Dude (Looks Like a Lady)

*Hijacking Transsexual Identity in the Subtitled Version of Stella by Panos Koutras*¹

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Abstract. *Problematizing and relativizing components of culture and identity are a constant theme in translation studies, yet there are fields where culture and identity are radically deconstructed, rather than problematized and relativized; such is the case in the uncharted area of transgenderism. By definition, transgenderism entails both great freedom and great constraints with respect to shaping physical and discourse parameters of identity. Taking Cromwell's (2006) concept of 'transsituated identities' as a point of departure, this article discusses the English subtitles for the cinema in Koutras' recent film Stella (2009). It demonstrates that the filmic language of Stella adopts strategies which are geared towards unsettling fixed hierarchies in society. Harvey's (2000) grid of strategies – namely, ludicrism, inversion, paradox and parody – is extended here for the analysis of filmic language. The analysis reveals that the move from a minor code (Greek) into a lingua franca, within the context of a transgender subculture, leads to recurrent shifts in the semiotic load of these resources in translation.*

Keywords. Audiovisual, Greek, Identity, Gender, Culture, Minority, Humour.

I had a friend called Joe
When friends were hard to find
He had a restless soul
With something on his mind

One day I went away
And when returned to the scene
Not to find restless Joe, no
But to find Josephine.

I asked her what her game was,
She said Joe had left the scene,
I asked her what her name was,
And she said, 'they call me Josephine'.

(Terrorvision, 'Josephine', 1998)

Images of masculinity or femininity are frequently exploited in popular culture. In multimedial text types in particular, audiences derive aesthetic pleasure and manage to interpret gender performance by alternating their focus on the visual and verbal codes. For example, in an old

¹I would like to thank Panos Koutras for offering me a bilingual copy of the film/script.

video of the song 'Josephine' by the British rock band Terrorvision, members of the band are evocatively shown preparing for a race on a deserted and sun-baked race track.² The running competition starts. Among the participants is a mysterious, lanky, androgynous-looking blond runner who competes with them. As the lead singer Tony Wright sings in a melancholically deep voice "the girl by my side, was the guy I'd missed", the mystery runner can be seen making a pit stop to refuel, change out of running gear and put on make-up; as the race progresses, and after a couple more pit stops, he or she is gradually transformed into a smartly dressed woman who, with great determination (and high heels), runs to the end and wins the race. The camera then cuts to the podium where the winner celebrates, mimicking the mannerisms of race track girls. This is a prime example of how sung text may anchor the interpretation of moving image in a commercial music video. Gender roles become a visual metaphor (running race), which is accompanied by a set of commonplaces, stereotypes and evoked knowledge (consumerism, objectification, male-centredness and competition). The end result is an effective mix of 'performances' playfully questioning certainty, traditional hierarchies and mainstream beliefs.

Cultural products like the video described above often require translation, with the usual slight or significant modifications this entails. To paraphrase widely accepted definitions of translation, the source text, as an effective mixture of form/content, 'evolves' into a different product that caters for the specificities of a target situation (Zethsen 2007:299). Such specificities may be conceptualized in terms of a network of relations, as in Even-Zohar's much quoted systemic model; target texts, as cultural artefacts created by certain producers, are made available through institutions to a market and are (successfully) received by consumers who may appreciate a particular repertoire of aesthetic features (Even-Zohar 2000). The influence exercised on any systemic element by other variables within its environment is a key component of this process. No producer, for example, can generate a product in a vacuum. Previous works, other producers and the concept of a receptive (or non-receptive) consumer base will affect the entire process. Even-Zohar's framework can address issues of identity too: a concept of identity or sense of purpose for all the parties involved in chains of communication will be derived relationally. Mutual interdependencies are the shaping force not only of texts, but also of subjectivities, a premise that underpins the study of cultural products that promote a gender-specific agenda.

Gender began to receive considerable attention in the 1980s, and especially in the 1990s, in translation studies. Perspectives varied, but a common denominator for many researchers was to challenge obfuscatory and oppressive patriarchal discourse (Arrojo 1994). Translation started to be seen as a social corrective, a tool for deflecting male-centred discourse, in, say, Bible or literary translation (Simon 1996). The resulting debate put the framework of Descriptive Translation Studies – with its 'detached' programme of enquiry into preliminary, initial and operational norms (Toury 1995:58-59) – into critical perspective; the study of 'patterns' morphed into a pursuit of ethical (de)selection and thick translation strategies (Massardier-Kenney 1997). Descriptive lines of enquiry eventually made a comeback in the 2000s, because it was thought that describing repeated patterns in translation could be fruitfully combined with nuanced accounts of their contextual implications. Harvey (2003), for example, looked at how patterns in the translation into French of key American texts with male homosexual characters can be linked to attitudes in the broader French polysystem, including those of activists, academics and translators.

² See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AECWwR3tosM> (accessed 4 March 2011).

Audiovisual Translation soon caught up with this cross-fertilization of frameworks. Taking ‘remake’ as translation in the broad sense, Mazdon (2000) showed how stereotypes in *La cage aux folles* (1978) and *The Birdcage* (1996) were functionally similar in both undermining and reaffirming gender roles by selectively drawing on the operative norms in their respective contexts. Baumgarten (2005) found that micro-shifts in the German dubbed text of early James Bond films have a cumulative effect on a macro-level, resulting, for example, in the toning down of sexism. Similarly, De Marco (2006) showed that the dubbed and (especially) the subtitled film dialogue in Spanish and Italian for the films *East is East* (1999), *Bend it like Beckham* (2002) and *Calendar Girls* (2003) occasionally exaggerates the gender divide.

This article attempts to bring together some of the threads outlined above: the macro-level perspective of minoritarian discourse and the micro-level analysis of subtitling choices. The material under examination is Panos Koutras’ recent film *Strella* (2009) and its English subtitles for the cinema, created and edited by the director himself.³ The story revolves around Giorgos Michalopoulos, who is released from an Athens prison after 15 years for murdering his brother-in-law in his village in the Peloponnese. Now middle-aged, Giorgos pursues a new start; he tries to sell his village home and to find his lost son, Leonidas, who is supposed to live in Athens. Soon after his release he meets a young transsexual girl, Strella, and they start an affair. Strella works as a prostitute as well as a jack-of-all-trades technician and drag impersonator in a bar where transsexual friends also work. Giorgos tries to be part of Strella’s life, only to find out that she is his lost son Leonidas and that she knew about Giorgos’ identity all along; Strella admits that her lifestyle, coupled with her desire to find her father, confused her enough to allow this relationship to develop. After the emotional and psychological turmoil of this disclosure, Giorgos and Leonidas seem to reach conciliation, and decide to start a new life among an extended family of friends in the house Strella keeps in Athens.

Koutras’ film became highly visible from its first screening, which took place during the 59th International Berlin Film Festival in February 2009; on 5 May 2010 the newly established Greek Academy of Cinematography awarded the transgender protagonist of *Strella*, Mina Orfanou, the best actress award. In her acceptance speech, Orfanou said: “I hope that this prize becomes a beginning for all the men and women whose difference has forced them to remain in the shadows” (my translation).⁴ It is the concept of this shadowy identity that I would now like to explore.

1. *Ordo transsexualis*: Ambiguously being and doing

Translation constitutes an ideal site for exploring cultural convergences and dissonances. A challenging concept itself, culture has often been defined along the lines of internal frames of reference which are historically derived, as well as external elements of various kinds. Katan (2004:43-48), for instance, draws on Hall’s widely used ‘iceberg model’ to present the interconnection of the ‘tip’, which is visible or explicitly taught, and what lies beneath, the result of inculcation and an out-of-awareness conditioning. These layers of organization can be readily mapped onto a scale of depth/abstraction (*ibid.*:63-85), starting with the environment (experienced through the senses), observable behaviour, capabilities (including skills, one’s

³ Koutras was born in Athens and studied at the London Film School and Sorbonne Paris I. He has directed several short films that have been screened in various international film festivals. He also works as a producer and theatre director. *Strella* is his third feature film.

⁴ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UOo-k66O00> (accessed 4 March 2011).

mental map of doing things), beliefs (relating to one's values and needs), and identity.⁵ Seen in this light, culture is both cognitive and social and can play a normative role, recalling another slippery notion, ideology (Van Dijk 1995:18). Elsewhere, I have argued that identity is a facet of *habitus*; it involves abilities, values and mental maps triggered by material, political or other opportunities available in a certain environment (Asimakoulas 2011:14-16); as such it cuts through all levels of culture. Subjects can be said to have an identity of some kind precisely because they possess personal ideas/values they hold dear or wish to change, a certain notion of 'face' in society, volition/agency expressed in their actions, individual histories, bodies through which they can experience the world, a biological sex and, of course, sexual desires. The process of developing an identity is ideological, because personal histories can be actualized in different ways, depending both on how society constructs subjects and how individuals respond to such imposed structures.

All the constituents of identity mentioned above develop through socio-cultural interaction. The very act of recognizing gender, for instance, is no more than a game of mapping biological, psychological and social differences onto the unquestioned, immutable, you-are-what-you-look-like dichotomy 'male/female' (Kessler and McKenna 2006:179). Relevant cues for gender attribution (typically predicated on the presence or absence of male characteristics) are 'learned'; thus 'displayers' use and accentuate gender signs in front of similarly socialized attributors who share the same repertoire of signs (*ibid.*:175). Butler has elaborated on this idea by considering 'gendering' to be a manifestation of *performativity*, supported by institutions and regulatory frames – "demands, taboos, sanctions, injunctions, prohibitions, impossible idealizations and threats" (1993:106). In her view, social norms which are linked to "relations of discipline, regulation and punishment" precede and condition a subject, and thus there is no recognizable and viable *I* prior to the forcible citation of these historically derived norms (*ibid.*:225, 232). And it is their historicity that allows reiterative acts of citation to "congeal over time to produce the appearance of a substance, a natural sort of being" (Butler 1990:33). Butler hastens to add that performativity is not exactly the same as performance, as the former does not signal volition/agency (1993:234):

[Performativity] consists in reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's "will" or "choice"; further, what is "performed" works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable.

The Terrorvision example I cited above is an apt metaphor of performativity: rules are set up and precede the participants, who acquire an identity by 'performing'. Butler also adds another important mechanism of identity formation here, namely, *abjection*. What does not accord with the performance of heteronormative sexed positions is dismissed (as deviant, disgusting, unviable, a passing fantasy and so on); abjection is a strategy that gives a sense of identity to those who enact the norm, or rather, the myth of an immutable, ahistorical and natural norm (Butler 1990:140, 1993:109-10). As a social and psychological mechanism, differentiation has significant ontological effects for both sides. A majority cannot have a sense of identity without exercising their conditioning force on a 'deviant' minority. For example, in the context of powerful legal, philosophical and medical discourses, a transidentity has traditionally been

⁵ Katan discusses identity as a level of culture that simultaneously creates and is created by beliefs/values or by institutional/speech roles, but he does not link it to gender and social agency in general (*ibid.*:56, 84, 90).

legitimate only when a transperson has denied his or her (preoperative) status as a transsexual and 'fitted in' as either man or woman (Cromwell 2006:512). In order for transpeople to find a job or avoid, say, ridicule or physical harm, it is often essential for them to forget their past and live an "identity that is supposedly seamless and unambiguous" (Sullivan 2008:106).

Despite the limited view of legal/scientific discourses, in broader contexts there is a multitude of 'non-normal' subject positions where ambiguity prevails, because gender itself is indeterminate, as "a play *between* psyche and appearance (where the latter domain includes what appears in *words*)" (Butler 1993:234; emphasis in original). This ambiguous tension between appearance and psyche has been addressed by cultural theorists with a radically reinterpreted label of abjection, namely, *queer*. When used as a verb, *queer* is synonymous with 'denaturalize' and 'quiz', thus signalling "a deconstructive practice that is not undertaken by an already constituted subject, and does not, in turn, furnish the subject with a nameable identity" (Sullivan 2008:50). In this sense, 'quizzing' implies deconstructing the opposition between natural and unnatural, uncovering "the constructedness of meaning and identity", which is a crucial step towards "alternative ways of thinking and living" (*ibid.*:51). Such deconstructive modes of being can be cast in sharp relief when examining transgender identities. As Sullivan argues, 'transgender' can encompass a wide range of ambiguous subjectivities (2008:112; emphasis added):

[The term includes] cross-dressers, drag queens and kings, intersexed people, hermaphrodites, people who modify their bodies in a variety of ways and to varying degrees with or without hormones and/or surgery, butch dykes, fairies, she-males, bi-gendered individuals, those who see themselves as belonging to a 'third sex,' androgynes, transsexuals, cyborgs, queers, and so on. In a sense, the term transgender provides an identity *category* and a sense of *belonging* to all those who have been excluded from gender identity programmes and denied access to surgery, and to all those who have felt marginalized by *heteronormative values* and institutions more generally. This collective sense of transgender could be said to inform and be informed by queer politics and the celebration of ambiguous and non-unified subject positions.

Sullivan's quote contains appellations that carve out spaces for excluded 'third Others'. In a similar vein, Halberstam argues that transgenders inhabit categories of their own making in an alternative reality where individuals "may pick and choose among the options of body modification, social presentation, and legal recognition available to them" (2005:53). The very 'known facts' of biological sexual differences dissolve within the remit of a trans-reality, allowing, for example, FTM (female-to-male) transsexual men to identify themselves as heterosexual men, closely aligned (or not) with queer culture (Green 2006:506).

Other researchers, such as Cromwell (2006), elaborate on the verb *queer* to explore the subversive 'selves', bodies and sexualities of transgender people. First, transpeople, who have traditionally been assigned an identity that goes hand in hand with the (re)construction of their bodies, define themselves in terms of any combination of the constituents of the male/female normative dichotomy – or any constituents excluded by them (Cromwell 2006:512). Secondly, their bodies may be modified fully or partially with surgery, further undermining any binarism (*ibid.*:515). As concrete sites of a self concept, bodies affect the ability to 'pass', that is, to erase the past and blend in with the mainstream, because there is an inherent inability to exercise this

erasure: “[h]owever much they may pass, transpeople, whether they identify as trans or not, are always aware of their transness – an awareness situated in their bodies” (*ibid.*).

An additional signification of ‘queering’ concerns sexuality. Transpeople have been categorized neatly with respect to sexual desires – for example, FTMs ‘only’ desire heterosexual women, lesbians are attracted to lesbians, etc. – or they have been denied any sexuality – they are often described as asexual, autoerotic, being able to engage in relationships only with the help of vivid fantasies of themselves as the sex they wish to be (Cromwell 2006:510). Ongoing research has refuted such views, showing that, in the course of their identity transition, transpeople have a variety of sexual partners, who in turn ‘identify’ themselves as straight, bisexual, gay, lesbian or trans (*ibid.*:516-17). Such ambiguous subjectivities lead Cromwell to talk of ‘transsituated identities’, which, crucially, he links to language usage. Echoing Butler’s observation on the psyche/appearance interplay, Cromwell assigns the verb *queer* further linguistic possibilities; he talks of “transsituated strategic discourse” which has a potential to reframe dominant discourses on gender categorization (*ibid.*:518). Thus, in a game of collusive recoding undertaken in the context of a culture specific to two people, the language and labels exchanged among partners are chosen relationally, drawing on existing gender categories, but reorganizing them into a coherent whole that makes sense to them only (*ibid.*).

Transsituated strategic discourse is a characteristic instance of queering. It is an enunciation of identity that enables transpeople to enact their agendas and personal histories. A disarmingly honest account relating to such an act of enunciation can be found in Orfanou’s interview for *LIFO* magazine. Orfanou, who grew up on the island of Kalymnos and then moved to Athens, remembers how she was mocked and excluded at school and in her small island community. The *metronormative* narrative (Halberstam 2005:36-45) of migration to a liberal urban centre is part of the repertoire of queer identities both in real life and in art/cinema, and Orfanou shares this personal history with her filmic persona, Stella (Hulot 2009; my translation):

Up to the age of 15 I did not want to go out of my house on the island, because some people mocked me so much that I had psychological problems. ...

The abuse that individuals who are different are subject to in Greece – and the countryside in particular – is immense. The psychological problems you gradually get as a kid are so difficult to overcome. And the greatest percentage of suicide incidents among young people can be seen among lesbians and gay men.

... What made me happy was not the film, or Berlin, or the glittering premiere [of *Stella*]. What made me really happy was that I turned from a boy to what I am. Without being lost. Most of the people who do this lose their family, their work; society turns you into a piece of junk, part of the gutter. I risked everything to become what I am.

... I once went to the bank to open an account of €1,000 and to issue a card. The bank clerk who was attending to me told me that it was not possible because my ID had the photo of a woman on it but with a male name underneath – something that the law requires me to do. He said that the name did not match the photo. I asked to see the manager, they took me there, and he insisted that I produce some papers. I swung my handbag, knocking down all the things he had on his desk, they had infuriated me. They called the police and the policemen, who knew better, told him: “See to this lady immediately!” When you tell them “I am a trans” they must respect

this, according to European law. Such things do not happen in the rest of Europe. I go completely unnoticed abroad.

Thematics of ‘shame’, ‘fear’ and ‘loss’ invariably recur in the personal narratives of transpeople (Green 2006:507), and Orfanou’s interview is a distillation of how ‘marginals’ understand their identity: they are an oppressed group with acquired psychological and practical, everyday problems, but with a need to maintain a sense of self at all costs. This is an imperative which led Orfanou, in the bank incident above, to verbally enunciate her own identity category with the loan word *trans* in Greek. This act was accompanied by the *camp* gesture of swinging a handbag aggressively (see discussion of *camp* below). Interestingly, the link to the public narrative of human rights is based on a mapping of central/peripheral geography onto the openness (or otherwise) of minds, activating a frame of migrant melancholia. ‘Enlightened Europe’ features as a space where transidentities are sufficiently tolerated to pass unnoticed. It is the cosmopolitan foil of a provincial Greece; in their turn, the urban centres in Greece have a greater degree of exposure to such identities (see the policeman’s reaction above), allowing them to serve as the ideological foils of the countryside. In the film, both Giorgos and Strella move to Athens in order to erase their past, the former motivated by the murder he committed and the latter driven by a desire to escape the strictures of his gender identity and of life in the countryside, as an orphan and a son of murderer.

2. How a self-made woman swings her bag

Culture often serves as a cohesive force in societies, hence sensibility-oriented definitions such as the following (Bell 1979:36):

Culture, for a society, a group, or a person, is a continual process of sustaining an identity through the coherence gained by a consistent aesthetic point of view, a moral conception of self, and a style of life which exhibits those conceptions in the objects that adorn one’s home and oneself and in the taste which expresses those points of view. Culture is thus the realm of sensibility, or emotion and moral temper, and of the intelligence, which seeks to order these feelings.

The quote from Bell makes sense in the context of his work on generation gaps and the rise of the countercultural sensibilities of the 1960s, a decade that also saw the birth of civil rights movements in the modern sense. Yet it can be deemed relevant for cultural responses in any circumstances where ‘feelings’ of difference and injustice are rife. The historian Jack Babuscio talks of a ‘gay sensibility’ as “a creative energy ... a heightened awareness of certain human complications of feelings that spring from the fact of social oppression” (2004:121); this oppression is connected to the act of labelling what is ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ (*ibid.*). Out of such oppositions comes a sensibility-related reaction to the status quo, in this case, *camp* (*ibid.*:122). As some cultural theorists have argued, camp has a political potential since it can be defined as a “queer cultural critique”, a deconstructive manoeuvre that allows marginal individuals (in general) to challenge any essentialist “depth model of identity” which presents gender as immutable rather than a product of social construction (Meyer 2005:138). In terms of minoritarian strategies, this could mean that “the marginalized and disenfranchised advance their own interests by entering alternative signifying codes into discourse by attaching them to

existing structures of signification” (*ibid.*:144). The voice of marginal identities can be promoted through an act of ‘hijacking’ mainstream discourses. Through such gestures as focusing on discredited values, language (including ambiguous gender categories) and enunciations of identity that are commonly suppressed, acts of majoritarian appropriation are reversed. Minorities are able to construct their identity and simultaneously inject a dominant culture with unfamiliar modes of being and doing.

The queering tactics of transsituated discourse can fruitfully be informed by camp, especially because the latter can be linked more concretely to linguistic or other signs. Babuscio, for example, has elaborated the concept of camp, identifying four features: *irony*, *aestheticism*, *theatricality* and *humour*. *Irony* refers to an incongruous contrast between things or persons and the respective contexts with which they are associated (Babuscio 2004:122). Such contrasts may be based on a play of binarisms, such as youth/old age, the sacred/the profane and high/low status (*ibid.*). Camp has an *aesthetic* aspect because, in art as well as in everyday life, it blurs the boundaries between being and role-playing (*ibid.*:123). Reflecting a process of intense self-exploration in contexts of unfavourable conditions, camp marks a move into non-standard (or even tabooed) states of mind, sentiments or fantasies, which in a filmic context may manifest themselves as an “emphasis on sensuous surfaces, textures, imagery, and the evocation of mood as stylistic devices” (*ibid.*:124). The ‘what’ of identity becomes tantamount to the ‘how’ of an often exaggerated style/emotive tone. *Theatricality*, as an interrelated property, also highlights the clash between the ‘theatrical roles’ meted out by society and the instinctive behaviour of individuals, an opposition that generates a subversive, heightened awareness of disguise, impersonation and projection of individuality (*ibid.*:126). The final property of camp is *humour*; this is based on an acute incongruity between individuals, situations or objects and a non-accepting context; camp humour is simultaneously based on feelings of pain, loss and self-pity, yet it generates laughter (*ibid.*:128).

Taking into consideration the various levels of identity mentioned in section 1 above – values, agency, history, physicality, sexuality – *Strella* can be seen as a manifestation of the hijacking power of camp. This is a film infused with comic elements throughout; many characters and *Strella* herself exhibit a subversive, playful attitude towards established ideas, fate, relationships, sexual desire and language itself.

It is also a film with a great degree of theatricality and aestheticism. The very title may intertextually resemble Kakogiannis’ *Stella* (1955) or Almodovar’s *La estrella* (1977). The plot is peppered with intertextual allusions, including some relating to Almodovar’s films, especially *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999) and *La mala educación* (2004), which deal with the shocking (re)writing of family histories and secrets, child abuse and, of course, transgenderism. Another point of reference might be Mitchell’s postmodern search for identity in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2001), with its dramatic pastiche of Platonic philosophy, drag acts and variegated musical excursions, autobiographical segments and animation sequences. Further intertextual links could perhaps be traced in Peirce’s *Boys Don’t Cry* (1999), which explores (violent) transphobia, collusive gender sign attribution and the rehearsal of heterosexual romantic love by a transgender man. Similarly to many of the protagonists in the above-mentioned films, *Strella* can be seen to negotiate her self-actualization, simultaneously desiring and being overwhelmed by the figure of Freudian castration she assumes; by seeking her taboo identity outside her ‘given’ identity, she finds herself in her equally tabooed Oedipal source, her father. In this sense, *Strella* is a film that questions the ways in which desire is organized, uncovering the positioning of “normal bodies” and the politics of containing and managing “perversion” (Papanikolalou 2010:12). Instead of

highlighting what is historically and physically appropriate, the focus lies in the “conscious decision to re-narrate oneself” by incorporating and undermining existing values, styles and emotions (*ibid.*).

This is precisely where the deeply ironic nature of *Strella* resides. The plot is rife with striking incongruities between past and present. For example, at 00:47:22 *Strella* is preparing to go out to meet a client; upon looking into a box of personal possessions, she spots her identity card with an image of her when she was a teenager; the close shot on the ID card lingers for a few seconds, possibly allowing viewers who are familiar with ID cards as realia to share her perspective. Similarly, Giorgos, who is tormented by his own past, looks up all the Leonidas Michalopoulos's in the telephone directory and assumes that a young policeman is his lost son. He then goes back to his village twice in order to sell his house; when negotiating the terms of selling the house with Kouloukousis, “the old fascist cop”, Giorgos is not only blithely reminded of his past, but he is also informed that Leonidas “has been seen” working the streets in Athens as a “transvestite”. This leads him to make the connection to *Strella*. Giorgos confronts *Strella*, asking questions about her past. She then recounts the story of her life in the village; the murder episode again exposes ironic distinctions concerning abuse, rejection and personal codes of honour:

When I was nine he killed my uncle, my mother's brother, a seventeen-year-old hunk ... I had returned from school and I was home alone. Then my uncle came along. He adored me, I was his favourite. We started playing. Mind you, childish stupid stuff. We undressed and touched each other. Then unfortunately my father walked in ... at the trial he never said what the real reason for the murder was, allegedly to protect me from public condemnation. (my translation) (00:53:25-00:54:57)

Equally interesting is the ironic juxtaposition of adulthood/childhood and male/female gazes. For example, in his last trip to the village, Giorgos discovers a view-master toy in the attic of his house, an object from his childhood, which was hidden there by his “wanker of a father” so that he would not “waste his time”. This is juxtaposed to *Strella*'s wound up toy, a muscular man doing press-ups, that she is playing with whilst waiting for Giorgos to come back after he bolted out of the house (i.e. after he confirmed the shocking truth of their relationship).

Finally, the film both mimics and undermines the styles, emotions and plots of various films and generic conventions. This is a comedy, melodrama and tragedy, except that there is a good ending; as Papanikolaou argues, the mix of *Oedipus Rex*, Greek songs, various allusive references and drag performance leads to a deconstruction of the notion of hubris, incest and psychological trauma (2010:13). All characters understand the concept of the tragic but they simultaneously (perhaps ludically) return to performativity, “thus relativising and historicising the ideology of psychological depth, the unconscious and patriarchal self, the insuperable hubris” (*ibid.*; my translation). This can be seen when Giorgos realizes that *Strella* knew about his identity all along:

Giorgos: But I am your father.

Strella: Yes, but you didn't know.

Giorgos: You did know, though!

Strella: Yes but I did not feel it. Because in fact we are two strangers. Look at me! Do I look like Leonidas?

Giorgos: I don't know. I don't know; I fuck my Jesus! I don't know anything anymore!⁶

Strella: You do know! Both of us know.

Giorgos: You are sick!

Strella: No! I did not want to lose you. I don't want to lose you now either. Please don't leave. We will find a way. (my translation) (01:02:29-01:02:56)

Characters in this film treat their context as a set of relations that have the potential to be hijacked, deconstructed and renarrated. Thus, they do “find a way” in the end: the closing scene shows Giorgos, his former fellow inmate Nikos and his Ukrainian friend Yuri, Strella, her kleptomaniac friend Alex and his baby sister, all under the same roof, celebrating Christmas.

Building on Babuscio, Harvey has slightly modified the four semiotic strategies of camp, extending them to verbal usage. This allowed him to use camp as a descriptive tool for the comparative analysis of literary translations from English into French (Harvey 2000). Furthermore, his construal of camp addresses a weakness in Babuscio's model, i.e. the fact that it describes the effects of camp and not “the actual triggers for sign-making/manipulation that underpins them” (Harvey 2000:257ff7). Harvey treats camp as a set of semiotic “resources which generate diverse surface features” (*ibid.*). He suggests an excellent semiotic grid, admitting that, by necessity, there is overlap both with Babuscio's model and across his own economy of strategies: ludicrism, inversion, paradox and parody. It is this grid that I would like to further modify for the purposes of audiovisual narrative analysis so that further resources are accounted for – ranging from the (para)linguistic and musical code to the syntactic code (editing); see Chaume (2004:17-22).

2.1. Hijacking act one: Ludicrism

Ludicrism is based on a playful attitude towards language (and situations) whereby the indeterminacy of signs is exploited in order to do “specifically subversive sexual-political work” (Harvey 2000:247). Ludicrism can manifest itself in motivated naming practices (nicknames) and wordplay, including explicit double entendres (*ibid.*:248-49).

The very beginning of the subtitled film, at 00:00:6, is an educational caption explaining the atypical proper name that frames the entire narrative (‘/’ indicates a subtitle break): “Stella: first name, feminine. / Trella: [Greek noun] madness, lunacy, extravagance”. Further down, at 00:02:36, the Greek title (Στρέλλα) is subtitled as *A Woman's Way / (Strella)*. This metalinguistic awareness is then rehearsed by Strella herself. In Example 1 below, the left-hand column provides the ST followed by a literal backtranslation (BT); the right-hand column shows the target text (TT), with time codes and numbered sequential subtitles – ‘/’ indicates a line break in two-line subtitles:

Example 1

ST	TT 00:06:49-00:06:56
ST: Με λένε Στέλλα... Οι φίλοι όμως με φωνάζουν Στρέλλα. Λένε πως είμαι λίγο τζαζ.	1. My name's Stella. 2. Friends call me Strella./They say I'm jazzed out!
BT: My name is Stella ... But friends call me	

⁶ The collocation fuck+religious symbol in Greek is a rather strong expression of anger.

Strella. They say I am a bit jazz [+slang:wacko].	
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Strella exhibits a playful attitude to language, quick-wittedness being an important element of her characterization. In Example 2, she comically diffuses self-reference:

Example 2

ST A)	TT 00:31:39-00:31:44
- Πού έμαθες; - Στα ΙΕΚ Ξυνή. Μόνη μου, καλέ, πού να μάθω; Ταλέντο είναι αυτό.	1. Where did you learn? 2. At Oxford University! / I'm a natural, silly!
BT 1. Giorgos: [watching Strella fixing her chandelier] Where did you learn this? 2. Strella: At IPT [Institute of Professional Training] Xyne. On my own, <i>kale</i> [vocative], where could I learn this? It's a talent.	
ST B)	TT 00:33:10-00:33:13
- Πιάνουν τα χέρια σου εσένα. - Πολλά πιάνουν τα χέρια μου.	- You sure are good with your hands! / -You have no idea!
BT 1. Giorgos: Your hands grab [idiom: skilled] 2. Strella: My hands grab lots of things.	

In segment B) of Example 2, Strella deflects a compliment with suggestive wordplay, fanning her fingers at Giorgos; the English subtitle also features the double entendre, matching the movement she makes. In segment A), the implication that Strella has had any formal education is deflected with sarcasm. Interestingly, the reference to 'IPT Xyne' is replaced in the subtitle by 'Oxford', given that such institutions are a Greek peculiarity. These are private enterprises that offer higher or vocational education; they have existed for decades and have been widely advertised in the media, but they have only recently been recognized by the Greek constitution. The connotation of a cure-all, low-quality educational institution is thus reframed in the subtitles, possibly underlining the impossibility of a scenario of formal training.

Strella's quick-wittedness occasionally verges on bitter existential commentary too, as in Example 3.

Example 3

ST	TT 00:21:24-00:21:38
- Ωχ πούστη μου, Τη μάνα μου ξέχασα, έπρεπε να της στείλω λεφτά με το ταχυδρομείο το γαμημένο. - Μην χάσεις, μην της λείπει η δόση της. - Τι να κάνω ρε Στρελλάκι, το αδελφάκι μου σκέφτομαι. - Αυτό σε σκέφτεται; Οικογένειες! Η κατάρα των τρानς!	1. Oh shit, I totally / forgot about her! 2. I was supposed to send her / money by fucking post. 3. Too bad, now she can't get high! 4. It's my little sister I'm thinking of. 5. Fucking families! / The curse of every tranny!
BT 1. Alex: Oh, my faggot! I forgot my mum, I should have sent her money through the fucking post. 2. Strella: Don't miss out, she shouldn't miss her dose.	

3. Alex: What should I do <i>re</i> [disagr. particle] Strellaki [+neuter/diminutive] [it is] my sibling [+neuter/diminutive] I think of! 4. Stella: Is it thinking of you? Families! The curse of trans [loan/zero suffix].
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The language-specific ironic cues in Example 3 are compensated for in the subtitles, allowing contextual implications to remedy omissions. Thus, the double negations and the verb ‘miss out’ used by Stella (BT-2) and which deliver a direct attack in Greek are left out; instead, TT-3 starts off with *too bad*, an economically phrased, idiomatic, evaluative statement on the result of Alex’s actions followed by a paralinguistically motivated exclamation mark. The challenging assertion which masquerades as a question (BT-4) is also left out; yet the vehicle of her bitter humour remains in the subtitles (TT-5): Stella targets the institution of the family in general, and the addition of the modifier *fucking* conveys her frustration about the incongruity of a child feeding a parent’s addiction.

Overall, the subtitles of the entire film deftly recontextualize the original dialogue to retain the humour. The wittiness of delivery and the play with maxims of communication and other linguistic resources, such as the ones outlined above, are conveyed in idiomatic and well-timed subtitles.

2.2. Hijacking act two: Inversion

Inversion refers to the “reversal of an expected order of or relation between signs”, including grammatical gender markers and gendered proper names (Harvey 2000:245). It also entails a reversal of expected rhetorical routines (*ibid.*:246). In the following excerpt, Stella returns to her house, a former brothel or *dello* (short for *bordello*), as she calls it, which she inherited from a deceased transsexual. There she finds out that her effeminate friend, Alex, has trashed the place. She tries to wake him up; the two of them engage in rhetorically ambivalent bonding, expressed through insults and ‘feminine’ discourse.

Example 4

ST	TT 00:19:57-00:20:40
- Σήκω! Σήκω! Σήκω μωρή. - Τι, τι; - Τυρανόσαυρος! Σήκω μωρή γουρούνα. - Πας καλά κοπέλα μου; Πως ξυπνάς έτσι τον κόσμο. - Ο κόσμος δεν θα έπρεπε να βρίσκεται εδώ. - Αϊ στο διάολο μωρή, πρωί-πρωί. - Σήκω μωρή... Τώρα!!! Μπουρδέλο!!! - Αϊ γαμήδια... γελοία!!! - Δύο μέρες έλειψα απ’ το σπίτι και το διέλυσες. - Μωρ’ δε μας χέζεις λέω εγώ. - Άχρηστη γυναικα. Θες να βάλεις και φουστάνια...!	1. Get up. 2. Get up you bitch! 3. - What? / - Get up you lazy bitch! 4. That’s no way to wake people up! 5. You “people” shouldn’t / be here in the first place. 6. Oh, go to hell! 7. I said get up... / NOW! 8. - It’s a fucking pigsty in here! / - Fuck off... you slut! 9. I’ve only been gone for 2 days / and you’ve torn the place apart. 10. - Will you get off my back? / - Call yourself a lady!
BT 1. Stella: Get up! Get up! Get up <i>mori</i> [vocative]. 2. Alex: What, what? [phonol./ti/]	

3. Strella: Tyrannosaurus! Get up <i>mori</i> pig [+fem.]. 4. Alex: Are you sane, my girl? How do you wake people up like that? 5. Strella: People should not be here. 6. Alex: Go to hell, <i>mori</i> , morning [time adv. Redublication: irritation]. 7. Strella: Get up <i>mori</i> ... Now!!! Brothel!!! [swearing/idiom: mess] 8. Alex: Fuck off... fool [+fem.]. 9. Strella: I'm only gone for two days from home, and you destroyed it. 10. Alex: <i>Mori</i> , don't you shit on us [swearing/idiom: go away], [is what] I'm saying! 11. Strella: Useless woman. You want to put on dresses...!	
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Strella exploits Greek phonology to give a mock reply, “*tyrannosaurus*” (BT-3), to Alex’s “what” (pronounced as /ti/ in Greek; BT-2). She also uses the insulting female vocative *mori*⁷ (BT-1 & 3). Greek uses inflections to distinguish between feminine, masculine and neuter grammatical gender in certain vocatives and in all pronouns, (in)definite articles, adjectives and nouns, such as ‘pig’ (BT-3), which is marked for the female gender (the English equivalent here would be ‘sow’). Following Alex’s gender-inversed cues, such as female forms for ‘fool’ and mock-insults in BT-8, and *mori* in BT-10, Strella retorts by skewing the idiom ‘to wear trousers’ to comment on Alex’s mess in BT-11; this is an expression which signals an ideal of masculinity/power, except that in this example the established male sign is replaced with ‘dresses’, thus alluding to an ideal of femininity, orderliness, and perhaps even the aspiration of a pre-operative queer man to become lady-like, a real woman. The semi-serious verbal attack is both effective in waking Alex up and in reaffirming their bond, because this conversation soon ends with the following turns: (Alex: Μωρό μου! (My baby!) Strella: Ψυχή μου! (My soul!); rendered as “- Darling baby... / - Sweetie!” in the subtitles – 00:21:50-00:21:51). The effectiveness of the subtitles in Example 4 relies on fast-paced, idiomatic turn-taking and on the use of ‘fuck’: Strella’s *fucking pigsty* in TT-8 is an expansion of the vulgar idiom ‘brothel’ in the original dialogue, which indicates something messy in Greek; this is mixed with semantically feminine lexical items like *bitch* and *slut* in TT2, 3 and 8. The final statement in TT-10 (*Call yourself a lady!*) also evokes the pride in enunciating a ladylike transidentity, as opposed to the more ‘visual’, concrete idiom ‘put on dresses’ in the original dialogue.

In Example 5, Alex informs Strella of his mother’s death. He blames himself for not being there for her and then considers the funeral details.

Example 5

ST A)	TT 00:58:32-00:58:55
Πέθανε η μάνα μου ρε συ. Ήταν χάλια τον τελευταίο καιρό. Και όλο έλεγα θα πάω, ρε πούστη μου, και δεν πήγα η πούτάνα... Την άφησα έτσι.	1. My mom died. 2. She hadn't been doing / very well lately. 3. I kept telling myself I'd go / see her and I never did. 4. Stupid bitch that I am!
BT	

⁷ ‘More’[+masc.] originates from the ancient Greek *moros* (‘stupid’, ‘moron’); the feminine form is *mori*.

My mum died <i>re</i> [particle] you. She was a mess in the last few days. And I always thought I'd go <i>re</i> [particle], my faggot, and I the whore didn't go... I left her like that. ⁸	
ST B)	TT 00:59:06-00:59:16
ST - Αυτά τι είναι μεσ' στην τσάντα; - Κάτι ρούχα του αδελφού του Κώστα. Ένα παντελόνι, ένα σακάκι. Για την κηδεία. Τι να φορέσω; Αγορίστια ε; - Ε, μάλλον.	1. What's in the bag? 2. Some clothes for the funeral. 3. - Should I wear men's clothes? / - I guess so.
BT 1. Stella: What are these in the bag? 2. Alex: Some clothes from Kostas' brother. A pair of trousers, a suit. For the funeral. What should I wear? Boyish [neuter/+plural] eh? 3. Stella: Well, yes.	

In segment A), Alex uses two vocatives, one marked for male and one for female grammatical gender; the former is a slang emphatic vocative ('my faggot')⁹ which simultaneously signals rhetorical commitment to the hearer; the latter, 'whore', is again a slang, self-deprecating reference used by women. The former is lost in the subtitles but the latter is rendered as *stupid bitch... !* in TT-4 (Segment A), thus relaying the feeling of guilt (and with an exclamation to highlight the emotional intensity). In segment B), Alex is wondering whether he should wear 'boyish clothes'; this is rendered as *men's clothes* in TT-3. The utterance is humorous because it reveals Alex's 'unusual' sartorial sense; it also queries the convergence of normative and subcultural aspects of identity in a 'serious' social event, a funeral. Yet the Greek text has an additional layer of meaning that is lost in translation. 'Boyish' is used in connection with small children or babies; thus it connotes a choice of gendering an individual that is still amorphous and undecided on the outside.

In general, the inversions evident in this film survived translation through a necessary shift of focus from morphological resources in Greek to strategic lexical choices in English. This, in combination with the humour discussed in section 2.1, may explain the references to "campy dialogue" as one of the appealing features of the film in official websites of Film Festivals.¹⁰

There were, however, some exceptions where inversion was not adequately conveyed. For example, inversion also occurs in 'performed text', as in the traditional rhyming birthday song sung in the honour of a trans colleague in the *Koukles* (Dolls) bar (00:41:57). This starts "may you live 'Efoula' [female proper name Efe+feminine diminutive suffix]", and although it should finish with the Greek adjectival noun *sofos*, used for both men and women, it ends with

⁸ The use of the informal particle *re* in this example serves as a link to a commonly known narrated entity and an emphatic of regret (Karachaliou 2011); in Example 3, 00:21:24-00:21:38, *re* serves as a friendly indicator of disagreement (*ibid.*).

⁹ The 'my' in 'my faggot' is not a possessive pronoun; it is a pronoun used in a different case (genitive) and functions as an adjunct to negative expressions and swear words to foreground the person affected.

¹⁰ See Seattle International Film Festival (2011) <http://www.siff.net/festival/film/detail.aspx?id=28988> and the 17th Greek Film Festival in Australia (2010) http://www.greekfilmfestival.com.au/a_woman_s_way__strella (both accessed 10 February 2012).

the more clearly masculine *trellos* (crazy).¹¹ This text is not translated, possibly because both the cake and the extravagantly camp outfits/gestures are visually accessible.

Perhaps the most representative example of inversion in the whole film can be seen in the conversation between Strella and Mary, her adoptive trans-mother, who suffers from terminal cancer and has just been informed of Strella's incestuous affair.

Example 6

ST	TT 01:05:30-01:05:53
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Κάνε ό,τι θέλεις αλλά να είσαι έτοιμη για όλα. - Τι εννοείς; - Μα είσαι σοβαρή; Είναι ύβρις κούκλα μου! - Τι είναι; - Ύβρις μωρή! Ύβρις πού 'λεγαν οι αρχαίες. - Ποιες; - Οι αρχαίες! Η Σοφοκλής, η Ευριπίδης... - Ποιες είναι αυτές; Τρανς; - Μην κοροϊδεύεις! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do as you please, / but be prepared for anything. 2. - What do you mean? / - It's hubris, darling! 3. - It's what? / - Hubris! Like the ancients used to say. 4. Who? 5. The ancient Greeks! / Miss Sophocles, miss Euripides... 6. - Who were they? Trannies? / - Don't make fun!
<p>BT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mary: Do whatever you want but be prepared for anything. 2. Strella: What do you mean? 3. Mary: Are you serious? It is hubris, my doll! 4. Strella: It is what? 5. Mary: Hubris, <i>mori</i>! Hubris as the ancients [+fem.] used to say. 6. Strella: Who [+fem./plural]? 7. Mary: The ancients [+fem.]! The [+fem.] Sophocles, the [+fem.] Euripides. 8. Strella: Who [+fem./plural] are they? Trans? 9. Mary: Don't make fun. 	

Mary manipulates the grammatical gender of an adjectival noun in the fossilized Greek expression 'as the *ancients* used to say' (BT-5). This puzzles Strella, and Mary then uses gender inversion for the definite article that goes with Sophocles/Euripides, a highly creative/humorous technique in Greek (BT-7). In the subtitles, this play on gender is lexically maintained in the latter half of the conversation, with the unexpected addition of a term of address, *Miss* (TT-5). Instead of phasing in the inversion in TT-3 to reinforce this inversion (say, by using 'old girls' instead of 'ancients'), the humour is transferred to Strella's mock-ignorance answer in TT-6, perhaps increasing the processing effort of viewers.

Overall, references to the ancient Greek past can be seen through the lens of the hijacking aesthetics discussed earlier in this article (i.e. the authority/certainty of that past is deconstructed). There are additional scenes which, from an iconographic and syntactic (editing) perspective (Chaume 2004: 21-22), serve as cohesive devices. For example, at 00:34:40, when Giorgos is still looking for his son in Athens, there is a close shot of a road sign reading 'Sophocles Street' in Greek, on-screen text that was left untranslated. Other proper names are equally loaded. For instance, the Michalopoulos family come from a village outside Tripoli in

¹¹ The Greek birthday song literally translates: May you live [name], and many years / may you grow old with white hair / may you spread everywhere the wisdom light / and everyone will say here's a wise *sofos*.

the Peloponnese, and Strella used to be called Leonidas; Leonidas was the hero-king of Sparta (situated in the Peloponnese) who fell at the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC along with his 300 Spartan warriors as they defended Greek lands from invasion by the Persian empire. Strella, as an inverse reincarnation of Leonidas, refutes ideals of masculinity; she overcomes her past and survives. Strella's utterance after the dramatic disclosure of incest is stridently paradoxical: 'Look at me! Do I look like Leonidas?'.

2.3. Hijacking act three: Paradox

In paradox, two contradictory concepts or views are employed simultaneously, "suggesting the possibility of a more inclusive and complex 'truth'" (Harvey 2000:244). Paradox covers incongruities of register, high/low culture admixtures, the co-existence of explicitness and covertness, all with a potential to create subcultural solidarity (*ibid.*:244, 245). I have already explained that the film is an ironic mixture of cinematic techniques, values and cultural allusions. Thus, when Giorgos is reunited with Strella in the end, he says:

Example 7

ST	TT 01:34:36-01:34:38
Με έκανες να σ' αγαπήσω με όλους τους τρόπους που ένας πατέρας μπορούσε να αγαπήσει το παιδί του.	1. You made me love you / in every possible way... 2. a father could love his child.
BT You made me love you in all the ways a father could love his child.	

This is a simultaneously "ludicrous and shocking" statement, which possibly constitutes the main linchpin of the film (Papanikolaou 2010:13). Similar reminders of this paradoxical mix of ideas can be seen in the final, Christmas celebration scene, when the director exploits the musical code (Chaume 2004:18). Two love songs describing the upheaval that love brings to a woman's life are used: 'It is Love's Fault' by Atzela Demetriou (which Strella expertly sings to Alex's baby sister, even parroting Demetriou's sibilant S's) and 'Only a Woman' by Kaite Gkrey; the two songs, which carry an ambivalent, ludicrous/shock value for a Greek-speaking audience only, are briefly foregrounded; there is a swift transition to retro disco music (played by a fittingly clad Alex) and then to the final dark, hard rock indie piece by Michales Delta that serves as a denouement.

Equally paradoxical from an editing perspective are the cartoon fantasy interludes featuring a squirrel. These are snapshots from dreams that Giorgos has at the following points: when he sleeps with Strella (00:15:05-00:15:21; squirrel climbing a tree on a sunny day); when he discovers her identity (01:03:02-01:03:09; squirrel eating flesh and hissing against ominous sunset-red background); when he visits the house in the village (01:16:57-01:17:03; empty branch on a rainy day, no squirrel); in the final scene when he blissfully looks out of the window (01:45:10-01:45:15; squirrel on a branch of Christmas tree with lights). These micro-narratives can be explained from the father/child perspective and are linked to Giorgos' view-master toy which contains cartoon characters, the central one being the squirrel. They can possibly be seen as queering techniques too, because they interrupt the plot and serve as a defamiliarization

technique, and because genderless, transmogrifying (here Freudian/totemic) cartoons often point out instabilities of gender and identity (Griffin 2005:107-108).

An obvious linguistic feature that evokes an alternative view of community in the film is the use of *kaliardá*, that is, queer subcultural expressions; these include *tzournevo* (to steal), *latsós* (handsome) and *dik!* (look!). Interestingly, the film script for the cinema release contains two footnotes explaining such terms, thus pointing to possible solutions to be adopted in the subtitles: *balamó* (“male client, guy, the john”), *but gradé* (“very rich, very luxurious”). As a code in the film, *Kaliardá* does not stand in opposition to contiguously present formal/neutral style, because it is only used between members of the same subculture. However, it interacts vertically with standard Greek, both in the film and beyond; many Greek viewers may retrieve the meaning of some of these words from the context, but the majority retain their defamiliarizing effect. *Kaliardá* expressions are neutralized in the subtitles, because the alternative of using an ‘equivalent’ sociolect in English would have been rather marked or would have increased the processing effort for the international audience for whom the cinema subtitles were designed. Yet the overall impression is that this loss is compensated for by exploiting other aspects of style, camp-related or otherwise (see Examples 8 and 9 below).

Similar distinctions between high/low culture can be seen in the musical and iconographic code (Chaume 2004:18-19) when, working at the *Koukles* bar, Stella does a parodic impersonation of Maria Callas and a colleague of hers imitates yet another cultural icon in Greek culture, namely, the actress Melina Mercouri. Whilst assuming the make-up, dress code and posture of a pseudo-Callas, Stella highjacks her persona: she suggestively flicks her tongue around the opening of an empty beer bottle and mimes doing lines of cocaine, both acts being integrated seamlessly into her operatic singing. Her colleague, who mimicks Mercouri, is less ‘creative’ but still exaggerates the facial expressions and mannerisms of Mercouri, something that a non-Greek audience may not appreciate, as Mercouri is not internationally known to the same extent as Callas. The capacity of drag to uncover the imitative structure of gender (Butler 1990:137) here becomes a “double cite” (Jones 2006:461); transgender, ‘constructed’ women imitate the grand dames of Greek culture.

Paradox is the defining feature of the film, and this is reflected in Greek reviews (Papanikolaou 2010) as well as in comments by international viewers on websites such as Rotten Tomatoes; in the latter case, perspectives vary slightly, but a common theme seems to be the “twists in the story”, and the “daring” portrayal of “taboos” and alternative ways of being.¹² However, paradox, along with the next semiotic resource, parody, constitute dimensions with both the greatest potential and the greatest limitations. Precisely because they rely heavily on the cultural matrix of viewers, their capacity to work as triggers of a unique gaze upon the film will be relative. As I explained earlier, realia and ‘echoes’ of various kinds may not be readily recognized by TT viewers (nor, occasionally, by ST viewers).

2.4. Hijacking act four: Parody

As Harvey explains, parody is a critical repetition of the form of an original in order to expose its arbitrary nature (2000:251). The paradoxical nature of *Stella* allows visual and syntactic/editing parody to be read throughout the film. As was shown above, this is a film that is replete with

¹² See <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/10011173-stella/comments.php?reviewid=1990935> (accessed 10 February 2012).

hijacking intertextuality. The scene where pseudo-Mercouri performs and Strella is pointing the stage lights onto her as a technician is identical to the first scene from Kakogiannis' *Stella* (Papanikolaou 2010:13), except that pseudo-Mercuri 'deviates' from the original by saying "*Mori*, where are the lights?" when Strella is distracted by a phone call. Even certain characters, such as the "matriarchal character of Mary", allude to the delivery and ethical gravitas of dramatic roles played by Katina Paxinou (1900-1973) (*ibid.*), a distinguished Greek actress who played various roles in modern European plays and ancient Greek tragedies in particular.

Verbally, parody can be seen in the use of surface features that diverge from the "supposed male verbal form", such as innuendo (especially depreciatory comments about addressees), hyperbole, exclamation and vocatives (Harvey 2000:253). In Example 8, Strella is fixing Mary's TV and both are joined by Vilma, Mary's close friend. The aesthetic value of feminine discourse is capitalized upon.

Example 8

ST	TT 00:37:22-00:37:49
<p>- Πω πω ντουμάνι! Ντουμάνι! Πάλι καπνός εδώ μέσα. Βρε Μαίρη δεν είπαμε δεν θέλω καπνό εδώ μέσα.</p> <p>- Ακούστε, πλάκωσε η κομαντατούρ! Η Στρέλλα καπνίζει μωρή όχι εγώ.</p> <p>- Ποια; Αχ Στρελλάκι μου, εσύ είσαι κοριτσάκι μου, τι κάνεις; Πάλι με το καλιαρντόκουτο ασχολείσαι; Θα φας μαζί μας. Έχω φτιάξει φασολάκια.</p> <p>- Όλα τα μαρτύρια...</p> <p>- Μωρέ θα τα φας και θα πεις κι ένα τραγούδι. Μωρή, έμαθες τι έπαθε η Τούλα ο υδραυλικός; Πάω να κάνω καφέ.</p> <p>- Και γω καφέ!</p> <p>- Εσύ το μουνί μου θα πεις.</p>	<p>1. It's fucking stuffy in here!</p> <p>2. Mary, didn't I tell you / not to smoke in here?</p> <p>3. It's the Nazi patrol! / It's Strella smoking, not me.</p> <p>4. Strella honey, how are you?</p> <p>5. Still trying to fix that shitbox?</p> <p>6. You're staying for lunch, / I made stew.</p> <p>7. What have I done / to deserve this?</p> <p>8. Shut up you bitch!</p> <p>9. Did you hear about / Toula, the plumber?</p> <p>10. - I'll make coffee. / - I want some too!</p> <p>11. You'll drink my cunt!</p>
<p>BT</p> <p>1. Vilma: My! My! Smoke [+slang]! Smoke [+slang]! Again smoke in here! <i>Re</i>[disagr.particle] Mary, didn't we say I don't want smoking in here?</p> <p>2. Mary: Hear, hear, the Kommandatur arrived [+slang]! <i>Mori</i>, Strella is smoking, not me.</p> <p>3. Vilma: Who? (kissing Strella). Oh, my Strellaki [+diminutive], it is you girl [+diminutive] how are you? Are you still dealing with the kaliardá-box? Will you have lunch with us. I have made fasolakia [green bean casserole].</p> <p>4. Mary: (expressing disgust) All the tortures!</p> <p>5. Vilma: <i>More</i>, you will eat them and you will say a song [idiom: that's final]. (turning to Strella) <i>Mori</i>, did you hear what happened to Toula [+fem.] the plumber [+masc.]? I am going to make some coffee.</p> <p>6. Mary: Coffee for me too!</p> <p>7. Vilma: You will drink my cunt.</p>	

Vilma expresses her disapproval of Mary's smoking habit (BT-1, and later on in the film confesses to Stella how worried she is about Mary's condition); this is expressed more forcefully in the subtitles with the addition of *fucking* (TT-1). Mary retorts with a loan word from German to indicate that Vilma's overprotection is unnecessary (BT-2), and although the overall meaning is transferred in the subtitles (TT-3), the metalinguistic sensitivity, mock-attack and humour of code-switching are not conveyed. Equally unclear in the subtitles (TT-7) is Mary's hyperbolic dismissal of a dish of *fasolakia* (BT-4; *fasolakia* is a casserole of green beans in tomato sauce, a culture-specific reference). The subtitles feature a more neutral/less unpalatable *stew* and, interestingly, they indicate a slight shift of scenario in TT-7 and 8: the subtitles focus more on Vilma's controlling nature, given the expressivity change in her curt answer: "shut up you bitch!". Other female/camaraderie discourse features can be seen when Vilma employs two affective vocatives with a diminutive suffix and a neologism – 'kaliardá-box' (BT-3). The functional solutions the subtitler employs are one female vocative (*honey*) and swearing (which replaces the sociolectal compound) in TT-4 and 5. These forms set up the scene for a gossip session about 'Toula the plumber' (BT-5). This is highly humorous in Greek as *Toula* is an informal, shortened form for some female first names and 'plumber' connotes a stereotypically macho profession; this instance of humour does not come through in the subtitles. When Mary asks for a cup of coffee (BT-6), an overprotective Vilma (BT-7) exploits the frame of a standard slang expression in Greek – 'you will take my balls', normally used by men – as a challenging refusal to grant a wish, replacing 'take' and 'balls' with 'drink' and 'cunt', respectively (TT-11). Her linguistic creativity and exaggerated protectiveness are completely lost in the literally translated subtitle, "You'll drink my cunt!", which reads as yet another curt reply, and a bizarre one at that.

A few seconds later, Mary asks for a morphine patch, because she is in pain. Then both she and Stella veer off to gossip:

Example 9

ST	TT 00:38:05-00:38:58
<p>- Έφερες αυτά τα πατσ; Φέρε μου ένα. Αυτά αγαπώ. Ας είναι καλά ο Γιάννης ο γιατρός. Ήταν και κούκλος τότε βέβαια, μην τον βλέπεις τώρα. - Γιατί, καλέ, μια χαρά είναι και τώρα. - Α, μωρή, γεροντόφιλη. Τρομερή μπάρα βέβαια. - Ναι, ε; - Ντικ μωρή! - Τι θεϊκό που είναι! Δεν το 'χω ξαναδεί. - Όταν το φορούσα αυτό, το '75...76, γινότανε κυκλοφοριακό.</p>	<p>1. Did you get the patches? / Give me one. 2. I just love these things! 3. Thank God for Dr. Yiannis. 4. - He used to be such a hunk! / - He looks just fine to me. 5. You necrophiliac! 6. - He's got a whopper chopper!! / - Really? 7. Check this out girl! 8. Simply divine!! 9. Back in '75, it used / to stop traffic.</p>
<p>BT 1. Mary: Did you bring those patches? Give me one. These I do love. May Giannis the doctor be well [idiom: 'thank god for']. He was a hunk then, of course, don't look at him now. 2. Stella: Why, <i>kale</i>, he is just fine now too. 3. Mary: <i>Mori</i> gerontophile. Terrific bar though! 4. Stella: Yes? 5. Mary: <i>Dik</i> [look] <i>mori</i>! 6. Stella: How divine it is! I have not seen it before. 7. Mary: When I put this on in '75/'76 there was a</p>	

Mary trivializes her medication by using an expression that alludes to utterances of actresses in (possibly cigarette) adverts ('These I do love'; BT-1), an allusion that is lost in the subtitle ("I just love these things!", TT-2), although the exclamation mark may function as a cue of camp exaggeration. She comments on Dr Giannis' old age; Strella reacts, using the female vocative *kale* (literally 'good') and the temporal adverb 'now' to emphasize her disagreement (BT-2). the subtitle ("He looks just fine to me", TT-4) focuses on this disagreement. Mary responds by calling Strella *gerontophile* (BT-3); this is replaced with the more hyperbolic *necrophiliac*" in the subtitles (TT-5). Mary also seizes the opportunity to comment on the length of Giannis' organ, using a slang expression for penis ('bar', BT-3), which is idiomatically rendered in the subtitles (chopper, TT-6), although the adjunct indicating a concession in the original dialogue ('though') is not translated, slightly reducing coherence. Finally, Mary draws Strella's attention to the dress she wants to wear when she dies, and uses a hyperbole to comment on her beauty when she was young ('When I put this on in '75/'76 there was a traffic jam', BT-7). It is interesting that Mary's use of *mori* with the kaliardá expression for 'look!' (BT-5) is somehow compensated for in the subtitles with an informal phrasal verb plus inversion ("Check this out girl!", TT-7). However, Strella's compliment on not having seen the dress on her before (BT-6), perhaps another feature of female bonding, is not translated, despite a gap of 4 seconds between turns; this leaves the expressive collocation "simply divine" (TT-8) as the main vehicle of bonding.

Overall, parodic sequences in the film cut are transferred effectively, except, arguably, for all instances of visual parody and a few instances of verbal parody (i.e. very specific intertextual fragments). The subtitler seems to tackle verbal parody qualitatively by strategically shifting the balance within a system of vocatives, slang, swearing and exaggerations (coupled with punctuation) to mark the points in the dialogue where the characters diverge from male verbal routines.

3. A graceful withdrawal

Strella is a collage of messages that express— in subtle or exaggerated ways — the theme of transgressing boundaries demarcated by established certainties. Such boundaries and preconceptions of identity have to be productively questioned, for as Butler argues, identity is not a "uniform certainty" but "[materializes in a] map of power in which identities are constituted and/or erased, deployed and/or paralysed" (1993:117). Transgender characters in *Strella* can be seen to have 'deviant' bodies and sexual desires that unsettle. They also opt for unique ways of dealing with circumstances, social structures and cultural repertoires in which they are embedded; their agency is often shaped by their social milieu and their complex personal histories, including emotional and physical abuse. In linguistic terms, transgender characters appropriate the dominant masculine and feminine discourses around them.

This article has focused on the operationalization of a highly abstract notion, identity, with a view to allowing a meaningful interaction between text and context to emerge. A framework of subcultural semiotic devices based on ludicism, inversion, paradox and parody was shown to facilitate film analysis and the evaluation of subtitles. The opportunities to discuss cohesion between scenes or between individual subtitles, the transfer of emotive aspects at a lexical level, the relay of the pragmatic force of speech acts are endless, because the 'repertoiremes' I have grouped under the four foci are by no means exhaustive. For example,

although the editing code was taken into account, a more careful examination of *gaze* and *shots/reverse shots* (Halberstam 2005:83, 86) could have interesting implications for subtitlers. Needless to say, the same four parameters can be approached differently if other language pairs were considered (the cinema subtitles for this film are now available in French, German, Spanish and Korean), or if monolingual subtitling or audio description were to be examined.¹³ Given that transgenderism has received little (if any) attention in translation studies so far, it would perhaps be interesting to allow the model of analysis envisaged here to ripple back to ‘translation proper’ too: there may be interpreting/translation environments where transgender thematics (perhaps in museums/events) or transgender clients are involved. Issues of ‘ambiguously doing and being’ can also be directly linked to professional ethics, frames of activism and contexts of censorship in various places around the world, involving minor and major discourses.

There are further implications. As Halberstam (2005:96) argues, the proliferation of art forms featuring the ‘transgender body’ as a spectacle in recent years throws up important questions as to what this ‘body’ means: for some audiences it may simply confirm the established binary gender system; others may see it through the lens of a “fantasy of fluidity so common to notions of transformation within the postmodern” (*ibid.*); for others still it may stand for “a utopian vision of a world of subcultural possibilities” (*ibid.*). When alternative frames of reference constantly come into being and are diffused with the help of art and the media, the map of relations and concepts of, say, ‘normal’ masculinity, shift with them. As much as a relationality effect, this is also a translation effect.

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¹³ Dubbing is highly unlikely as this Greek film is shown in festivals.

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Filmography

Strella (2009). Dir. Panos Koutras. Dvd – Editor's Cut. 109 mins (Viewed in VLC player).