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Choreography, virility and the nation: the case of Vassos Kanellos

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Abstract

Attingendo da testi editi e inediti, materiale iconografico e stampa, questo articolo tratta il lavoro di Vassos Kanellos, un danzatore e coreografo greco attivo dall'inizio del XX secolo. Esaminando come la sua danza ha messo in scena una mascolinità egemonica e l'ha intrecciata con rappresentazioni altrettanto egemoniche della "grecità", l'articolo intende integrare la conoscenza sull'incarnazione, da parte della danza moderna greca, delle tematiche di genere e nazionali. La contestualizzazione della pratica di tale artista in contesti locali e transnazionali, studiando in particolare il ruolo della sua collaboratrice e consorte statunitense, Tanagra Kanellos, contribuisce difatti a comprendere come la danza moderna/modernità greca si sia inscritta nella danza moderna/modernità occidentale, in cui Kanellos è ingiustamente sottostimato.

Drawing from published and unpublished texts, iconographic material and press sources, this article discusses the work of Vassos Kanellos, a Greek dance artist active since the early 20th century. Examining how Kanellos' dance staged a hegemonic masculinity and interweaved it with equally hegemonic representations of 'Greekness', the article complements scholarship on Greek modern dance's embodiment of gendered and national narratives. By contextualising his practice in local and transnational frameworks, notably studying the role of his U.S.-American collaborator and spouse Tanagra Kanellos, it also contributes to an understanding of the inscription of Greek (dance) modernity within Western (dance) modernity, in which it is severely under-represented.

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Choreography, virility and the nation: the case of Vassos Kanellos[1]

While the history of Greek modern dance remains to a great extent absent from historiographic narratives of European dance, scholars within the country have documented and analysed dance both in its aesthetic and formal aspects and as a cultural artefact performatively reflecting, processing and shifting social and political realities. A considerable amount of study in this latter framework has been dedicated to the topic of gender: complementing studies of the intersections between dance and gender in Western European scholarship[2], they provide a wealth of information and critical perspectives upon the – mainly female – bodies and subjects incarnating choreography in twentieth century Greece. More specifically concerning the early decades of the century that this article will be occupied with, the work of both individual figures and anonymous dancers has been approached – in the work of Eleni Fournaraki, Steriani Tsintziloni, Manolis Seiragakis for instance – from a gender-informed perspective[3]. In several of these studies, an intersection of gender with national identity within choreographic works and practices is identified. This takes multiple forms, ranging from the embodiment of a femininity corresponding to – and/or legitimised by – its association with nationhood, as in the case of staging women as virtuous and modest according to Greek tradition[4]; to the embodiment of a femininity deviating from hegemonic norms and excluded from the national community, as in the case of the light musical theatre ballet dancer, whose negative reputation was concurrent with her

1. All quotations from sources that are not in English have been translated by the author.

2. See for example Helen Thomas (edited by), *Dance, Gender and Culture*, Macmillan, Basingstoke-London 1993 for an early, foundational text.

3. See e.g. Eleni Fournaraki, *Bodies that Differ. Mid- and Upper-Class Women and the Quest for 'Greekness' in Female Bodily Culture (1896–1940)*, in «The International Journal of the History of Sport», vol. XXVII, n. 12, 2010, pp. 2053-2089; Steriani Tsintziloni, *Koula Pratsika and her Dance School. Embracing Gender, Class and the Nation in the Formative Years of Contemporary Dance Education in Greece*, in «Research in Dance Education», vol. XVI, n. 3, 2015, pp. 276-290; Manolis Seiragakis, *O Horos stin Operetta. I Anadisi ton Ellinon Horografon sti Dekaetia tou 1930* [*Dance in Operetta. The Emergence of Greek Choreographers in the 1930s*], in «Ariadni», vol. XIII, 2007, pp. 115-126.

4. See Eleni Fournaraki, *Bodies that Differ*, cit., p. 2070.

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foreign-ness[5].

The staging and performance of femaleness does not, however, fully cover the ways in which dance processed and interacted with gender norms, in particular in their intersection with the nation. Beyond the fact that the institutions of the nation – from political representation of the polity to the army – are male-dominated, conceived and enacted primarily by men, numerous aspects of national(ist) narratives adopt hegemonically masculine characteristics. Historian George L. Mosse has described masculinity as concurrent, complementary and even co-opted by nationalism[6]; sociologist Joane Nagel notes:

> The culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand in hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism. Masculinity and nationalism articulate well with one another, and the modern form of Western masculinity emerged at about the same time and place as modern nationalism. […] Terms like honour, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculinist, since they seem so thoroughly tied both to the nation and to manliness[7].

While dance can constitute a space of cultural production in which interweavings of – hegemonic or otherwise – masculinity and national identity can be enacted, and while significant scholarly work has been published on masculinities in dance[8], the representation and performance of masculinity in Greek early modern dance has not been fully studied.

This article constitutes a step towards understanding the intersections of masculinity and nation as they are translated in early modern dance in Greece through the work of Vassos Kanellos (1895?-1985). A relatively understudied figure, Kanellos was a choreographer and dancer active in the early twentieth century who, born Vassileios Kanellopoulos in the Peloponese, pursued a career spanning several decades. He developed an important body of work in the vein of dance theatre or, in his own terminology, *chorodrama*, centering on themes primarily relating to aspects of Greek culture and history[9]. Within these works, I argue, he blended a gendered – virile – and a nationalised – essentially "Greek" – dance. This article draws from Kanellos' published texts as well as press and archival material in order to examine how he choreographically, performatively and dramaturgically mediated

5. See Manolis Seiragakis, *To Elafro Mousiko Theatro sti Mesopolemiki Athina* [*Light Musical Theatre in Interwar Athens*], Kastaniotis, Athens 2009, vol. II, p. 504.

6. See George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, Oxford University Press, New York 1996, pp. 77, 109, 192.

7. Joane Nagel, *Masculinity and Nationalism. Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations*, in «Ethnic and Racial Studies», vol. XXI, n. 2, March 1998, pp. 242–269: pp. 249, 251-252.

8. See e.g. Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer. Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities*, Routledge, Oxon 2007 [1995]; Jennifer Fisher – Anthony Shay (edited by), *When Men Dance. Choreographing Masculinities Across Borders*, Oxford University Press, New York 2009.

9. For a full biography see Eleni Fessa-Emanouil (edited by), *Horos ke Theatro. Apo tin Duncan stis Nees Horeftikes Omades* [*Dance and Theatre. From Duncan to the New Dance Groups*], Efessos, Alimos 2004, pp. 218-221.

a hellenised masculinity, turning dance into a field in which hegemonic narratives of gender and nation interweave. In doing so, it situates Kanellos' performance both in the local-national context of Greece and in the wider frame of the West, for which Greece was a peripheral, semi-exoticised Other as well as a constituent part of its own genealogical narrative[10]. Within these overlapping contexts, this article transnationalises the framework of understanding choreography's preoccupation with gender and nation, considering how Western cultural dominance may have influenced local performances of a hellenised masculinity. Finally, I address Vassos Kanellos' female collaborators – notably his long-time dance partner and spouse Tanagra Kanellos (1892-1937) – interrogating the way in which her positionality weaved into his performance of masculinity. Throughout these analyses, I consider dance as not only a field *in* which gendered and national identities, representations and narratives intersect, but also as a practice that becomes itself gendered and nationalised.

In what follows, gender, masculinity and femininity are seen as always and already inscribed in specific historical and cultural frames and therefore as not reducible to singular, stable identities[11]. Even dominant or hegemonic conceptions of gender can vary between and within different contexts; I therefore in this text refer to "a" dominant or hegemonic masculinity. Relatedly, this text points to the ways in which one and the same performance of maleness may acquire different status within different contexts, reflecting the malleability of masculinit*ies*. Comparable conceptual clarifications are due regarding the topic of the nation. While what follows will refer to Greek national identity as well, it will primarily make use of the concept of "Greekness", which I am here using as an imperfect translation of *ellinikotita*: introduced in 1851 but gaining particular relevance in the 1930s, *ellinikotita* constitutes, as Dimitris Tziovas[12] explains, a bridge between an internally experienced national consciousness and an externally projected national identity. The concept of *ellinikotita*/Greekness therefore grasps the interstitial position of Kanellos' dances, navigating between the not always identical expectations of local/national and transnational understandings of the Greek nation.

Hellenising virility

Vassos Kanellos' repertory was in many cases plot-based, with defined characters allowing him to incarnate particular male roles on stage. These included Triptolemos, son of ancient Eleusis' king

10. See Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the Looking-Glass. Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995 [1987], p. 1.

11. See Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer*, cit., p. 12.

12. See Dimitris Tziovas, *Ellinikotita: Sinidisi i Taftotita?* [*Greekness: Consciousness or Identity?*], in «To Vima», 25/11/2008, online: https://www.tovima.gr/2008/11/25/opinions/ellinikotita-syneidisi-i-taytotita/ (u.v. 30/4/2021); see also Dimitris Tziovas, *I Metemorfosis tou Ethnismou ke to Ideologima tis Ellinikotitas sto Mesopolemo* [*The Transformations of Nationism and the Concept of Greekness in the Interwar Period*], Odysseas, Athens 1989.

Celeus (e.g. 1929); Pluto, the divine king of the underworld having captured Persephone (e.g. 1929, 1930); Achilles (e.g. 1925); Orestes avenging the murder of his father Agememnon (e.g. 1930); a Satyr chasing after a nymph (e.g. 1925, 1928, 1930); Byzantine emperor Theophilos – bearing a crown topped with a cross, reproducing the magnificence of Byzantine imperial iconography – (e.g. 1923, 1924, 1925); an un-named Greek Hero (e.g. 1925) as well as a heroic *Evzonas* (selected member of the Greek army, date unknown); the half-human figure of Pan (e.g. 1930); Apollo fighting the Python (at the 1927 Delphic Festival); Alfeios (mythological personification of a Greek river, date unknown); an ancient warrior – complete with helmet, shield and javelin – (possibly 1930); a Spartan (date unknown); and the *Kleftopoulo* (e.g. 1925, fig. 1), a figure referring to *kleftes*, armed groups rebelling against Ottoman authorities in the period when territories that are now Greek were part of the Ottoman empire[13]. Triptolemos, Pluto and Theophilos are all male figures carrying political power concentrated in the roles of king or emperor; the Spartan, Achilles, the un-named Hero, the warrior, the *Evzonas*, Apollo – in particular in his battle against the Python, rather than in his artistic endeavours – and the *Kleftopoulo* exemplify traits of valour, force and heroism associated with virility, in many of these roles also associated with military traits and positions; the Satryr, Alfeios and Pan embody (as did non-narrative "Dionysian" or "Bacchic" dances) a sexually charged masculinity. Kanellos did not only cast himself in male roles but, as a photograph of a group of male dancers surrounding him in a 1930 performance of Dionysian dances[14] shows, also comparably staged other men. These performances of masculinity were, in certain cases, complemented by female roles that confirmed and supported the concentration of – political, physical, sexual – power in male characters: for example, Persephone is kidnapped by Pluto; Kassiani, a potential bride for Byzantine emperor Theophilos, dares challenge him only to be rejected in favour of Theodora – her redemption in the end of the drama consists in her glorification in a life of religious devotion[15]. Kanellos' works therefore drew from pre-existing narratives and figures that display traits and/or story arcs that confirm a hegemonic masculinity enacted through multiply construed power. A small proportion of works – for instance *Icarus* or an un-named *Martyr* – did not directly feed into that view of masculinity – without, however, contradicting it.

13. This list of roles was composed from programmes held at the Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos archive of the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), mainly folders 1.5 and 3.1, complemented by information in Eleni Fessa-Emanouil (edited by), *Horos ke Theatro*, cit., pp. 218-221.

14. See Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, n/a, Athens 1966, p. 69.

15. Anonymous, *Stories of the Ballet – The Byzantine Chorodrama The Emperor's Bride*, article in un-named newspaper, Friday October 6, 1922, reproduced in Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, cit., pp. 157-158.

Fig. 1: Vassos Kanellos as a *Kleftopoulo* at the Greek Theatre of Berkley, California, in 1925. Image source: Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, n/a, Athens 1966.

Understandably for a dance-drama genre, Kanellos' choreography exhibited a pronounced theatricality – press reviews called it a "moving pantomime"[16] – mainly focusing on corporeal expressivity rather than facial expression[17]. Even though the sources do not allow us a detailed description, it can be said that his dance was kinetically characterized by a combination of skillful – such as virtuosic high jumps (e.g. fig. 2) – and simple – e.g. solemn marches – motions. His own description of his choreography includes a focus on balanced lines (e.g. fig. 3), plasticity of motion and rhythmicality[18].

Fig. 2: Press image of Vassos and Xenea Kanellos at the theatre of Dionysus. Image courtesy of The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), The Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive, Folder 3.1.

Fig. 3: Vassos Kanellos dancing in the United States. Image courtesy of The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), The Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive, digitised collection.

16. See Dudley Crafts Watson, *Athens Provides Art Tourists' Big Thrill*, in «The Chicago Evening Post Magazine of the Art World», 28/8/1928.

17. See Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, cit., p. 43.

18. See *ivi*, pp. 43, 55-56.

Against this background, iconographic sources allow us to infer that the choreography of Kanellos' pieces supported the embodiment of a hegemonic masculinity. Perusing photographs of Kanellos dancing, especially in duets with female co-protagonists, one can see him supporting the female dancer; directing his face and gaze towards the female dancer as the object of that gaze; leading the female dancer, either by a guiding arm around her back or pulling her by the hand (e.g. fig. 4, 5); chasing or trying to touch the female dancer (associated with imagery of Pluto, fig. 6); holding or encircling the female dancer with his arms; or jumping virtuosically next to a female dancer who remains more static (fig. 2)[19]. While some images show that exceptions to this partitioning of bodily postures did exist – for example when a storyline required it, as when mortal Triptolemos kneels in a bow to divine Demeter, or when male and female figures form symmetrical positions – several instances of Kanellos' movement material choreographically confirm a hierarchical position of the male figure. They do so by transferring a set of gendered habitus that enact and reinforce the partitioning of bodies and social positions to theatrical dance, incorporating them into choreographic language.

Fig. 4: Vassos Kanellos and Tanagra Kanellos dancing in an open-air theatre, probably the ancient theatre of Megalopolis. Image courtesy of The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), The Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive, Folder 3.

19. For background on such movement analysis see Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer*, cit., p. 57.

Fig. 5: Vassos Kanellos and Tanagra Kanellos as satyr and nymph respectively, at the ancient theatre of Dionysos in 1930. Image source: Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, n/a, Athens 1966.

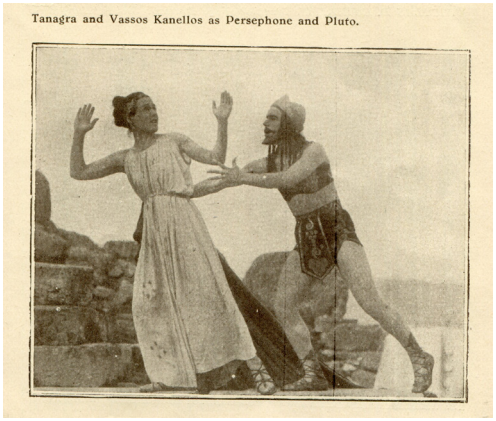

Fig. 6: Vassos Kanellos and Tanagra Kanellos as Persephone and Pluto. Image courtesy of The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), The Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive, Folder 1.5.

In Kanellos' discursive production, so strong is the association of dance and virility that dance itself becomes (male) gendered: writing that «[i]n the virile village dances we find the living principles, a vibrand [*sic*] language of beauty, expressing a great universal truth»[20], for example, he points to the posited virility of dance *per se*. There are indications that the reception of Kanellos' work conceded to this reading of his practice: a 1924 text by John S. Yerakis, for example, refers to «the power of Mr Kanellos, [*sic*] personality, and the force of his athletic form»[21], thus underlining masculine-related values of physical strength and power.

Kanellos' staging of masculinity concurred with a hierarchisation of genders in the valorisation of artistic labour in his productions. Women performing modern dance engaged in a field that contributed a great deal to their emancipation from limiting gender norms, both physically – through non-prescribed movement material and practices more attentive to physical experience than visual exposure – and more widely – through solo performances, self-directed careers and authorial positions. This holds with respect to artists active in Greece as well. Artemis Leontis' in-depth work on Eva Palmer-Sikelianos details her early experiences of queer sexuality and lesbian relationships as being intricately linked with her study of ancient Greek literature and prefiguring her choreographic work

20. Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, cit., p. 40.

21. Quoted in Vassos Kanellos, *I Arhea Elliniki Tragodia* [*The Ancient Greek Tragedy*], Ethniko Typografeio, Athens 1964, p. 116.

for the Delphic festivals[22]. Steriani Tsintziloni's[23] analysis of the educational work of Koula Pratsika – a highly influential figure whose practice interweaved Eurhythmics, influences of German expressionist dance and abstracted references to Greek antiquity – notes how it formed an opportunity of emancipation for female bodies through non-partnered, group-based, uncodified kinetic experiences. While the emancipation of female modern dance artists applies to Kanellos' dance partners too, in their collaboration with him they also found themselves bound by masculinist hierarchies; for example, they were regularly credited after his name in performance programmes. Even Tanagra Kanellos, despite being often cited as co-creator of the dances, creator of the costumes and even co-author of a 1931 book draft titled *Elliniki Orhisis* (*Greek Orchesis*)[24], consistently appears in second place[25]. Press sources correspondingly note how she «contributed to the work of Kanellos»[26], therefore assuming that the work was primarily his.

That Kanellos' dramaturgical choices, choreographic language and creative hierarchies display a masculinist bias may not seem surprising, if one considers them as one more manifestation of social contexts structured through gender inequality. It is nevertheless crucial to point such manifestations out in order to articulate their penetration of the dance field and to counter their normalisation within it. In the case of Kanellos, this manifestation moreover needs to be related to the intersecting theme of the nation. The dance in which his performance of masculinity was integrated was indeed preoccupied almost exclusively with staging Greekness. Dramaturgically, as the enumeration of his roles makes manifest, Kanellos' works focussed on Greek antiquity, Byzantine history as well as, albeit more rarely, other parts of Greece's nation-historical narrative. Choreographically, his pieces freely drew from ancient iconography as found on vases and reliefs; included material from traditional dances; and were associated with music based on ancient hymns, Byzantine or traditional melodies. The staging of Kanellos' works confirmed and underlined this attachment to Greekness through costume – chlamys-like tunics, sandals, robes referring to Byzantine iconography – and venue choices – ancient theatres and open-air temples[27].

22. See e.g. Artemis Leontis, *Eva Palmer's Distinctive Greek Journey*, in Vassiliki Kolocotroni – Efterpi Mitsi (edited by), *Women Writing Greece. Essays on Hellenism, Orientalism and Travel*, Rodopi, Amsterdam-New York 2008, pp. 159-184, in particular p. 162; see also Artemis Leontis, *Eva Palmer Sikelianos. A Life in Ruins*, Princeton University Press, Princeton-Oxford 2019, pp. 1-40.

23. See Steriani Tsintziloni, *Koula Pratsika and her Dance School*, cit., p. 282.

24. Conserved at the Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos archive of the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), folder 1.1.

25. In the programmes I have been able to consult at the Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos archive of the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), female co-protagonists' names appear underneath or even in smaller letters than Vassos Kanellos' name. Tanagra Kanellos appears in several programmes in the same line but nevertheless second (e.g. «Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos»). In two exceptions, the artists are presented together as «the Kanellos couple».

26. Quoted in Vassos Kanellos, *I Arhea Elliniki Tragodia*, cit., p. 30.

27. For a more detailed discussion of Kanellos' staging of Greekness see Anna Leon, *Proximity and Difference in Vassos*

An association of masculinity and Greekness can initially be identified in the subject matter of Kanellos' works and the male roles therein. The men Kanellos danced were marked as Greek: figures from ancient Greek mythology, be they mortal or divine (Triptolemos, Pluto, Orestes, Satyr, Pan, Alfeios, Achilles); iconic figures of Byzantium (Theophilos); as well as figures of Greece's becoming as a nation through resistance towards Ottoman forces, as in the case of the *Kleftopoulo*. More abstract, un-named roles such as the Greek Hero, the Spartan (fig. 7) or the heroic *Evzonas* additionally associate the virility of heroism with dedication to the nation – in the case of the *Evzonas* in direct link to the institution of the army.

Fig. 7: Press image of Vassos Kanellos as the "Dying Spartan". Image courtesy of The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), The Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive, Folder 3.3.

A further work stands out as an emblematic illustration of the dramaturgical interweavings of masculinity and an ideal of the nation in Kanellos' work: *The Marble Prince*. It centred on the story of Chryssoula, a young peasant woman who, for fear of a baptismal prediction coming true, is not allowed to leave her family dwelling. Chryssoula escapes and stumbles upon a scroll held by the eponymous prince, who has turned into marble – along with the entire Byzantine court of which he is prince. According to the scroll, the maiden who would grieve for forty days would break the spell of the enchanted marble court and bring it back to life. After this has been achieved, Chryssoula marries the prince and ultimately becomes empress of Byzantium at his side[28]. The story of *The Marble Prince* confirms normative gender roles and teleologies: Chryssoula's "happy ending" consists in becoming a bride, reinforcing the perception of marriage as a female destiny and fulfilment, magnified by the class difference between the characters; while Chryssoula inverts the *Sleeping Beauty*'s position of passiv-

Kanellos' "Greek" Dance, in preparation.

28. Anonymous, *Kanellos Festival of Hellenic Arts performance program*, Folder 3.1, Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive, The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET).

ity by being the one who "reanimates" the prince, it is he who retains a superior position of power once order and normality have been re-established; a precondition for Chryssoula to break the curse is that she be a virgin, reflecting the body- and sexuality-policing of women. While these aspects of the story have a lot in common with gendered *topoi* of multiple fables, *The Marble Prince* also has specific links with narratives feeding into the construction of an idealised Greek national-historical consciousness. Indeed one needs to relate *The Marble Prince* with *The Marble King* (*O marmaromenos vassilias*), a fable widely known, as reflected by its rendition into a homonymous popular song. The King in question is Constantine XI Palaiologos, the last Byzantine emperor, during whose reign Constantinople fell to Ottoman forces in 1453. While the nation of Greece is not coextensive with the Byzantine empire, 1453 is still a date that haunts dominant narratives of Greek history, as a defeat that caused the loss of potentially nationalised territory. Fictionalising this sentiment, popular legend has it that Constantine did not die at the siege, but lives on, turned to marble, and will revive along with his empire[29]. By selecting the theme of the marble prince and placing it in the context of a latent Byzantine court, Kanellos' work directly refers to and animates this legend. The masculine figure of the marble prince therefore needs to be understood as a nationally charged one, that encapsulates feelings of national pride and aspiration as well as desires of territorial expansion.

Beyond the thematic focus of his works, Kanellos' performance of masculinity mingled with his performance of Greekness also on choreographic planes. This can be made manifest through an analysis of a concept that is at the core of Kanellos' dance philosophy: *leventia*. *Leventia* is a term still active in the Greek language, referring to the qualities of courage and bravery as well as a strong, well-built appearance. The word applies predominantly to men – characterised as *leventes* – and is associated with virility, even though it is possible to speak of a *leventissa* in the female form if a woman is considered to embody the above, primarily male-associated qualities. For Kanellos, *leventia* was the embodiment of health, vigour and youth[30]. These qualities, that follow conventional use of the term in Greek, were associated by Kanellos with physical and kinetic aspects of his practice. *Leventia* was seen as the source of motional expressiveness, «[t]he power to express through bodily movement alone an idea»[31]. It also was a core element of Kanellos' conceptualisation of ideal bodily posture: associated with uprightness and an elevation of weight in the equilibrium of the body[32] – a position communicating control and pride – *leventia* was made manifest as an «exalting straight line, from the

29. See Konstantinos Nakos, *The Role of the Age of Antiquity in the First Years of the Young Modern Greek State (1830-1850)*, in László Horvàth (Herausgegeben von), *Investigatio Fontium. Griechische und lateinische Quellen mit Erläuterungen, Beiträge der Tagung Klassisches Altertum – Byzanz – Humanismus der XI. Ungarischen Konferenz für Altertumswissenschaft*, Eötvös-József-Collegium, Budapest 2014, pp. 171-179, in particular p. 174, online: https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/154250655.pdf (u.v. 30/4/2021).

30. See Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, cit., pp. 45, 64.

31. *Ivi*, p. 45.

32. See *ivi*, pp. 49, 63.

earth straight up through the centre of the figure into the heavens»[33]. Kanellos furthermore presented *leventia* as an essentially Greek bodily and even psychological trait. Stating that it «typifies all that is Hellenic»[34], his writings associate it with archetypes of Greekness, both in antiquity (Apollo) and in contemporaneity (local members of Greek mountain populations)[35]. Through the concept of *leventia*, therefore, Kanellos performs a choreographic hellenisation of masculinity: postural and expressive aspects of dance are associated both with maleness and with an essentialised Greekness. The concept of *leventia* also applies, in Kanellos' texts, to the essentially Greek and masculine nature of dance itself: theorising that «[t]he traditional line of the body, the cypress-like line of the Greeks' *leventia*, is the first phase of *orchesis*. […] The walk, as we teach it and use it in our dances is traditionally Greek»[36], he is speaking both of the lines and actions of dancing bodies, and of a dance that is itself gendered and nationalised. This association of *leventia* with dance itself allows an abstraction from the particularity of bodies, explaining Kanellos' proposal that the archaic figures of sculpted *kore*, found among others on the Acropolis of Athens, also could embody the masculine traits of *leventia*[37].

This imbrication of Greekness and virility cannot be understood as the combination of a generically construed masculinity or a generically construed Greekness. As pointed out earlier, Kanellos' dance incarnates a specific masculinity associated with strength, sexual energy and power – as opposed to, say, a masculinity that manifests fragility, weakness or subordination, all of which can be compatible with male bodies. Similarly, the Greekness of his dances corresponds to a particular, dominant narrative of the country's history and culture – placing a strong emphasis on antiquity, integrating Byzantine history as Greek, or accentuating figures of revolutionary heroism – and excludes those aspects of Greek history that do not align with a hegemonic national narrative. In the period when Kanellos was working, Greece had recently acquired, as a result of the Balkan wars, large territories in the north of the country, whose culture reflected the heterogenous ethnic mix of the Ottoman empire; after a military defeat in 1922 while attempting to secure territorial expansion in Asia Minor, Greece also saw large numbers of Greek-identifying refugees come into the country, whose background contributed to cultural diversity – but these aspects of Greece's heterogeneous history are not put to the fore in Kanellos' work. His male Greekness or Greek maleness is therefore a specific one, consistent with dominant narratives both of masculinity and of the nation.

33. *Ivi*, p. 45.
34. *Ibidem*.
35. See *ibidem*.
36. *Ivi*, pp. 63-64.
37. See *ivi*, p. 49.

Neither too little, nor too much

Kanellos' portrayal of a hellenised masculinity needs to be understood as developing in a context where frictions existed between masculinity and dance. In Greece as elsewhere, athleticism had long been associated with manliness[38] while most dancers were female. This is consistent with the fact that in several European contexts women were also more prominent in the dance field, despite the presence of several male figures in modern dance as well as the contributions of modern ballet to shifting the perception of the male dancer towards more social and artistic acceptability[39]. The co-extensiveness of dance and femaleness held for Greek ballet – as it developed in lyrical and light musical theatre – whose dancers were, as Manolis Seiragakis' extensive work on operetta and Avra Xepapadakou's overview of ballet history show, consistently stigmatised, notably through an association of their practice with prostitution[40]. But it held for Greek modern dance too, which was also performed almost exclusively by women, albeit women from more privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, as it did not carry the stigma of ballet[41]. Both of these associations between dance and gender were coloured by their further association with the nation: ballet dancers were, until the 1920s, largely foreign, the perceived depravity of ballet not reconcilable with Greek bodies[42]; while the strong connection of modern dance with a hegemonic national narrative, in the works of artists like Koula Pratsika for instance, contributed to its legitimacy and perceived suitability for Greek female bodies[43]. It is against this background that Kanellos' performance of a hellenised masculinity is to be understood.

Kanellos also spent a significant part of his life and career in the United States, where he completed part of his education, performed, and met his lifelong dance partner and spouse, Charlotte Markham (later Tanagra Kanellos). Kanellos was also invested in the Greek diaspora communities of the United States, performing, for example, under the auspices and to the honour of the AHEPA (American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association), one of the most prominent bodies repres enting the Greek immigrant community in its process of assimilation in U.S.-American society. This process of assimilation occurred in a context in which Greeks did not fully qualify – despite being able to at times pass[44] – as whites: the AHEPA was formed partly in response to racist attacks towards

38. See Eleni Fournaraki, *Bodies that Differ*, cit., p. 2054, for a background since the late 19th century.

39. Diaghilev's Ballets Russes played a significant role in this process of reconstructing the allure of the male dancer and it is in this respect significant that part of Kanellos' training was under Michel Fokine.

40. See Avra Xepapadakou, *Ta Prota Vimata. O Endehnos Horos sti Neoelliniki Skini* [*The First Steps. Theatrical Dance on the Modern Greek Stage*], in «Science of Dance», vol. IX, 2016, pp. 70-86, in particular p. 83; Manolis Seiragakis, *O Horos stin Operetta*, cit., p. 120.

41. See Steriani Tsintziloni, *Koula Pratsika and her Dance School*, cit., p. 286.

42. See Manolis Seiragakis, *To Elafro Mousiko Theatro sti Mesopolemiki Athina*, cit., p. 504.

43. See Steriani Tsintziloni, *Koula Pratsika and her Dance School*, cit., p. 286.

44. I use the term "passing" to refer to the decision and/or capacity of members of a minority group – here, Greek immigrants in the United States – to present themselves as belonging to a dominant group – here, that of U.S.-American

Greeks perpetrated regularly by the Ku Klux Klan and ranging, as Dan Georgakas[45] recounts, from physical assaults to segregation and from there to everyday micro-aggressions. Intersecting with gender, the racial boundaries of whiteness were policed, in the United States, through miscegenation legislation which applied to Greeks as well; indeed part of the rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan against Greek immigrants was that they represented a menace to American women[46], including them in racist tropes on non-white masculinity as dangerous and violent.

Within this context, the performed masculinity of Kanellos has to be understood as being confronted with two, to a certain extent opposing, negative representations: on the one hand, carrying the effeminate stigma of dance, it ran the risk of being considered not masculine enough; on the other hand, as a potentially threatening masculinity, it also ran the risk of being considered too masculine. Situated at the limits of acceptability in both of these ways, Kanellos' performance of masculinity arguably necessitated strategies of modulation and legitimation: it had to strike a balance between aligning with the positedly non-threatening respectability of white virility – rather than a potentially exceeding and aggressive non-white manliness – while avoiding assimilation to the effeminate connotations still carried by male dancers both in Greece and beyond. The double bind of masculinity that I propose Kanellos was caught in was both a locally Greek and a trans-nationally Western-motivated phenomenon, be this in the legacy of male dancers as effeminate or in early twentieth century racism. The strategies of responding to it, therefore, also need to be sought in these overlapping contexts.

The primary way, I would like to argue, in which Kanellos' work achieved a "correctly dosed" masculinity, was by underlining its association with a specific part of Greek history – antiquity – that was valued both within Greece and in a Western context largely grounding its cultural narrative on its reception of ancient Greece. Mosse has moreover explained how Greek antiquity has constituted a source for the development of Western modern masculinity models in particular[47]. Kanellos' dance indeed was, as we have seen, imbued with multi-layered references to antiquity, be these in the choice of themes and narratives, in the movement material, in the selection of performance venues, or in the importance placed on drama in his choreographic approach. This focus on antiquity is of course far from being solely relatable to gender. Nevertheless, given the idealised position that Greek antiquity holds within Greece as well as in transnationally dominant Western discourse – and more particularly

whites.

45. See Dan Georgakas, *The Greeks in America*, in «Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora», vol. XIV, n. 1-2, 1987, pp. 5-53, in particular pp. 14, 45.

46. See Yiorgos Anagnostu, *Forget the Past, Remember the Ancestors! Modernity, 'Whiteness', American Hellenism, and the Politics of Memory in Early Greek America*, in «Journal of Modern Greek Studies», vol. XXII, n. 1, 2004, pp. 25-71, in particular p. 35.

47. See George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, cit., e.g. p. 28.

its masculine ideal – this focus forms a framework in which Kanellos' performance of manliness could be modulated and legitimised.

Thodoros Hatzipantazis[48] has proposed that when Isadora Duncan performed in semi-nakedness in early twentieth century Greece, the antique aesthetics and references of her dance were enough to shield her practice against possible critiques of inappropriateness. Similarly, Kanellos' association with antiquity may have contributed to countering the potential perception of effeminacy of a male dancer by relating it to a historical era already valued in Greek national consciousness. Beyond the national context, Kanellos also referred to his dance's posited closeness to antiquity in order to ground a view of it as vigorous and healthy, thus presenting his (male) performance as relatable to (white) U.S.-American audiences' values:

> ["Greek" dance's] rhythms move according to the laws of the universe, the moving of spaces and lines. It is in harmony with out of doors, with the sky and sunshine, the wind, the rain and the storm. I think this is why it harmonises so well the thought and spirit of America. For the American too loves the out of doors, and sunshine and fresh air. The American as well as the Ancient Greek believes in a healthy body[49].

In images of his works referring to ancient Greece, Kanellos appears in costumes recurrently consisting in a short tunic exposing the muscular form of his legs and torso. This costume can be seen as encapsulating the complex negotiations inherent in the staging of his male figure. Almost voyeuristic, it exposes his body to the spectatorial gaze, placing it at a risk of feminisation while potentially also satisfying Western audiences' fetichisation of exotified bodies. At the same time, clearly inspired by ancient Greek iconography, the costume pulls the dancer away both from problematic effeminacy and from Otherness, by appealing to a cultural realm valued both nationally and trans-nationally.

Performing references to Greek antiquity as part of a gender-legitimising strategy was not exclusive to Kanellos. Eleni Fournaraki explains how ancient Greece was discursively used as a way of grounding Greek manhood and particularising it as a national trait[50]. Beyond Greece, Ramsay Burt, in his analysis of masculinity in the figure of Vaslav Nijinsky, refers to the possibility that its links with classical Greece in such works as *Narcisse* (1911) may have supported the association of his body with a culture both manly and open towards homosexual practices[51]. It is also important to note that it was not only men who legitimised their gendered positionality through an association with

48. See Thodoros Hatzipantazis, *"Romeikos Sivolismos". Diastavrosi Eghorias Laikis Paradosis ke Evropaikis Protoporias sto Neoelliniko Theatro I Theatro ke Ethniki Taftotita stin Ellada* [*"Romeikos Sivolismos". Crossing Domestic Popular Tradition and European Innovation in Modern Greek Theatre, or Theatre and National Identity in Greece*], Cretan University Press, Herakleion 2018, p. 338. On the legitimation of nudity in male bodies through their association with ancient Greece see George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, cit., p. 33.

49. Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, cit., p. 42.

50. See Eleni Fournaraki, *Bodies that Differ*, cit., p. 2054.

51. See Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer*, cit., p. 70.

the nation. A significant example in Greece is the Lyceum of Greek Women (*Lykeion Ellinidon*), an organisation promoting a moderate, upper-middle class feminism which contributed towards legitimising the physical practice of female bodies in the male-dominated field of physical culture through their association with a normative representation of the nation – notably by staging festivals in which young women's bodies were imbued with markers of antiquity[52].

The co-construction of a (male) gender identity and of a national one is pursued by Kanellos (as it was in certain productions of the Lykeion) in his portrayal of Byzantine (e.g. Theophilos) and post-Byzantine (e.g. *Kleftopoulo*, *Evzonas*) masculinity. Both in his writings and in his performances, Kanellos underlined the continuity of Greek culture – the positedly smooth transition from antiquity towards modern Greece. In this vein, Kanellos proposed performance evenings that included choreographic renditions of landmark periods of Greek history; for a 1923 performance in Chicago, for example, this consisted in antiquity (e.g. *Hymn to Apollo*), Byzantium (e.g. *The Emperor's Bride*); and modern Greece, illustrated through popular peasant songs and dances[53]. While this view of the country's history disregards parts of its heterogeneity, it projects modern Greece as the privileged, "proper" inheritor of antiquity. In this way, even post-antiquity figures of manhood embodied by Kanellos were imbued with the legitimacy of an ancient heritage, countering (Western) modernity's positioning of a twentieth-century Greek dancing masculinity at the limits of acceptability.

Crucially, Vassos Kanellos' modulation of modern Greek masculinity through its association with a Western-validated antiquity was mediated through a choreographic language that incorporated Western choreographic traits, thus allowing it to further respond to the expectations of foreign spectators. In effect, while Kanellos focussed on Greekness both dramaturgically and choreographically as described before, he also carried, within his practice, influences of non-Greek artists' physicality and technique, having trained under Isadora Duncan as well as in classical ballet[54]. The figure of masculinity that he embodied therefore responded to the risk of its Othering both by being associated with a legitimising antiquity and by displaying stylistic traits originating from Western practices and recognisable by Western audiences. Western modernity therefore co-determined the framework of bias within which Kanellos' hellenised masculinity was (per)formed but also provided choreographic tools and models through which his response to that framework could develop.

52. See Eleni Fournaraki, *Bodies that Differ*, cit., pp. 2066-2071.

53. Anonymous, *Kanellos Dionysia* performance program, Folder 3.1, Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive, The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), 1923.

54. For a more complete discussion of foreign influences on Kanellos' dance see Anna Leon, *Proximity and Difference in Vassos Kanellos' "Greek" Dance*, cit.

Charlotte Markham and Tanagra Kanellos

In this framework of performing both the nation and masculinity in a fragile balance between affirmation and legitimation, Vassos Kanellos' female co-protagonists and co-creators, often functioning as counterparts to his embodiment of masculinity, are of central importance. Indeed while Kanellos' repertory did include solos, many of his pieces were either duets or group works articulated around a protagonist male-female couple. Most of his early appearances in the United States were made with Thaleia Zanou, a dancer known for performing in ballet shows accompanying film projections in New York theatres. After a small overlap of common performances in the early 1920s, Zanou's place as Kanellos' regular co-protagonist was taken by Charlotte Markham/Tanagra Kanellos. Finally, after the early death of Tanagra Kanellos in the 1930s, the couple's daughter Xenea worked with her father. Tanagra Kanellos was the most prominent of Vassos' partners in terms of the duration of their collaboration, and her embodiment of "Greek" dance can further illuminate the interweavings of national and gender identity in his and their practice.

Tanagra Kanellos was born Charlotte Markham in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, in the United States. She grew up in a wealthy and reputed white family, as evidenced by her capacity to pursue non-vocational higher education, her trips to Europe and the coverage of her activities by local newspapers such as the «Manitowoc Pilot». In the 1910s, Markham studied at the Chicago Art Institute and was active in staging plays and exposing her painting work. She met Vassos Kanellos in 1920, after his U.S. debut, in Hillside, New York and they married that same year. Markham's biography had until then no apparent relationship with Greece, and her family was, according to press sources, opposed to her turning to «foreign gods»[55]. Vassos himself initially saw his spouse as foreign: even though he underlines her interest «in things Greek», she was, in his words, «of pioneer American stock»[56].

One way of understanding Vassos Kanellos' and Charlotte Markham's civil and artistic union is as a further layer of the process legitimising Kanellos' dance through its positioning in a white cultural context. The couple's wedding can be read as the introduction of a Greek artist into the legitimacy of U.S.-American whiteness, an introduction that necessitated his being exempt from prevailing sentiments towards Greeks. Local press coverage of the wedding indeed celebrated Kanellos in a way that distinguished him from working-class Greek immigrants to the United States: he was presented, with little accuracy, as «an Athenian of international fame as a classical dancer, has been a resident of the

55. Maria Ikonomidi, *Mia Horeftria Klassikon Horon* [*A Dancer of Classical Dances*], in «Eleftheron Vima», 22/11/1928.

56. Vassos Kanellos, untitled manuscript, Folder 2.1, Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive, The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET), undated.

United States for a number of years» and as a graduate of the «Classical Academy» of Athens who has gained national recognition in the U.S.[57]. In such accounts, Kanellos' dance credentials were adapted to the expectations of a social context privileged both socioeconomically and ethnically/nationally, pointing to the ways in which dance practices and practitioners are – or have to be – legitimised in their migration across boundaries of nation and class.

Another way of understanding the two artists' union is as the passage of a U.S.-American white woman towards an idealised Greekness. A decade after the wedding, Charlotte Markham would indeed have become an embodiment of Greekness: a photograph of her from 1930 conserved in Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive of The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET) exemplifies this, showing her dancing in an outdoor ancient theatre, waving a piece of fabric in the wind under which the word "Greece" is typed in large letters; the photo, whose aesthetics are not dissociable from tourism advertisements, presents Markham/Kanellos as «the Graceful Greek Dancer»[58]. A 1928 press article illustrates the perceived teleology of her path towards Greekness when it writes of Charlotte Markham's time in the landscapes of Wisconsin, when as a young woman she would imagine the Dryads that she later embodied – thus pointing to her posited predestination towards that embodiment, and therefore its equally posited authenticity[59]. In the words of her spouse, too, «Charlotte Markham became Tanagra, and the blossoming Hellenic spirit in her soul came into full and glorious flower»[60]. This passage from Charlotte Markham to Tanagra Kanellos contributes to opening a space in which the notion of a Greek race (to which the Kanelloses both subscribed) was complemented by a subjectively experienced and culturally constructed access to Greekness. It is nevertheless a very specific Greekness towards which Tanagra Kanellos navigated: one characterised by its links with antiquity, as symbolically marked by the choice of her Greek name, referencing the Tanagra figurines found in the homonymous locality in Greece and often utilised to describe early twentieth century female dancers working with antique references[61]. By embracing this dimension of Greek national identity – rather than, say, its Mediterranean or Balkan aspects – Markham/Kanellos' transition towards Greekness confirms the tendency of Vassos' dance towards both internally dominant and externally (white) Western-validated models. The influence that she may have had on the choreography she co-created and performed with her spouse can correspondingly be seen as a further way of rendering "Greek" dance a dance of whiteness.

57. Anonymous, *Married*, in «Manitowoc Pilot», 14/10/1920.

58. Conserved in folder 3.2, Vassos and Tanagra Kanellos Archive, The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (ELIA/MIET).

59. See Maria Ikonomidi, *Mia Horeftria Klassikon Horon*, cit.

60. Vassos Kanellos, untitled manuscript, cit.

61. On the *topos* of Tanagra see Ann Cooper Albright, *The Tanagra Effect. Wrapping the Modern Body in the Folds of Ancient Greece*, in Fiona Macintosh (edited by), *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World. Responses to Greek and Roman Dance*, Oxford University Press, New York 2010, pp. 57-76.

Tanagra Kanellos' transition towards Greekness is presented by Vassos as being mediated by himself. In his own words, when they met, he «took her on long imagined journeys to Greece»; while he recognises that Markham had practiced dance mime before meeting him, he also states that he «gave her lessons in the dance»[62], thus proposing that her access to Greek dance was granted by him. Their marriage, despite its U.S. American-context, was staged as a rite of passage towards Greekness, with the bride wearing a «Greek tunic of heavy white silk»[63]. The symbolic change of name from Charlotte Markham to Tanagra Kanellos was also presented, by Vassos, as being related to him: «For weeks Charlotte had been pondering the question of a stage name – if she was to be my partner and work with me in the dance, "Charlotte Markham" was hardly suitable»[64]. In other words, not only was Charlotte Markham's transition towards Tanagra Kanellos facilitated by her association with Vassos, but it was considered necessary if she was to embody the role of his partner in life and dance. In a succinct illustration of the imbrications of gender and nation, the expectation that a female partner in a heterosexual union will adapt to the circumstances and needs of the male partner blends, here, with access to – but also a possible pressure towards – embodying a national identity. This blend does not only happen in political – the institution of marriage –, affective or discursive levels, but also choreographically, in the introduction of Charlotte Markham into a performance of "Greek" dance for and through which she was to become Tanagra Kanellos. In this context, the extent and nature of Markham/Kanellos' creative inputs to the couple's common dance work may be concealed by the combination of Vassos' prominent position and the dance's essentialised Greekness, to which she was positedly introduced.

Markham/Kanellos' complex positionality – her foreign-ness both constantly reminded and transcended; her Greekness an achievement as well as a legitimation through its association with undisputed whiteness – is reflected in her own writings as well. She holds several positions in common with Vassos – for instance on the proximity between dance and drama or the posited continuity of Greek civilisation[65]. Markham/Kanellos' texts also agree on the imbrication of "Greek" dance and a masculinity bearing essentialised national characteristics: speaking of village dances she witnessed in Greece, she comments that «[i]t is a thrilling thing to see strong men dance. […] Their dance has a deeper, almost religious significance. The pulse of these dances is in a dynamic eternal rhythm, attuned to the heart-beat of the world»[66]. At the same time, Markham/Kanellos also participates, from her position as a person originating from a culturally and politically dominant culture, in a ste-

62. Vassos Kanellos, untitled manuscript, cit.
63. Anonymous, *Married*, cit.
64. Vassos Kanellos, untitled manuscript, cit.
65. Quoted in Vassos Kanellos, *I Arhea Elliniki Tragodia*, cit., pp. 39, 41.
66. Quoted in *ivi*, p. 43.

reotypisation and potentially even exotification of Greek people as well as their dance. For instance, she comments that

> [i]f the Greek feels himself becoming slightly ready with wine he immediately begins to dance, not because he feels happy and desires to express that happiness, but because he knows that the dance is the medium for the transmutation of vital energy which the wine gives[67]

or interprets that

> [j]oining the circle each one takes the lead in turn. He is for the moment the focal point of the universe, suspended between heaven and earth, alone before all creation. He dances, his life, his joy, his tragedy, his atonement, his at-one-ness, while the circle keeps the beat and the song, surrounds him with sympathy, and upholds his spirit[68].

Or elsewhere:

> These powerful men in line for the dance do not even hold hands. They hold instead the twisted handkerchief between them. That moment of the dance is too sacred, too personal to be interrupted with even the hand-touch of another personality. It would divert the flow of ecstasy and be a sacrilege. This isolation, this strong individualism, is characteristic of the whole Greek race, and until one understands this personal independence, this immaculateness, this aloofness, one will never know them[69].

These observations provide valuable information on village dances of early twentieth century Greece as Markham/Kanellos may have witnessed them. But they also – in their use of the singular ("the Greek") and in the homogenisation it achieves; in the postulation of a Greek race; in the projection of essential characteristics; in the association of Greek peasant dance with a cosmic, spiritual act from which urban, Western-influenced and/or modern forms are distinguished – exotify both the dances and their performers. Given that the Kanelloses drew links between traditional dance and their rendition of "Greek" dance, these comments also colour possible perceptions of a theatrically framed dance of Greekness. In these ways, Tanagra Kanellos' texts act as reminders that her positionality encompassed both the subaltern status of a woman in a heteronormative situation and the privilege of a white Westerner in a country situated at the periphery of the West. It is as such that her presence and actions co-constituted Vassos' hellenised masculinity: her transition towards an embodiment of Greekness through her link with Vassos both confirms his dominant position within a heterosexual union and grounds his embodiment – and therefore capacity to provide access to – Greekness; but it also validates his Greekness in a transnational framework that placed it under

67. Quoted in Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, cit., p. 33.
68. Quoted in Vassos Kanellos, *I Arhea Elliniki Tragodia*, cit., p. 42.
69. Quoted in *ivi*, p. 43.

undue pressure. Insofar as Kanellos' hellenised masculinity is itself choreographically mediated and translated, Charlotte Markham/Tanagra Kanellos simultaneously complied to the performance of a dance of Greekness, contributed to its formation and legitimation, but also discursively participated in its perception as an Other of Western/European dance.

Closing thoughts: dancing with Zeus

Within Kanellos' pieces, one can identify processes through which dance comes to contribute to the gendering of bodies, allowing, in the present case, to embody a hegemonic masculinity; and mediates the intersection of that gendering with representations and markers of the nation. A composite performance not reducible to motion alone, Kanellos' practice choreographically, dramaturgically, but also in its staging and in its discursive traces contributes to the imbrication of masculinity and Greekness, confirming normative narratives of each. It is in the act of dancing, in the act of embodiment, in the act of exposure to the gaze of spectators, journalists or critics, that Kanellos took on the traits of a hellenised masculinity. These acts are performative not only in the sense that they constitute moves towards the gendering and nationalising of the dancer's body, but also in the sense that it is in their performance that hellenised masculinity is (re-)enacted, (re-)made present, (re-)brought to existence. In this process, dance itself is also virilised and hellenised: it is the act or even agent enabling, marking, and authenticating both national and gender belonging but also, imbued with culturally charged signifiers, it becomes gendered and nationalised, part of a hegemonic history and culture that its performance sustains. From this perspective, one can underline the importance of examining physical and performative practices in order to understand the imbrications of gender and the nation in Greek modernism – and beyond; as well as the need to further recognise the participation of certain modern dance practices, as emancipatory and aesthetically ground-breaking as they may have been, in reinforcing normative or even hegemonic narratives.

At the same time, the processual nature of gendering and nationalising dance – the selection of roles, the costuming of bodies with culturally charged markers, the partitioning of choreographic material, the choice of performance venues – also betrays the stage-ability, and therefore malleability, of gendered and national identity. Dance in the form of embodied spectacle as it was practiced by Kanellos therefore constitutes a terrain where the constructibility of both masculinity and Greekness may from a critical perspective be made manifest.

If dance is a territory in which gender and national identity can be re-performed, re-constructed and woven into each other, dance is also, itself, a multiply situated phenomenon. Vassos Kanellos' dance was inscribed both in the national context of Greece and in the trans-national context of Southern European cultural transfers to the United States; Charlotte Markham/Tanagra Kanellos'

dance was inscribed in the national context of Greece as well as the trans-national context of Western transfers towards a culturally non-dominant country. Kanellos' performance of hellenised masculinity was modulated differently but concurrently by each of these overlapping contexts, being simultaneously locally hegemonic and trans-nationally disadvantaged. The motivations and circumstances of – in this case Greek – modern dance's role in the nationalisation – in this case hellenisation – of gender therefore need to be sought in a trans-national context too, articulating the ways in which Western cultural dominance may have influenced the formulation of locally hegemonic narratives and performances.

Writing on Isadora Duncan's untimely death, Kanellos notes: «If Zeus were living he would have attracted her to him as he did Leda, Danae, Semeli and Europa and the world would have obtained one more demigod»[70]. In this quotation Kanellos underlines the relationship of Duncan with Greek antiquity, strengthening the perception of this link. But in doing so he places Duncan at a place comparable to that of a series of female mythological figures mistreated and even harmed by the superior male god: both Leda and Danae were tricked into mating with Zeus by his transformation into a swan and golden rain respectively; both Danae and Semeli were punished as a result of or even for mating with Zeus, carriers of the consequences of their affair; Europa was literally kidnapped by him. Duncan is here presented as potentially attracted by Zeus, the agency of the attraction remaining with him; the emancipatory discourse of her (female) *Dance(r) of the Future*[71] is replaced by a presentation of womanhood as unwittingly partnering a man whose identity is imbricated with nationalised mythology. At the same time, Kanellos' writing about Duncan points to the importance of her influence in his career as well as the extent to which she – a white, U.S.-American dancer – was amalgamated with his vision of "Greek" dance, exemplifying Western inputs in the construction of Greekness. The hellenisation and masculinisation of dance take here their full significance: Duncan is attracted towards Zeus – an abstracted, idealised figuration of virile Greekness – through her dance, which in its turn contributed to the imaginary of choreographed Greekness.

70. Vassos Kanellos, *The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated*, cit., p. 28.

71. Isadora Duncan speaks of a female dancer of the future in her text *The Dance of the Future* [1903], in Selma Jeanne Cohen (edited by), *Dance as a Theatre Art. Source Readings in Dance History from 1581 to the Present*, Dance horizons, Princeton 1992 [1974], pp. 123-129.