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Siân Adiseshiah • Louise LePage
Editors

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Twenty-First Century Drama

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What Happens Now

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For Lucien and Xanthe

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Translating Austerity: Theatrical Responses to the Financial Crisis

[AU1]

Mark O'Thomas

A NEW DRAMA UNFOLDS

On 9 October 2014, a Greek tragedy of national proportions was enacted as Loukanikos, the stray dog who came to fame in the anti-austerity protests, rolled over and died.¹ If, for a moment, it might have seemed that the campaign against the externally imposed cuts had stalled, within four months it rose to new giddy heights as the Greek people brought rank outsider Syriza to power in an election result that rocked the European establishment causing Germany to entertain the possibility of a future European Union without Greece. Meanwhile, in the rest of Europe the protests against austerity measures have certainly not stopped as the financial crisis rolls on into what is now its eighth year. Public-sector workers in Portugal went on strike in November 2014 in protest against the government's decision to extend cuts even further, while days after Syriza's January 2015 election victory, Madrid was brought to a standstill in a popular struggle against a set of measures that has seen one in four of the young workforce unemployed. While the UK may be seemingly on the cusp of a tentative, post-election recovery, much of the rest of Europe continues to ride an economic maelstrom which has seen no tangible improvement in people's

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lives since the 2007 financial crisis. This is the story of early twenty-first-century Europe – an epic drama whose narrative continues to affect all of our lives and whose consequences will impact on generations to come.

In this chapter, I look at the development of theatre's engagement with twenty-first-century European austerity as a way of understanding how new plays produced in the UK relate to the social and economic conditions apparent elsewhere in Europe. In doing so, I am particularly interested in how recent examples of that engagement use translation to eclipse borders and challenge theatrical forms, offering us new ways of understanding both theatre and translation itself. Translation is a process that inherently engages in transformations of some kind. As translation scholar Laurence Raw has noted, both (literary) translation and adaptation involve complex processes of transformation that engage with social and political issues as they mediate them towards a new aesthetic end (2012, p. 6). The mediation of austerity lies at the centre of this chapter as I investigate its various theatrical renderings. At a moment of history when macro economics and local fiscal policy have become powerful ideological tools with profound social consequences, cultural production affords the possibility for generating new communities of artists and audiences who can reinvent modes of theatrical discourse through and beyond linguistic exchange.

As recent events such as the Scottish referendum have shown, Britain remains far from being a kingdom united around common cultural values and ideals. However, it nevertheless shares playwriting as its national dominant theatrical form which continues to shine as an important cultural marker of international reputational significance for the country as a whole. To talk of twenty-first-century UK drama in any meaningful way appears almost inevitably to demand a discussion of twenty-first-century British plays written by playwrights who seek to maintain the voice of an alternative. Within this perennial paradox for art forms that always err towards the oppositional – the anti- and the counter – it is playwrights, who are so often middle class, who write about the social consequences of austerity in ways that suggest a growing chasm between the articulators of the issue and those living at the sharp end of its consequences in ways that mirror theatre's ongoing meditation and deconstruction of what it means to be middle class.² If Margaret Thatcher's infamous rejection of the term 'society'³ has any resonance for today, it might be found in the disjuncture between communities of artists and communities of what in popular political parlance has become formulated as the ubiquitous touchstone for meaningful discourse: 'working people'. The word 'community' in this regard is neces-

sarily complex, evoking a sense of shared interest, shared values and mutual support. Within the apparent fractured state of these two groupings that so clearly should share a common interest (an end to austerity) through the mutual support offered (by the sharing of ideas and empathetic understanding), translation offers up a mode in which a coming together of these communities might be initiated and facilitated. This ‘coming community’, to borrow Giorgio Agamben’s bold reappraisal of the notion of ‘community’ itself (1993), is one in which translation for the stage becomes an engine that drives a process of transformation that extends far beyond the boundaries of theatrical discourse. Within this regard, Vicky Featherstone’s opening season as new Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre in 2014, and in particular her season of European austerity plays, PIIGS, becomes a pivotal moment in a reappraisal of how translation can work in theatre and how theatre can work in translation. In translating austerity, Featherstone’s opening gambit has conferred upon the cultural landscape of twenty-first-century drama a theatrical, linguistic and virtual space that can be accessed by communities of artists and audiences in new and exciting ways.

FINANCE IN CRISIS

It is ironic that the roots of the crisis in Europe were located in an integrationist project, which sought to bring currencies together and collapse national borders in ways that would ensure that the spectre of a continent self-flagellating through two World Wars would never materialize again. With the ascension to the EU of Greece, Italy and Spain in the 1980s, and their entry into the Eurozone’s single currency in the 1990s, along with 15 other member states, the Euro came into circulation on the 1 January 2002, symbolizing the fruition of European harmonization to a degree that had been hitherto unimaginable.⁴ While monetary union appeared to be a good thing for some countries, in others it fuelled a housing bubble where a rapacious demand for finance in Greece, Ireland and Spain was met with the free availability of credit (Scharpf 2013, p. 120). The economic climate became one in which to say ‘yes’ equated to an irrational cultural mantra that privileged the idea that growth was both unstoppable and risk free, a powerful, self-propagating characteristic that was later investigated by British dramatist David Hare in his appositely entitled play *The Power of Yes* (2009).

The new two-tier, north–south Europe that emerged saw a cluster of countries that found it impossible to counteract a domestic boom that had transmogrified into sovereign debt. Collectively known as GIPS (Greece,

Ireland, Portugal and Spain) but more recently as PIIGS,⁵ as Italy came to join their ranks, these countries have been forced to endure the worst of EU-imposed austerity measures as their mutual economic demise has become distanced from the much wider global financial crisis. Instead a narrative has emerged to explain the plight of the PIIGS nations as one that was 'shaped by the perception that the euro crisis was caused by irresponsible [...] governments recklessly raising public-sector debt [...] rather than by current-account deficits and the underlying structural deficiencies of the Monetary Union' (Scharpf 2013, p. 129). Pigs are notoriously greedy animals whose hunger is almost impossible to satiate: never satisfied with their lot and always wanting more. Irrational and dirty, the reductiveness of the acronym PIIGS provides a convenient shorthand for dismissing and cordoning off the plight of some countries from others, of characterizing public spending as flabby excess and fiscal starvation as sensible, healthy dieting.

The political discourse around the financial crisis remains disturbing in its promulgation of this myth that explains austerity as the logical medicine to a life lived to excess. In contrast, world-leading economists such as Joseph Stiglitz have noted that while the foundations of the crisis resided in North America, Europe has suffered some of its worst consequences (Stiglitz 2010, p. 21, 2012). Similarly, Nouriel Roubini and Stephen Mihm have drawn attention to the ideologically driven, rather than economically prudent, policy of austerity (Roubini and Mihm 2010, p. 133), where policies rooted in ideology surface as economic restrictions. Early in 2014, the UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, delivered a speech at the Midlands head office of car parts manufacturer Sertec, where he stated that:

There is still a long way to go – and there are big, underlying problems we have to fix in our economy. More repairs. More cuts. More difficult decisions. That's the choice in 2014: to go on working through a plan that is delivering for Britain, putting us back in control of our destiny with the security and peace of mind that brings; or squander what we've achieved and go back to economic ruin. (Osborne 2014)

The spectre of economic ruin without austerity looms large, and the only alternative is 'more repairs' and 'more cuts'. As Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman has remarked, it is with some irony, then, that by way of contrast the Keynesian approach of spending rather than cutting back during a recession has successfully fuelled a recovery in the United

	States whereas the PIIGS countries, which had extreme austerity measures	136
	foisted upon them, remain in deep recession, suffering from high unem-	137
	ployment, low business investment and a significant underinvestment in	138
[AU2]	the future of public education (2012, p. 16).	139

ARTISTS AND AUSTERITY 140

At a national level, the bailing out of the southern European countries 141
and the contingent austerity measures imposed on those countries by the 142
so-called troika (the International Monetary Fund, the European Central 143
Bank and the European Commission) has resulted in territorial and psy- 144
chological lockdown. Border controls are back on national agendas as 145
nationalism has become the domestic response to a series of measures 146
that has sought to apportion blame to sovereign governments for their 147
poor financial housekeeping.⁶ The open borders so fundamental to the 148
origins of the European ideal have become a *cause célèbre* of the New 149
Right, which has seen national variants in every EU country ranging from 150
the egregious rise of the Little Englanders of UKIP to the dangerously 151
malevolent Golden Dawn in Greece. Within this new social and political 152
climate, artists have a critical role to offer alternative views of the world 153
from which new transnational notions of ‘community’ might be estab- 154
lished that can eclipse the financial and regulatory basis of the European 155
Community. However, to some extent the preoccupations of artists early 156
on in the crisis resided in finding ways in which they could actually con- 157
tinue to make art. 158

Austerity for European artists has generally meant cuts to arts funding. 159
Many artists and creative producers maintain their livelihoods through 160
either state funding or the public’s ability to literally ‘buy in’ to an art 161
form through the purchase of an entrance ticket. At the end of 2013, 162
the Culture Ministry in Spain concluded a report on arts funding with 163
the statement that the average arts organization had had to enforce bud- 164
get cuts on activities by almost 50 per cent.⁷ This was in a climate of 165
increases in VAT which saw a theatre in Catalonia sell carrots rather than 166
tickets for their show.⁸ In Portugal, in contrast to what later became an 167
accepted view of the profligacy of the austerity countries, the government 168
had resorted to selling off major art assets (such as the work of the Spanish 169
painter Joan Miró) as early as 2008 in order to pay off some of its debts 170
while the crisis had barely started.⁹ Closer to home, where cuts to arts 171
funding came later than in other parts of Europe, it was not until 2013 172

that a group of UK-based artists came together under the banner of The Artists' Assembly Against Austerity¹⁰ (as part of the broader organization The People's Assembly Against Austerity) in order to mobilize a campaign against reductions in funding.

While artists have operated nationally to oppose austerity measures and the inevitable impact these measures have had on their lives and livelihoods, artistic responses that have crossed borders have been less in evidence. Certainly in the UK, the seismic shifts in the social, economic and political landscape of the European map in the twenty-first century might have generated an expectation that drama, and in particular new writing for the stage, could provide a space for making sense of these turns. Indeed, the British tradition of playwriting is one firmly wedded to this kind of polemical enterprise that on the one hand engages in Reithian values of providing education, information and entertainment and on the other seeks to raise awareness of contemporary experience in a cosmopolitan mission of radical consciousness raising. It is not entirely surprising, therefore, that early theatrical British responses to the financial crisis focused on attempts to explain and narrativize both the 'why' and the 'how' of its genesis.

THEATRICAL RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

David Hare's *The Power of Yes* opened at the Royal National Theatre in 2009 and describes the playwright's journey, embodied by actor Anthony Calf as The Author, on a quest to understand how the financial crisis evolved into a worldwide phenomenon of catastrophic proportions. Drawing on interviews the playwright conducted with a range of academic experts and economists, the play responds to the 'why' of the crisis as one that is inevitably and causally linked to an intrinsic hubristic vanity of the financial markets. Lucy Prebble's *Enron*, which opened in the same year as *The Power of Yes*, takes a case-study approach to its exploration of the crisis (although it was originally conceived prior to the crisis), detailing the rise and fall of the eponymous Texas energy company through a multi-mediatized, singing and dancing extravaganza which charts the 'how' of the crisis in ways that thrill and engage in equal terms. The play sees Enron chair Jeffrey Skilling embark on the idea of not only selling energy but also trading on it, which itself becomes a precursor to even wilder ideas that gain ground as they accrue debt. As these debts become obscured into shadow companies, something ultimately has to give as the mighty Enron

(like the Lehman brothers who are presented as one bodily element, artfully restricted into a single tailored-fit suit) ultimately comes to fall.

As relatively early theatrical manifestations of what ultimately became the financial crisis of 2007, both *Enron* and *The Power of Yes* attest to theatre's artistic engagement with contemporary politics and its desire to facilitate a more sophisticated debate within the public realm around the complex workings of macro-economic policy and the market practices of the corporate world. Theatre becomes a form through which communities of artists can speak out nationally against perceived injustices and, through translation, can extend its reach internationally. Hare's play, for example, has been translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese and Greek and has received numerous productions on the European mainland as a consequence. However, both pieces might be viewed as the products of corporate entities themselves, forming parts of the commissioning programmes of the UK's (Royal) National Theatre and the nation's centre for new writing for the stage: the Royal Court Theatre.¹¹ In this sense, the productions could be viewed as inherently and ironically conservative: they operate in large-scale theatre spaces for an audience demographic that is liberal and already in sympathy with the critiques that are presented to them. Moreover, *Enron*, in its mainstream financial model that entailed West End and Broadway transfers, clearly reflects the economics of a commoditized mass entertainment market.¹² As the crisis unfolded across the world and as Europe attempted to deal with its consequences through the imposition of a range of severe austerity measures, Prebble and Hare's work nevertheless became the first two important markers on an unfolding timeline of twenty-first-century, geopolitically engaged theatre.

THEATRE UNCUT

With the financial crisis resulting in two successful plays in quick succession, the damage wrought by the ensuing austerity that emerged across Europe was equally swift in providing fertile ground for individual and collective dramatic imaginations. In the UK, Chancellor George Osborne's budget speech of June 2010 heralded in a new age of austerity Britain, raising VAT, freezing public sector pay for two years and cracking down on welfare benefits in a narrative that focused on winning back the confidence of the markets. For Osborne, the problem was articulated as one centred around the past misdemeanours of a Labour government that had spent too much rather than taxed too much.¹³ Theatre Uncut, a theatre

company devoted to producing new writing for the stage that responds to the political climate of its day, emerged as a direct response to Osborne's austerity budget at this time. While on the one hand the company's first season was starkly conventional in its assemblage of established British playwrights such as Mark Ravenhill, Lucy Kirkwood and David Greig, it did seek to develop new paradigms for how contemporary playwriting might get produced. Influenced perhaps by Caryl Churchill's open-access policy for her *Seven Jewish Children* (2009) polemic in which the text was made publicly available for any group to perform, Theatre Uncut adopted the same approach by asking eight playwrights to write response pieces to austerity with the facility for any theatre group to download and perform the texts when and how they chose within specified limited time periods. The word 'uncut' signals both the fact that the works can be presented as unedited in the sense that their length is already pithy and concise, and also suggests a disassembling of the austerity cuts themselves.¹⁴

In addition to its seasons of themed plays, Theatre Uncut has also convened annual 'mass action events' where selected plays have been performed simultaneously around the world. Here responses to the crisis that could both speak to, and about, the social and economic consequences of globalization were exported, making the impact of market machinations, so expertly dissected by Hare and Prebble, resonate at a local level. However, in 2012, its achievements extended beyond an attempt at breaking the mould of how theatre gets created and produced, as its reach of writers extended beyond the UK and included contributions from Mohammad Al Attar (Syria), Marco Canale (Spain), Blanca Doménech (Spain), Lena Kitsopoulou (Greece), Neil LaBute (USA), Andri Snær Magnason and Thorleifur Örn Arnarsson (Iceland), and Helena Tornero (Spain). Kitsopoulou's surreal and disturbing play, *The Price*, was particularly well received with its story of an Athens couple shopping in a supermarket that alongside its shelves of groceries sells babies, priced according to weight, ethnicity and health. The couple eventually settle for a dead baby which is only two Euros but when they discover it is too damaged to go through the barcode reader, they demand to be allowed to buy it nevertheless. The savagery of what appears at first to be a mundane activity of supermarket shopping is brought into clear view in ways that feel deeper and more human than the earlier, macro-etchings of Prebble and Hare. In translating not just Greek but also the affective experience of the cuts, Kitsopoulou and translator Alikì Chapple frame both the absurdity and the abhorrence of austerity in a country that has seen the virtual collapse

of its healthcare system alongside the growth of ‘social supermarkets’ as an
antidote to the unaffordable offerings of the usual grocery outlets.

Theatre Uncut’s 2013 season comprised works by Neil LaBute, Mark
Thomas, Davey Anderson, Clare Brennan, Tanika Gupta, Kieran Hurley
and Tim Price, all offering responses to a new question – does austerity
make us all more right wing? The plays here offer no more of a definitive
answer than ‘probably, possibly’ but again there are startling moments
that convincingly capture the zeitgeist of a nation struggling under austere-
ity measures. Clare Brennan’s *The Wing*, for example, sees a recent gradu-
ate encounter her unemployed father who has belatedly joined the English
Defence League. The void that has developed between them feels at first
too wide to be bridged, yet at the end of the play Brennan appears to offer
a chink of light in the otherwise dark experience of those living with the
consequences of austerity. The play artfully interweaves the social conse-
quences of austerity and how it has reshaped lives in modern Britain where
anti-immigration becomes a catch-all first-world solution to a problem
of global proportions where compromise is demanded of everyone. The
answer to the question, ‘does austerity makes us more right wing?’ almost
inevitably, then, is that austerity does indeed make us all more right wing
both mentally and physically as the father in the piece ultimately develops
a real right wing in place of an arm. Humanity is therefore what is ulti-
mately at stake in all of this but it is in the gift of theatre to make us think
and reflect about this rather than to passively accept the given circum-
stances of the human condition in twenty-first-century Europe.

RESPONSES ELSEWHERE

In addition to Theatre Uncut’s work, the financial crisis has also inspired
other theatre-makers in the UK. Birmingham-based Stan’s Café took us
back to territory explored by John Constable some years earlier in *Tulip
Futures* (1994) as it used the seventeenth-century Dutch tulip crisis as a
metaphor for the absurdity of the financial markets in James Yarker’s *The
Just Price of Flowers* (2012). Concerns for the causes of austerity resurfaced
again the following year with Clare Duffy’s *Money: The Gameshow* (2013)
and its playful treatment of the financial crisis in the City of London.¹⁵ The
play takes risk, chance and gambling to the extreme where its two char-
acters encourage the audience (literally) to bet on their lives. The game
that ensues is one where the audience become caught up in a frenzy of
excitement that sees them determining the potential death of one of the

characters. In a similar satirical vein, the Court returned to the theme of the crisis and the onset of austerity with Anders Lustgarten's blistering anti-capitalist polemic *If You Don't Let Us Dream, Then We Won't Let You Sleep* (2013) – a play whose title comes from a slogan adopted by a protest movement that began in Madrid's Puerta del Sol square. Lustgarten, an articulate young playwright involved in the Occupy Movement, offers a fierce attack on free-market capitalism where, despite a mixed critical reception, the sincerity of his critique of austerity is never in question.

PIIGS AT THE COURT

Four months after Lustgarten's play, the Royal Court continued its engagement with themes of austerity but in a significantly different way as it staged a week-long season of readings of new plays in translation from the European austerity countries collected under the banner of The Big Idea: PIIGS. The five-day event formed part of a new season of work developed by incoming Artistic Director Vicky Featherstone that sought to offer punchy, topical and quick responses to a range of contemporary issues. Each night, new playwrights from each of the so-called PIIGS countries explored the social consequences of economic austerity measures through translational responses that operated at the level of the interlingual (within the same language), intralingual (through the direct translation of foreign languages into English) and the intersemiotic (through changes of medium).¹⁶ The Royal Court PIIGS season, along with later iterations of Theatre Uncut, are clear attempts at engaging in a pan-European theatrical response to the austerity crisis that does not involve an export model where plays written in English by chiefly British writers are offered to other countries as a way of articulating a shared experience of living under deteriorating social and economic conditions.¹⁷ As such, translation is fundamental to both its process and its product. But more than this, under Richard Twyman's direction, the week utilized a unique format of presenting a European play in translation alongside interviews recorded by the playwright in their first language, and a British playwright's response play to both of these sources. The mode of engaging an audience was one where theatre and theatrical translation(s) were presented in multiple ways, where translation as both a process and a product could be understood and reconstructed, and a new theatrical paradigm was conceived for contemporary works for the stage that continue to operate within the social realist genre. With all of the events streamed live over the internet

and performed by the same company of actors,¹⁸ the potential audience for the work became one that could extend globally and certainly move far beyond the confines of the somewhat salubrious Sloane Square of the Royal Court Theatre.

The week opened with an evening devoted to the P of PIIGS, Portugal, in a presentation of Sandra Pinheiro's short play *Farewell to the Old Country*,¹⁹ April De Angelis's British response, *Articipation*, and the translated interviews Pinheiro had conducted. Through these interviews we met a range of voices, which included excerpts from Pinheiro's encounters with journalist Camilo Lourenço, former Finance Minister Bagão Felix, economist Miguel Frascuilo and a clip from Prime Minister Passos Coelho.²⁰ The playwright also interviewed a woman who had recently lost her job and expressed little hope of finding another as well as a young couple who had become geographically separated from each other due to the husband moving to Belgium in order to find work. This last interview dealt with the hopes and fears of young people living in what Pinheiro refers to as the 'old country' in the title of her play where the word 'old' has clear connotations relating to its ageing population, the group that gets left behind.

Pinheiro takes this last story as the inspiration for her work, which centres on a couple who plan to emigrate to Germany. The play takes place early in the morning as they are about to leave the woman's parents' apartment to catch their plane – a moment made even more tragic due to the fact that they are leaving behind their two young children. At a pivotal moment in the piece, the young woman, Joana, decides that she cannot leave her children, and so opts to stay with her parents, thus fracturing her relationship with her husband in ways that might be permanent. The performance of the play offers a dramatic mirror to the conditions endured by the couple we previously meet through the recorded interviews but its image is necessarily refracted. The response to this source text reflects the translation process itself, which is always about positionality and functionality rather than adhering to an idealized notion of achieving the impossible one-to-one correspondences and equivalences of languages. Translation here becomes a mode of critical enquiry rather than a process that dutifully services linguistic exchange; it seeks to comment on its source the same way that the play can be seen as commenting on the interviews, which are themselves a comment on social and political events.

While the interviews projected on to the Royal Court stage provide direct access to contemporary responses to the financial crisis in Portugal,

of themselves they would serve to do no more than offer an untranslated news item, deep on commentary and shallow on analysis. However, when juxtaposed before and after *Farewell to the Old Country*, theatrical representation surfaces as a critical point of enquiry. Pinheiro's play can be seen as both a direct response to one of the interviews she conducted and to austerity itself. In this way, it can be seen as a first iteration of an intersemiotic theatrical translation of those interviews where fact has become a fiction that is itself inherently factual.

De Angelis's response play *Articipation* offers a far more surreal encounter with current events and the EU's contradictory role in, on the one hand, promoting cross-cultural understanding through the funding of artistic projects, while on the other, imposing catastrophic austerity measures on the Portuguese population. Music workshop leader Jessica Underwood strives to teach an unwilling and uninterested audience various historical and sociological aspects of Portuguese *fado* and to explain how, via a process of vocalizing our inner selves, we might 'dig our way out' of the hopelessness of austerity 'through our own enterprise'. Things take a turn for the worse when a young male volunteer is chosen at random to take the workshop. The reluctant participant is encouraged to explore his own personal raw material and in doing so he offers a story of how he came to lose his job after taking out a mortgage and trying to support his three children. In an act of brutal self-sacrifice, he has cut off the head of his dog in order to make him feel that he somehow deserved such poor treatment. Singing these events through an operatic and exaggerated form of *fado*, which we are reminded is a melancholic song form whose name originally meant 'fate', it does seem as if art's ability to nurture the soul is really beginning to work. However, at the end of the play the man is himself killed in a seemingly senseless shooting by a security guard and Jessica's final words to the audience, 'Why aren't you singing?', ring out as hollow and as vacuous as her EU-sponsored workshop tour now appears to be.

With the addition of De Angelis's play, the process of not just translating another culture but translating austerity itself becomes even more marked. *Articipation* operates within a distinctly surreal genre that sits as a translational response to the anti-austerity politics of Pinheiro and her mediatized interviews. Thus De Angelis is able to successfully translate austerity through positioning fiscal policy, art and even theatre-making as central motifs that reside as inherent contradictions at the heart of the EU. Through a deliberate interrogation of the human cost of austerity

measures endured by artists, translation becomes both a mode of delivery 438
and a way of understanding that cost – it is the means through which 439
we come to bridge each other's condition. This occurs in a forum where 440
the status of translation is heralded and where its translational process 441
becomes an engine which rails against the separatism, conservatism and 442
indeed racism that has erupted throughout Europe in its own localized 443
responses to the poverty of national economies and the paucity of creative 444
solutions to find a way out of the crisis. 445

The second night of PIIGS saw Anders Lustgarten (whose play, *If You* 446
Won't Let Us Dream, We Won't Let You Sleep, was presented at the Court 447
four months earlier) linked with playwright Fausto Paravidino as they came 448
together to present two plays exploring the crisis brought on by austerity 449
in Italy. Lustgarten introduced the work by reminding the audience that 450
Paravidino was currently taking part in an occupation of a theatre in Rome 451
in protest against cuts to its funding that had led to the theatre's actors 452
being evicted. As with all evenings presented under the PIIGS season of 453
work, the plays were interspersed with verbatim elements that the writer 454
had assembled although in this instance the material gathered came from 455
Facebook and Twitter messages. Paravidino's play, *They Were in My Field* 456
(translated by Gillian Hanna), and Lustgarten's *Three Gifts* both fittingly 457
engage with the chaotic worlds of social media. Paravidino's contribution 458
draws on the absurdities of territorializing physical and financial space in 459
a world of spiralling debts whereas Lustgarten's piece is, in contrast to his 460
earlier works, unusually pensive in what amounts to a dramatic meditation 461
on familial love. Here the daily struggle to make sense of life becomes aug- 462
mented when the gap between the generations is torn even further apart by 463
the challenges of living under austerity. This second offering of the PIIGS 464
week reveals translation in its new technological sphere where Google 465
Translate and other corpora-based machine translation tools have become 466
popular modes of engaging in language exchange in a world of fast-paced 467
Twitter chatter and the ever-proliferating interactions of Facebook and 468
the like. Theatricalizing these technologies makes visible the invisibility of 469
translation, an area that has now become firmly established in translation 470
theory, largely as a response to the work of Lawrence Venuti (1995).²¹ 471

Given the dominance of the English language in Ireland, it might 472
have been assumed that the Irish evening of the week would consist of 473
one first-language play. However, Featherstone retained the principle of 474
writer response by engaging Scottish writer Kieran Hurley (who, like 475
Lustgarten, was a previous contributor to Theatre Uncut) to respond 476

to Irish playwright Deidre Kinahan's work. Kinahan, as with the other playwrights in the season, conducted a range of interviews with people who had been affected by austerity as well as those who might be thought of as being complicit in the cause of the financial crisis in Ireland. *Protest* is set in a primary school where a small group of parents come together to form an action group against the cuts. During the course of the meeting we learn about the property boom and what its consequent bust has left in its wake – the large number of young people deserting Ireland for work abroad and the swingeing cuts inflicted on the health service and the schools. Ultimately, there is a paradoxical sense of despair and contentment as the parents adjourn the meeting to go to the pub, expressing an already fading hope that something really might arise out of their nascent protest movement.

Kieran Hurley's response piece, *Belcoo*, is set in the small County Fermanagh town of the same name where Dennis and Jake work on renovating a fruit and vegetable shopfront in advance of a G8 meeting while a homeless woman sits outside constantly muttering her thoughts. The men talk about a range of topical issues such as the 'fiscal cliff', which they don't really understand, but as the play progresses it becomes apparent that the ramblings of the woman²² are far more perceptive than their own attempts to understand the current crisis in Ireland; their renovation efforts equate to nothing more than putting on a show, symbolized by the fake plastic fruit that they are putting on the shelves. The Ireland evening ended with the story of a woman whose family had got into debt, lost their house to the bank and had no other option but to emigrate to Canada to try and start a new life for themselves; emigration offered the possibility for hope in what was otherwise a story with an almost inevitable tragic ending.

The mixed use of verbatim material (in this case the sound rather than video that Kinahan recorded when interviewing people) and the actors on the stage re-presenting this material followed much the same format as the previous evenings but also offered audiences different possibilities for understanding and reflecting on the material. For example, Kinahan's interview with journalist Simon Carswell begins with us hearing the initial set-up, with Carswell asked to say who he is and what he does.²³ The sound then quickly dissipates as Carswell becomes embodied by one of the ensemble actors (Meera Syhal) who picks up his words and not only retains her gender but also her own accent, thus making the performance a visible translation of the original with

no pretence of representation, no masking of translational source over 516
 target language, or any need to somehow embody Carswell beyond dra- 517
 matizing his words into a staged interview (where Kinahan is played by 518
 Robert Lonsdale using his own English accent). The actor's physical 519
 presence in the here and now is readily accepted as the portal through 520
 which the virtual presence of the interviewee is to be understood. But 521
 the actor is not simply ventriloquizing the words; he is literally (re) 522
 enacting them, encouraging contrasts and comparisons with the screen 523
 image and making the interpretive and adaptive processes of translation 524
 transparent. This is a radical departure from the usual practice of trans- 525
 lation on screen where the use of subtitles, cued in real time with the 526
 speech, offers audiences a seemingly authentic and authoritative depic- 527
 tion of what is being said. The lines are delivered in a performance 528
 that allows the words to speak for themselves as Carswell describes a 529
 process whereby nobody has taken personal responsibility for the prop- 530
 erty boom in Ireland with its devastating consequences for those who 531
 succumbed to a frenzied world of buy-to-let mortgages. 532

While language exchange is demonstrated and enacted in a variety of 533
 ways during the first three nights of PIIGS, translation itself becomes a 534
 theme of the Greek evening which included a new work by playwright 535
 Andreas Flourakis and a response play by Alexi Kaye Campbell. The 536
 previous evening had shown how emigration continues its historical tra- 537
 jectory of offering a lifeline of hope thrown to the Irish community in 538
 a time of economic recession. For Greece, however, immigration was a 539
 central concern for Mayor of Athens George Kaminis, in quite different 540
 ways as his filmed interview, which marked the beginning of the Greece 541
 evening, demonstrated. Kaminis, a controversial yet charismatic figure 542
 in Greek politics, set the national context as one that has brought about 543
 the rise of far-right party Golden Dawn and a humanitarian crisis that 544
 has seen the appearance of malnutrition alongside the increasing use of 545
 soup kitchens – a country where few would choose to live. Flourakis's 546
 piece, *I Want a Country* (translated by Alexi Kaye Campbell), thus 547
 begins with three people lined up on stage with their suitcases in hand 548
 as they leave Greece and all its troubles behind. Looking back on what 549
 they have left, they contemplate the possibilities of a Greece more at 550
 ease with itself: 'I want a country like a bed-time story. So that I can 551
 sleep well at night. So that I can rest my head on this country, so that I 552
 can sink into it softly. With no worries at all. What a beautiful country. 553
 More than beautiful' (Flourakis 2013). 554

Alexi Kaye Campbell's response play, *Mr Brown, Mrs Paparigopoulos and the Interpreter*, deals with the sacking of a Greek university lecturer by a British man acting through the services of an interpreter. As the play unfolds we learn of the real impact that this is going to have on her life while Mr Brown coldly reiterates feeble titbits of support (such as getting up early in the morning and taking exercise in order to feel positive about the possibilities of finding new work). Brown embodies the troika, going through the motions of sounding concerned but barely being able to mask his impatience with, and hostility to, the Greek situation, while Mrs Paparigopoulos ends up literally floored by the news of her dismissal as Mr Brown and the Interpreter make their way to the airport for their next stop, Lisbon. Kaye Campbell's play challenges the objectivity in that other popular use of translation, interpreting, as the interpreter's interpretation is called into question. Translation, a process that is often invoked as a vehicle to bridge cultures, nations and differences, is thus offered up as a site of instability. In this way, what is called into question and what becomes at stake is not only the integrity of the messages from the troika to the Greek nation but the very reliability of translation itself.

The final evening to complete the PIIGS season was devoted to Spain with a play by Madrid-based Vanessa Montfort (translated by William Gregory), a response piece by Alexandra Wood, and the inclusion of two interviews Montfort conducted in Spain offering two different perspectives of the crisis – those of journalist Cristina Fallarás and Álvaro Sierra, an employee of a major Spanish bank. Montfort's play sees a homeless man, forced to take early retirement and now living on the streets, refuse to come to terms with his descent from middle-class security to destitution. His encounter with a young *indignada* – an austerity protestor – reveals the latter's similar inability to acknowledge the impotency of the movement although she retains a faint hope that eventually 'at some point it will have to start raining'. Wood's piece, *Merit*, provides an ironic riposte to the unemployed of Montfort's play as we encounter Sofia who, despite landing a lucrative job working for a banker, is met with a mixture of suspicion and concern by her parents. The conflict that erupts is one constructed around the ethics of survival in Spain and the personal sacrifices everyone is required to make in order to find some way forward in their lives. What counts as survival in austerity Spain is something that, on this last evening of the season, resonates with all of the countries and all of the works collectively brought together during the course of the week. In order to survive, compromises have to be made (to move away, to stay

behind, to rupture familial ties, to sell your body and your soul) and it is 594
 here where the human rather than the financial cost is brought into a far 595
 sharper focus. 596

THEATRE TRANSLATION AND AUSTERITY 597

The PIIGS season forms a significant moment for theatrical translation 598
 which is no longer confined to providing a vehicle in which to realize 599
 the exchanges between languages and their representations on the stage. 600
 Rather, through the range of plays presented and their interface with each 601
 other, as well as the archived documentary material that was collected, 602
 theatrical translation works to disrupt our understanding of austerity and 603
 the ways in which we have encountered its theatricalization before. In 604
 doing so, we appear to witness a newly reconstituted idea of commu- 605
 nity (European, unemployed, actor, interviewee, playwright) and what 606
 this might mean in the twenty-first century. What is of concern is not so 607
 much what separates and marks the individual territories of these identities 608
 (or to recall Giorgio Agamben's formulation, these 'whatever/singulari- 609
 ties' [1993, p. 86]), but rather the relations that are formed across them 610
 where the popular discourse about nationhood and national economic 611
 policies are presented as narratives and counter-narratives that simultane- 612
 ously speak to each other and about each other. Thus playwright speaks 613
 directly to playwright, actor to actor, and even the audience develops a 614
 new sense of its wider self where the territorial borders that demarcate 615
 these groupings and even translation produce a kind of static that makes 616
 their separation at once irrelevant and visible. Taken collectively, these 617
 works demonstrate a subversive radicalism where translation offers a coun- 618
 terpoint to neoliberalism, where new technologies harnessed by the col- 619
 lective enquiry of artists provide new ways of understanding who we are, 620
 where we are and the possibility of what we might be in a theatrical space 621
 where national borders are mitigated and traversed. 622

NOTES 623

1. Loukanikos rose to fame barking at police lines, where he braved tear gas, 624
 pellets and kicks from the police and consequently suffered a range of 625
 injuries. He gave up protesting in 2012 when he retired from his anti- 626
 establishment activities and went to convalesce with an adopted family 627
 who cared for him during the autumn years of his life. 628

2. This point is consistently made by reviewers of new work. For example, in a review of *The Pain and the Itch* (2007), Dominic Cook's directorial debut as Artistic Director of the Royal Court, the *Spectator* noted that 'Laughing at the educated wealthy is a lot more fun. You know them better. And it's genuinely cathartic. You leave the theatre sighing with relief, "I'm a bit like them but they're off the scale."' See: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/arts/38522/bourgeoisie-bashing/>.
3. Margaret Thatcher's comments in an interview with Douglas Keay for *Woman's Own* magazine in 1987 have been much quoted over the years and have occasionally been nuanced by a neoliberal reading that claims she was misunderstood in terms of her wider intentions. See Keay (1987).
4. The European Commission, which forms a central part of the so-called 'troika' (flanked by the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank), has prided itself on its unique multilingual model of operation, offering 24 languages in simultaneous interpretation at all levels of its operation, although there remains a privileging of a troika of its own as certain documents are only translated into English, French and German. Here we also need to be wary of the development of a modern dramaturgy that privileges English and writing for the stage beyond other forms, and seeks to produce and promote those forms, above all others, within a specific British context both theatrically and linguistically. These considerations, though, are for another book and cannot be fully considered here.
5. The acronym PIIGS was first coined by London financial traders and was cited in the *Financial Times* in May 2009 in relation to a report by Andrew Clare of the Cass Business School in 2008.
6. This is not to discount the rise of anti-capitalist movements across Europe at this time where the Occupy Movement in particular has provided an alternative voice to the zeitgeist of nationalism.
7. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/17/arts/music/in-spain-austerity-takes-to-the-stage.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.
8. Fresh food only incurs a VAT levy of 4 per cent as opposed to the almost 50 per cent levied against box-office ticket prices – see Fotheringham (2012).
9. According to the Portuguese newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, the sale was destined to take more than €80 million off the balance sheet – http://www.dn.pt/inicio/interior.aspx?content_id=1129796#AreaComentarios.
10. See <http://artistsassembly.wix.com/artistsassembly>.
11. *Enron* was in fact a co-production between the Royal Court Theatre, Headlong Theatre and the Chichester Festival Theatre.
12. Interestingly, *Enron* did not survive long on Broadway due to its damning review from *New York Times* theatre critic Benjamin Brantley and thus with some irony endured a demise that mirrored the subject of its enquiry.

13. For the full statement, see <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/jun/22/emergency-budget-full-speech-text>. 671
672
14. It is interesting to note that of the first season of plays, Anders Lustgarten is 673
the most conservative, somewhat ironically perhaps, in his characterization 674
of capitalism as *The Fat Man* – inspired ‘after a lengthy breakfast in Exmouth 675
Market with Simon Stephens’ (2011, p. 41). David Greig’s *Fragile* casts the 676
audience in the role of support worker Caroline, as Jack, a mental health 677
patient, breaks into her home in order to gain her collusion in his Arab 678
Spring-inspired protest at the cuts. Jack Thorne’s *Whiff Whaff* is similarly 679
disturbing as two apparently innocuous characters come to reveal the socio- 680
pathic ramifications of austerity on their lives. Most moving of all, perhaps, 681
is the monologue *Open Heart Surgery* by Laura Lomas in which a young 682
woman sits by the bedside of her partner who is recovering from heart sur- 683
gery, bringing forth in full symbolism a physical embodiment of cuts 684
wreaked on the body of public services while society looks helplessly on. 685
15. The play, too, recalls Caryl Churchill’s seminal work of the 1980s, *Serious* 686
Money (1987). 687
16. The classification of translation into these three broad headings comes 688
from the Russian formalist Roman Jakobson (1959). 689
17. It should be noted that while the focus of this chapter has been on British 690
theatrical responses, austerity theatre artists in other countries have not 691
been dormant. In 2014, I had the pleasure of working on *Tristeza e Alegria* 692
Na Vida Das Girafas (*Sadness and Joy in the Life of Giraffes*) by Portuguese 693
playwright Tiago Rodrigues which had premiered in Lisbon in 2011. The 694
play tells the story of a nine-year-old girl, nicknamed Giraffe by her 695
deceased mother, who travels across Lisbon for a day as she struggles to 696
find a way to deal with the impact the economic crisis is having on her own 697
imploding world. At the end of the play, she enters the presidential palace 698
and confronts Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho with her questions. 699
18. The company consisted of Paul Chahidi, Nadia Clifford, Mariah Gale, 700
Robert Lonsdale and Meera Syhal. 701
19. It should be made clear here that I was commissioned to write both the 702
translations of Pinheiro’s play and the interviews she conducted for the 703
project. 704
20. In a clip where he suggested that teachers might like to move abroad in 705
order to find work. 706
21. Lawrence Venuti has championed a paradigm shift in literary translation 707
where the hidden translator and the usually eclipsed translation process are 708
unearthed and made visible for all to see (1995). 709
22. In many ways, the woman in the play resembles the character Mouth in 710
Samuel Beckett’s *Not I* (1972) in the emerging sense that she begins to 711
make both for herself and for the audience. 712

23. Carswell is presently the Washington Correspondent for the *Irish Times* but was its Finance Correspondent from 2007 to 2012, the period when the financial crisis was at its peak in Ireland.

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Author Queries

Chapter No.: 7

Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	Please check if author name and affiliation are okay.	
AU2	Krugman (2013) has been changed to Krugman (2012) as per the reference list. Please check if okay.	