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Adelaide Ristori's Tour of the East Mediterranean (1864–1865) and the Discourse on the Formation of Modern Greek Theatre

IOANNA PAPAGEORGIOU

The new aesthetic experience offered by the Italian diva to the Hellenic upper classes of the Orient was filtered through their broader concerns related to social and national visions. Adelaide Ristori was received as a representative of Western culture, which at that time bore the double significance of social progress and economic exploitation in the Near East. For a minority of commentators, she was one more European speculator who was taking advantage of the supposed treasures of the East. For the supporters of westernization, however, the performances and her personality raised issues which had been discussed in Western Europe a long time previously, regarding the power of the theatre to shape national and social conscience and the relationship between art and material culture.

Adelaide Ristori, the celebrated Italian tragedian of the nineteenth century, was undoubtedly the most travelled star of her time. From 1855 to 1864 she visited most major European cities, and in September 1864 she found herself ready for another journey, heading this time towards the main ports of the eastern Mediterranean Sea: Alexandria, Constantinople and Athens. While in Alexandria she made a one-day trip to Cairo, and on her way to Constantinople she gave one performance in Smyrna.

Considering the travelling conditions of that period, the tour was a daring and expensive venture, compelling Ristori to set the prices for entrance tickets high. Her audience was inevitably restricted to spectators from the upper social strata in each city. A great part of that audience consisted of wealthy Greek people, who, by the time Ristori embarked on her eastern journey, had already taken off on their own cultural journey towards the West, in search of models for their new social identity. For them, the Italian diva was not simply a cultural ambassador of Italy – as she intended to be received[1] – but a representative of Western civilization in general. Greek spectators, in their majority unaccustomed to dramatic performances of high artistic and emotional effect, were profoundly affected by the actress's extraordinary stage impact. Her performances showed them that dramatic art offered a powerful means for shaping the cultural and national identity they wished to promote. However, their enthusiasm was tempered by moral considerations regarding conformity between the high moral ends assigned to theatre and the material basis of its operation. Moreover, depending on the nationalistic standpoint of each commentator, Ristori's symbolic status came to signify opposing views regarding the West.[2]

The aim of this article is to define Ristori's crucial contribution to the public discourse raised in Greece about the revival of drama in its birthplace, as well as to explain the contradictory reactions her visit triggered among the Hellenic audiences of both Greece and the Ottoman Empire.

Ristori's expedition started in Alexandria, some time at the beginning of October 1864, and concluded in Athens on 28 January 1865.[3] Except for remarks on the effect of her acting, and on the benefits and charity performances, the newspapers of Alexandria and Constantinople, unlike the those of Athens, made no further comments on her appearances. This was probably due to the fact that most Greek newspapers of the period were primarily concerned with politics and economics. Apart from recording outstanding social events or news related to their community, they had not yet endeavoured to provide any regular theatre criticism.[4] Therefore they only reported a few titles of her repertory.

Alexandria at that time had four theatres hosting Italian tragedies and operas and, less often, Greek plays. Ristori appeared at the older wooden Rossini theatre instead of the new large and luxurious Zizinia theatre.[5] She had agreed to thirty performances for the sum of forty-five thousand Turkish piastres (about ten thousand French francs).[6] By 25 October she had performed Ernest Legouvé's *Medea*, Paolo Giacometti's *Elisabetta regina d'Inghilterra* and Racine's *Fedra*.[7] The benefit performance of that date was a unique spectacle, consisting of various unspecified theatrical and musical pieces.[8] While fulfilling her engagement in Alexandria she made a short trip to Cairo, most probably invited by Ismail, the khedive, or viceroy, of Egypt (1863–79). There she gave a single performance.[9]

Ristori remained in Alexandria until 24 November 1864, when she set off for Constantinople via Smyrna. After a horrible sea voyage the boat arrived at Smyrna, probably on 1 or 2 December, where the passengers were transferred to another liner, bound for Constantinople.[10] Before departing, and despite her fatigue, the star and businesswoman made profitable employment of the unavoidable stay at Smyrna by performing *Medea* at the Camerano theatre.[11]

The single appearance in Smyrna was succeeded by a full series of thirty performances in Constantinople, where the company arrived around 5 December.[12] In the 1860s there were mainly two theatres providing the capital of the Ottoman Empire with theatrical entertainment: the Crystal Palace, usually conceded to French operatic companies, and the Naoum theatre, which accommodated Italian operatic companies. Ristori was hosted in the second theatre, a commodious 1,500-seat building with many facilities, erected in 1848 by Joseph Naoum in order to give a roof to visiting Italian opera troupes.[13] The only performance of hers mentioned in the Greek newspapers is *Luisa Sanfelice*, probably Paolo Giacometti's play which had been incorporated in her repertory.[14] It was performed in the context of a charity event organized by the Freemasons' Grand Lodge of Italy.[15]

In mid-January 1865, after receiving a diamond-framed portrait of the Sultan, presented to her by the grand vizier,[16] Ristori took leave from her wealthy Constantinople admirers, and set out for Athens. She arrived there on about 20 January, and stayed for

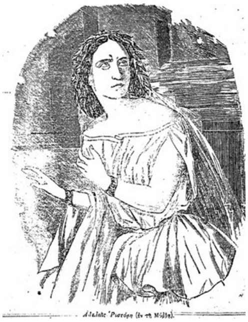
Ἀδελαΐς Ῥιστόρη (ἐν τῇ Μύῤῥᾳ).

Fig 1 **Ristori in the role of Mirra, published in *Pandora* (Athens), 15, 358 (15 February 1865), p. 536.**

a few days – until 28 January. She gave only five performances, most likely because she realized that a city of fifty thousand people could not support more, since the high ticket price excluded many otherwise regular theatre-goers. Besides, she was in a hurry to get ready for subsequent engagements in Paris and Florence.[17]

She appeared at the Athenian theatre of Boukoura, an unimposing construction completed in 1839, accommodating only between five and eight hundred spectators.[18] As a result, many ladies of high society were obliged, for the first time ever, to take seats in the pit instead of the boxes, so eager were they to watch Ristori perform.[19] For that enthusiastic public Ristori performed *Medea* on Sunday, 22 January, which was accompanied by an unspecified comedy, *Giuditta*, on Monday, 23 January, *Fedra* on Wednesday, 25 January, Vittorio Alfieri's *Mirra* on Thursday, 26 January (Fig. 1), and again *Medea* on Wednesday, 27 January. The latter was a charity night in support of the newly established poorhouse of Athens. At the end of the performance of *Mirra* she recited a 'monologue' from a 'scene' of the unidentified play *Jeanne d'Arc*.[20]

Each of the cities Ristori visited had a unique and peculiar character. Due to a series of commercial treaties between the Sultan and several European countries, the subjects of those countries were granted tax-free trading rights across the whole Ottoman Empire. These treaties, known as 'capitulations', encouraged many Western companies to expand their businesses to the major cities of the empire, attracting the so-called Levantine Europeans. Consequently, those cities were transformed into multicultural and multilingual centres, combining characteristics of both the Eastern and Western civilizations.[21]

Particularly in Alexandria, Viceroy Mohamed Ali (1810–39), aspiring to refashion Egypt and establish it as a maritime power, encouraged the settlement of religious minorities – mostly Greek Orthodox – from Ottoman lands, granting them land and asylum. The new settlers engaged mainly in the trade of cotton, a product thriving in the fertile soils around the Nile. The privileges these newcomers enjoyed brought in vast profits, and by 1865 the half-ruined village of the early nineteenth century had evolved into a multicultural economic centre of 180,000 people.[22]

These peculiar conditions made Alexandria a port where people from all over the Mediterranean could mingle and coexist. Each ethnicity had a unique cultural identity, yet all shared a common history and lifestyle.[23] Apart from the native Egyptians, who accounted for seventy-three per cent of the city's population, other prospering communities were the Greeks and the Italians.[24] The cultural mixture becomes evident from the fact that most Alexandrians spoke several languages, especially French, Italian and English, mostly learned on the street thanks to neighbourhood relationships and the communication needs of daily life.[25]

Constantinople, on the other hand, though a city of thriving commercial life and with a population of over half a million,[26] had been reduced by that time to a semi-colonial trading post. The commercial treaties with European countries diminished the city to an intermediary role between the powerful industrial countries of the West and the Ottoman countryside.[27] The economic dependency of the city on Western capital inevitably resulted in the shift of a great part of the population towards European, mainly French, culture. A flux of consumer goods and Western habits affected the traditional oriental lifestyle, at least among the upper classes who resided in Pera and Galatas (the wide district on the eastern side of the Golden Horn). As Georges Nogues, who visited the city in 1864, noted,

> Every day . . . Constantinople received every scientific invention, artistic innovation, and frivolity of fashion: the latest novels, the most recent score, the 'mieux portée' textiles, all are accepted with equal success, not only in the Levantine living room, but in the Muslim harem as well.[28]

In both cities, the international character of commercial activities had given birth to a cosmopolitan elite of diverse ethnic backgrounds, which transcended ethnicity barriers. Within that elite different nationalities blended both in businesses and social events.[29] In Alexandria, such people probably formed the largest part of the city's theatre audience, including Greek, Italian, French, English, German and Maltese spectators. In Constantinople the mosaic of Pera society and the audiences of the Crystal Palace and the Naoum theatre were shaped by wealthy businessmen, mostly Greeks (either running their own enterprises or acting as representatives of Western companies), Levantines (settled in Constantinople due to the capitulations), Muslims (forming the upper ranks of the Ottoman bureaucracy) and foreign diplomats.[30]

For those people, who held the Western way of life to be the quintessence of high culture, Ristori's performances symbolized this sought-after ideal and were enthusiastically received. At her benefit in Alexandria the house was full of people who

> cheered and applauded the adorable Ristori during the entire performance. Ribbon-decorated laurels in the colours of the Italian and Greek flags were thrown onto the stage, and a golden diamond-joined wreath that had been ordered using collected money was offered. Printed idylls in Italian and Greek fell like snow, while golden rain was repeatedly poured on the magnificent actress from the stage ceiling . . . After the end of the performance, the musicians of the Zizinia theatre escorted her home, while the crowd watched and cheered.[31]

Although the business and the social life of that elite had a cosmopolitan character, at the same time each ethnic community retained a strong national identity. In Alexandria the Greek *koinotita* – a community structure that tuned its members' social lives – was founded in 1843 and ran its own schools and hospital.[32] In the mainland of the Ottoman Empire the Hatti Hummayun – an ordinance issued by the Great Porte after the Crimean War – granted increased rights to non-Muslim communities, yielding them considerable self-management. The new situation offered the opportunity for social and economic development, leading some communities to handle certain social issues themselves.[33] Gradually, prosperity and cultural progress became intertwined with the role that each nationality aspired to play in the great mosaic of the empire's peoples. For example, one of the most influential communities in Constantinople and other cities of Asia Minor was the Greeks. Even if they had repressed the dream of unification with the motherland, they used intellectual and economic supremacy to counterweight political oppression. Moreover, many Greek intellectuals saw their community as a conveyor of cultural enlightenment in the Near East.[34] The social models they promoted were mainly derived from ancient Greece, Western civilization and the Orthodox religion.

In Athens, liberation from the Ottoman rule did not lead to absolute national independence. Soon after the national revolution (1821–30) the citizens of the new state realized that the dream of independence they had fought for was yet far away. The small size of the new country suspended any hope of self-sufficiency, while the cost of organizing the new kingdom caused economic and, subsequently, political dependency on Western creditors. The rulers of the new country belonged to foreign royal families, while the political parties were oriented towards foreign countries as a solution to the national and economic problems of Greece, and were even named the 'French', the 'Russian' and the 'English' after their countries of 'origin'.[35]

Economic and political dependency inevitably brought about cultural dependency as well. The ruling classes of Greece, Ristori's audience in Athens, consisted of the upper ranks of the overgrown state bureaucracy, professionals who offered freelance services to the state, politicians, the descendants of the old landowner families, intellectuals and journalists who espoused Western ideological movements, doctors and lawyers educated in Western universities, and finally merchants who had made their fortunes reselling the agricultural products of Greece and of the east Mediterranean to Western companies.[36] For most of them, the West and ancient Greece provided worthier cultural models than did the traditional oriental lifestyle.[37]

Despite their Western orientation, a great part of those classes, and especially their intellectuals, still shared with their compatriots in the Ottoman Empire the same dream of the intellectual or military supremacy of Greece throughout the lands that had once belonged to the Byzantine Empire – a dream that was crystallized in the vision of the 'Great National Ideal'. Thus the desire for adopting Western habits was mingled, or sometimes confronted, with national dreams, creating an extremely sensitive ideological background, which determined the course of Greek affairs until 1922 – the year of the violent eviction of Greeks from Asia Minor.

Cultural supremacy, however, was not possible for a small country like Greece or for the Ottoman Empire's Hellenic communities, which had just begun to structure themselves according to contemporary standards. Therefore modern Greeks resorted to what they thought of as the great moment of their history; that is, ancient Greek civilization. Its revival or imitation became the guiding principle of state politics. In that context, the restoration of the classical theatre of antiquity obtained special significance.

However, the conditions of the theatre in modern Athens had little in common with its ancient glory. The small Boukoura theatre hosted mostly Italian operatic troupes, which visited Athens regularly, and from time to time it was allotted to short-lived companies formed by local semi-professional players.[38] The writer G. Mavrogiannis summarized the theatrical experience of the Athenians:

> We read some tragedies once or twice . . . our conscience remaining at ease . . . believing ourselves to have obtained a complete knowledge [of the texts]. When we suspected that our knowledge was imperfect, we rushed to the theatre of Athens. There it occurred that clumsy actors performed even clumsier plays, and as anyone can understand, our respect for drama diminished. Moreover, seeing the audience's indifference towards dramatic performances and its enthusiasm for opera, we concluded, with great disappointment, that true theatre was forever lost, and that only opera triumphed.[39]

Neither did the spectators of Constantinople and Alexandria enjoy regular Greek performances. They were more fortunate, however, because they had the opportunity to see operatic as well as French and Italian dramatic troupes. As one could expect, the quality of those travelling companies was not the highest possible. Prompted by Ristori's tour, the newspaper of Constantinople, *Telegraphos kai Byzantis* (5 December 1864), stated that it was not the first time that the public of that city had watched a great and distinguished actress.[40] However, this statement has not been verified. The scholar Stamatopoulou-Vassilakou, who has studied the Greek theatre of Constantinople during the nineteenth century, considers Ristori to be the first celebrated actress to perform in that city. Operatic troupes had visited the major east Mediterranean cities since the 1840s at least, but it seems that no distinguished dramatic performers visited Constantinople or Alexandria before 1864.[41]

For the inexperienced spectators of Athens and Constantinople, Ristori was a kind of 'witch' or 'wonder-worker' who enchanted the spectators.[42] They could not understand how the representation of a passion could be so persuasive, how it could make the audience both empathize with it and take it for real.[43] Mavrogiannis's fears, 'that true theatre had been lost forever, and that only opera triumphed', were driven away when he saw Italy's great tragedian on stage.[44]

Even ignorance of the Italian language did not hinder the audience's fascination with the spectacle. Ristori herself confided to the Athenian writer Emmanouil Roidis that during the performance of *Mirra* the spectators' attention was distracted by the continuous side-reading of the French translation.[45] According to most critiques, the impact of Ristori's acting principally emerged from the pictorial quality of her style; that is, from her ability to portray emotional states using her face and body. A critique in London's *Spectator* had termed this style 'picture acting', and it functioned effectively on non-Italian-speaking audiences.[46] Moreover, the 'Greek plasticity' of her postures proved especially successful with the modern Hellenes. It evoked paintings and sculptures, bringing associations with some ancient Greek styles. For Mavrogiannis, the

> passions of the heart are pictured by her in the same way that objects are reflected in a mirror . . . When she takes a sword in order to cut Holofernes's head, she resembles a statue of [the goddess] Themis; in the fourth act of *Fedra*, she runs around the stage like an ancient Maenad; and, in *Mirra*, when she sits on the ground struggling against death, one believes oneself to be watching a marble from the Parthenon's pediment that has shifted from its place onto the stage.[47]

Watching Ristori, Greek intellectuals realized the possibilities that dramatic performances offered in shaping national conscience. The newspaper *Ethnofylax*, in an article titled 'Ristori and the National Theatre', wrote about establishing a theatre where people would be 'spectators of worthy and great deeds and audiences of virtuous speeches and ideas articulated in the national language. [Such a spectacle] would gradually formulate our morals, rouse a national way of thinking about good and brave actions, and refine our sentiments of good'.[48]

The newspaper *Franklinos*, on the other hand, espoused an extremely chauvinistic vision: the daughter of Aeschylus would some day marry the 'Demon of Greece', and give birth to poets who would erect the temple of Melpomene, Thalia, and Euterpe. It went on to prophesy that Westerners (the 'Frankoi') would return some day to worship at that temple.[49]

Ristori's presence in Athens was not linked to any dreams for the unification of the Greek nation as existed in her native land, but it did raise many of expectations for the creation of a national theatre, which indirectly would lead to the same end. In her *Memoirs*, Ristori attested that the Greek king

> conceived the idea of reviving in the XIX century, the Greek tragedy, with all its practices, with its chorus, in a word, in its entirety, all its parts, which no longer harmonise with the corrupted forms of the modern drama. It was his desire that we should perform a tragedy, having for its *motif* a Grecian subject, in full daylight, inside of the Theatre of Bacchus, where all Greece would come. That classic enclosure had to be put in better condition for the performance, in the least possible time, by Grecian architects.[50]

Though no other source verifies this almost Wagnerian statement, concurrent developments in Athens attest to its plausibility. Discussions concerning the excavations of the Dionysus theatre and Herod's Odeon in Athens had already begun, contributing to setting public opinion in favour of the creation of a national theatre.[51] So the extraordinary dramatic experience provided by Ristori, coupled with the wise choice of roles from ancient Greek mythology and the Testaments, further nurtured such dreams. As the theatre historian Theodoros Hadjipantazis has already noted, Ristori's performances of *Medea* and *Fedra* predisposed 'public opinion to the possibility of a modern presentation of the heroes and heroines of ancient tragic poets. [They] gave shape to dreams of joining ancient tragedy with modern stage, and of developing the ancient Greeks' heritage'.[52]

The public discourse about a national theatre had been initiated in the years before the Greek Revolution of 1821.[53] However, as Mavrogiannis indicates, Ristori's astonishing influence on spectators renewed the fervour of that discourse. She convinced Athenians, whose experience of theatre had been limited to Italian opera, that drama had the power to shape manners and morals in accordance with national ideals.[54] Nevertheless, the specific form and content of 'Greek' drama, as well as the manner in which it should be performed, remained an issue for endless dispute among Greek intellectuals.

Moreover, Ristori generated concern for training Greek actors and actresses. At last it was deemed possible that the despised Greek performers could, with some help and training, attain Ristori's superior technique. Ristori herself offered to take some young Greek people with her to Italy and teach them the art of acting, but the project did not materialize.[55] Instead, the government formed a committee of intellectuals who undertook the task of organizing and directing local-company dramatic performances. The ambitious plan was worked out for some months during the following season, but the conditions were not yet ripe to establish a Greek theatre company in Athens. It would take three more decades for the dreams to come true.[56]

The enthusiasm over Ristori's visit was not, however, unanimous. Some journalists, provoked by the actress's financial arrangements and the high prices of tickets, started a war of defamation against her. The whole issue was prompted by the remarks of an unknown 'little theatrical newspaper' in Egypt. According to the newspaper *Ægyptos*, this other 'little newspaper' accused Ristori of greed and claimed that she rushed to Cairo in order to 'devour' the khedive's presents.[57] Besides, she did not give any charity performances in Alexandria, a fact that roused the anger of the Constantinople newspaper *Telegraphos kai Byzantis*.[58] The latter suggested that the motive of her tour was probably the imaginary 'golden fleece' of the Levant, and that she ought to have respected the land of Aeschylus and Euripides. Although, the article insisted, she profited immensely from performances in Alexandria, she did not make any contribution to its charitable institutions; despite her desperate desire to be adored, for both technical and moral qualities, she did not care to pay proper respect for whatever good and positive existed in the Levant. Besides, the paper wrote, 'the stage is something sacred, where the audience goes to admire what is good in the art of drama and acting'.

Ristori was most likely informed of the vicious attacks, and she did not repeat the same mistake in the other cities. In Constantinople she gave a charity performance at the Naoum theatre on 9 January, for a school for the children of the poor founded six months earlier by the Freemasons' lodges of the city.[59] In Athens, although her sojourn was extremely brief, she agreed to grant a charity performance for the support of the poorhouse of Athens.[60]

The aggravation against her was augmented by newspapers' reports on the actress's earnings from the tour. Ristori was followed by a company of several performers and assistants.[61] According to a disputable report by the Greek writer Nikolaos Dragoumis, she was accompanied by 'forty actors, secretaries, sub-secretaries, clerks, cooks, [as well as] male and female servants'.[62] The travelling expenses of so many people increased the tour's expenditure, most probably compelling Ristori to overprice tickets.[63] Prices were so excessive that journalists could not resist the temptation to guesstimate the net profit of the performances. The newspaper *Armonia* reckoned that Ristori's total takings in Constantinople amounted to three thousand Turkish pounds for thirty performances.[64] Deducting a thousand pounds for the rent of the theatre, six hundred francs a day for the company's expenses, and 7,400 francs for the passage to Naples, the net profits added up to between thirteen and fourteen thousand francs, a much larger sum than she had received in Alexandria.

The price of entry to each performance was set at twenty piastres (4.4 francs), a sum equivalent to the daily income of a skilled worker. In total, a ticket for entrance and for a seat in the pit cost twenty to forty piastres. Additionally, the average nightly cost of a box was 240 piastres (boxes ranged in price from two to three hundred piastres, depending on location), or 53.4 francs, while the usual charge was 1,600 francs, or 7,200 piastres, for a season of ninety performances.[65]

In Athens, due to the peculiar ownership status of the theatre, the prices of the boxes soared to extraordinary heights. The boxes were not controlled by the proprietor because they belonged to private owners, and in such cases as Ristori's performances they were probably auctioned. It is difficult to attain precise knowledge of the bargaining, but reported rumours show that the price of some boxes reached an unprecedented eighty drachmas, which at the time amounted to about seven French francs. The amount charged for entrance was six drachmas plus two drachmas for a seat in the pit.[66]

The financial issue may have occasioned the attacks but the hidden motives of *Telegraphos kai Byzantis*'s anonymous journalist went far deeper. The real reason for the hostility was his or her dislike of Western Europeans, originating in the recently formed conviction that Western concern with the problems of the Orient actually stemmed from economic and political calculations. Recent speculative interventions of the European countries in the Near East had shattered any illusion that the West would be of any help to the peoples who lived under Ottoman rule. This anti-Western feeling was expressed by the emblematic slogan 'the Orient for the Orient', meaning that the Orient should seek solutions to its problems by itself without expecting any help from western Europe.[67] Ristori's tour coincided with the emergence of this idea in Asia Minor. Inevitably, she was identified with the Western speculators who rushed to take advantage of the region's riches. This dislike was more noticeable in Asia Minor than in Egypt – at least there is no such indication of it in the latter in the related bibliography. This was probably due to the fact that the Alexandrian Greeks actually belonged to the new settlers who were exploiting the country's resources.

The anti-Western sentiments of *Telegraphos kai Byzantis*'s writer were further supported by the belief that the artist's preoccupation with pecuniary concerns degraded the superior function of the theatre. Art belonged to a higher sphere of life, its foremost purpose being the improvement of people's moral and mental existence. This notion was current among Greek writers at the time, and was partly responsible for many Greek people's disregard for professional acting.[68]

However, such attacks came from a minority of journalists. The majority were captivated by Ristori's charm and rushed to her rescue. Her supporters' arguments were not identical. Some thought it proper to defend the actress's 'genuine' artistic nature, claiming that it was not affected by material issues, and they disconnected financial concerns from that person's sensibility. For example, *Ægyptos*, which reported the first vicious comment against Ristori, defended the actress:

> Material things and presents could not enslave the heart and mind of a person like Ristori; this is impossible . . . Mrs Ristori does not need money, but, what if she did! A genius like her could enjoy the royal material presents (out of courteousness) without any inexplicable embarrassment, and [without] scorning material goods, that unfortunately contribute greatly to the welfare of man in society.[69]

The writer went on to add that the actress had shown philanthropic sentiments and noble character by performing for charity on the boat that had brought her to Alexandria. In accordance, the magazine *Pandora* described an episode from Ristori's tour in Spain, where she pleaded with the queen for the life of a condemned soldier.[70] The actress's sensibility was further vindicated in a fiction-like narration of her life signed by Cleon Ragavis and published in three different papers after her departure from Athens.[71] The newspaper *Armonia*, on the other hand, transcended the issue of sensibility, and bluntly stated that it was right for her to be recompensed more than was usual, for she was unusual. One does not pay, the journalist argued, the same amount of money for brown and white bread![72]

What makes this short discourse on the artist's relationship with material goods more interesting is its association with philanthropic issues. This aspect reveals more about the audience's concerns than about the actress's 'sensibility'. The upper classes of the three cities amassed riches, and used them to cultivate themselves in western European culture. However, social and economic conditions hindered their aspirations to 'westernization', especially in Athens and Constantinople. A major conceived hindrance was the issue of the homeless and the handicapped, as well as of the widows and the orphans who crowded the streets, who had to rely on the charity of passers-by for survival.[73] This situation was perceived as inappropriate for a European city. In this context, the issue of philanthropy obtained a new significance that fused nationalistic goals with social aspirations.

Actually, the first public medium to address the issue of urban poverty in Greece was the 'mystery novel'. From 1844 to 1864 about fourteen European mystery novels were translated into Greek. They dealt with the subject of the social, moral and economic degradation of the poorer strata, and could be said to have implanted the issue in Greece.[74] Ristori's visit just provided an opportunity to expand the discourse to theatre as well.

In Greece, the old communal form of *koinotita*, which had provided for its poorer members, ceased to exist after the national revolution of the 1820s. The new state adopted a highly centralized form of government, which tried to deal with the problem of impoverished people.[75] Likewise, in the Ottoman Empire, charitable institutions based on the Koran were gradually deteriorating under the pressures of economic and social change. The traditional religious image of poverty as an inseparable part of the natural order gave way to the modern perception of it as a social problem that required measures to be taken by local or national authorities.[76] A temporary solution, to which the governments of both countries resorted, was the enclosure of the beggars and the ill in institutions where they could not be seen. However, those measures failed because the state lacked the infrastructure and the economic means.[77] In contrast, the communities of Alexandria do not seem to have faced the poverty problem with the same intensity, probably because they were structured according to traditional Ottoman models. Provision for the poor was already an integral part of the community's responsibilities.[78]

At the time that Ristori made her Eastern tour, a change was under way in the Ottoman Empire and in Greece. In the former, the increased rights that the Hatti Hummayun granted to the non-Muslim communities offered these ethnic groups the opportunity to handle intra-communal poverty themselves. Provision for philanthropies, as well as for education and art, passed into the hands of the ethnic communities, and they became intertwined with the role that each aspired to play in the empire. The medical care of the ill, the protection of disadvantaged women and the education of the poor and of orphans became issues related to the destiny of each national community, and at the same time functioned as evidence of its Western identity.[79] The charity school that Ristori was invited to support was founded by the Grand Lodge of Italy with the assistance of 'some orders from other places'. It seems that the Italian lodge, like most Masonic lodges, claimed a universal character and cooperated with other nationalities. An active member was the Greek merchant and banker Nikolaos Psicharis, later consul of the Ottoman Empire at Palermo.[80] There is very little known about Freemasons' activity in the mid-nineteenth century, but their institutions probably aimed at the dissemination of their own ideology, as Greek institutions did, and they used philanthropy as a means of propagating it. Constantinople, due to its international trade transactions, was open to any foreign influence at that period.

In Greece the care of deprived social groups passed into the hands of private philanthropic societies, which had adopted the 'modern' viewpoint and considered poverty to be a social illness requiring treatment like a bodily disease. However, the discourse on poverty had not been fully developed in the mid-1860s.[81] The poorhouse, for which Ristori gave a charity performance, was the first example of such a private institution in Greece, although it ran under the older methods of confinement. In 1865 it accommodated several poor people who, in order to enjoy its care, had to obey strict rules of conduct, and were allowed to leave only twice a week – and that only for a few hours.[82]

The 'nouveaux riches' of the two countries had become rather anxious over philanthropy, and their response to Ristori did not remain unaffected by this fact. The newspaper *Evnomia* directly connected society's obligation towards the poor and the handicapped with its reaction to Ristori's performances.[83] The writer wondered how it was possible for her spectators to be so moved by the imaginary affliction of Mirra and, at the same time, to remain indifferent to the appalling situation of such people as lepers, who were exiled into caverns far away from inhabited areas.

NOTES

1 Adelaide Ristori, *Memoirs and Artistic Studies of Adelaide Ristori*, trans. G. Mantellini, with Biographical Appendix by L. D. Ventura (New York and London: Benjamin Blom, 1969), p. 19. See also

Marvin Carlson, *The Italian Stage: From Goldoni to D'Annunzio* (Jefferson, N.C. and London: MacFarland and Company, 1981), p. 130–1.

2 The information about Ristori's tour to the East Mediterranean in the years 1864–5 is mostly derived from Greek newspapers and magazines published in Alexandria, Constantinople and Athens during that period. The writer of this essay was unable to trace any non-Greek papers of the same period, though it is known that there were some published in English and French. Almost all the data have been recorded and listed in the archives of the Theatre Research Project in the Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Rethymno, Greece.

3 *Avgi* (newspaper, Athens), 6 November 1864; *Paliggenesia* (newspaper, Athens), 15 January 1865. This essay uses new-calendar (Gregorian) dating when referring to events. In order to avoid confusion, however, the essay has kept the original dates of magazines and newspapers, almost all of which are dated according to the Julian calendar. The latter run thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar. So the reader must add thirteen days to the cited date in order to calculate the publication date according to the modern dating system.

4 Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou-Vassilakou, *The Hellenic Theatre in Constantinople in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Contantinoupolitans' New Circle, 1994), Vol. I, pp. 86–7.

5 *Aion* (newspaper, Athens), 2 July 1862; *Avgi*, 27 February 1865. See also Theodoros Hadjipantazis, *From Nile to Danube. The Cronicle of the Greek Professional Theatre in the Broader Region of the East* (Herakleion, Greece: Crete University Press, 2002), Vol. A2, p. 557.

6 As indicated by the newspaper *Armonia* (Constantinople), 13 January 1865, the exchange rate for 7,200 piastres was 1,600 franks. Another newspaper, *Telegraphos kai Byzantis*, 5 September 1864, wrote that 21.30 piastres were exchanged for five francs. In accordance with this information, the amount of forty-five thousand piastres is estimated to be equivalent to ten thousand francs. Concerning Ristori's agreement and the theatre she appeared at, see the correspondence from Alexandria, 13/25 October 1864 in the newspaper *Mellon* (Athens), 23 October 1864.

7 *Mellon*, 23 October 1864.

8 *Anatolikos Astir* (Constantinople), 28 November/10 December 1864, article reprinted from *Ægyptos*.

9 Ibid.; Ristori, *Memoirs and Artistic Studies*, p. 66.

10 Ibid. Ristori gives 2 December as the date of her departure from Alexandria. However, this seems to be the date of her departure from Smyrna. The adventures that the passengers of the ship experienced during that journey are described by the newspaper *Telegraphos kai Byzantis*, 28 November 1864. The maritime services are listed in Levernay's 'Guide and Yearbook of Egypt', in Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yannakakis, eds., *Alexandria 1860–1960: The Brief Life of a Cosmopolitan Community*, trans. from the French by Colin Clement (Alexandria: Harpocrates Publishing, 1997), pp. 204–12, here pp. 211–12.

11 Ristori, *Memoirs and Artistic Studies*, p. 67; *Avgi*, 1 December 1864.

12 *Anatolikos Astir*, 18 November/10 December 1864.

13 Stamatopoulou-Vassilakou, *The Hellenic Theatre*, pp. 364–74.

14 'Giacometti, Paolo', *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo* (Roma: La Maschere, 1958), Vol. V, column 1211.

15 *Armonia*, 1 January 1865; *Ethnofylax*, 12 January 1865.

16 *Ethnofylax*, 12 January 1865.

17 Ristori, *Memoirs and Artistic Studies*, p. 68.

18 Hadjipantazis, *From Nile to Danube*, pp. 57–8; Nikolaos Laskaris, *History of Modern Hellenic Theatre* (Athens: n.p., 1939), Vol. II, pp. 244–5; Giannis Sideris, *History of Modern Hellenic Theatre: 1794–1944* (Athens: Museum and Centre for Hellenic-Theatre Research – Kastaniotis Publications 1990), Vol. I (1794–1908), p. 194.

19 Nikolaos Laskaris, 'Theatre in Athens, 1862–1875', *To Hellinikon Theatron* (newspaper, Athens), 174 (1 October 1933).

20 *Ethnofylax*, 15 January 1865; *Paliggenesia*, 14 January 1865.

21 Katerina Trimi and Ilios Yannakakis, 'The Greeks: The "Parikia" of Alexandria', in Ilbert and Yannakakis, *Alexandria 1860–1960*, pp. 65–71, here pp. 66–8; Kemal H. Karpat, 'The Social and Economic Transformation of Istanbul in the Nineteenth Century' in *Istanbul à jonction des cultures balkaniques, mediterraneennes, slaves et orientales, aux XVIe – XIXe siècles. Actes du Colloque international organisé par l'AIESEE, Istanbul 15–10 octobre 1973* (Bucarest: n.p., 1977), p. 426. See also Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1986), pp. 31–2.

22 Robert Ilbert, 'International Waters', and *idem*, 'A Certain Sense of Citizenship', in Ilbert and Yannakakis, *Alexandria 1860–1960*, pp. 10–15, and 18–34, here pp. 11, 15 and 22–4 respectively. Egypt was a semi-independent region of the Ottoman Empire. It was obliged to pay a heavy tax to the empire, but it was economically and militarily autonomous.

23 Ilbert, 'International Waters', p.15.

24 Ilbert, 'A Certain Sense of Citizenship', p. 26.

25 Trimi and Yannakakis, 'The Greeks', p. 69; Levernay, 'Guide and Yearbook', 205–6; Efthimios Soulogiannis, *The Hellenic Community of Alexandria 1843–1993* (Athens: Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive, 1994), p. 131.

26 There was no official census before 1885. As indicated by an unofficial census carried out by the Greek societies of Constantinople in 1878, out of a total of 695,000 inhabitants, 287,000 were Greeks and 205,000 Muslims. This census, of course, is biased and Muslims were probably far more numerous. Their proportion increased rapidly in the following decades. See *History of the Hellenic Nation* (Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon, n.d.), Vol. I, p. 372.

27 Karpat, 'The Social and Economic Transformation of Istanbul', p. 426 ; Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul*, pp. 31–2.

28 Georges Nogues, 'Constantinople en 1864', *Revue Contemporaine Mensuelle*, 1, 1 (25 January 1865), p. 99. About the Western character of Galata see Karpat, 'The Social and Economic Transformation of Istanbul', p. 421. This and the Greek texts cited elsewhere were translated, unless otherwise noted, by the present author.

29 Trimi and Yannakakis, 'The Greeks', p. 69; *History of the Hellenic Nation*, p. 370.

30 History of the Hellenic Nation, pp. 417, 421–2; Çelik, The Remaking of Istanbul, pp. 35 and 38.

31 *Anatolikos Astir*, 28 November/10 December 1864.

32 Trimi and Yannakakis, 'The Greeks', pp. 66, 89.

33 Efi Kanner, 'Poverty and Philanthropy in the Orthodox Community of Constantinople' in *Constantinople City of Cities* (Athens: Ephesus Publishing, 2002) pp. 160–82, here pp. 173 and 178–9.

34 K. Th. Dimaras, *Hellenic Romanticism* (Athens: Hermes, 1982), pp. 349–52.

35 Constantinos Tsoukalas, Dependency and Reproduction: The Social Role of Educational Mechanisms in Greece (1830–1922) (Athens: Themelio, 1987), p. 29.

36 Ibid, pp. 22–4, 210–25 and 239–42.

37 Ibid, p. 242; Alexis Politis, *Romantic Years: Ideologies and Mentalities in the Hellas of 1830–1880* (Athens: E.M.N.E.–Mnimon, 2003), pp. 78–9, 90–4 and 118–34.

38 Hadjipantazis, *From Nile to Danube*, pp. 57–8.

39 G. Mavromatis, 'Mrs Ristori and Mr Legouve's Medea', *Chrysalis* (Athens), 3, 50, (30 Januray 1865), pp. 52–3.

40 *Telegraphos kai Byzantis*, 5 December 1864.

41 Stamatopoulou-Vassilakou, *The Hellenic Theatre*, p. 102–5; Kostantza Georgakaki, 'Theatre of Athens: Performances during the Period of King Otto', in *Paravasis*, Scientific Bulletin of the Department of Theatre Studies, University of Athens (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 1998), Vol. II, pp. 143–80.

42 *Paliggenesia*, 9 and 12 January 1865; *Ethnofylax*, 12 January 1865.

43 *Avgi*, 6 November 1864.

44 Mavromatis, 'Mrs Ristori and Mr Legouve's Medea', p. 52–3.

45 Emmanouil Roidis, 'Ristori', in *idem*, *Complete Works* (Athens: Hermes, 1978), Vol. IV, p. 379 (the article was originally published in 1893).

46 Susan Bassnett, 'Adelaide Ristori', in M. R. Booth, ed., *Three Tragic Actresses: Siddons, Rachel, Ristori* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 117–69, p. 146.

47 *Chrysalis*, 30 January 1865. See also *Paliggenesia*, 12 January 1865.

48 *Ethnofylax*, 15 November 1865 and 14 January 1865.

49 *Franklinos*, 18 November 1865.

50 Ristori, Memoirs and Artistic Studies, p. 68.

51 Hadjipantazis, *From Nile to Danube*, p. 133–4.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid, pp. 17–35 and 59–69.

54 *Ethnofylax*, 14 January 1865; *Nomimofron*, 21 January 1865.

55 *Ethnofylax*, 15 January 1865

56 Hadjipantazis, *From Nile to Danube*, pp. 134–6.

57 The article in *Ægyptos* was reprinted in *Anatolikos Astir*, 28 November/14 October 1864.

58 *Telegraphos kai Byzantis*, 5 December 1864.

59 *Armonia*, 1 January 1865; *Ethnofylax*, 12 January 1865.

60 *Paliggenesia*, 14 January 1865.

61 The names of the performers are rarely mentioned in the newspapers. The only troupe member who appears by name in a critique is the actress Anna Michelli in the role of the servant Abrahamie in Paolo Giacometti's *Giuditta*. See 'Mrs Ristori', *Paliggenesia*, 12 January 1855.

62 N[ikolaos] D[ragoumis], 'Miscellaneous', *Pandora* (Athens), 15, 358 (15 February 1865), p. 558. The Greek writer was annoyed by Ristori's arrival because he was asked to give up his room at the hotel where he was staying as it had been reserved for the company. Besides, as an intellectual, he envied the financial achievements of an actress.

63 Ristori, *Memoirs and Artistic Studies*, p. 66. In her journey to the eastern Mediterranean, as with the other tours, Ristori was escorted by her husband, the Marchese Capranica del Grillo, and by their daughter. See the anonymous article 'Mrs Ristori', *Ethnofylax*, 12 January 1865; Roidis, 'Ristori', p. 378.

64 *Armonia*, 13 January 1865.

65 *Armonia*, 13 January 1865. See also *Telegraphos kai Byzantis*, 5 December 1864. About the average wages of workers see the newspaper *Smyrna*, 11 December 1873.

66 *Avgi*, 9 January 1865; *Paliggenesia*, 11 January 1865. About the exchange rates of the period see Ioannis Kokkinakis, *Currency and Politics in Greece, 1830–1910* (Athens: Alexandria Publications, 1999), pp. 79 and 123.

67 Dimaras, *Hellenic Romanticism*, pp. 358. See also a series of related articles in the newspaper *Smyrna*, 20 March 1871, 10 September 1871, 23 and 27 June 1872, 30 May 1872, and 31 October 1872.

68 Hadjipantazis, *From Nile to Danube*, pp. 266 and 274–9.

69 *Anatolikos Astir*, 28 November/10 December 1864 (the article was reprinted from *Ægyptos*).

70 *Pandora*, 15, 357 (2 February 1865), p. 537; Ristori, *Memoirs and Artistic Studies*, pp. 47–52.

71 *Evnomia*, 19 January 1865; *Paratiritis* (Athens), 9 February 1865; *Armonia*, 27 January 1865.

72 *Armonia*, 1 January 1865.

73 Veta Gotsi, 'The "Mysteries"' Novel. A Contribution to the Description of the Genre', in Nasos Vagenas, ed., *From Leandros to Loukis Laras: Studies on the Prose Fiction of the Period 1830–1880* (Herakleion, Greece: Crete University Press, 1997), pp. 149–68.

74 Ibid.

75 Maria Korassidou, *Athens' Miserable People and Their Therapists: Poverty and Philanthropy in the Hellenic Capital in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Typothito, 2000), pp. 58–62.

76 Kanner, 'Poverty and Philanthropy', pp. 161–72.

77 Ibid.; Korassidou, *Athens' Miserable People*, p. 13.

78 See Ilbert, 'A Certain Sense of Citizenship', p. 24. It may not be irrelevant that Alexandria's Greek community founded the first orphanage only as late as 1909. See Soulogiannis, *The Hellenic Community of Alexandria*, pp. 240–1.

79 Kanner, 'Poverty and Philanthropy', pp. 173 and 178–9.

80 *Ethnofylax*, 12 January 1865. The newspaper derived the information from Constantinople's English newspaper, the *Eastern Herald*. Most probably the lodge mentioned was part of the Italian Freemason society called the 'Grand Orient of Italy'. See Efstathios Liakopoulos, *Freemasonry in Greece: Another Identity Crisis* (Athens: Aretha Publishers, 1989), p. 186. About N. Psicharis's Masonic identity see [Yiannis] Psicharis. 'The Psicharides (My Genealogy)', in G. Zolotas and Em. Saros, eds., *History of Chios* (Athens: P. D. Sakellarios, 1928), Vol. 3b, p. 836.

81 Korassidou, *Athens' Miserable People*, pp. 13–14 and 62.

82 Ibid, pp. 93–6.

83 *Evnomia*, 23 March 1865.

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