

COSMOSEMIÓTICAS DE LA RESISTENCIA Y DECOLONIALIDAD

Julieta Haidar
(Coordinadora)



COLECCIÓN
complejidad,
transdisciplinariedad,
decolonialidad,
semiosis y
análisis del discurso

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SECCIÓN III

ARTE Y CUERPO
EN LAS PRÁCTICAS DE RESISTENCIA

Defacing patriarchy at the framework of a greek feminist collectivity: the activism of *stORGI* [care/RAGE] By Oestrogones

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Oestrogones. Source: Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/oistrogones>

Which patriarchy and how to deface?

Shaped by cultural and religious patriarchalism, social paternalism, and political patronage, patterns of patriarchy in Greece motivate a generalized matrix of coloniality within post-Ottoman geographies. Regulating multiple material and symbolic inequalities, and even multiplying antagonistic hierarchies among family units, communities, central nation/state, periphery, and borders, patriarchy is performed in situ according to long-term male, religious and patriarchal dominations, colonial dispositions of governmentality, and sexist capitalist trends (see analytically in Tsibiridou, 2022).

However, instead of paying attention to all the modalities patriarchy has, and continues to produce, as the matrix of palimpsest dominations over female colonized bodies in situ, up until recently feminist radical critique in Greece viewed ‘patriarchy’ as male diachronic and capitalist domination (Kanaveli, 2016). Since 2008, during and after the Greek economic crisis, followed by the refugee crisis in 2015 and the COVID-19 pandemic, there are more and more feminist initiatives, critiques, and struggles that engage with other embodied decolonial practices from the Global South (Zefkili, 2021). Even if this stance does not directly open the topic of decolonial critique within the activist discourse of the feminist groups in question, we think that, after the successive crises, now is the moment to put the new feminist praxis under the lens of such decolonial analysis, based on black feminist and indigenous critique and practices in the postcolonial framework (Mohanty, 2003; Lugones, 2008, 2010; Castro, 2020).

From this perspective, patriarchy is perceived as “institutionalized sexism” (Hooks, 2000), that is not uniform and universal, but with multiple layers of oppression that affect feminine bodies differently (Butler, 1990). In this sense, it works hand in hand with colonial divisions of domination between majorities and minorities, that put certain human categories (i.e., women, minorities) into a subaltern position. Thus patriarchy acts as a matrix of coloniality of power par excellence, nesting palimpsest dominations through time over subaltern (young/minority) and/or feminized bodies (Tsibiridou, 2022). The latter, as motivated from an intersectionality prism today (Crenshaw, 1991), more than ever, seem to deface specific faces of patriarchy in situ, concerning not only women’s and researchers’ positionality, but other subaltern categories of vulnerability, related to their type of activism.

Decolonization, as a process that relates to knowledge produced not *about* but *through* the praxis of resistance (Santos, 2021; Lugones, 2010), is connected to the reevaluation of situated feminist knowledge and positionality

produced in the field of struggle (Haraway, 1988). In the case of the feminist resistances presented in this text, we are dealing with a double process of decolonization: first, the undoing of the Western European gender binarism at the core of the Greek-nation/state exclusion and security mechanisms that perpetuate inequalities and create “second class citizens” (or non-citizens, those usually considered as feminized bodies), to become exploited by capitalist, old, and neo-colonial patriarchal order; second, the shift from westernized unidimensional epistemic views on feminism and academic discursive protest on gender equality to more nuanced ones, situated in the Global South, relating feminist critique with art and embodied performative experiences (Davis, 1998; Paredes, 2008; Sergidou, 2020).

Last but not least, decolonization equally challenges experiences of domination in a palimpsest way (see Okello and Duran, 2021; Tsibiridou, 2022). This palimpsest simultaneously shapes their own way of resistance too, through practices of mix and match, here and there, then and now, choices, discourses, affects, reasoning, performing, dancing, singing, struggling, etc.

As we looked closely, we found a lot of analogies in the circumstances of multiple dominations and dispossessions, caused by aggressive capitalist neoliberal, colonial and patriarchal technologies; in other words, resistance has started to adopt a more intersectional and multimodal spirit (Tulke, Tsilimpounidi, Spathopoulou, Travlou and Carastathis, 2020). Firstly, the new feminist struggles in Greece seem to follow the paths that multiple colonized female bodies adopt in the Americas and Spain (Sergidou, 2020), paying attention to the significance of irrational embodied performances in producing solidarity within the group but also intersectionally in dialogue with other subaltern bodies. Secondly, more and more feminist praxes not only denounce patriarchy in a written or discursive way, but also deface it symbolically through performative resistance, eroding its different pragmatic palimpsest layers of domination.

In this paper we will focus on one such representative case of Oestrogones¹ in Greece, an ‘artist’ group acting and performing in Athens, the European city having more suffered from the impact of successive neoliberal and neo-colonial crises. However, even though we realize that a comparative approach

1 Even if the name ‘oestrogones’ seems obviously recognizable, semiotically combines the sign of the ancient Greek word for ovulation and violent passion, i.e. ‘oestros’ with that of ‘gonos’, meaning child, descendant, progeny. Thus metaphorically, the name carries strong connotations of power and disorder, based on the complex physiology, as well as the affective and reproductive capacities of the female body.

within the Balkan, Mediterranean and European South genealogies and geographies could be useful, it is not possible to provide it in this paper, as our research and hypothesis are still in progress.²

In this paper, the analysis will bring into light motivations, practices and performances that shape feminist subjectivities through the contradictory combination of 'care and rage' (as in *stORGI*). In our view, this sign becomes a response to the matrix of coloniality that shapes patriarchy in Greece through heteronormativity and paternalist moral ethics of patriarchal control and supervision, addressed to/expected by female and other feminized bodies: for instance, care and modesty, exclusion, supervision, and control, within the family and the community, while patronage sociality regards them as second-rank citizens in the public sphere; the ones assigned with 'care and rage' through the naturalization of their female gender, and condemned to behave irrationally according to the Western bourgeois morality of male reasoning and action, in the public political sphere.

The activism of Oestrogones that manifests *stORGI* should be discussed and analyzed within similar scapes of *mise-en-scène* action, combining art and activist feminism in the face of decolonial challenges (McGarry, Erhart, Eslén-Ziya, Jenzen, and Korkut, 2020). Defacing patriarchy in its care/rage complex matrix of coloniality, seems to be a sequel of performative embodied practices that bring cure and liberation for the female bodies in action.³

The feminist practices described here are articulated over the 'care and RAGE' complex sign, with the second concept capitalized. In other words, rather than introducing a feminist model from abroad, they start building on a palimpsest discursive binarism of rage/care, through embodied expression of justification, reclaims, and protests that reveals not only the matrix of their own patriarchal coloniality, built upon a palimpsest of dominations, but also their priority in the struggle. Based on individual and collective experiences of oppression, the participants are producing a situated feminist critical knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Mohanty, 2003).

2 On the subject see in the Symposium <https://decolonizehellas.org/en/program/> and the webinars organized by the collective *dēcolonize hellás*: <https://decolonizehellas.org/en/defacing-patriarchies-at-the-mediterranean-borders-the-decolonial-at-stake-for-mizrahi-and-basque-feminisms/>

3 For such a discussion bridging feminisms, art, theater and performances, but also connecting Greece to the Americas see on the project *Antigones* <https://antigones.gr/>

Field Research and Methodology

This research focuses on the activist collective Oestrogones [Οιστρογόνες], who participate in street protests with a strong performative element, that involves music, singing, and dancing. The goal is to reveal how they introduce embodied resistance to express themselves politically through counterpublics (Tsibiridou, 2014; 2017; 2018) and to participate in the networks of solidarity that have been emerging in Greece after the financial crisis. The study also aims to explore how they deface the local patriarchies in the frame of broader subaltern cosmopolitics (Tsibiridou, 2021) through their activism (Quintanilla, 2020). Our initial impulse to select their activity as a case study was certainly informed by our previous research experience in the realm of culture and local ethnographies, but also motivated by the appeal of their embodied performances, where resistance is combined with dionysiac ecstasis.

The use of aesthetic and performance as an integral part of Oestrogones' activism inscribes their efforts within a greater history of gender and queer activism, which also employ similar methods. The study shows how their activity is connected to the artistic-activist groups around Metaxourgeio in Athens, but also reflects the rise of feminist activism since 2020 globally: for example, the #NiUnaMenos (not one less) movement in Latin America, that started as a cry against gender violence and femicides, and became so powerful, that it played a significant part in securing women's reproductive rights in Argentina (Mason-Deese, 2020).

The fermentations that have led to this upsurge can be traced back to the Greek crisis, when, after the first few years of intense claim-based street mobilizations, resistance took a different character in practice, shifting into local solidarity initiatives, that tackled the urgent needs in regards to food, education, and housing caused by the crisis (Kouki and Chatzidakis, 2020). These solidarity groups operated with the active involvement of women, some of them with no previous political experience, who were mainly motivated by their urge to help their local communities.

The participation of women within local social movements imbued political activism with feminist values: On one hand, women were more attuned to the identification of intersectional oppressions based on race, class, sexuality and gender identity. On the other hand, they introduced feminist principles to their strategies, thus resulting in activism with a core of care (The Care Collective, 2020), affect, and embodied resistance. So, even though men are more active in political organizations and unions, women are more numerous in social solidarity networks, development and human rights organizations

(Papageorgiou and Petousi, 2018), such as food banks, solidarity kitchens and solidarity clinics and pharmacies (Kouki and Chatzidakis, 2020).

In late 2020, multiple stories of sexual assault in Greek sports and theatre surfaced on the media, signalling the onset of the so-called “Greek MeToo” movement (Tulke, Tsilimpounidi, Spathopoulou, Travlou and Carastathis, 2020). It emerged at a time when harsh confinement to the domestic space exacerbated incidences of gender violence and femicides. In parallel, there was a pushback to women’s rights by conservatives, like the Greek Church, and right wing political entities, who lobbied against abortion rights (Bampatzimopoulou, 2022) and even managed to affect legislative changes in regards to child custody after divorce (Dimitrakaki, 2020).

This was met with a surge in feminist initiatives and groups who operated in different cities across the country, such as Thessaloniki, Komotini, Trikala, Larisa, Kavala, Athens, Chania, Ioannina, Veria, Heraclion. According to the exploratory research for this article,⁴ that we will detail below, most of these groups, that have emerged during the past three years, function like small interconnecting nuclei of resistance, like local observatories for patriarchal oppression; on one hand they track down victims of gender violence in their vicinity who may need support and on the other hand they synchronize with other solidarity groups across the country to achieve a greater impact. Even though they have a strong presence in the public space through protests –for example outside courthouses where cases of rape or femicide are being tried– they are equally apt at addressing more practical needs in regards to housing or protection for women who may need their help.

These local groups are vocally intersectional, transfeminist and pro-LGBTQI+, anticapitalist and connected to the respective social movements in their cities. They organise a wide range of interventions, from protests to round table talks, parties and crowdfunding campaigns in support of people in need, pride parades, worker strikes and feminist festivals, but also produce theoretical texts on key feminist issues.⁵ All the above seems to have a strong connection with the activity of Oestrogones, as they may share some

4 This ethnographic field research was part of Christina Grammatikopoulou’s postdoctoral research under the supervision of prof. Fotini Tsibiridou, since 2020 at the University of Macedonia, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies.

5 See for example the round table discussion around homophobia in Greek provincial cities, organized by Fyliki Ataxia, a feminist group from Trikala: <https://ampa.lifo.gr/loatk/omofovia-stin-eparchia-simera-mia-koyventa-gia-osa-den-leme-stin-perifereia/>. Also: the presentation text in some of these groups’ pages, like the Anarcho-Fem group Tsoupres <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100082624080713>, Vlachodanes <https://>

of the strategies, goals, ideological spaces and even participants. However, the nuances in their mode of embodied performative action and broader organization of the events are also significant, as we will see.

Image 2. Feminist groups currently active in Greece (2023)



These groups are active both online and in their streets, in their respective communities. Map compiled by Christina Grammatikopoulou.

Image 3. Witches Fight Back. Banner “No one alone, not one less”



Source: Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/witchesfightback>

vlahodanes.espiovlogs.net/aytoparoysiastiko-keimeno-omadass_also_Witches_Fight_Back
<https://witchesfightback.noblogs.org>

Image 4. Anichti Feministiki Sinelefsi. Flyers “If you need help, you can come to me”



Source: Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/anoixtifeministikisyneleusi>

Image 5. Kamia Anochi
Protesters holding Zak Kostopoulos' photos over their faces. Protest in Athens, on the day of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 2018



Source: Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/KamiaAnochi>

Our methodology is rooted in feminist research practice, which prioritizes the embodied experiences of the actions studied, and is built on the premises of open communication and informed consent between the people that participate in the conversation. It brings into focus small, local stories that create the bigger picture of patriarchy and feminist struggle in Greece. As defined by Hesse-Biber, “feminist research positions gender as the categorical center of inquiry and the research process” (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Feminist research highlights women’s voices and lived experiences, taking into account their unique circumstances and identities, and supports social justice and political change, through theoretical perspectives that erode the system of gender inequality. To address any potential power imbalances between the researchers and the researched, the researchers practice ‘reflexivity’, recognizing that our own situatedness –social background, location, and assumptions– can influence the research, and accounting for personal biases and the effects they may have on the outcome (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Moreover, they face knowledge-building as a relational process that emerges from researchers and research participants through open and transparent communication.

More specifically, our research began with a theoretical approach connecting the regional matrix of patriarchies in Greece the Balkans, and Eastern Mediterranean Anatolia and the challenges for feminist struggles to deface palimpsest dominations, shaped upon male honor representations and female colonization practices (Tsibiridou, 2022).

The exploratory research for this article’s case study began with a qualitative approach into the Facebook pages of feminist groups and initiatives in Greece, to gain an understanding of their organization, interconnectedness, and interventions.⁶ After building an overview, we decided to focus on the performances of Oestrogones and their activity online, as it expressed the local stories of patriarchal oppression and feminist resistance. Finally, from January to February 2023 Christina Grammatikopoulou had a series of talks with members of the group. During the conversations the informants’ involvement and interventions in the group were brought into focus, as well as their experience of local idioms of patriarchy and the impact of feminist agency at the framework of performativity in the group, as well as their personal and collective motivations and stance. We provided them with access to some of our previous studies that were relevant to

6 Namely, these Facebook pages and groups that were considered for the initial stage of the research for the current article, analyzing their Facebook posts and street activity, were: Sabbat, Kilotina, Kamia Anochi, Fyliko Ataxia, Tsoupres, Tsouchtres, Sinelefsi 8 Marti, Vlachodanes, Anoichti Feministiki Sinelefsi, Witches Fight Back, Medouses, Feministiki Allileggii, Witches of the South, AKFO QUinA, Feministiki Sinelefsi and lastly, Oestrogones.

the topic, and a preliminary draft of the current paper, to ensure transparency about our research background and scope. After a first contact with members of the group through chat and mail, they received a set of open-ended questions, followed by a semi-structured conversation through voice calls with five of them. During the talks, we shared openly our ideas and double-checked our assumptions with them, to see how our positions reflected their perception about their role in the group and the place of the group among the social movements and the communities that they are active in. Each conversation provided insights into different aspects of the group, but also an idea about each member's own background and perception of their role as an individual and as a collective. At the end of this research, they received a copy of this text before publication, and were encouraged to provide feedback, in order to make sure that they didn't feel misrepresented by our analysis.

Concurrence in the Urban Space

Oestrogones do not describe themselves as a feminist group, but as “an activist collective of people, who participate in theoretical discourse, show their thighs and sing politically. They were created on a night. Since then, they move in solidarity, creating collectively lyrics and bodily movements. Their course is inscribed on the streets”⁷ (Oestrogones, 2020). Oestrogones bring to the streets protests with elements of theatrical performance, cabaret and Greek satire theatre. Their lyrics are usually based on pop songs but also Balkan tunes and more highbrow music.

There is a core group of fifteen members, but they are often joined by many more like-minded people on their street protests, after they publish their calls and lyrics online. Their backgrounds are diverse as well: some have previous political involvement with grassroots movements and feminist groups, some members have an artistic or academic background, while others have no previous involvement with art, politics, or feminism. These connections are significant because they delineate a network of political-feminist activism that is active in the centre of Athens. The notions of space, network, and embodiment will resurface during our analysis regarding their activity.

Oestrogones started in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, after a call for a meetup in the Demosion Sema in Kerameikos, the cemetery for prominent citi-

7 Oestrogones, 06.04.2021, [Status update] Facebook. Retrieved March 1, 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/oistrogones/posts/pfbid0L5WwG9i4ZwPyy1aWJUxj1SSqN-Ltm6SSKYeeE66YQEqTrFGQeiqYfW3YU2ompdQFGI>

zens of ancient Athens, where Pericles' Funeral Oration was made.⁸ At the time, in June 2020, the restrictive measures taken in Greece against the spreading of the pandemic were some of the harshest in Europe: access to the public space was almost completely banned, and people were confined within their homes, which caused rifts in the social fabric, and collective and individual trauma.

In this state of complete isolation, “the Other becomes a stranger, a carrier of disease, a despised body”, as Dina Kaferani observes (unpublished interview). Within this concurrence, creating *Oestrogones* was already an act of embodied resistance, a way to reappropriate the public space and to bring individual bodies close together, into the spotlight, through an “experimental game with words and rhythm”, as Eirini Dafermou described it (unpublished interview).

Through their members and the place of activity, *Oestrogones* are related to other grassroots movements and artistic groups that are active in the centre of Athens.

According to Erato Trika and Anka Arvanitidi (unpublished interview), the neighborhood of Metaxourgeio has been a great influence on the group, so understanding the culture of the place through the prism of spatial singularity and anthropogeography is relevant here. For many decades, the area around Metaxourgeio / Kerameikos was in a state of degradation, due to the old buildings, factories and workshops, driving middle-class residents away. This freed the space for immigrants and sex workers initially, and subsequently young people in shared apartments (rather than single-family homes), and artistic and theatrical communities, who looked for an affordable place in the centre of Athens (Giannakopoulos and Giannitsiotis, 2010). Therefore, the neighborhood has a vibe of culture and diversity, hosting a vibrant community of musicians, artists and performers, meaning that the resistance that takes place there is different in regards to temperament, communication, and organization, compared to the social movements in other parts of Athens (for example, Exarcheia o Kypseli). The spirit of the neighborhood is expressed in the Carnival of Metaxourgeio and affects their mode of action, as most *Oestrogens*, as they call themselves, are actively involved in it.

The Carnival of Metaxourgeio is an independent grassroots event that has been taking place since 2010. It revives the ‘dionysian’ essence of the carnival, as a spontaneous, open event of the local community that comes together to

8 For more information about Metaxourgeio, its ancient history and the current social and spatial geographies around the area, see Alexandri, Georgia. Spatial and social transformations in the centre of Athens: the case of Metaxourgeio. Doctoral Thesis. Charokopion University, Faculty of Geography. Athens 2013.

express themselves artistically –through their costumes, singing, and dancing– but also politically –through satire and slogans with carnivalistic and activist undertones–. It is a significant starting point for the group, as the urban carnival offers a space for embodiment and the transgression of individual identities to collective ones, providing a fertile ground for experimentations and ideological fermentations.

The carnival has, naturally, a strong connection to Greek rural folk cultures that date back many centuries. Within the urban centres, carnivals have followed western paradigms of processions and organized groups of masqueraders, popular in the 19th and 20th century. However, grassroots carnivals have a different story to tell: in urban neighbourhoods with a strong migrant presence, carnival parades are linked to histories of anticolonial resistance and politics (for example, the Notting Hill Carnival and Manchester’s Caribbean Carnival). For women, the carnival can become a space of feminist counter-hegemony (Sergidou, 2020), where, even briefly, everyday life and politics are being debated through performative actions. Having these carnivalistic genealogies in mind, one could view the Metaxourgeio carnival as a convergence of local folk traditions, with Western influences and cultural practices that reflect subaltern groups.

Image 6. Batala Atenas at the Metaxourgeio Carnival. Athens



Source: Meta Lands, Creative Commons, 2017

Due to their carnivalistic origin, Oestrogones share a certain degree of liberty of speech, excess, and connections with culture and subcultures. “There’s

a lot of ecstasis and improvisation and teasing so we may not take it easy on everyone”, says Erato Trika.

Oestrogones are often accompanied in their interventions by Agia Fanfara [Holy Fanfare], a music group of Balkan horns that also originated from the Metaxourgeio Carnival. On their Facebook page, Agia Fanfara describe their music as “traditional hymns, Balkan psalms, Gypsy prayers, exorcisms, demolitions”.⁹ They represent a very vibrant intersection of traditional Balkan music with contemporary pop themes. Thanks to their music, the Dionysiac element of Oestrogones is further accentuated, in performances that offer a feeling of elation to the participants.

Dina Kafterani, an instigator and active member of Oestrogones, has a strong background in street theatre. She is an actor and director in the theatrical group ‘Adesportes Skyles’ [Stray Bitches], an independent theatrical group that performs in the public space, or in self-managed theatrical spaces (for example, the theatre ‘Empros’), and festivals. For the past fifteen years, Adesportes Skyles have been staging their performances under the same title ‘The Waltz of the Dirty Streets’, but under different content, that combines singing, cabaret, satire and politics. Their politics are introduced as “a joy-inducing resolution of coexistence”, quoting poet and journalist Evgenios Aranitsis. Through their artistic work, Adesportes Skyles seek to inspire acts of resistance and solidarity. In this sense, they work towards the same goal as Oestrogones, lending the artistic tools for their political interventions, to build their performative aspect (Thanou and Menou, 2020).

Another significant element in the group is their connection to feminist groups and anarcho-autonomous spaces in the centre of Athens, which is visible in both the content of their interventions but also their form of organization. For example, Eirini Dafermou has been an active member of the transfeminist group Kamia Anochi [No Tolerance] since 2016. This group often employs performative and ritualistic means in their protests, like music, synchronized movements, mourning in public and artistic aesthetics.

9 Agia Fanfara, (n.d.), Intro [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved March 1, 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/agiafanfara>

Image 7. Oestrogones



Source: Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/oistrogones>

Networks of *stORGI*

A recurrent slogan in feminist protests and solidarity gatherings is that “we are full of *stORGI*”, which translates both as ‘affection’ [*storgi*] and rage [*ORGI*], depending on whether you read the full word or just the capitalized letters. During our talks with Eirini Dafermou, she remembered how the slogan came about, during a workshop with the group *Kamia Anochi*: “We were preparing the protest for the one year anniversary after Zak (Kostopoulos)’s murder and I was looking at all these creatures preparing their signs and spreading glitter around, and I was thinking of how much rage and love we have, and I realized that there is a word that contains both, and this is how I made the sign, ‘we are full of *stORGI*’” (unpublished interview).

The act of mourning in public is already an act of opposition to the rules of ‘established memorability’ (Athanasίου, 2017), of what should be remembered within the public space and how it should be remembered; as Athena Athanasίου notes, in *Agonistic Mourning*, “The embodied performative politics of improper mourning introduces social passion into the public space of the city and, by the same token, it politicises affectivity” (Athanasίου, 2017).

In this sense, *stORGI* could be considered as a type of politicised affectivity, as well as a driving force for the participants and their interventions: “Rage and joy were two things that made me feel connected to Oestrogones, these two elements, that we connect together and take them together to the streets”, as Rebecca Varnali shares (unpublished interview). She further explains how they channel these feelings into tangible actions and support: “This is how you build a network: Each one of us brings the information about what is going on, who needs support, how we could help. It is spontaneous. This is how we learn about what is going on and decide whether we could do something about it. What can we do with the means that we have and the way that we have? We could either write a song with lyrics, or throw a party to raise funds. Things that you do for people in your community”.

The lyrics of Oestrogones may express support towards a specific case, a local instance of patriarchal palimpsest oppression based on class, gender, locality, sexuality and heteronormativity discriminations, or their connection to other social movements. One of their most impactful actions, as documented online, is their song for Zak Kostopoulos, on the music of Kemal by Manos Chatzidakis, ending in a call for solidarity, “if one of us does not get back home, we will set the entire city on fire”, and a promise for revolution, “Goodnight Zak, we will change this world together”. In the end, Eleni Kostopoulou, the late activist’s mother, visibly moved by the performance, thanks them for their support.¹⁰ During my talk with Anka Arvanitidi (unpublished interview), she mentioned this feeling of relief that she has witnessed in the faces of the people who have suffered from violence, once they see that there are people to support them in their time of ordeal.

10 Menoume Energoi - igia sillogikotita, allilegii, 15.02.2022, Η Ανοιχτή Ορχήστρα και οι Οιστρογόνες τραγουδούν για τον Ζακ Κωστόπουλο [Facebook video] Retrieved 01.03.2023, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=359110612697607>

Image 8. Oestrogones singing outside the courthouse during the trial for the murder of Zak Kostopoulos, Athens, February 2022.



Source: YouTube <https://youtu.be/IgHxS3z408U>

Image 9. Oestrogones singing outside the courthouse during the trial for the murder of Zak Kostopoulos, Athens, February 2022.



Source: Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/oistrogones>

Solidarity is a key issue, especially in a patriarchal reality where victims of domestic violence are often failed by the state and justice. Erato Trika clarifies that they don't demand specific things from the patriarchy, or the system or the state, but they simply claim space in the streets. This idea of relying on a

solidarity network, rather than the authorities, is reflected in one of their most famous lyrics: “Like hell would I expect anything from a state of scumbags, I have girlfriends”. This song, a cover of a pop song by Keti Garbi, is addressed to victims of rape and expresses the feeling of sisterhood that connects the members of the group, which extends to those who may need it.

Oestrogones are attuned to the international feminist movement, which inspires their resistance, as we see in their song about the women in Iran covering the famous Misirlou, “the wind blows through my hair, look at me now, I burn it in the fire”. However, their place of resistance, as Dina Kafte-rani highlights, is “right here, against the local macho men”, against the local patriarchies and incidents of oppression (unpublished interview). Their lyrics reveal the systemic nature of inequality and fight against the system that creates it. They ridicule Greek corruption, nepotism, and political involvement in recent cases of sexual abuse of minors: “Familiocracy the power of the elite, top pedophiles, I become an outlaw”, and the waste of public funds for police special units instead of public health “cops in schools, hospitals with no intensive care units”. Some of their lyrics talk about local cases of pollution, where the protesters were met with violence “my lungs have turned into chimneys, AGET [concrete factory] gives me plastic treats, a roar perforates the city, I can’t breathe in Volos”¹¹ and satirize the government’s obsession with fossil fuel extraction “bring me bulldozers, tear down the hillside [...] destroy the Earth”.¹²

Even though Oestrogones share the same space in the streets with other social movements, their poetic approach sets them apart, as we shall see here.

11 The song is in solidarity to the initiative against the burning of waste by the company AGET Lafarge, which is a source of contamination for the air and ground near the city of Volos. Also see: Volos No Burn <https://www.facebook.com/VolosNoBurn/>

12 Oestrogones, 2022, Publicly accessible document on Google Drive, Retrieved 01.03.2023 https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RC4OiEy7TR2P2C1dpZOZiipPhI4_FqP-1jKqYGANAOSM/edit

Image 10. Oestrogones singing with Agia Fanfara. Communitism, Athens, 2020



Source: Youtube <https://youtu.be/uyNqUZH8oiA>

Embodied and poetic protests: claiming a space for eutopias

Oestrogones want to “add some poetry to the standard form of protest”, as Anka Arvanitidi shared in our communication. There is a reason why feminist, transfeminist and LGBTQIA+ people opt for this mode of expression in their resistance. According to Audreya Lorde, “for women poetry is not a luxury. [...] Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. [...] Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary awareness and demand the implementation of that freedom” (Lorde, 1977). The poetic element helps women and feminized bodies bring their experience as subaltern bodies into words, which will then shape their ideas and their revolutionary activity (Spivak, 1988).

For Oestrogones, feast is a form of resistance, on the condition that it takes place in an open public space. Their form of protest sets them apart from the standard aesthetic of black and red, with people walking like in a military march and chanting their words in the same monotonous rhythm, which is considered as a more ‘solemn’ one by left-wing protesters. As Rebecca Varnali shared, “we stand out from the rest, because even women’s rights groups have a certain seriousness in the streets, either with a certain drama, or with a certain rage, or with a seriousness, or a sense of detachment. I feel that the anarcho-left and the anarcho-queer groups try to do away with this seriousness. There are people who are fed up with going to the streets and listening

to the same parties chant with the same monotonous mechanical rhythm” (unpublished interview).

The body comes first with Oestrogones. The process of songwriting starts with the topic, usually inspired by a certain cause or person they want to support. After they find the topic, they ask themselves, what would be the optimal rhythm for this topic, and they look for a suitable song to cover. This process is significant because first they dance to the music, and then they find the words to it, in order to get a better feel of what they want to say. They may even make a party of the songwriting process, by drinking and dancing together –a process that is also tied to their carnivalistic origins–. By selecting the rhythm first, their intervention becomes a priori embodied. “First comes the rhythm, the body, the feeling, and then the words are sewn onto that”, as Eirini Dafermou noted (unpublished interview).

So, first their bodies synchronize to the rhythm, and then they synchronize together, as a collective. Rebecca Varnali remembers her first participation in the group: it was an open interaction in the public space, where Dina Kafterani asked them to make a circle and sing in rhythm, in order to observe each other and find how they can coexist rhythmically and become one as a collective. At first, they would sing some very simple lyrics in repeat, that were born at that moment (unpublished interview). Kafterani’s experience with theatrical improvisation and synchronization of a group helps them borrow tools from the theatrical stage, even though they are not artisans.

Eirini Dafermou analyzed during our conversation why embodiment is so prominent for women and feminized bodies. Women within patriarchy were not allowed to speak; they were only given the right to their body only to reproduce and to serve others, a tool of social reproduction and free labour. Since their day of birth, women learn to be attuned to their bodies; therefore, in order to resist their destiny, they need to put their body forward. This is why for female and feminized bodies, resistance is a priori embodied, because their bodies are both the site of oppression and the starting point for resistance as well (unpublished interview).

Image 11. Oestrogones at Syntagma Square. International Women's Day, March 8, 2021



Source: YouTube <https://youtu.be/RArBMSAG3Ek>

In contrast, dancing or mourning in public space is not part of the male gender performance in Greece. Men can only sing or dance in the street to express despair –if, for example, they suffer a heartbreak– or to celebrate their football team. Dance is not a given for them in contrast to migrants, for example, whose culture allows dancing and mourning in public. This is why Greek men protest as if they were in a military march, stomping and creating human chains with their interlocked positions. Their bodies are hidden and protected with their extended fists or their signs. As the local moral codes of patriarchy command, the male way of doing things is the ‘default’ or ‘right’ way to do them. To paraphrase Katerina Sergidou, this would meet the patriarchal standards of a ‘reasonable protest’, where passion is restrained to a permissible low key, leaving no room for the display of emotions (Sergidou, 2021). On the contrary, the female way of protesting might be perceived as ‘less serious’ –or even, irrational–.

Undeterred by these stereotypes, the local feminist, transfeminist, and queer movements take the tools that were conceded to them by the national capitalist patriarchal order, appropriate them, and turn them into tools of embodied resistance. In contrast to the ‘closed’ male bodies, female bodies open up in public space through movement –a literal social ‘movement’ as Gabrielle Klein observes in her analysis regarding social movements as social choreographies– (Klein, 2013). These subaltern bodies already challenge the local hegemonic patriarchal assumptions by placing themselves in a place that is not welcoming to them and in a position that disrupts the everyday. As Heather Harrington notes in her research about dance and protest, “Through

dance, women can redefine the power dynamics in the public space by inserting themselves in a way that makes their presence and intentions known” (Harrington, 2016).

Oestrogones put their bodies forward, the way they want their bodies to appear, as “offensive bodies that dance to the slogan, that sweat to the slogan. Not just talking heads, but talking cunts, wombs, or femininities without wombs. It’s our entire body talking”, as Dina Kafterani reflects, adding that “Oestrogones cause commotion on the streets, they create a happening. When they appear on the streets, something happens, you know that there will be a boost of energy” (unpublished interview). Indeed, despite the scepticism by other activists, who may feel that this way of protest might be less serious or political, their presence is met with enthusiasm by the people who are there and join them on the spot, an experience of small eutopias.¹³

Contrary to the unattainable status of utopia, these eutopias are achieved in a “fragmented, smaller, present-oriented way” (Tsibiridou, 2014), with a feeling of euphoria for multiple, non-homogenized subjects, focused in the moment, and not the expectations of future fulfillment.

Image 12. Oestrogones singing with Anoichti Orchistra (Open Orchestra).
International Women’s Day, March 8, 2022.



Source: YouTube <https://youtu.be/vzcI95bAwiv>

13 For similar feminist and art activism eutopias in Istanbul see analytically in Tsibiridou 2014, 2017 and 2018

Defacing local patriarchal norms and bourgeois moral ethics

While exploring the eutopias that emerge during Oestrogones' performance, it is evident that their activism defaces local patriarchal norms and moral ethics: first, by exhibiting, rather than hiding, their vulnerability; second, by claiming the space of resistance, both literally, in the public realm, and figuratively, through their connection to each other; third, by living their dream in present tense, collectively.

As these bodies move in the public space, disrupting the ethics of the local patriarchal rules and norms, they become vulnerable to opposition, violence, or any physical danger. However, it was their vulnerability that led them to the streets in the first place, their own vulnerability and other people's vulnerability (Butler, 2016): precarious working conditions, police violence, environmental pollution, gender oppression, political corruption, those are some of the conditions that Oestrogones mention in their songs. Through resistance, they gain visibility in the public space and become empowered politically; on the other hand, their presence in the streets makes them vulnerable once more to further oppression by the police and the systemic forces that oppose them.

This is what Judith Butler calls "vulnerability in resistance": protesting bodies that are being acted upon and acting, people aware of the narratives that are being projected upon them, but still trying to dismantle them (Butler, 2016) through resistance in the public space. Oestrogones aren't oblivious to the gendered dimension of their singing, dancing, and appearance, but rather than rejecting it, they play with it, they sing and dance, they wear skirts and glitter makeup. They have no qualms about replicating the gender performance of 'femininity' while also going against it through a manifestation of power in their own way, "without being violent and without displaying a macho behaviour or showing fear", as noted by Erato Trika (unpublished interview).

This idea of political power as a manifestation in the public space, is reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's approach to power, as the outcome of political action (Arendt, 1958), that produces the 'space of appearance' dynamically, for the entire duration of the action, fading out afterwards (Grammatikopoulou, 2022). For Erato Trika, this is the rhythm of resistance that they are building for as long as their protest takes place, where anyone can join in and experience it in the moment.

A space of appearance propagates horizontal relationships of equality, in contrast to a space of surveillance that reproduces vertical relationships of

inequality (Marquez, 2012). In the case of Oestrogones, the space of appearance is present even before they show up on the streets, in the horizontal organization of the group in regards to the songwriting and decision-making process. Any hierarchies that may exist among the members, may occur due to the frequency of participation of each member, but are constantly being addressed to maintain the open and non-hierarchical character of the group. This is not simply a question of ‘practicing what one preaches’, but more a challenge to create the space of change that they envision.

Erato Trika describes the process of defacing the patriarchal norms and ethics as a quest for space and time for women, first among each other and then from their surrounding environment. “This is how we break the patriarchy. By creating new spaces between us”, she says (unpublished interview). She believes that you have to take your own space, either as an individual or as a group, with the help of your sisters. Rather than making political claims from the state, they claim space on the streets. And space is vital for political power, as we discussed above. As Judith Butler observes, mobilizations are often taking place in order to “create, keep, or open the platform for political expression itself”, that is, public space. Within economies of accelerating inequality, as in Greece, this infrastructure of the public space is being dismantled and resistance often takes place to keep the streets open to people’s counterpublics (Tsibiridou 2017; 2018); as Judith Butler sums it, “The material conditions for speech and assembly are part of what we are speaking and assembling about” (Butler, 2016).

Regarding how they fight the patriarchy individually and collectively, Erato Trika explained the process of *claiming the space and time* for fermentation and coexistence, and proximity to each other and themselves, and being proactive rather than reactive to the decisions made for women by other people. This reflects Athena Athanasiou’s observation that women who claim visibility in the public sphere on their own terms perform a radical act, because these “contentious practices of embodied appearance destabilise the regulatory regime of en-gendering space” (Athanasiou, 2017) –meaning that, rather than passively accepting the space conceded to them, these feminine and feminized bodies create their own. To create space is to find your breath, and sense of time, and sense of foot on the ground, instead of putting the shoes that you have been handed. Oestrogones, according to Trika, fight the patriarchal system by containing one another, and leaving their own patriarchies behind. By expressing themselves in a common rhythm and a common vibration they create a new space where they can exist and be creative (unpublished interview).

For Dina Kafterani what they create is not just a space, but their dream, their eutopia. She recognizes that we are living in dark times, when ideologies have fallen and the hope to produce change through street resistance is dim, so she believes that the only chance we have to live our eutopia is during the moment of resistance. If power for Hannah Arendt was generated for as long as the political action took place, for Dina Kafterani it's eutopia that comes into existence during resistance: "You live the dream, or parts of your dreams now. Now. You now live the life that you wanted, that you dreamed of after the revolution. You live it now, because you are with your brothers and sisters, going in the same direction, and this gives you the ultimate pleasure. There is a sense of fullness. We all look towards the same direction and synchronize to the same rhythm. This is majestic. And this is resistance. The fact that I live it now, I don't need to wait" (unpublished interview). Rather than reproducing or reflecting reality, the performance of Oestrogones produces reality, it brings to life a eutopian place of unity and collectivism.

On a personal level, their experience with the group brings them joy, a feeling of belonging, a sense of sisterhood and friendship that binds them together. And already, this is an act of resistance, to have your girlfriends and not expect anything from the "state of scumbags". Ultimately, Oestrogones deface the patriarchy through creating their own spaces and their own networks of care, of affection and rage, of *stORGI*, a complex of feelings experiencing not paradoxically but ironically the ambiguity of their gendered experiences.

Epilogue

The carnivalesque and dionysiac element of Oestrogones, as the signifier of their name shows, reminds us of the importance of affects, irrationality, and enchantment in the production of politics in the public space. Politics that today, more than ever before under the shadow of European colonial, rational, and pedagogical modernity, should remain hidden. On the antipode of this, politics in the Global South seem more and more bound to acquire a female modality in the way they bring passions and affects into action—elements that were expelled from the modern colonial paradigm of governance and resistance—(Tsibiridou & Bartsidis 2016).

Oestrogones show us a different way of being political in the public space: an embodied way of doing politics with passion, a less monotonous and monochromatic one, where music, dancing and mourning become tools of resistance. Because their activism is not only a reaction against gender oppression and capitalist dispossession, but also an action towards creating their own

eutopia of solidarity and care; an alternative path for decolonization from the local old and new patriarchal palimpsest dominations, as well as from dominant modern feminist struggling, seems to be open.

Ritual and performances of *stORGI* are not only cultural components produced by subaltern female and feminized bodies at the side, but a political call for action conversing in a way with other maternal publics (Baraitser 2012), investing in embodied passions and practices of care in times of capitalist crises (Fraser, 2016). This modality that, through carnivalesque significant festivities (Bakhtin, 1984), produces horizontally care and solidarity eutopias, is challenging masculine domination, heteronormativity and authoritarian biopolitics of paternalistic hierarchical rules, as well as the bourgeois hypocritical and neoliberal sexist ethics.

These eutopias could be no more than a fleeting moment in the noisy streets of Athens. However, for the bodies that synchronize to the oestrogenic rhythm, this is their moment to resist oppression in a state of dionysiac ecstasis, to build spaces of care out of their own vulnerabilities, and, ultimately, to transform their surroundings through their unfettered *stORGI*.

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COSMOSEMIÓTICAS DE LA RESISTENCIA Y DECOLONIALIDAD

En este volumen convergen varios análisis desde posturas de la complejidad, la transdisciplinariedad y la decolonialidad sobre las problemáticas contemporáneas, que lejos de distanciarnos nos acercan de forma novedosa y enriquecedora a la experiencia de sujetos que de distintas maneras han sido sometidos históricamente por estructuras políticas, económicas, sociales y culturales. Las transformaciones a partir de las cuales emergen sus prácticas semiótico-discursivas son resultado de constantes inter-retro-acciones del bucle recursivo coyuntura-acontecimiento de la historia.

Los autores abordan los fenómenos socioculturales con una diversidad de aparatos teórico-metodológicos para explicar procesos que abarcan desde diversas epistemologías nuevas realidades, como las resistencias estudiantiles ante la imposición de plataformas digitales mediante discursos críticos, la insurgencia de los pueblos ancestrales en la Web desde narrativas transmediales, los alcances de la regulación estatal frente a las libertades digitales de colectivos e individuos y la demolición de estatuas colonialistas en América Latina como acto reivindicativo de los pueblos ancestrales.

Otros análisis versan sobre las resistencias de los pueblos como es la reconstrucción de lo ancestral en la lucha por una vida digna desde la marginalidad que supone la migración campo-ciudad, las disputas por el sentido ocasionado por festividades insurgentes, la resiliencia históricamente construida desde la memoria de la cultura entre la comunidad chicana, la generación de una semiosis multivalente en el uso ritual, terapéutico y médico de la ayahuasca, las narrativas de resistencia frente a proyectos extractivistas en territorios históricamente insumisos o las prácticas de curación entre nahuas de la huasteca hidalguense.

También aparecen prácticas artístico-políticas como la música tecno en las estrategias de resistencia política cuando se trata de prefigurar el futuro desde el imaginario de colectivos, las resistencias urbanas de una expresión de largo aliento como es el graffiti que se ha diseminado por todo el orbe, las resistencias semióticas hechas cuerpo en la cultura marroquí, y el activismo feminista griego en su faceta de amor y rabia como desfiguración del patriarcado. Toda la arquitectura construida en este libro nos permite atender esta invaluable producción como una obra de sensibilidad e inteligencia colectiva e individual.