

# Going the Way of the Ancients

(An Adaptation Odyssey)

Submitted by  
Phillip Nicholas Kafcaloudes (B.A., M.Litt.)

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (by creative work and exegesis)

College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

La Trobe University  
Victoria, Australia

April, 2020

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## Abstract

This PhD is a methodological study to accompany a play based on events in the life of the author's grandmother Olga Stambolis - a Greek-Australian spy working for the British in Greece in World War Two. Stambolis' story was passed on through oral history given to her children. There were few supporting documents. This led to several methodological questions for the writing of the play including: how one could write her story in a way that was true to what she did; and would it be legitimate to write the story with fictional elements filling the gaps present in the oral narratives. The exegesis therefore deals with the boundaries of fact and fiction, and explores what options were available in the writing the Stambolis story and which traditional elements can be identified. The exegesis explores the literary background to this kind of dilemma and considers the author's own part in it. There is discussion of how authors, playwrights and poets such as Homer in his *The Odyssey* - who relied on oral histories - fictionalised and embellished their stories. There are consequences of fictionalisation, as the Greek historian Herodotus found out. His embellishments led Plutarch to call him "the Father of Lies" for Herodotus' invention of protagonists' thoughts in his *Histories*. The context for this discussion is the adaptation of Olga Stambolis' story from the author's 2011 novel into a play, and draws comparison with the methodologies of not only the ancient Greek playwrights and poets, but also more contemporary screenwriters and playwrights. This methodology could apply to anyone wishing to tell the story of a period where the protagonists have long died leaving only oral histories. It is this methodology that is worth examining, both in its legitimacy and its value.

## Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the exegesis, neither this exegesis nor the creative work contain material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from an exegesis or play accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the exegesis. This exegesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.



Phillip Nicholas Kafcalouides

17 April 2020

This work was supported by La Trobe University Postgraduate Research grants [HUSS Internal Research Grant Scheme (IRGS): Grant # 2017-2OS-HDR-0010 and Grant # 2019-1-HDR-0004].

The January 2019 workshop production of *Lady of Arrows* was directed by Gary Young. The actors who appear in the recorded excerpts are Jackie Rees, Hannah Fredericksen and Stephen Mahy.

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## Acknowledgements

I owe a huge debt to my primary supervisor Professor Chris Mackie for his great ability to know how to keep encouraging me. It is because of him that I enjoyed every moment of this PhD. His words at our first meeting stayed with me for the entire collaboration: “Just write. Get stuff down on paper.” Because of these wise words, at no point did I feel this PhD stagnated. Our regular meetings brought in new aspects, including reference to the works of Homer and Herodotus. My co-supervisor Dr Nasya Bahfen was a perfect fit, keeping my writing on the academic straight road while Chris and I delved into Greek dramatic history. Nasya was a latecomer to the process, replacing Dr Steinar Ellingsen, who had left La Trobe University. Steinar generously agreed to stay on as an external supervisor, offering his usual cheery support. Chris, Nasya and Steinar, thank you for proving that doing a PhD is not the drudge that so many claim it to be. Lawrie Zion kindly agreed to be the chair of my Research Progress Panel and was always supportive. The LTU Graduate Research School never failed to give me sound advice and were more than comfortable with me submitting this PhD ahead of schedule. Merran Hunt from the School of Humanities & Social Sciences was a great help with IRGS grants that allowed me to carry out research in Greece in 2017 and to pay for the January 2019 workshop. My employers at RMIT, Philip Dearman and Adrian Danks were quick to give me study leave for the Greece trip, which was above and beyond considering I was a new staff member who was doing the PhD with a rival university. Many thanks to David Beesley and Luke Raisbeck for making RMIT’s premier television studio available to stage the three-day workshop. Gary Young was a wonderful director of the workshop, his many years of theatre experience helping turn the play into something better. Your warmth, encouragement and tears were brilliant. A special thanks to the playwrights and screenwriters whose works offered inspiration for what *Lady of Arrows* finally became. I hope you didn’t object to have your fine works tested in this thesis. To Jac, who was always the inspiration for the character of Olga, thank you. I imagined you speaking my lines as I wrote them, and then in the readings and workshopping, you brought those words to life. And finally, my grandmother Olga, the real Lady of Arrows. Although I never knew you, you have been a lifelong inspiration. I just hope that my version of your story meets with your approval, and that you forgive my excesses.

## 1. INTRODUCTION: Going the Way of the Ancients

This work is a methodological exegesis submitted in partial fulfilment of a practice-based PhD, and to accompany the writing of a play based on events in the life of my maternal grandmother, Olga Stambolis, who was a Greek-Australian spy in World War II. The play, titled *Lady of Arrows*, has been written using my novel *Someone Else's War* (Kafcaloudes, 2011) as the source material. The novel was published in Australia in August 2011,<sup>1</sup> and was translated into Greek and published in the European market in 2012.<sup>2</sup>

I first considered developing the novel into a play in 2015, and an initial draft of the play was begun before this PhD started in early 2017. Thus, while the adaptation element of this exegesis is retrospective to some degree, its main findings contextualise the substantial period of the development of the writing of *Lady of Arrows* from January 2017 to March 2020, which was when the final version of the play was prepared after a January 2019 workshop production of the script. Presented here is the final post-workshop script,<sup>3</sup> which includes a link to parts of the visual recording of the play which was made on the final day of the workshop.

As well as interrogating the adaptation process, this exegesis explores several of the issues that arose during the writing of Olga's story, including the issue of maintaining authenticity when there is a lack of verifiable sources. In my case the primary source was oral histories. To put the issue into historical context, in the second chapter (the literature review) I discuss how writers throughout history have dealt with telling true stories when they have little more than oral histories as source material. The chapter shows how this was an issue which has dogged the authenticity of the writings of ancient Greek storytellers, including Homer and Herodotus. This on-going dilemma is why *Going the Way of the Ancients* was chosen as the title of this exegesis.

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<sup>1</sup> Published by SEW Books, Melbourne and as an eBook by Port Campbell Press, Melbourne.

<sup>2</sup> By Psychogios Publications (Athens) under the title *Olga's War*. Reprinted 2013.

<sup>3</sup> See *Appendix 8 – Lady of Arrows script and links*.

## 1.1 The story

Both the source novel and the play tell the story of Olga Stambolis' life, with a focus on her activities in Greece during World War II. Estranged from her Australian-based family, Olga was in Greece in 1940 as the Italians threatened to invade through Albania. The British government made a guarantee to defend Greece against any such invasion (Long, 1953), and decided to recruit and train members of the Greek population in rescue, combat, sabotage and subterfuge (Morris, 2017). Olga Stambolis was likely to have been one of those recruits.<sup>4</sup>

After her espionage training finished, she started work as a member of the Greek resistance, rescuing Australian, New Zealand and British flyers caught behind the battle lines as the Germans made their push towards Athens from the north in 1941. She later told her family that her job involved working with Greek locals in regional areas to secretly transport the airmen across the country to ports on the east coast of Greece, and then to accompany these airmen by boat to the British stronghold of Cairo in Egypt. There is some evidence to substantiate her claims about these rescues.<sup>5</sup> There is also some evidence which supports her story that she was caught by the Germans in 1941 and spent six months in jail.<sup>6</sup>

Olga told her family that she narrowly avoided execution through her ability as an actor and her understanding of the German language. After she was released, she says she resumed her resistance work and continued to do this up until the Germans were expelled from Greece in 1944.

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<sup>4</sup> There is no written evidence of this recruitment [see *Appendix 5*] but Olga exhibited the skills taught by the British-trained operatives and she carried out British-sponsored operations. The British Special Operations Executive may well have considered her to be a perfect candidate for an operative: she was a British subject (although born in Greece, she had been an Australian resident for many years); she could speak six languages including Greek, German and Italian; she was believed to have no close family in Greece and thus no family connections that could be used against her if she was caught; and she had been an amateur actress.

<sup>5</sup> My mother told of an airman arriving at the family's Sydney shop during the war claiming to have been rescued by Olga.

<sup>6</sup> She made a detailed claim for reparation for the personal items the Germans stole while she was in jail. See *Appendix 1 – Stambolis Claim*.

## 1.2 How I approached and researched Olga Stambolis' story

Writing the novel *Someone Else's War* was a labour of love. I describe in the novel how I had heard the stories about my grandmother's war work all my life (Kafcalouides 2011, Prologue). At Christmas and Easter celebrations my mother and aunts would tell, even act out, our grandmother's exploits. The pride my mother and aunts had about Olga are my strongest sense memories about these gatherings.

When I became a journalist in 1986, I started to think that Olga's story should be told more widely. As a radio producer I had met Australian war hero Nancy Wake, who had worked for the British government in the French resistance (FitzSimons 2001). Wake's and Olga's stories had similarities, but where Wake had been decorated for her work and wrote about her exploits,<sup>7</sup> it appeared Olga's story was unknown beyond our family. I was soon to learn that the work of the Greek resistance in general was not widely known outside of Greece (I explain more about this later in this section of the exegesis). This, and the apparent lack of general awareness about the war in Greece became an extra impetus for me to write Olga's story.

Second-hand accounts, provided by her daughters and son, were my primary source. They told me that when the war started and Olga was working as an agent, they themselves were facing their own wartime challenges. The oldest daughter Nellie (my mother) had moved to Darwin unaware that Germany's ally Japan was preparing to bomb the town, and the Japanese Navy General Staff were arguing for an invasion of Australia (Bullard 2012). Because Olga had been out of contact with her family for much of the war, her family came to believe that she had perished. Consequently in 1942 Olga's husband Michael had her declared dead, and he then remarried and had two more children with his new wife. Olga, deep in the resistance and in jail for some of this time, was unaware of these developments.

These elements made for a story that this more than just about a spy working in wartime. I came to think that the circumstances of the family in Australia could provide a powerful contrast to Olga's situation in Greece under the Germans. I explain the

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<sup>7</sup> This was the autobiography *The White Mouse* (Sun Books, 1985).

rationale for broadening the story to include the Australian side of the story in 1.5 (a) below.

As I started to write the story, I came to believe a reader would question why Olga was in Greece when her children were in Australia. Was she simply a bad mother? Did she not care what happened to her children? These were acute questions given that this was in wartime and her family was facing its own dangers against the Japanese in Australia. The reasons why Olga was separated from her family were complicated and not simple to untangle for readers. It required delving deeply into Olga's character and background to bring to the reader an understanding of the type of person who would leave her family and risk her life by standing up to Germans and traitors - killing, rescuing, sabotaging and committing espionage. Family correspondence<sup>8</sup> indicates she also had to deal with the guilt of being away from her young family of three daughters, a deaf son and a husband who was left to run a family shop in Sydney without her.

Olga's childhood, teen years, early marriage and motherhood offered an explanation for her character and actions. She had been a foundling, given away by her Athenian mother in 1904. Her adoptive mother was a seamstress who worked in Alexandria in Egypt. This woman, the only mother Olga knew as a child, encouraged her to be independent, and supported her ambition to be an actress. This proto-feminist attitude encouraged Olga to learn languages and join an acting troupe in Alexandria. My research with Olga's daughters suggests that by the time she left Alexandria to go to Australia with her husband in 1921, Olga had become outwardly an independent, confident woman, who was also harbouring some self-doubt about her foundling origins.

This exploration of Olga not only provided a snapshot of her character, but it led me to find deeper motivations within the story. The novel describes how being given away as a baby led to a series of events which in both the novel and the play, were to become the climax of the story. This climax involved the death of her youngest child,

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<sup>8</sup> See *Appendix 11– Letter from Nicky Stambolis to Olga*. This is a letter to Olga during the war from her son in which he informs her that his sisters have been married and have borne children. As far as I know this is the first time Olga learns that her daughters have become mothers. The letter also states that her second daughter has been hospitalised after giving birth.

Christopher, which occurred when Olga visited Athens in 1930 to be reunited with the woman who given birth to her. The tragic irony of Christopher's death occurring when Olga was herself was trying to be reconciled with the circumstances of her own infancy, had a poignancy that I felt needed to be included in the telling of this story. The death of the baby led to wayward behaviour on her return to Australia - a behaviour that might have been a sign of mental illness - and contributed to the break-up of the marriage, and consequently the reason for Olga doing what to many saw as the unthinkable: leaving her family.

Thus I was able, as the author of this account of Olga's life, to provide a rationale and a link between her desire to find her birth mother, and the reason why she was in Greece when the war started.

The starting point for the research was obviously the oral histories passed on to me from my mother and her two sisters.<sup>9</sup> They told me these stories had been given to them by Olga herself and her one relative in Australia who witnessed the Greek side of her story, Olga's sister Anna. Apart from Anna, they knew of no-one in Australia who witnessed Olga's activities. Anna died in the 1970s, many years before the research began, so there was no first-hand verification of Olga's version of the stories. In order to chart the information I had about Olga, a series of family meetings were set up with the three main sources (Olga's daughters Nellie, Tina and Freda), and a record was made of these oral histories.<sup>10</sup>

It soon became clear to me there were limits to the effectiveness of using this oral history as a research source. These issues are listed below:

- (a) there were conflicts of information, disagreements, and at times, the presenting of erratic job-lots of facts;
- (b) there were missing elements such as dates and places;
- (c) these histories were, in many cases, second-hand information;

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<sup>9</sup> In interviews carried out in February 1994, April 1994 and November 1994.

<sup>10</sup> An excerpt from the original handwritten notes is attached as *Appendix 13 – Oral History Notes*.

- (d) this information had been given to them by the person claiming to have done what were sometimes heroic acts, so there was the risk of conscious or unconscious self-aggrandisement - emotions such as shame or embarrassment could have skewed the information as Olga provided it;
- (e) the primary sources were talking about their mother, so there was a risk of emotion tainting the facts as the stories were passed on to me;
- (f) Olga and Anna passed on their original versions of events at least ten years after the war, so there was the risk of Olga's and Anna's memories being faulty and of important details being forgotten;
- (g) similarly, with the passing of at least thirty years since Olga told these stories to her daughters, there was the risk the stories were misremembered, and important details forgotten by the daughters;
- (h) there was a risk that the daughters influenced each other as the stories were remembered over the years, with a sister's true memory changed by versions as remembered or misremembered by her sisters;
- (i) the risk of contamination from media reports, books and movies about spies (abundant in the 1950s and 1960s around the time Olga told her daughters the stories) which could exaggerate or influence the memory of the version in the minds of the daughters, further skewing the original story; and
- (j) even if the original stories were uncontaminated, in the process of the daughters passing on these stories to the next generation, contamination could have occurred and multiplied each time the story was retold.

An example of conflicting information was when Nellie told me of an episode that Olga said had happened during the war. In Nellie's version, Olga was standing in a queue in a bakery in Athens and saw a double agent several places ahead of her. When this alleged double agent left the bakery, Olga followed him to a nearby lane and stabbed him to death. My aunt Tina, however, said it was not in a bakery, but in a butcher's store. My other aunt Freda said that Olga was not alone when it happened. She was with another agent, and together they killed the man. Some years later a

cousin, Michelle Stambolis, said her father (Olga's son Nicky) had told her that this incident actually happened in Paris later in the war.<sup>11</sup>

Having so many, often conflicting, memories presented a problem of finding what might have been the true version of each of the activities. My intention was to make the story as factual as possible. But there was also the possibility that the true version may not have existed at all in the versions given to me. Thus, verification would be a significant part of the research process, and there was the possibility that verification of some elements of the story might not be possible at all.

To deal with these issues I developed the following processes:

- (1) I started by collating these stories as they were told by each of the daughters. At times the daughters jumped around chronologically in their telling of events, telling me about an event then half an hour later returning to it and adding detail. When this occurred I took this added detail and put it in with the original story.
- (2) I noted the similarities between the stories that were told by the three sisters. If they were closely aligned then I was able to use this common story as the basis of a scene and further research.
- (3) I highlighted the differences in details and the points of divergence and convergence. As with the bakery stabbing, I needed to see if there were more conflicting details in any of the scenarios given by the daughters.
- (4) I noted where some stories had details not present in the other versions. This would not necessarily be accepted as a factual detail, but it could be the basis of further questioning for the next meeting.

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<sup>11</sup> Nick Stambolis died early in the research process, so he was unable to contribute an oral history, nor confirm why he believed the killing happened in Paris.

- (5) I coalesced these stories into likely versions using a three-pointed triangle system, which involved finding the cross-over points that were common to all three versions to form the basis of stories that would be eventually included in *Someone Else's War*.
- (6) I went back to the smaller details, including those provided by only one sister and considered whether to add these details into the stories. When fictionalising the story these elements may have been included, in preference to inventing an entirely new set of details.
- (7) I attempted to verify Olga's story by researching existing British records of their operatives in Greece. I contacted the Central Services Establishment (CSE) at the British Ministry of Defence, who required information applications to be in written form. This meant airmail communications, and sometimes months between exchanges. In 1994, in reply to my enquiry I received a letter from the CSE which said there was no record of Olga's activities. The office representative wrote that if an operative was deceased, records would have been destroyed when the operative turned eighty-five years of age.<sup>12</sup> As a result, there was no information that the British authorities could provide for the Olga Stambolis story. I also contacted the British Returned Services League in 1998,<sup>13</sup> but there was no response. I also made searches of the existing academic and war literature to see if there was any reference to Olga by name.<sup>14</sup> This was fruitless. I then collected what information was available about the operations of the Greek resistance.
- (8) I checked the documents left by Olga, looking for discrepancies to the stories as they were told, and to see if the documents could confirm or locate the events in the oral histories. Olga left few records apart from official passes and documents, references, and the aforementioned letter

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<sup>12</sup> See *Appendix 5 - Defence Correspondence 7.11.1994*.

<sup>13</sup> See *Appendix 6 – British RSL Journal Letter 21.9.98*.

<sup>14</sup> Olga used several surnames: her married name (Stambolis), her foster mother's name (Hadjidaki), her birth family name (Mavromati), as well as several shortenings and anglicisations (Stam or Stan). I searched for all of these variations.

of reparation which refers to the Germans taking her property, and some photos, including one of her in a Greek naval uniform.<sup>15</sup> The documents were all dated and many had addresses, so Olga could be located in certain places at set times.

- (9) I had the Greek language documents translated into English.<sup>16</sup>
- (10) I constructed a rough timeline of Olga's life and that of her family using information in the oral histories as well as dated documentation (passes, references, bank orders and passport applications).<sup>17</sup>
- (11) I researched the locations of the events to investigate if there were accounts of the war and the Greek resistance that could be used to substantiate the stories as they existed. I made four trips to Greece early in the research process<sup>18</sup> to find locations that were mentioned in Olga's documents, to see where she worked and lived, and to visit museums and archives. In those days of limited internet research, I found there were scant references to the war in Greece in written accounts by resistance fighters and biographies.
- (12) I studied the broader role of women in the Greek resistance. This was done for two purposes: first, to give background on what kind of operation Olga would have been part of, and second, to find any reference to her. There were no references to her by name in any of the reference books and memoirs about the resistance. At this point it should be said that although Olga's circumstances as an Australian-Greek spy were unique, her work as a woman in the resistance was not. There were many women in the Athens-based Greek resistance at the time. The use of women in the underground was extensive because many Greek men

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<sup>15</sup> See *Appendix 7 - Stambolis in Uniform*.

<sup>16</sup> My godfather Nick Maniarizis translated all the documents. One example is given in *Appendix 12* which is a translation of a U.S. Embassy document which is presented next to the original in Greek.

<sup>17</sup> My first, handwritten timeline, juxtaposing Olga and her husband's activities, is attached as *Appendix 2 – Stambolis Timeline*.

<sup>18</sup> In 1988, 1995, 1998 and 1999.

were absent, either killed by the invaders, or working in other parts of the country in combat roles. This meant that in many villages and towns there were often only men of young or old age. There was sparse information on the women in the resistance, but occasionally there was biographical information of some of the more notorious women such as the fighter Nikotsara, who is referenced in only a few research documents and in a Greek General's memoir (Sarafis, S 1951, pp. 7-8).

- (13) I used information from the oral histories, research and documents, and compiled a rough version of the stories.<sup>19</sup>

I had hoped to gather the facts in a year or two, but it was not a simple process. The research went on for more than a decade, concurrent with the writing of the novel. This research process provided varying results. The passage of time since the war, and a relative paucity of information about the situation in Greece during its occupation by the Germans meant that much information was limited to stories of some individuals, such as the memoirs of a British officer who worked with the resistance (Myers, 1985) or retrospective biographies of soldiers such as Murray Elliot's short book about Dudley Churchill Perkins, whose resistance work with local Cretans led to Perkins being called "Vasili, The Lion of Crete" (1987). I also discovered that few Greeks wrote their own memoirs of the war period. Greek-American journalist Gregory Pappas listed ten of what he considered the most compelling books about Greece in the World War II,<sup>20</sup> and the list contained only one memoir by a Greek.<sup>21</sup> It may be reasonably supposed that a lack of literacy or publishing opportunity, and a desire to move on from the privations and horrors of war were among the reasons for this lack of autobiographical material.<sup>22</sup>

With the research only bearing limited fruit, I reconvened more sessions with Olga's surviving children. In some cases, this was the last time the daughters had the

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<sup>19</sup> This was effectively the beginning of the writing process that would eventually lead to the publication of the novel *Someone Else's War* in 2011.

<sup>20</sup> *10 Great Books about Greece in World War II* <<http://www.pappaspost.com/10-great-books-greece-world-war-ii/>>.

<sup>21</sup> *Modern Greeks: Greece in World War II: The German Occupation and National Resistance and Civil War*. See Stassinopoulos 2005.

<sup>22</sup> In *Chapter 4 – Conclusion* I suggest the reasons for the paucity of Greek memoirs from this era is a possible area for further research.

ability to offer me help. Nellie had been suffering from dementia since having a series of strokes in 2005 and was unable to verify any but the earliest drafts.<sup>23</sup> Freda died in 2012, the year following the novel's publication, but she had been suffering from Alzheimer's Disease for a decade and was unable to assist me after the first two interviews with her and her sisters. Tina had died in December 1998 and saw no drafts. Thus, none of the original oral history providers were able to give final approval to the form in which their own stories were finally told. I had an older sister and some cousins who knew Olga, but they were still children when Olga died, so they were able to provide limited insights into their grandmother's life.

Nevertheless, from the first round of interviews in 1989 I had collected enough information to be able to write about Olga's adoption as a baby, her childhood in Alexandria in Egypt, and her marriage and emigration to Australia in the early 1920s. I could also write about the fifteen years following this emigration when Olga was a Sydney mother and wife.

This led to decisions about how I should write an account of the story with the research I had. These decisions concerned the narrative voice to be used; the breadth of the story (should it be confined to Olga's story or should it include events in Australia and in other parts); and centrally, the resolution to the dilemma of whether this would be a non-fiction rendition of Olga's life, or an approach to the work as one of fiction incorporating factual elements, or indeed a writing of the whole work as one of historical fiction.

### **1.3 Factual or Historical Fiction?**

I originally intended for *Someone Else's War* to be a work of historical journalism; a biography of Olga's activities from 1936 to 1943.<sup>24</sup> I intended this non-fiction book to take its place as an addition to the world's knowledge about the war in Greece.

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<sup>23</sup> Nellie died in November 2011, only two months after the novel's publication, but had lost her long-term memory many years before.

<sup>24</sup> This was the period of Olga's activity in Greece, before and during her time as an operative.

For this to work to be non-fiction, I needed to be certain that the events I would be depicting were true. The facts, as supplied in the oral histories, needed to be confirmed. As discussed in the previous section there were problems with getting these facts, and greater problems certifying them. As I will explain in 1.5 (a), I included the activities in Australia involving Olga's husband Michael and his daughters in Sydney and Darwin. These events were easier to verify, because Nellie and her sisters were telling their own stories (not relying on hearsay) and had documentary evidence of where they were and what they did. They were personal eyewitnesses to the events.

However, for the activities of Olga Stambolis in Greece, the lack of verifiable information about her activities meant that the part of the book devoted to Olga's activities was going to be very short if it was going to be a non-fiction story. The alternative was to consider turning it into an account that used all the facts available but in the framework of a historical fiction work.<sup>25</sup> This kind of fictionalisation appeared most attractive in my circumstances because times could be manipulated, and places and characters invented. I was also to find that this mode of storytelling offered challenges. I needed to learn how to write in a fiction voice. As the years went on and the book acquired feedback from publishers and my literary agent,<sup>26</sup> I found writing fiction a challenging but satisfying art.

This said, it was never intended that the book would become purely fiction, rather a hybrid historical fiction. The real names of the Greek leadership and some other historical figures such as some of the resistance fighters are used. Olga, her husband, children and her husband's second wife Jean are all real people and their real names are used. I was to discover in the course of this PhD candidacy that the writing of what was to become *Someone Else's War* followed the Homeric tradition of using research and knitting a character's story into established facts to provide a piece of work which provided much truth but which was accompanied by invention. Of course, this knitting of fiction is not restricted to the ancient Greek authors. Twentieth century writer George Orwell admired his nineteenth century predecessor Charles Dickens, not just for

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<sup>25</sup> Britannica.com defines a historical fiction novel as "a novel that has as its setting a period of history and that attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity (which is in some cases only apparent fidelity) to historical fact."

<<https://www.britannica.com/art/historical-novel>>.

<sup>26</sup> I was with the Sandy Wagner Literary Agency in Darlinghurst, Sydney from 2000 until 2008.

Dickens' sympathy for the working class, but also for the way he diverged from the facts when there was an advantage to it. Veale suggests Orwell's work may be seen in the same light:

*His work may eventually come to reflect what he valued in Dickens's work: "telling small lies in order to emphasize what he regards as a big truth" (2007, p.24)*

A similar massaging of an original story happened with Virgil, whose story of Aeneas descending into Hades<sup>27</sup> bears resemblance to a visit by Homer's Odysseus in *The Odyssey*.<sup>28</sup> Virgil has made significant changes to the story, adding in the river Styx and Charon the ferryman, and changing the traveller, but Virgil is unmistakably inspired by Homer and expanding upon the original story.

My storytelling methodology went further than to just give a fictional context to true events. In order to provide context, to drive the story, to provide emotional context and sometimes simply to fill gaps, I invented some scenarios and characters from scratch, adding another fictional layer onto the story. At times such fictionalisation gave me the space to make additions to help dramatic tension. For example, there is a scene early in the novel, where the Greek prime minister John Metaxas shoots a protestor dead.<sup>29</sup> This was a scene that I felt was essential for the character of Metaxas to be established, but this particular event was fiction. It could only be included if the story was told and acknowledged as historical fiction.

Another of the novel's invention was a scenario where Olga was sexually assaulted on the day the Germans entered Athens.<sup>30</sup> Although many women were raped in Greece (Fagge 2015), Stambolis herself never claimed to be raped. I wrote this for a number of reasons: as a final motivating force for a character who was representative of the resistance; as symbolism of what was happening to the ancient capital on that day; as a device to show her personality as she responds; and to give an

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<sup>27</sup> *The Aeneid* Book VI

<sup>28</sup> Book XI

<sup>29</sup> This scene is in Kafcaloudes 2011, pp 3-4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 170-172.

example of what was happening because, as Fagge reports, several Greek women were raped during this time.

Some other fictional events were included to help set the character and context, such as a passage where a British airman, Bill, watches Olga crying in a doorway on the day of her rape.<sup>31</sup> I did this to give a glimpse into how Olga at a particularly emotionally charged condition appeared to someone observing her. I had this passage immediately abutting a passage from her diary, that explains how she felt. This contrast was useful because at this time Olga was distraught and her diaries would have been written in a fractious state of mind. Bill's view of her gives a different aspect to the situation.

Other scenarios had a deal of invention because I only had the briefest of primary information. This included an ongoing scenario where Olga is given a house in the Athens suburb of Pendeli by the French ambassador.<sup>32</sup> This house was later confiscated by the German command while Olga was in Averoff prison. The factual basis for this story came not only from oral history, but also from a document lodged with the British Ambassador in which she claimed compensation for 234 items that she said had been stolen from the house by the Germans, including blankets, a fur coat, car, boxes of cigarettes, and a meat mincer.<sup>33</sup> This document was the inspiration for a series of scenarios, including Olga moving into the furnished house the French ambassador has given her, the Germans showing interest in the house, and finally the decrepit state of the house when she finally returns to it after she is released from jail to find the Germans who had taken it over have moved out and stolen her possessions.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to these invented scenarios, certain characters were also invented, such as a Greek priest who helps the resistance build a tunnel under an Athens church, and a deaf character in Greece named Nicky. This Greek Nicky, who was not based on any real character, was placed in the novel as a literary device. Olga treated this Greek Nicky as a surrogate son, caring for him as she would her would her real son in Australia who was also called Nicky and who was also deaf. The Australian Nicky is present in the

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<sup>31</sup> Kafcaloudes 2011, pp. 160-161.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>33</sup> See *Appendix 1 – Stambolis Claim*.

<sup>34</sup> These events were all part of the oral histories.

Australian side of the novel, and for me the creation of the Greek counterpart offered a tantalising opportunity to offer contrasts between the situation in Greece to that in Sydney. I invented this character to show Olga's maternal side. It also had an interesting additional benefit, in that it allowed me to show how disability was approached in the two countries at that time.

The Greek Nicky was only one of a range of invented characters, Others were constructed to give an insight into the wider personalities in the resistance. They were invented with inspiration from some of the true characters of the time but were fictionalised so they could be inserted in places, deeds and times that suited the story of *Someone Else's War*. One such character was a man known only as Proteus who was the leader of an Athens cell in the resistance. He, along with another fictional resistance fighter Stavros, were both based on some of the characters who had senior positions in cells in the resistance movements ELAS and EDES, but they were composites of several people and were never intended to represent true characters. The reason for inventing these two characters was to provide a contrast between two types of resistance leaders. While both were capable and passionate, they had contrasting personalities. Proteus was tough and confident (demonstrated by his savage murder of a suspected informant).<sup>35</sup> Stavros was more fragile minded, and badly affected by the loss of a relative. As a third contrasting character, I invented Elias, who was enthusiastic but child-like; not at all tough; glorying in the killings and the successes of the underground, but certainly unreliable. Through these three characters, the reader may get an idea of the broad range of men who were involved in the resistance cells. Similarly, German characters were invented, again offering a range of identities to assist with the narrative. There is the German officer who rapes Olga, another German officer who uses the black market to enrich himself,<sup>36</sup> and two others who interrogate Olga in the police headquarters in Athens.<sup>37</sup> But not all German characters were unsympathetic. There is a portrayal of a German man who dates Olga towards the end of the novel and helps her escape detection.<sup>38</sup> None of these characters are based on real people, except the

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<sup>35</sup> See Kafcalouides 2011, pp 318.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, pp 253-254.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*, pp 216-219.

<sup>38</sup> See Kafcalouides 2011, pp 309-312.

interrogators, but since their identities are unknown, their characters too are largely invented, even if the interrogation scenario was based on fact.

Despite the fictional elements, I always planned for a story that would use as many of the available facts as possible. To do this, there were a number of rules that I maintained throughout the writing of these scenarios: the context needed to be as close to the (known) facts as possible; the scenarios could not exaggerate Olga's story into that of a great war hero<sup>39</sup>, and the scenarios could not overstate what a resistance operative would have done in the context of the war in Greece. The narrative had to be rooted in the context of what actually happened. The resistance did fight the occupiers - on several fronts and in many ways. At no stage could my Olga or any of the characters in the novel do anything that the resistance could not have done. However, to make this a credible work, the publication needed to clearly state that this was a work of historical fiction work, that was no more than *based* on a true story. This allowed a broadening of the story, and the inclusion of fictional elements to help tell the story of the Greek experience under occupation, and of a woman's role in that situation.

The result was that the final novel was a fictional re-telling of historical events in Greece, Egypt and Australia while also moving backwards and forwards through a time period that extended from before the first world war (Olga's childhood in Egypt) to 1952 (Olga's arrival back in Australia). I chose these movements through time to juxtapose the backstory with the war story, and to help explain motivations and provide contrasts. These backstories, and the filling of the gaps in the story were always carried out while I attempted to stay honest about the nature of the work as an historical fiction.

#### **1.4 Selection of Voice in the Work**

Having decided to write the novel as historical fiction, the next decision made in the process of writing it was about its voice. Should it be written in the first or third-

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<sup>39</sup> I had no wish for this to be a hagiography. I wanted to present her whole personality, and from the oral histories it seemed she did have personality faults including being overbearing, impulsive and at times snobbish. I felt as an author that a fascinating character was more fascinating when she made mistakes, had regrets and sometimes did not cope.

person? Should I tell the story from my point-of-view as her grandson, from Olga's own point-of-view, or through an unidentified narrator? If the voice was to be one that was separate to Olga's or mine, a decision needed to be made whether the voice would be masculine, feminine or neutral in tone, and whether it would be detached, tending towards the form used in a non-fiction book.

In the first few drafts of the novel the entire story was told in the third person describing Olga's deeds and thoughts. But the writing did not ring true. It became heavy on description, and thin on connection with the protagonist. One publisher gave verbal feedback on an early draft, saying: 'we (as in the readers) don't really know how she feels'. As the process continued, I decided that the text needed to be more inside Olga Stambolis' thoughts as she dealt with the many emotionally conflicting events around her. At different times she had to deal with self-doubt, guilt, fear, anger and possibly mental illness. For the novel to connect with the audience, the reader needed to connect with Olga herself. The challenge was how to make this connection happen. I then started exploring a first-person narrative: activating her own voice and having Olga talk directly to the reader.

First-person exposition is not new in novel writing. Works as diverse as Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* are presented in first person, with the narrator being one of the more minor characters in the book. Telling the story through a secondary character can risk a sense of detachment though because it only describes the central characters; the central characters do not reveal thoughts or deeds unless talking with the narrator or doing something within the view of that narrator. This kind of narration by a secondary character was not an option for me anyway because there was no other character in the story who could see all that was happening to Olga and describe it to the reader. The nature of much of Olga's resistance work was solitary. Only she witnessed all of it. The Olga Stambolis story is very much her own personal journey. Hence, I decided the only effective voice for the work would be through a first-person narrator in Olga Stambolis herself.

This led to consideration of the best way for Olga to tell her story. She could be a detached observer of her own story, but to do so would mean she would need to be the

person leading the reader through the story, the conductor of the journey, and an impartial explainer of events. This is not what I wanted of Olga's character. I wanted to show her with her failings and doubts and problems. I did not want detachment. I wanted her reactions, even the unreasonable ones. I wanted to show the reader a character who makes mistakes, rues them and suffers for it. This story needed to be told in a personal way, where her version of events could be assessed as reasonable or unreasonable, and fair or unfair. She could not be an unaffected observer because everything that happens to her in this story affected her.

This led me to choose to have Olga tell us her story through the most personal of methods: through personal diaries. This is a device that has been used many times, for example in *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Fielding 1996), the protagonist speaks to the reader through a near-daily diary, although it might be argued that the writing was less a diary than a simple first person narrative with dates put at the top of each entry. Although the diary entries start with short, clipped sentences as one might see in a genuine diary, they soon change into a style that is more script-like than diary style:

*“Who's Julie Enderby?”*

*'You know Julie, darling! Mavis Enderby's daughter*

*Julie! The one that's got that super-doooper job at*

*Arthur Anderson...'*

*'Mum...'*

*'Always takes it on her trips...'*

*'I don't want a little bag with wheels on.'*

(Fielding 1996, p. 27)

For *Someone Else's War*, I wanted the diary to be more personal than this, and not simply a narrative device. The diaries I would present must have all the elements of a real diary: an opening of the heart and a way of making the reader a confidant for her secrets. The literary device of a fictional diary as presented in *Someone Else's War* gave scope to revealing secret thoughts that Olga may never have intended anyone to know about. In other words, the constructed diary was written for herself only and the reader is getting a privileged look. In places the diary is written almost as letters to her eldest

daughter Nellie. Olga is telling her daughter all her secrets. Obviously as an undercover operative, she would not have been able to send actual letters from occupied Greece. These parts of the diaries were written as direct communication between mother and daughter, although the daughter would never see them, and the mother probably intended for her never to see them. These letters are Olga's imagining of a one-way conversation with her daughter, a conversation where she admits guilt, confesses her shortcomings and says things that she might never really say to her daughter face-to-face. These conversations are perhaps no more than a comfort to Olga herself.

The diaries are also central to the storytelling because they not only explain what is happening, but they give Olga's slant on the events and her reactions to them, so these invented diaries allow scope for more of the storytelling beyond her own thinking. They can weave in contemporary accounts and oral histories. At one point the diary becomes a plot device when she is arrested by the police and the diaries come close to being discovered.<sup>40</sup> If found, the diaries would be evidence of her resistance work and would also lead to the discovery of the underground and its operations. These diaries were never to be discovered by the German occupiers because this would change the truth of her story and indeed, the history of Olga's own story. For this reason, it's essential that in choosing the diary as a storytelling device, that diary must not itself affect the way Olga's story developed.

These fictional diaries, made in Olga's voice, were the most difficult of the elements in the book. It required writing in the voice of a woman who lived in a different era<sup>41</sup> to that of me as the author, and who was a part of a culture which was foreign to me,<sup>42</sup> whose background included speaking English as a second or third language, who was living in a country under repression (Greece under a dictatorship), in a period of war (which I have never experienced); and whose voice I had never heard.

The choice to write these diaries was to prove valuable later when it came time to convert the novel into a play, because having found Olga's voice for the diaries, the voice for the play *Lady of Arrows* was largely discovered: I had already written from

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<sup>40</sup> See Kafcalouides 2011, p 185.

<sup>41</sup> 1921-1943.

<sup>42</sup> Greece and Egypt in the early twentieth century, as well as inter-war Australia.

Olga's perspective in composing these first-person diaries; converting them from the novel's written word to spoken word form for the play was a simpler process. The diary entries are necessarily told in first-person. The other parts of the story (explained below in 1.5) are told in the third person.

### **1.5 Deciding on the breadth of the story**

The next choice in the writing of the work was to decide how wide to make the story and how much to include. The story could have been as narrow as Olga's personal story of her time in Greece in the war as told through her diaries, or it could be broadened to incorporate the events affecting other people including her family.

#### **1.5 (a) Whether to include the Australian side**

Originally, this was going to be a story about Olga Stambolis the spy, restricting the story to events in Greece during the war. But as the writing process continued, I felt the events affecting her children in Australia became essential to understanding Olga's situation. Her four children ranged in age from eight to fourteen at the start of the novel in 1936 when Olga left the family. The children, particularly Nellie, suffered continued humiliation from their peers because of desertion by their mother. They are brought up by their father with the help of a young local woman, Jean. As explained in 1.1, when Olga is not heard from during the war years, her husband Michael has her declared dead and marries his shop assistant Jean who becomes a de facto mother to Olga's children, and who bears two children to Michael. During the war, some of the children move to Darwin. Nellie marries, becomes pregnant, and has to deal with the issues of being a mother herself while still a teenager. She is evacuated just before the Japanese bomb Darwin.

None of this was known to Olga as she worked in Greece during the war. She had no communication with her family. If the novel was to consist simply of her fictionalised diaries, none of this Australian part of the narrative could be included. In terms of the storytelling, this Australian element of the story is dramatic, and provides a contrast to

what is happening to Olga. To be a character that engenders sympathy from the reader, Olga will have to show how she never stopped caring about her children. To have her wonder about her children means the book would need to provide the answers. This Australian side of the story provides these answers. Without it, a reader may well have too many unanswered questions.

Because of this I decided to include events in Australia both before and during the war, such as Olga's pre-war marital breakdown; the relationship and eventual marriage of her husband with Jean; and one of Olga's rescued flyers coming to the family ship in Ultimo to pass on a message from her.<sup>43</sup>

To do this properly, the Australian side of the story would need to include more than just the activities of the husband and children, but the context of events in Australia, especially insofar as they affected Olga's children. This brings in the fact that for the protagonists in this story the war was not confined to Greece but had also come to Australia. Two major contextual events relevant to the story were:

- the Japanese mini-submarine firing a torpedo in Sydney Harbour on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1942, and
- the first bombing of Darwin ten weeks earlier on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1942.

Both these events were included in the novel to heighten tension for the reader and to draw parallels between events on both sides of the world and the two halves of the family.

Consideration was given to making the Australian side of the story in diary form as well, perhaps from the daughter Nellie, alternating passages from the mother's diary to those of Nellie, making this novel a conversation of sorts. Eventually I decided against this idea. Although Nellie was a child and it would have been fascinating to give a child's view of the situation, some of the action in Australia would not be available to her eyes. She would not, for example, know what was happening in her father's bedroom behind closed doors. She would also not be able to share the details of his visits to a gambling

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<sup>43</sup> This is a true event. It is depicted in Kafcaloudes 2011, pp 328-329.

club,<sup>44</sup> nor his feelings towards either of his two wives. A third person view allows the reader to see everything, or at least everything that the author wishes to show them. Thus this part of the novel is told in third person while Olga Stambolis tells her story in the first person.

### **1.5 (b) Whether to broaden the Greek side of the story**

Although Olga's diaries could, to a degree, give an overview of the events in Greece, there would be things that she would not see, and I felt that context required these events be depicted. I write several scenes reflecting these events.

The first was the midnight visit by Italian Ambassador Count Grazzi to Greek Prime Minister John Metaxas to give an ultimatum to allow Italian troops to cross Greece, or be invaded.<sup>45</sup> Apart from setting context for the events to follow, the depiction of this meeting constitutes an important plot device: it gives a sense of Metaxas' character. It is a characterisation that needed to come to life in order for readers to see why the resistance changed from fighting against the fascist Metaxas to being supportive of him. Over the course of this one night, Metaxas changed from being a villain to a hero. Without the inclusion of this scene, the reader would not appreciate how Olga and her fellow insurgents could so suddenly switch positions from resistance to the Metaxas government to a resistance against the Axis powers. The Metaxas-Grazzi meeting was fictionalised to include emotional context: Metaxas' anger; Grazzi's embarrassment; and the evaporation of the underlying camaraderie between the two men who, within hours, would become enemies.<sup>46</sup>

Another scene was about the deportations of Greek Jews to concentration camps outside of Greece. In the novel, Olga is sent to gather intelligence on these deportations.<sup>47</sup> There is no evidence that Olga Stambolis went to the north of Greece

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, pp 146-148.

<sup>45</sup> This October 28, 1940 meeting ended in Metaxas' refusal to allow Italy onto Greek soil, which led to Italy invading several hours later. Greece resisted and forced the Italian soldiers back into Albania in a major Greek victory. It is still celebrated every year as "Oxi Day" ("No" day) [see *Chapter 2. Literature Review* for a discussion on the relevance of the Grazzi-Metaxas meeting to Olga Stambolis' story].

<sup>46</sup> See Kafcaloudes 2011, pp 141-144.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp 321-324

during the war. There is no evidence that she witnessed the deportations of Greek Jews. While not directly impacting on the story, these deportations were happening in northern Greece and may not have been as widely known as other atrocities against Jewish Europeans.<sup>48</sup> This section reveals this horror, provides added motivation for the Olga character and gives us further insight into her reactions. I felt it was an inclusion that had value for the narrative.

A third scene showed the unprovoked blowing up of the Greek warship Elli by the Italians.<sup>49</sup> I considered this part of the pre-invasion story to be important because it provoked the Greek government into preparing for war.<sup>50</sup> It also gave context for the Metaxas-Grazzi meeting which took place two months later.

In examining how to include these events, I considered several options, including having Olga tell the story in her diaries. This was not an option because although this midnight encounter visit eventually became public record, Olga would not have been privy to it, nor was it likely she have known of it from the newspapers at the time.<sup>51</sup> I decided that like the Australian side of the story, these events would be told using third-person narrative, with that narrator being the author.

*Someone Else's War* thus became a story about humanity, what makes people act under duress; why some act altruistically while others will use the situation for personal gain; how a war can destroy lives but also give a chance for people to find their purpose in life. In this Greek war, family members were at war with each other, often because of political differences, but tragically, also because of petty jealousies. It is such a petty jealousy that almost led to Olga's own death.

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<sup>48</sup> One ABC broadcaster told me that he had not known about the Greek holocaust until he had read about it in the novel [see the final page of the literature review for more detail].

<sup>49</sup> The Elli was torpedoed off Tinos on August 15, 1940. The Italians and the Greeks were not at war at this time.

<sup>50</sup> See Kafcaloudes 2011, pp 137-138.

<sup>51</sup> From 1936 until the German invasion in 1941, Greece's newspapers were severely restricted under the fascist Metaxas regime. Journalists critical of the government were jailed in Haidari prison in Athens. With the German occupation, journalism became even more restricted.

## 1.6 The dangers of invention

Chapter 2 - the literature review - discusses possible problems with this fictionalisation approach, including the question: if readers believe these tales to be absolutely true and the diaries to be genuine; would they consider the stories, as told in the novel, to be genuine and factual in every detail? In other words, would they feel misled, and would their knowledge of history be damaged? This dilemma is expanded upon further in the literature review with a discussion of how other authors - from Homer to Herodotus to Hugh Walpole to Tim Rice - have invented scenes and characters to aid their storytelling.

This discussion includes balancing how far to deviate from the story's factual base. In the literature review I outline how throughout the history of storytelling many factual stories have been told in a fictional context. In his histories, Shakespeare invented dialogue and facts for all his major characters - Richards II and III; Henrys IV, V, VI and VIII; King John; and Pericles. Like his histories, Shakespeare's dramas gave imagined dialogue to real characters such as Antony & Cleopatra and Julius Caesar. The ancient Greek writers, Homer and Herodotus, similarly used surmise and invention, as did the ancient Greek playwrights Euripides, Aeschylus and Sophocles. However, unlike Shakespeare's histories, my writings are not comprised of new takes on an established and well-known story. Olga Stambolis' story is told for the first time in *Someone Else's War* and *Lady of Arrows*. The danger of getting the facts wrong or overblowing the facts could lead to readers feeling or being misled, since they have no other reference points for the story. As Shakespeare painted the character of Richard III, it was only one of many possible interpretations of Richard, and in this case one invented for entertainment. With Olga, the character painted by me is the only one in existence, so a major question for me was: how could I write a work that paid due respect to the true facts of her legacy and not portray her as a character that may have been very different to how she was? This was especially an issue for me because I never knew her, and my painting of her character in the novel and the play was largely my own construction – a best guess based on the information I had been given, but still a best guess.

The literature review also examines adaptation theory specifically, but not exclusively, relating to adaptations of historical novels into theatrical works. Although this exegesis is about adapting the existing novel into a play, I considered the decision-making process I have just outlined about the writing of the source novel to be important because some of the major methodological decisions made in regard to my novel *Someone Else's War* were carried through to the writing of the play *Lady of Arrows*.

### **1.7 The Conversion of a Novel into a Play**

After the publication of *Someone Else's War*, I considered how this story could work as live performance theatre. The reason live performance attracted me for the telling of Olga's story was because it presented the opportunity to delve deeper into her character and to expose elements of this character more than I could in the confines of the written words in a novel. As explained earlier in this introduction, for the most part in the novel, I have Olga tell her story in a fictionalised diary, allowing her to talk directly to the reader. The tantalising prospect of a play was the fact that it could take this personal communication one step further: Olga herself could talk to an audience, not through words in a novel, but through the voice of an actor speaking and acting her words. It also allowed room for interpretation, with the actor playing Olga interpreting her own version of the character she read in my script. With this in mind, the original conception was for this to be an intimate one actor play, with the actor playing Olga to be the only person on stage, and the other characters being voices from offstage. By the time I completed the post-workshop script in 2019, this changed to a three-actor play,<sup>52</sup> but intimacy was still essential for the success of the writing of such a personal story. Therefore, despite having other actors on stage with her, the protagonist Olga often spoke directly to the audience, explaining herself, her actions, or her justifications.

*Chapter 3 – From Novel to the Play* is the substantive part of this exegesis which contextualises this playwriting journey as research. It follows the process of writing the play from early 2017 until the production of a post-workshop draft in late 2019. This

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<sup>52</sup> The reasons for this significant change are outlined in *Chapter 3.1 (e)*.

chapter looks at the decisions that led to the final construction of *Lady of Arrows*. This chapter begins with a discussion of the reasoning behind the decision to adapt the novel into a play. This leads to a timeline of the play writing process, and the developments that occurred at each stage of this timeline.

In that chapter, particular attention is paid to dramatic needs as the story is converted into a work for the stage. It examines what I needed to do in changing the mode of storytelling from book to play [3.1], the need to restructure the story to make the play more dramatically effective for a live audience [3.1 (a)], the need for Olga's voice to be changed to into one suitable for direct conversation for the audience [3.1 (c)], the consideration of the needs of a staged production and the requirement for collaboration with a creative team [3.1 (a)]. The title of the work was also changed several times during the writing process. A rationale for the final decision about the name is explained in 3.1 (i) *Giving the play a name. Stick with the old?*

Many of the stories used in the play come from the novel, although new dialogue was necessarily constructed, and the storytelling methodology needed to be changed for this to succeed as a stage production. In a novel the author can paint a scene and the reader has no other influence in terms of response but the words on the page and their own imagination. In a live performance, however, there is much more information imparted to the audience with choices made by an entire artistic team which decides the direction, acting, use of sound, scenery and lighting. Furthermore, the performance of the actor can inform by intonation, movement and gesture. It is not so much that the written words are spoken, but the way the words are spoken and how the actor expresses them physically that will determine what is conveyed to the audience. This process obviously does not apply to the audience's reception of novels.

To look at these issues, I examined other plays, many of them about historical figures. I made a study of the methodologies used in those plays to help in the preparation of *Lady of Arrows*. I examined and considered the techniques used by these other playwrights, particularly in plays where true stories are told in a fictional context.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The issues raised by these comparison works and how they affected the writing of *Lady of Arrows* are discussed in *Appendix 3 –Other Works (and Conscious Responses)*.

I did not limit the comparisons to play scripts, but also screenplays that had similar thematic or stylistic choices. Also included were a number of ancient Greek texts. From these works there were techniques that playwrights have been using since the first plays were recorded (or at least, the oldest plays that have survived). In this comparison with *Lady of Arrows* are six recent plays (*Greek Goddess*, *I Am My Own Wife*, *Resident Alien*, *Heroes of Past & Present*, *The Testament of Mary* and *The Good Muslim Boy*), a screenplay (*The Lives of Others*), and two ancient Greek texts (Homer's *The Odyssey* and Herodotus' *The Persian Wars*).<sup>54</sup>

The rationale for these comparisons is that they each deal with true stories in either a fictional context or use a storytelling methodology that brings in fictional elements. Reference to these other plays ensured that writing was an organic process, where these other works helped inform of broader ways of writing this play and extended the palette of writing styles and concepts for me to draw upon.<sup>55</sup>

I also carried out a fieldwork trip to Greece in 2017 as part of this PhD research process. This trip took me to many of the places depicted in the play, and also helped in the research for facts about Olga Stambolis. These facts include information essential for a theatrical production, including physical aspects of the landscape that might help the staging of the play. I also found new information about the operations of the Greek resistance and may have found my grandmother's resistance cell.<sup>56</sup>

In summary, 3.1 explains the following elements of the adaptation into a play:

- the approach to writing *Lady of Arrows*;
- the logic behind the changes made from *Someone Else's War* source material;
- the reasoning for the final choices made in the final play draft;
- how the decisions were necessary to tell this story as a dramatic production (as opposed to in the form of a novel);

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<sup>54</sup> These other works were chosen by me, and some on the advice of my supervisors Professor Christopher Mackie, Dr Steinar Ellingsen and Dr Nasya Bahfen (as the PhD progressed, Dr Ellingsen moved to the University of Wollongong, but remained as an external supervisor. Dr Nasya Bahfen replaced him as co-supervisor).

<sup>55</sup> The details of the plays and a fuller examination of the issues raised by them is included in *Appendix 3 – Other Works (and Conscious Responses)*.

<sup>56</sup> The Bouboulina Cell founded by war heroine Lela Carayannis. The detailed findings of this trip are outlined in *Appendix 4 – The Greece Research Trip*.

- how this makes the final draft of the play fundamentally different from the first drafts (this includes the decision to change the format from a one-woman play into a play for three actors);
- the way the story is presented to the audience: a discussion of point-of-view.

The final part of the development process was a workshop of the play at the RMIT University television studio in Melbourne in January 2019 with three actors and a director. In 3.2 *The Workshop* I explain the rationale for the workshop and outline the difficulties faced in staging the script as it was written. Elements of the script were changed during the course of the three days of the workshop. Some of these were to make the story more comprehensible, others were to make the staging of the play more feasible. A full list of the issues and their resolutions are in 3.2 (a) to (j). These changes varied from minor, such as point-of-view being changed for a short scene [3.2 (g)], to some more substantial modifications including the deletion of characters [3.2 (b)], changing the sex of one character [3.2 (c)], and action added to aid the storytelling [3.2 (f)]. There is also discussion of whether an interval was needed [3.2 (d)].

I decided to end the playwriting process after the workshop because this was the effective end of the play's development process. As I explain in chapter 4, the workshop director told me at the end of the workshop that he believed the play was now in a form that was ready to be offered to theatre companies for staging. A theatrical commissioning process could take several years and in the end a theatre company may put its own imprint on the script, with its creative team adding further layers of interpretation; others may want to have it undergo further development. It is an arbitrary process from here, a process dependent on others. For these reasons, I considered the script produced in the months after the workshop to be an appropriate and productive place to stop the substantive writing process. As I explain in the conclusion, there may be an area of further research with the process of getting the play to an audience, but that is beyond the scope of this exegesis. I did make further script changes in the year after the workshop (leading up to the submission of this PhD for examination), but these were minor amendments.

The conclusion to this exegesis gives a brief summary of what I gained from this PhD process, from where I started with a first draft to the final version of the play presented at the end of the January 2019 workshop. In the conclusion I note that the final play was substantially different from the first draft I had already written at the start of the PhD process. By outlining these insights and the rationale for the script changes and improvements, this exegesis offers these developments to the scholarly world so that others working in the field of adaptation or historical non-fiction may also benefit from my research and playwriting journey. As this exegesis is part of a practice-based PhD the conclusion also provides the equivalent of the 'future research' section of a traditional thesis, looking at where the play may go from here: what opportunities there are for further development of *Lady of Arrows*, including possible opportunities for the script to be staged, both within Australia and internationally. There is also discussion about whether the story could be further developed by adapting it for other media, particularly film or television. Finally, following this is an examination of where my research and the exegesis fits in with current thinking and other research. It then explores the opportunities for further studies or explorations of the topic.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### *Art lies in concealing art - Ovid*

This literature review serves as a contextual scene-setter for the next chapter's explanation of the adaptation of the novel *Someone Else's War* into the play *Lady of Arrows*. It begins with a discussion of adaptation theory and the issues that may occur when attempting to change the storytelling modality from the written form of a novel into the stage's oral and physical medium. It will examine the particular requirements of adapting historical fiction, and discusses the range of adaptation methods, a range that extends from barely changing the source text, to turning the story into an analogous story that may be almost unrecognisable to readers of the source work.

A stage adaptation of a non-fiction story necessarily brings in elements of interpretation and modification from actors and a creative team, which adds an extra probability that the story can get further from its factual base. In this context this chapter presents a contemporary critical discourse about telling true stories in a fictional context. It discusses how writers of historical fiction have approached telling true stories and finds that some writers have crossed the boundary into what I consider misrepresentation. By this I mean a situation where the author has, wittingly or unwittingly, asserted their writing to be history, when it (or parts of it) was historical fiction. I will maintain that there is nothing wrong with invention to aid storytelling, as long as the reader or audience understands that what they are reading or watching is not strictly factual.

This leads on to the central question in the adaptation of true stories: with my grandmother's story being written as a piece of historical fiction using invented elements, if people believed these tales to be absolutely factual, would their knowledge of history be damaged? This literature review will look at these issues in the context of ancient Greek writers. It also discusses how invention played a part in their writing, and how, two and a half thousand years later, these issues informed my writing of *Someone Else's War* and subsequently *Lady of Arrows*. It should be noted that I mean by this

invention not only whole scenes and incidents, but also more subtle deviations from fact such as dialogue, thoughts, expressed motivations and emotions. All of these kinds of invention are present in the writings of Herodotus, the man credited with writing the world's first formal work of history.<sup>57</sup> The ancient Greeks generally invented stories within their existing folklore, effectively creating new myths within established myths. An example of this is the way Homer, as the quintessential storyteller, invents narratives using established figures from myth and religion, figures already known to his audience, such as the gods Poseidon, Zeus and Apollo and the goddesses Athena, Artemis and Aphrodite. Scott argues that one of the major characters in *The Iliad* may have been entirely invented by Homer. He suggests this character, the Trojan hero Hector was created by Homer because the alternative character of Paris, who had taken Helen from her husband, was not an ideal hero for the Trojans:

*“Paris was the traditional leader and champion of the Trojans, but for moral reasons could not be made the protagonist in the poem. The poet therefore degraded him and created a hero with sufficient nobility of character to win sympathy for his cause. Hector, as he appears in Homer, is the creation of the poet who conceived the idea of The Iliad; without Homer there would have been no tradition of Hector.”* (1921, 236).

If Scott is correct, this is a major invention because the battle between Achilles and Hector is one of the climaxes of *The Iliad*. Without Hector, this battle between two worthy representatives of the Greeks and Trojans would not have taken place. Later in this chapter is a discussion of the dangers of inventing the deeds of mythological deities and possibly princes (as Homer did), or true characters (as I did).

As a starting point for this discussion, the Oxford Dictionary simply says adaptation is:

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<sup>57</sup> *Histories*, written in Ionic Greek in 440 BC.

*“an altered or amended version of a text, musical composition, etc., (now esp.) one adapted for filming, broadcasting, or production on the stage from a novel or similar literary source” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2017).*

If we are to follow this simple dictionary definition, it follows that in the context of this exegesis, ‘*adaptation*’ is simply the changing of a novel into a play with amendments made to the original text in order to make the story work for the stage medium. It should also be noted that Oxford’s definition does not place limits on the scope or kind of adaptation. An important part of this definition is the “(now esp.)”, which indicates that the definition of adaptation is a fluid concept. When this dictionary entry was published in 2017, adaptation from novel to stage was a common event. In preceding decades there had been many such adaptations particularly to the musical theatre stage, including Ian Fleming’s children’s book *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*,<sup>58</sup> P.L. Traver’s *Mary Poppins*<sup>59</sup> (via a film adaptation first), T.S. Eliot’s *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* (1939) which became the basis of the Andrew Lloyd-Webber musical *Cats*,<sup>60</sup> and *Jesus Christ Superstar*<sup>61</sup> which was an adaptation by Webber and lyricist Tim Rice of the Bible’s gospels with a great deal of dialogue invention, as was *Godspell*.<sup>62</sup> Roald Dahl’s novel *Matilda* was adapted into a film in 1996, and subsequently into a stage musical by Australian composer Tim Minchin.<sup>63</sup> However there is always the possibility that musical theatre adaptation may represent a passing fad, much in the way that film musicals were popular in 1940s and 1950s Hollywood. It can’t be certain that musical adaptations of novels will still be happening in thirty years. It will depend on audience taste. Thus the definition of adaptation may change, and the Oxford definition seems to allow for this. Even so, a dictionary definition of thirty words will never cover all the elements of adaptation.

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<sup>58</sup> First produced at the London Palladium in April 2002.

<sup>59</sup> First produced in Bristol and London in 2004.

<sup>60</sup> First produced on London’s West End in 1981 with additional lyrics by Richard Stilgoe and Trevor Nunn.

<sup>61</sup> First produced on Broadway in October 1971.

<sup>62</sup> First produced off-Broadway in May 1971.

<sup>63</sup> First produced as *Matilda, A Musical* in Stratford-upon-Avon by the Royal Shakespeare Company in December 2010.

University of Chicago researcher Mark Brokenshire's definition of adaptation goes further than that of the Oxford dictionary, allowing for range of sources:

*“Consider a property such as Star Trek, which began as a failing television program, but survived extinction through adaptation into other media such as animated television, comic books, novels and feature films, before returning to television and commencing the cycle again. Since 1966, Star Trek has leapt back and forth from medium to medium” (2019).*

Just as the source may be comics, film, play, books, history, poems or indeed oral history, Brokenshire suggests the final adaptation may also be comprised of any of these media, or as we have seen with the Marvel universe, even more diverse media forms (film, animation, comics, animated storybooks, audiobooks). In effect, the sky is the limit for genres of adaptation, and the sources may be just as diverse.

This brings us to the level of change that may occur within the adaptation. An examination of the range of adaptations of Homer's *The Odyssey* reveals just how broad adaptations can be. Homer's work was written in an epic poem of more than twelve thousand lines divided into twenty-four books, all written in a dactylic hexameter.<sup>64</sup> We should note that although it was an epic poem and was written in hexameter, it was not the like the poems we know today. *The Odyssey* was not bound in a book and published in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It was most likely performed and sung before an audience before the poetry was written down, and these performances altered the work (Mandal 2016).

Looking at the scale of change that might happen in the adaptation, McGibbon (2014) groups adaptation into three broad types: *transposition*, *analogy* and *transformation*.<sup>65</sup> These methods cover the range of adaption from making minor changes (see below for the discussion of Wolfgang Petersen's film adaptation *Troy* and its setting in the sand and dust of the era) to making a change so profound that the original text could barely be recognised (for example *2001: A Space Odyssey* which sets

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<sup>64</sup> A form of rhythmic structure in verse writing.

<sup>65</sup> In his PhD thesis: *Seeing Double: The Process of Script Adaptation Between Theatre and Film*.

the Cyclops in outer space). For my adaptation of *Someone Else's War* into a play, this palette was liberating. Here I will assess McGibbon's three methods in turn and their suitability as vehicles for my adaptation.

McGibbon's first method, *transposition* (p. 33), tells the story in the same way as the original. It simply puts the source material on stage, not adjusting the work for the live medium; not allowing change from the original story. When first considering how to adapt *Someone Else's War* I thought about making this a transpositional adaptation. The adaptation script would be taken directly from the dialogue in the novel, and the timeline would follow the chapters as they were laid out in the novel. As I considered my writing in the novel to be descriptive, these descriptions would be laid down as stage directions. As a starting place for an adaptation, transposition makes sense. It begins with the format of the original story and then you decide whether it needs to be changed. I was soon to find that the needs of a staged performance meant an unchanged literature format would not work for the play *Lady of Arrows*. The novel starts with Olga as an out-of-work actress in Athens just before the second world war. From this base the story then moves back and forward in time, and across to Australia and back again to Athens. Each of these movements is depicted in some cases for only a few pages in the novel. In a novel such changes can be easily demarcated by a new chapter, a new heading, a new point-of-view. For a play each changed setting meant a new scene with its requisite staging. Then there is the danger of the audience not understanding the changes they are witnessing. They could not re-read a chapter or go back a page to make sure they could comprehend the changes. The play needs to take the audience with it. Although writing nearly fifty years before my adaptation, Perry noted that adaptations often require additions to the source story a story to make the narrative work on stage and cites the stage adaptation of Herman Melville's book *Billy Budd*. When two playwrights<sup>66</sup> looked at adapting the novella, they found the source text wordy and difficult to use as a source. They added extra action to the story to keep it exciting for an audience (Perry 1968, p. 1313). Likewise, I was to find in the playwriting process that scenes I wrote as quick passages in the novel needed to be expanded upon in *Lady of Arrows* to give those scenes a dramatic tension.<sup>67</sup> McGibbon's *transposition* would just not have been enough for a successful adaptation in either case of *Billy Budd*

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<sup>66</sup> Louis O. Coxe and Robert Chapman. Their adaptation was produced on Broadway in 1951.

<sup>67</sup> See 3.2 (f) *Adding action to emphasise the dialogue*.

or *Someone Else's War*. I needed to make substantial changes to the novel's structure to make it work for the stage.<sup>68</sup> For me transposition worked as a starting point and failed as a final outcome. This kind of risk with *transposition* is acknowledged by McGibbon, who says this method can lead to the adaptation failing because it may not make allowance for the particular needs of live performance.

McGibbon's second method breaks away from the original story almost completely. His *analogy* technique is where a new, different, analogous story is found to tell the original story (p. 69). He cites Andrew Bovell's Australian murder mystery movie *Lantana*<sup>69</sup> as being an analogy of the play about suburban sexual intrigue *Speaking in Tongues*. The storylines are parallel but analogous with different characters in different places and times (p. 313). This is the method that is used by the Coen Brothers in their film adaptation of *The Odyssey* into *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* in which George Clooney plays Ulysses Everett McGill, an escaped prisoner who is trying to get back to his family in Mississippi in 1937. While in the original poem, Odysseus' wife Penelope is besieged by suitors wanting to marry her for the riches of the kingdom and title of king (and Odysseus wants to get back to Ithaca before one of these suitors succeeds), in the film, McGill's wife is about to remarry, and he wants to get back to her before the wedding can happen. The poem's sailors are replaced in the film by two fellow travellers, Hogwallop and O'Donnell, while the Cyclops is no mythical monster here, but a large Bible-selling John Goodman who mugs the trio instead of eating them. In this version of the story, the tension of the protagonist needing to get home and being thwarted (because of the barriers put up by the salesman; the flirting, thieving, bathing sirens; the sheriff who is set on trapping the escapees; and the wrath of the authorities) represents a constant underlying frustration that is true to the original. All these impediments correspond to the characters in the poem, but reinterpret them as earth-bound powers who trap, delay, divert and frustrate. Thus this film adaptation is more successful in conveying the tension of the poem as it has an imperative that is in the original. The fact that Odysseus has already been away from Ithaca for the ten years of the Trojan War and spends a further ten years returning from Troy (amid the trip's many diversions) is represented by McGill's time in jail.

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<sup>68</sup> These are outlined in *Chapter 3 - From the Novel to the Play: Strategies of Conversion*.

<sup>69</sup> Released in 2001. Bovell wrote both the screenplay for the movie and the 1996 play *Speaking in Tongues*.

There have been other allegorical film adaptations of *The Odyssey* – for example Mackie (2017a) has suggested that Odysseus is the inspiration for the stranded astronaut Dave in *2001: A Space Odyssey*,<sup>70</sup> in which a lone surviving astronaut who is prevented from returning back to earth by a computer that has taken control of his space vessel. Recalling Aeschylus' comments about the 'slices of Homer', this film may be an example of just that: a slice from *The Odyssey*, with the one-eyed computer HAL representing the Cyclops Polyphemus. Like Polyphemus in the Homer story, HAL kills Dave's fellow travellers and enters a battle of wits with Dave himself. There is no siren, sea monsters or god in this version of the story. It is truly just a slice of Homer's narrative, with a one-eyed power who is eventually overcome.

Mackie (2017a) goes on to say that there are also parallels between Odysseus and the drifter character in the film *Paris, Texas*.<sup>71</sup> Certainly a fan page for the film claims that the director read *The Odyssey* when forming the subject for the film (Louis, 2000). There are similarities between Odysseus and Harry Dean Stanton's Travis Henderson who, like Odysseus, is a wanderer who is looking for his wife. Characters come into his life as he continues his search, with many helping him on his journey, and some not so much. There aren't Cyclopes-like monsters or giant bible salesmen in this story, but the allegory seems to be more personal. It does diverge sharply from Homer's original at the end: Henderson finds his wife Jane, but rather than be the man who wants to have his kingdom back, he wants his wife and son to be reunited. His wish, in the last reel, is for the others in the story to obtain what they want. Odysseus is less selfless. In *The Odyssey*, it might be argued that Odysseus just wants to get home to fight off his enemies and get his wife and kingdom back. It's all about him.

These films appear to be slices of the poem, acting as conscious responses to *The Odyssey* without being a literal re-telling of it. They tell of men trying to get home and being frustrated, although in both cases the men make progress. The Kubrick film presents a sense of tension because the astronaut is impeded by a seemingly insurmountable enemy. Here *The Odyssey* has been sliced, with these slices rewritten for the new media and analogised to a new time and place.

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<sup>70</sup> Directed by Stanley Kubrick and released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in April 1968.

<sup>71</sup> Directed by Wim Wenders and released by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox in May 1984.

In adapting *Someone Else's War* into *Lady of Arrows*, I also took slices of my original story, but not all of it. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, the breadth of the original novel was very wide; scenes were drawn out, often to include several perspectives; people are described in detail; and there are vignettes involving minor characters who appear only once. For Aeschylus, taking slices of Homer may have given him the opportunity to expand on a Homeric character the way Kubrick did with his HAL. For me taking slices of my original novel was all I could do if I was to keep the play to a length suitable for a theatre audience.

McGibbon's *analogy* technique is an idea that gives scope for a new slate for the playwright. In the case of *Lady of Arrows* where the work is written by the same author as the source novel, the concept of analogising may have offered greater freedom for me as the playwright. I could have set the play in another time or another situation like transforming Olga Stambolis into a female version of Odysseus, struggling to get back to her family in Ithaca instead of Australia, or battling mythical monsters instead of the Germans. This would have opened up a mythological arena for me, with a freedom to move beyond the truth of her story. However, there are several downsides to the technique in terms of its relevance to *Lady of Arrows*:

- If the adaptation were to use *analogy* it would have lost the factual basis of the storytelling. If one is telling a story based on fact (such as in the case of *Lady of Arrows*), changing the circumstances of the play may lead to a great loss because the audience would not be introduced to the events in Greece in World War II or to the development of Olga as a daughter, wife and mother in twentieth century Egypt and Australia. Many of the comparison plays discussed in this exegesis<sup>72</sup> tell true stories and are all the more powerful because the characters are depicted as real people responding to the events of their times.
- In *Lady of Arrows*, the story's climax reveals one of the major motivating factors for the protagonist's behaviour: that before the war Olga's infant son was killed by a girl feeding the baby sewing machine parts. This scene

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<sup>72</sup> See Appendix 3 – Other Works (and Conscious Responses).

in the play is all the more shocking because it really happened.

Analogising this occurrence may cause the work to lose this powerful element because the audience may believe it is simply a fictional device in a fictional analogical play.

These issues represent the problems with *analogy* as an adaptive technique. It is possible the analogy can be so far set from the original that it may be difficult to recognise as an adaptation. While *The Odyssey* describes ten years in the life of Odysseus, James Joyce's epic novel *Ulysses*<sup>73</sup> sets the story over the course of one day in 1904 in Ireland. Odysseus is changed into Leopold Bloom who was anything but a Greek warrior, rather, he sells advertising. Odysseus' son Telemachus becomes the writer and teacher Stephen Dedalus, and Odysseus' wife Penelope loses her Odyssean fidelity to become Leopold's sexually promiscuous wife Molly Bloom. The adaptation has a poetical style in eighteen chapters titled after characters and events from Homer's original and relies on a stream-of-consciousness in terms of narrative style that seems to bear little relation to the cadence of Homer's original. The story retains elements of the original with the character of Bloom meeting and overcoming various roadblocks and adversaries across the day, but it would be entirely possible that if the book didn't use the Homeric chapter titles and name, a reader would not realise that what was being read was in any way related to *The Odyssey*.

If Joyce's adaptation is almost unrecognisable from the source, Dermot Bolger's adaptation of Joyce's *Ulysses* into a stage play also called *Ulysses*<sup>74</sup> may have taken the process even further. Bolger took whole passages of the stream-of-consciousness novel, cutting it down from its 295,000 words, but maintaining the novel's dense narrative style. The play is significantly different from the source novel, giving us an interesting process of adaptation upon adaptation using two different adaptation methods. Where Joyce analogised Homer's original, bringing in pubs, promiscuity and drunks, Bolger made further changes to Joyce's story in a way that fits it into the third of McGibbon's adaptation types: that of *transformation*. McGibbon says this method is more useful for writers making adaptations because it allows the story to be expanded beyond that in

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<sup>73</sup> Published in 1922 by Sylvia Beach.

<sup>74</sup> Bolger's *Ulysses* was originally staged in 1995 and rewritten in 2017.

the source material, and the story's themes to be delved into (p. 54). This is the method which my adaptation of *Someone Else's War* most resembles. The story can be changed sufficiently to bring in new elements including the addition of characters, the invention of scenes, and changes of focus from one character in the original to another in the adaptation. McGibbon cites the example of David Mamet's adaptation of his own play *Glengarry Glen Ross* into a movie of the same name.<sup>75</sup> The original play is about a group of sales executives struggling to make their firm's quota of new clients. In the movie version the focus is changed from the play's ensemble of characters into a single protagonist. The ensemble is still there, but the single salesman Levene becomes the movie's protagonist, because the director David Mamet believed the power of the movie lay in the story of one character (p. 57).

In this way the *transformation* method allows the freedom to change the story to make it suit a different medium. I did this in *Lady of Arrows* when I add a scene showing Olga's reaction when her baby goes missing. In the novel she simply reveals that her child had died. For the stage medium I added a scenario where Olga's mother and brother lie about the baby's fate, claiming the child has wandered off. In the play I have Olga rage against her mother and grab the throat of her brother, forcing them to admit to her that the child was accidentally killed. For a theatre audience I felt this provides a much more powerful mode of revealing the death of the baby than in the original novel and gives more of an insight into Olga's maternal instinct. Balodis sees nothing wrong with making such changes in the process of adaptation, suggesting that adaptations are a re-telling of the source story, and are not necessarily bound to the incidents and characters as depicted in the source material. He says this is particularly so in the genre of theatre adaptation:

*"..as the theoretical discourse has moved on from outmoded notions of fidelity to original sources, the practices of adaptation is a method of re-invigorating theatre forms and inventing new ones"* (Balodis 2012, p. 1).

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<sup>75</sup> Produced in 1992 from Mamet's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1984 novel.

Writer Daniel Wallace agrees, saying the playwright is a creator and should be able to invent, just as the writer of the source material was able to invent:

*“The best adaptations are inspired by the source material, not dictated by it”* (cited by August, 2011).

If we are to follow Wallace’s edict, even the bounds of the original story might be changed, such as in the case of a character being taken out of the source work and remade into a narrator telling the story in retrospect. This is the major change I made in adapting *Someone Else’s War* into *Lady of Arrows*. Olga, who in the source novel is one of the major characters talking to the reader through her diaries, is presented in a new light in the play adaptation as an older woman reflecting on her past, thus becoming a single narrator for the audience.

McGibbon’s method of *transformation* most resembles my adaptation because I only make changes to help the story work for the stage. Olga is still a spy. She kills, she rescues, she trades with the Germans, she is caught, and she suffers guilt for being away from her family. All these things are in both versions of the story, but characters have been deleted, added or merged, locations are added (such as the scene of the revelation of the baby’s death just described), and scenes are also merged. Most profoundly, the narrative is changed, with Olga being an older woman talking to the audience instead of through the source novel’s diary. The two methods of discourse differ in style. In *Someone Else’s War* Olga writes the words in her diary; in the play she can shout, laugh, cry, belittle or in the case of the scene with her brother, use physicality.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to McGibbon’s three categories of adaptation, Balodis (p. 17) cites examples of where the source work can be completely deconstructed in the adaptation; where only strands of that original work are incorporated into the final play. While not presenting an argument on whether an adaptation should show fidelity to the source work, Balodis does cite Hutcheon’s phrase that adaptation is a process of “borrowing and stealing – or more accurately, of story sharing” (p. 22). Perhaps this mirrors

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<sup>76</sup> There is also the issue of length. It would be a very long play if all the scenes in the novel were put in the play. The decisions on play length and what to excise for the play is discussed in 3.1 (f) *Getting the Length Right*.

Aeschylus saying that his own works of tragedy were slices of Homer's dinner parties (cited in Karakantza, 2010) and often cited as "slices of the banquet of Homer" (Abel, 7). Aeschylus may have simply been paying homage to a great writer; perhaps he was suggesting that Homer's works had all the elements of tragedy in them; or perhaps Aeschylus was accurately suggesting he took episodes from Homer's stories and expanded on them. This taking of parts of the original might have value particularly where the source text is long and consists of an intense narrative. Parts could be borrowed or - as Hutcheon describes - 'stolen' and 'shared'. But should it not also be the adaptor's job to make sure the gist of the original story is told? If the change is too profound, why claim it as an adaptation? Why not leave this adaptation claim out of it altogether and say this is a different story? After all, that is what it would be.

If we can then change or add characters and scenes, or amend point-of-view, can we go one step further and consider a sequel an adaptation? Greek novelist Nikos Kazantzakis wrote *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* in 1938, using the same Odysseus, Penelope and Telemachus of the original but imagining the events immediately after the conclusion of the original, with Odysseus leaving home for further journeys. None of the events were in the original and new characters were added. Wells-Lassagne argues - using the example of the television medium - that such sequels, reboots, prequels, and spin-offs, even when they add new characters and invent new scenarios, are still adaptations:

*"The definition of the term 'adaptation' must be expanded to accommodate the different forms of transfiction present in television, in the same way that television itself is constantly expanding to accommodate new storylines, new characters, new settings etc" (2017, p. 8).*

This interpretation has value for my adaptation, because although *Lady of Arrows* is not a sequel of *Someone Else's War*, it does contain the new presence of Olga after the war. The source novel ends in 1943. The play adaptation is set in 1960 with Olga remembering her past. Many of the scenes are based on events in the novel, but 1960 is an extension of the novel's timeline, and there is an expansion of events to take the

audience seventeen years beyond what the novel reader has seen. Wells-Lassagne's definition still allows for my adaptation to be considered just that: an adaptation.

Adaptations of *The Odyssey* across the centuries have incorporated all the methods found in the McGibbon and Aeschylean palette. Playwrights and filmmakers have adapted the written version of the poem back to the original performance mode, and in doing so the nature of the original work has in some cases been changed, transformed, analogised and transposed into a range of adaptations that have ranged from minor changes from the source work, to changes so major that the original work may hardly be recognised both in content and in style.

An example of keeping the original characters but changing the style is clear in Tom Smith's 2002 staging of a theatrical interpretation of the *Odyssey* for young people,<sup>77</sup> where the Cyclops becomes an awkward teenager named Polly, and the Sirens sing elevator music. The playwright chose to make this play into a work with humorous overtones with the aim of helping teach audiences about humility and trust (Smith, 2019). Homer may approve the good intentions here while probably being mystified by the nuances of elevators and their soundtracks. Homer may be less approving of his masterwork being reduced to a speedway version as it was in 2010 by R.N. Sandberg. Sandberg ambitiously compacted Homer's original poem, a massive epic of twelve thousand lines, into a one act play for four actors running for barely half an hour.<sup>78</sup> Like Smith's work this is also a less than serious retelling of the story. In fact, it is billed as a short comedy, while maintaining the essential themes of the Homeric original:

*"How do we protect our homes? What makes something or someone a monster? How do we deal with the monsters we encounter overseas? What does it mean to be a hero, to grow up, to be civilized? How does each one of us, despite our age, fears or background, confront the obstacles that life places in our path and find our way through?" (Sandberg 2019).*

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<sup>77</sup> *The Odyssey*, first produced in 2002.

<sup>78</sup> *The Odyssey*, developed at the New York University's Provincetown Playhouse in 2010.

Adapting an epic into a play this brief must require some strict excising. This version still has Circe, the Cyclops and all forms of monsters and treacherous seas. Odysseus's son Telemachus is also featured, with the parallel journeys of father and son featured, making the brevity of the play all the more remarkable. One must question the time given to the elements of the story; with all of these elements from the poem included, it would necessarily be a somewhat frantic piece of stage work.

By contrast Hischak's stage adaptation of *The Odyssey* gives the original story more time than Sandberg's version. It runs nearly four times longer at 105 minutes and features a cast of twenty-two actors.<sup>79</sup> However, this adaptation adds more than just time: it changes the story's perspective, with Odysseus narrating the story as an old man who has returned home to Ithaca after his ten years at sea.<sup>80</sup> This narrative device bears relevance to my own adaptation because I too changed the viewpoint of *Someone Else's War* so that in *Lady of Arrows*, Olga is telling the story near the end of her life, describing events, and playing a kind of Master of Ceremonies for the events we are seeing, in the way of Hischak's Odysseus.<sup>81</sup> This change of perspective offered a further opportunity in that the audience comes as close as they can to dialogue with Olga. She talks to them. She asks them questions, and although the audience cannot answer these rhetorical questions, my intention was to have some audience connection. Hischak may well have had the same intention of connection with his first-person narration by Odysseus.

While these adaptations of the poem into stage performances have varied in length, scope, style and narration, the scope has been broadened still with the various film adaptations of *The Odyssey*. The closest direct retelling of the story may be the 1954 film, *Ulysses*.<sup>82</sup> Kirk Douglas plays a bare chested, muscled and slightly darkened Odysseus.<sup>83</sup> His men emit grisly screams as they are eaten by a giant, slightly mechanical Cyclops; Ulysses himself is anguished by the calls of the Sirens. It is a film of deeds,

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas Hischak's *The Odyssey* first staged in Boston in 2001.

<sup>80</sup> The audience does not know it is Odysseus himself who is doing the narration until late in the play. This change of narration viewpoint presents extra dramatic purpose to the play because it adds tension: the audience will wonder who this narrator may be.

<sup>81</sup> Although I had decided to do this before I had discovered Hischak's work.

<sup>82</sup> I suggest in the conclusion that further research be carried out to examine the reasons for this almost 3000-year fascination with *The Odyssey*.

<sup>83</sup> Although the filmmakers decided to use the Latin form of the name of the hero: Ulysses.

horrors and a musically enhanced ending. It is not lyrical, nor is it spoken in the hexameter of the source poem. The language is colloquial and the accent American. There is little in this movie about the nature of man, of the yearning for place and family beyond the angst and posturing of the central character. It is a film of events. A moviegoer in 1957 will have experienced an adventure, but most probably will not have left the theatre foyer pondering life.

In both allegorical and literal adaptation, writers run the inherent risk of superficiality in trying to cram everything in. In Wolfgang Petersen's epic 2004 movie *Troy*, the director tries to convey just about every major element in *The Odyssey's* predecessor *The Iliad* making it a kind of literal re-telling including setting it in ancient Greece itself. It begins with the romance between Paris and Helen. It ends with the sacking of the city of Troy. It has a timeframe of ten years. At two hours and forty-three minutes, the movie skims the story, but leaves out much of the mythological element:

*"Wolfgang Petersen's 2004 film, "inspired" by the Iliad, edited out all the gods and nymphs, and made the war into an action movie, supposedly based on history" (von Tunzelmann 2008).*

The excised gods and nymphs were probably taken out by necessity. The screenwriter would have had to make a decision about what was essential to the storyline (or indeed storylines, for there are quite a few). The legend of Achilles seems to be the through-line for this movie, as are the machinations of the Greek kings as they prepare to lay siege to Troy. Then there is the romance between Paris and Helen. After this the movie delves into Paris' brother Hector's story, involving his wife and son. Then there is Troy's king Priam versus his Greek antagonist king Menelaus. Each of these characters and their associated plots could arguably have filled a movie script on their own. There really would not have been a lot of space for another god or nymph. But it is not just excision that happens in *Troy*. Some changes are made simply to make the story more palatable, such as the fates of the protagonists. Both Helen and Paris survive together at the end of the movie, giving the audience a happy Hollywood finale. This is in contrast to the epic poem where Paris dies and Helen returns to king Menelaus: not as

romantic, and certainly less feel-good for a cinematic audience. As von Tunzelmann implies, the result is superficial: the turning of a masterpiece of heroism and myth into a romantic action flick. This last change may have been required by a movie studio fearing that the audience may have had enough bad news with the sight of the body of Hector – played by actor Eric Bana - being pulled around Troy in the dust for three days. Perhaps the executives wanted some good news for the audience to take home. Although not for similar kinds of commercial reasons, I also found it necessary to change elements of the Olga story in adapting it to suit a theatre audience. These decisions are outlined in detail in the next chapter, but for the purposes of examining my method of adaptation I can say that I moved several elements of the story to suit the build to a theatrical climax, including the revelation that Olga’s husband had her declared dead before marrying his shop assistant. Unlike Petersen, I did not whitewash this, nor did I add a happier ending. I simply rearranged it in the interest of reaching a climax. I felt that moving it into a careful sequence at the end of the play made the impact of this element more effective. It is the same story, but it is somewhat rearranged.

From all this we can see that an examination of adaptation theory sets few boundaries on what an adaptation can be. The adaptation could be a close but superficial retelling of the original (such as the movie *Troy*), but can also be analogised to take a Homer epic into space, Mississippi, or the modern mid-west. It can be rewritten for children, for cartoons, comics and picture books. The original can also be sliced so that only elements of it are used in the retelling. Even a sequel, or in my case the projecting of the story by some seventeen years, may be considered an adaptation. The limits of theatrical adaptation may be few, but the test of success must be whether the resulting script makes for compelling theatre.

If we accept that adaptors have broad liberties in their work, the next question must be about felicity. Can a source story be changed so much that, say, the hero becomes a villain; that the ending in the movie *Troy* can be switched from tragic to romantic; that the adapted Odysseus in *Paris, Texas* becomes a selfless hero? The oft-seen rider on movie posters that the film is “inspired” by an author’s story, or is “based” on other people’s work seems to give some leeway for the adaptor, especially as this rider goes some way to ensuring the audience is not misled. For true stories, however,

there is danger in changing facts when making an adaptation. There is nothing in McGibbon to suggest any of his methods of adaptation cannot apply to non-fiction. Adaptors of fiction might add elements to, embellish, change, deviate from, or go tangential to the original story. Similarly, adaptors of non-fiction (when they rewrite scenes, combine characters or add dialogue) might find themselves adding a layer of fiction on top of what was non-fiction in the source story, thus changing fact into fantasy and losing authenticity. Francois Fenelon recognised this in 1740 when writing about his own extension of the Odysseus story:

*“..how can poetry, the daughter of error and fiction, possibly establish a solid reputation?” (Vol 2, p. 104).*

This is an issue that has affected storytellers from the very first days of the craft. Homer’s *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* are counted among the oldest existing texts, and both could be considered histories of a kind, even if they tell of characters and deeds that may have been myths. Both have been questioned as to authenticity. Regardless, in 1955 Cottrell wrote that both works ended up becoming historical sources anyway:

*“Less than a hundred years ago the only knowledge – if it could be called such – of the early history of Greece was that obtainable from Greek mythology, and especially from the great epic poems of Homer, the Iliad and the Odyssey.” (p. 25).*

While *The Odyssey* tells the story of Odysseus, and his attempt to return home to Greece after the Trojan War, it is a story that may never have happened. The Trojan War may have occurred, but there is no evidence that Odysseus was kept in limbo for ten years, seduced a goddess or saw his troops eaten by a gigantic one-eyed man. Indeed, the evidence that Odysseus ever existed is scant. In 2010 a team of archeologists discovered what they claimed to be Odysseus’ house but even this did not quell all doubt:

*“The claim [about the house belonging to Odysseus] will be greeted with scepticism by the many scholars who believe that Odysseus, [and] other key characters from the Homer's epic such as Hector and Achilles, were purely fictional” (Squires, 2010).*

Indeed, throughout *The Odyssey* there are regular interactions with non-human creatures (The Sirens, The Cyclops); with Gods and Goddesses (Poseidon, Zeus, Athena); and with supernatural elements (The Bag of Winds). This takes *The Odyssey* into the realm of myth, a fairy tale, or perhaps even a metaphor that was never intended by its author to be seen as a direct retelling of true events. Nearly three thousand years after the death of Homer, it is likely we will never know what was in Homer's mind, if indeed Homer existed as a single writer.

This leads us to the second part of this chapter which is a discussion of the issue of fidelity. As we have seen, adaptation can completely transform a story and move it further and further from its factual base, perhaps moving it from a factual non-fiction story into one that can at best be an imaginative excursion, and at worst be misleading. We will examine this in the context of the work of Herodotus, whose masterwork *Histories* was the first known work to be the result of investigation and documentation. Cicero went as far as to call Herodotus ‘The Father of History’ (Keyes 1928, 1.5).

Herodotus faced a serious problem for a writer of the new genre of history. He had to rely on oral histories as sources (like me and any writer or scholar using a framework dependent on oral history) because the first and second Persian Wars occurred well before Herodotus' adulthood. In *Histories*, Herodotus appears ready to accept the word of the people who told him stories:

*“I know this is how it happened because I heard it from the Delphians myself.” (Macaulay, Book VII, 12.6).*

Morford says unless Herodotus had personally witnessed or was a participant in the events he was writing about, he had no alternative but to accept these oral recounts as sources, simply because that was how history was passed on in those days:

*“The stories of the earlier period were kept alive by oral recitation, transmitted by bards like those described in the epics themselves” (1999, p. 22).*

The oral histories Herodotus relied upon may have been imperfect with embellishments already built in as it passed from mouth to mouth. I faced the same problem - I too had to rely on oral histories as a source of the facts of the Olga Stambolis story. Although these oral histories came initially from the protagonist herself, they came to me through her children as secondhand accounts many years later. In both my case and that of the Herodotus, the oral histories may have been faulty or contaminated. Olga may have exaggerated. Her children may have overreached in their retelling. Memories may have been faulty. These issues lead Tsoutsoumpis to warn that oral testimony should be low on the scale of research sources:

*“Despite their usefulness, oral testimonies do not present an ‘authentic’ version of events..” (2016, p. 30).*

For writers of historical events such as Herodotus (and me) the issue is not whether the oral histories have dangers - that is a given. Rather, the issue may well be whether we as writers have taken safeguards against their doubtfulness. Unlike Herodotus, I had libraries, memoirs, documents and my cross-examining skill as a journalist of many years' experience. For Herodotus, the chances to verify the actions of Xerxes, Artabanus and the Pythian prophetess would have been impossible. It was not as if he could, like me, have popped down to the library or looked up archival records. Although the Persian Wars were still extant in his childhood, Herodotus was too young to have been a participant in most of the events he was describing.

However, the risk of a Herodotus' work becoming tangential from the facts did not just lie in the dubiousness of his sources. There is also the fact that he went beyond

the facts. He made things up, extrapolating aspects of cases by going into the minds of his protagonists, and inventing thoughts, words, and probably deeds. For Homer, this may have been allowable because he did not claim that his oral poetry was historic record. It was a poem. However, Herodotus claimed his prose work *was* history, documentation of actual events. He went as far as to title it as such. Perhaps it was this that led Plutarch<sup>84</sup> to respond to the Cicero epithet (*'The Father of History'*) by labelling Herodotus *'The Father of Lies'*:

*"But thou, O Herodotus, transferest the full moon from the middle to the beginning of the month, and at the same time confoundest the heavens, days, and all things; and yet thou dost pretend to be the historian of Greece!"*  
(Goodwin, 1878, section 26, 10).

This is a serious attack on Herodotus' credibility. In this part of this literature review I discuss whether the invention in my novel *Someone Else's War* opens it to the same kind of criticism, for I too invented, aiming to provide an elegance and a force in my writing, an example of which is the following passage:

*"Stavros calls her a slut for being with the German. A word spat with spittle, a blade as sharp as a knife to go into her heart."* (Kafcaloudes, p. 287)

These words are fiction. I wrote this verbal attack to have an effect on my reader by surprising them with a swift and brutal passage which takes them on a new turn. It is true that Stavros never said these words because Stavros did not exist as a single known person. He was a composite taken from brief portraits of resistance fighters I found in my historical research. Thucydides, a contemporary of Herodotus, was one of the first to acknowledge that such invention has storytelling value:

*"To hear this history rehearsed, for that there be inserted in it no fables, shall be perhaps not delightful. But he that*

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<sup>84</sup> In his work *On The Malice of Herodotus*.

*desires to look into the truth of things done, and which (according to the condition of humanity) may be done again, or at least their like, shall find enough herein to make him think it profitable. And it is compiled rather for an everlasting possession than to be rehearsed for a prize" (Hobbes, 1830, p. 31).*

Although this comment is made in relation to Herodotus' invention, it may also apply to my own work, for I too tried to look into the 'truth of things done', into the motivations of the people I write about. Perhaps at this early stage in the discussion I may suggest the demarcation between inventive storytelling and deception should be accompanied with the honesty of the author about the nature of the work. If the writer claims to have seen such incidents or if they claim the writing is what we today call journalism when it is invention, then they have presented deception. John P.A. Gould (in Hornblower, 2012) believes Herodotus was not being deceptive:

*"(Herodotus) nowhere claims to have been an eye witness or participant in any of the major events or battles that he describes" (p. 674).*

So according to Gould, Herodotus stayed on the right side of the line that defines deception. He did not make a claim to be present at the events he described.<sup>85</sup> Gould's view has weight if Herodotus explicitly claimed, for example, to be in places (such as Egypt) doing things (such as measuring the Giza pyramids) he did not do. Herodotus would be seen as a fraud, and doubts about any of his claimed and unverified facts would reasonably follow.<sup>86</sup> However, whether or not he measured pyramids in actuality, it is certain that in his *Histories* are elements of fictional expansionism in dialogue, motivation and thought. For example, in *Histories*, Mardonius urges Xerxes to attack the Greeks (Book VII, 5.8) and much of the dialogue for this scene includes speeches which are very long. It is improbable that they could be word-for-word accurate depictions of

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<sup>85</sup> Although it could be argued that whether Herodotus was a participant or an eyewitness is irrelevant. One may not have to be a soldier to write about a war. Nor does one have to be a politician to write a political history.

<sup>86</sup> It should be noted that there are no extant facts to refute his claims that he measured pyramids.

actual speeches that were made at the time. All are written in inverted commas, and not paraphrased. Unless one of the two participants wrote down that entire speech for Herodotus, this must be invention, at least to some degree.

Herodotus justifies his fictional passages by saying that the purpose of writing history is more than just to record what happened but also to speculate on why:

*“So that human achievements may not become forgotten in time, and great and marvelous .. and especially to show why the two people fought with each other”* (cited in Whiting 2007, p. 21).

When Herodotus does overstep into speculation at times, he admits it:

*“As far as I judge by conjecture, Xerxes gave command for this digging out of pride”* (my emphasis) (Macauley, Book VII, 24.1).

This passage may just represent a tool of the writer’s craft, but at least Herodotus is admitting to his reader that he doesn’t know something. It is a refreshing honesty in the face of the criticism from those like Plutarch.

I too invented dialogue, not only for the protagonist Olga, but also for documented historical events. In the introduction I discuss my decision to include in the novel the Italian ambassador’s ultimatum to Greek Prime Minister Metaxas in 1940. This ultimatum, given in the middle of the night, demanded that the Greeks allow Italian troops to pass through Greece. It is known that Metaxas, speaking in French, said ‘So, this is war’ (Lord, 2018).<sup>87</sup> Apart from the Metaxas refusal, there is no record of the conversation of that meeting. There were no witnesses beyond Metaxas and Grazi. Metaxas died three months later in the midst of war and wrote no memoirs or accounts of his life. In *Someone Else’s War* this meeting is expanded to heighten the emotion of the moment and to bring out the characters of the players. I invented most of the

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<sup>87</sup> Although others believe Metaxas simply replied ‘Oxi’, which means ‘no’ (Neos Kosmos, 2009).

dialogue of this meeting. I also constructed other details, including small nervous movements by both men. Without this expansion this would be a rather short passage and an abrupt, colourless incident for what was a key moment in modern Greek history.

This brings us to the danger in this writing choice. A reader may not know the difference between what certainly happened and what was a fiction. In my case, I felt that these elements of the story of the war in Greece were important, and the telling of these stories should not be prohibited because I didn't have the name, location and the date of these things. I gave them a name, location and date. But to insert these inventions I followed a rationale. They had to have a base in real events in Greece at the time (reprisal shootings, a woman starving to death, a sexual encounter with a soldier). I could not claim the Parthenon was bombed when Athens was never attacked in this way. If I did there certainly would have been critical consequences. As an added safeguard I ensured the publisher clearly labelled the book as a novel. Journalist Alastair Reid made no such safeguards in a series of articles about Spain:

*“Recently, Alastair Reid was castigated for creating composite characters and locations... Joanne Lipman, a New Yorker staff writer says Reid ‘took disparate elements from different places – a bar here, a bartender or television speech there – and moved them around and put them in a whole different place and made a poetic whole” (my emphasis) (Adams 1990, p. 5).*

This brings us back to the question that I asked at the beginning of this chapter: if people believe fictional or semi-fictional depictions to be absolutely true, would their knowledge of history be damaged? In making his poetry whole, has Reid crossed the line? If Reid's Spanish bartender simply worked at a different club, I can't see that any damage is done. Indeed, in this case I argue the benefits of poetic, compelling writing probably outweigh the geographical amendments. Telling a story in a novel, a poem or entertainment is not just the dropping of facts onto paper. The story might need succinctness which necessitates amalgams of character and places; it may need to be adjusted for a cadence, or to add a rhythm to pull the reader from line to line, and page

to page. Homer did this with his dactylic hexameter. I did this with a mix of short and long paragraphs that had a rhythm, or a repetition of beat or words. In the Metaxas-Grazzi meeting the cadence of the lines leads the reader through an invented flow of seven-word phrases which is then ebbed with the truncated single line “*What is this, Count?*”:

*“The General comes down almost right away, shoeless, putting on his dressing gown on the stairs.*

*The General sits on his usual couch; the Count takes an adjacent chair.*

*What is this, Count?*

*The Count crosses and re-crosses his legs and has nowhere to rest his arms. The chair has no sides. When he speaks it’s in French so that his words cannot be mistaken.”*

(Kafcaloudes 2011, p. 154).

To apply this cadence, I fitted Metaxas’ and the Count’s movements to suit the narrative. Obviously this was invention, as was how Metaxas was dressed, how he walked downstairs, how Grazzi reacted to Metaxas. Even the crossing and re-crossing of his legs was put in purely to give a sense of discomfort and a window into Count Grazzi’s possible state of mind, and this state of mind was my invention. Grazzi may not have been uncomfortable. He may have been annoyed, sleepy, apathetic, or triumphant. We don’t know. If I did know that he felt otherwise, I would have written this scene differently. But again, my work was a novel and labelled as such.

If authors do not reveal the fictional nature of their work, there can be problems. One example is Mary Chesnut’s purported autobiographical American Civil War diary, *A Diary from Dixie*, which was later found to have been written after the war had ended (Adams 1990, p. 6). There is obviously a likelihood that early readers of this work would have wrongly believed these to be genuine diaries written in the midst of the events they

are describing. Instead, it is a retrospective work, written from the safety of peacetime. It could be argued Chestnutt's writing is a genuine memoir of an event she was part of, and therefore no damage was done, but it should also be asked that if Chestnutt lied about this, how much else did she invent?

This issue of validity is also raised in the case of a series of history books by Australian author Peter FitzSimons. The State Library of Victoria places some of these books in its non-fiction Australian history section. But whether these books can be classified as non-fiction is debatable. One example is *Nancy Wake*, a biography by FitzSimons about the life of an Australian spy who fought with the French resistance. The book charts Wake's life and wartime activities but at times expands beyond documentary. For example, the opening paragraph of this biography reads:

*".. the air was thick with exhaustion, the sheets and floor nearby lightly spattered with blood and wetness. On the bed, a woman was just starting to recover from the searing waves of pain that had been washing over her during the supreme effort of giving birth.. Ella Wake lay back exhausted, totally spent" (2001, p. 3).*

The style of writing here clearly aims to make the birth of Nancy Wake accessible to readers. But these lines are at best conjecture and at worst (for a non-fiction book) invention. FitzSimons was not present at Wake's birth. Nor is there any reference to suggest that he was drawing on a written account of someone who was present. These are the lines of an entertainment writer who has taken liberty with facts and has left it to the audience to decide whether the birth was as described. That said, is the reader's knowledge of the world damaged because of this passage? Probably not. It is a birth, and whether Ella Wake screamed or not is probably not kind of issue that would spark a Plutarch salvo.

That was one, seemingly unimportant example, but there may be more cause for concern over the invention in FitzSimons' book *Batavia* which is about a shipwreck, mutiny and massacre involving the Dutch ship Batavia off the West Australian coast in

1629. FitzSimons not only embellishes, but invents and assigns motivations to one of the murderers:

*“..his mark is: the heavily pregnant Mayken Soers – so pregnant, she will be incapable of running far if she tries it. Andries grips his knife tightly and steels himself. This is what has to be done if he is to survive. He is neither a bad man nor a good man, particularly. He is just a man preparing himself to do what has to be done. He has to do this”* (2011, p. 295).

There are no references to show that this is a direct quote from the character involved. This character is executed soon after the above events (2011, p. 413). He left no writings or diary. FitzSimons has extrapolated motivation and inner thinking to the character. He takes the reader not just into an imagined scene, but into an imagined mind. He does so in a book that does not state anywhere that it is fictional. In fact, the inside flap of the book reads:

*“FitzSimons’s (sic) unique writing style has made him the country’s bestselling non-fiction writer over the last ten years”* (author emphasis) (2011, front flap).

This portrayal of Andries’ state of mind is a fiction, and FitzSimons chose to paint him as a man who rued doing what he did. But what if FitzSimons got Andries wrong? What if Andries was a psychopath who enjoyed the murder of a pregnant woman? What if the Batavian *Lord of the Flies* scenario gave vent and opportunity to the worst of this man’s personality? In this case the author’s invention placed a complexion on the story that will have skewed the story. FitzSimons' version certainly made the story of this horrific killing more palatable for the reader, and if this was the reason for the softening of the depiction of this murderer, then there must be doubts as to whether this is the right decision, particularly in a work that claims to be non-fiction.

The same issue applies to Australian novelist Peter Corris' invention of the discovery of a long-lost diary to tell the story of his ancestor Fletcher Christian in the book *The Journal of Fletcher Christian* (2005). The *Goodreads* website, in its description of the book, states the work is:

*"...sourced from mysterious journals obtained while researching his family ancestry"* (Goodreads, 2017).

This is not true - Corris did not find these diaries during research, but rather the diaries were invented by Corris. Elements of the story were factual (such as the mutiny on the *Bounty*) but the fictional diaries told of an imagined future for Fletcher Christian and his descendants. There was no disclaimer that this was a novel, and Corris' publishers provided little to say that the work was fictional, except for a hint on the back cover:

*"Binding together three lives, two histories and a fractured world of new – and old – cultures, The Journal of Fletcher Christian is a rivetting tale of men and madness, and a dazzling work of imagination"* (author emphasis) (Corris, 2005).

Even if a reader would pick up on this subtle line at the back of the book, I question whether every reader would understand this to mean that the entire premise of the book is fictional. The reader might take this line (if they read it) to mean that it is referring to the writing method as being imaginative; that the Christian journals might still be genuine. There is obviously the risk that others besides Goodreads could be misled by the fictional nature of the journals.

Such fictionalisation might be so obvious so as not to be a problem. In his *Rogue Herries* series, New Zealand-born British author Hugh Walpole used a theatre-of-the-mind concept<sup>88</sup> by referring the reader to whole books which did not exist, even going

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<sup>88</sup> A concept that originally came from radio, where the writing created vivid images in the minds of the listeners. I argue the concept applies equally to the writing of fiction, which may also create mental images or beliefs in the minds of the reader.

as far as to include the names of fictitious publishers in references in the footnotes of his pages, such as:

*“<sup>1</sup> Judith Paris’ Journal is still Herries property. See An Old Border Family, published by Houghley & Watson, 1894” (1939, p. 452).*

Neither *Judith Paris’ Journal* nor *An Old Border Family* exist. They are texts invented by Walpole for that one footnote reference. While there’s a risk that some readers were misled into thinking that *Rogue Herries* is a true story, the fact that it was widely known that the *Rogue Herries* series was a set of novels means these references were likely to be seen for what they were: devices to help subsume the reader into a culture of a fictional family of such note that members would have written autobiographies, and other writers would have written about them. It is an immersive technique unlikely to misrepresent - especially as anybody trying to locate the references would find these books to be non-existent.

Another inventive case is that of Max Morgan who took the fictionalised diary concept one step further with his book *Aerobleu* (1997) which tells the story of a pilot’s plane journey told through a fictional diary. The diary is a facsimile of a handwritten text (or a font that apes handwriting). There are no headers, footers, introductions or chapter titles – there is nothing to distinguish this from a genuine pilot’s journal. There is not even a title page. The demarcation between events are dates that are in the same font as the body text. The book is in the shape of a genuine logbook (280mm x 145mm) and comes in an aluminium case in the style of a protective case that might have been used by pilots flying aircraft in the 1940s. The book is stamped with the writer’s name and the date “1947”.

It is not until the final endpaper that the following statement is made in small print:

*“Aerobleu Pilots’ Journal is a work of fiction. Although the author makes occasional references to actual persons,*

*the content and context of those references are entirely fictional” (Morgan 1997, endpaper).*

This might suggest that in the interests of keeping readers immersed in the story, the publishers wished in this case to keep the fictional nature of the work hidden from the reader until the very end. There is no deception. Readers who have read the whole work will be appraised of the fictional nature of the book, but only if they read that endnote. Nevertheless, the publisher and author have taken steps to not misled the reader.

However, there have been cases where the writer has indeed deliberately misrepresented themselves and their work. Australian author Helen Demidenko’s 1993 novel *The Hand That Signed the Paper* is set in World War II, and tells of a man, purported to be the author’s uncle, who had committed atrocities against Jewish prisoners. The author claimed that the book was based on true events and the story was part of her Ukrainian background:

*“Darville submitted the book to the University of Queensland Press in early 1993 as a work of nonfiction. Her author's note states: ‘The things narrated in this book really happened, the things they did [are] historical actualities.’ It says she compiled her story from taped interviews with, among others, her uncle ‘Vitaly Demidenko’, who appeared in the draft under that name. The manuscript is accompanied by notes in Darville's handwriting” (Knox, 2005).*

But Demidenko had no Uncle Vitaly. She was not Ukrainian, and her name was Darville, not Demidenko. The story was entirely fiction.

The Demidenko case led to great controversy about the nature of fact versus fiction in writing. Commentator Gerard Henderson claimed that the Demidenko book had the potential to cause societal damage:

*“Helen Demidenko’s The Hand that Signed the Paper is a loathsome book – all the more so because the author insists that her first novel is not just a work of fiction. Regrettably (and no doubt unintentionally) this book will give comfort to racists and anti-Semites – from Australia’s Lunar Right League of Rights to the fascist wing of Russia’s Pamyat movement”* (cited in Sparrow, 2015).

After this criticism, Darville amended her back story to say she had interviewed an anonymous (and still unknown) Ukrainian war criminal to get the facts on which the novel is based. Whether the story was based on a true interview is not certain, even at the time of writing this exegesis (twenty-six years after the publication of Darville’s book). The original novel was told with narrative merit, proven by the fact that the manuscript won several Australian literary awards,<sup>89</sup> but the value of the work has been damaged by this question of authenticity. If Darville’s tale is based on a true story, then this is a powerful story that may have been of benefit to history because the book - though clearly written in the style of a novel - might have brought to the world a story of historical value, especially as Darville claimed at the time of publication that she interviewed the protagonist who was telling his story for the first time. There must be value in knowing a first-hand account of a person who did what he did: to learn and gain insight; and to go some way towards an understanding of his thought processes and how he could be so abusive to helpless people. However Meyer cites a survey which indicated respondents believed, in the wake of the scandal, that the whole work was fake and thus the atrocities at the base of the book did not happen:

*“Strikingly, the categorisation of the literary scandal was in all cases and across all response groups based upon conjectures of authorial motivation and/or intent: either as hoax (satirical), as fraud (exploitative), or as the*

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<sup>89</sup> The Australian Vogel Literary Award, the Miles Franklin Award and the ASAL Gold Medal.

*insensitive doings of a pathological adolescent author”*

(2006, p. 134).

So this survey indicates Darville may have done a disservice to the Ukrainians she had claimed to have wanted to help. As an extension, if the war criminal's thought processes are Darville's alone and are a total invention, then these thought processes may have nothing at all to do with those of a dangerous, abusive man of the 1940s. Through Darville's deception, readers who believed the story to be true may be misled.<sup>90</sup>

Questionable labelling may have led readers to misunderstand the nature of a book produced in 1961 by former British politician Garry Allighan. The novel is an imagined perspective of someone writing twenty-six years later in 1987. In it he imagines the then-current South African prime minister, Dr H.F. Verwoerd transforming from the architect of apartheid to the man who dissolved it. The future that Allighan imagined did not come to pass. Verwoerd was assassinated in 1966. The road to the end of apartheid was very different from that predicted by Allighan. However, nowhere does the book explain that it is a fictional work. The style of writing is that of a biography, as is the style of the book's design showing a full page posed photo of Verwoerd, in the style of a biography. The dust jacket explanation is written as if the book is a biography. The one concession to the fictional nature of the story is a single line on the front inside dust jacket fold:

*“An imaginative excursion into politics”* (Allighan 1961,  
inside flap).

This ambiguous statement is the only reference to the fact that the book is a work of fiction. It could be argued that for someone buying this book in 1987, there would be a chance that the reader may believe they were buying a non-fiction biography. The reader might be led to believe an alternative (and wrong) version of the end of apartheid.

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<sup>90</sup> These are issues which have caused concern for both the publisher and the Vogel Award itself. The Vogel now has a policy of mandating that an author writing under a nom de plume must reveal their real name on submission for the prize.

These are the concerns that accompanied me as I wrote *Someone Else's War*. I do not believe my fictionalising of the Olga story constitutes lying (in the Cicero sense) and I attempted to reduce the risk of misrepresentation by making it clear on the cover of the English edition that *Someone Else's War* was a novel. There was also an acknowledgment at the end of the novel that stated:

*“And to Olga, who I felt at my shoulder on so many of the late evenings. I hope the diaries were as you would have written them”* (Kafcaloudes, 2011, p. 619).

Perhaps this was not enough. Some readers of *Someone Else's War* believed the invented diaries were genuine. As one elderly Greek man who attended one of the book's launches told me:

*“I was on that street corner on the day she was released from prison, and you brought it all back to me. You wrote it just as it was.”*<sup>91</sup>

However, ‘the day she was released’ was a creation of my imagination. It was based on true accounts of what was happening in Athens around that time, but the diary entry that described what Olga saw on the day of her release from Averoff Prison was imagined by me. In it she walked through a pavement covered in dead bodies and desperate people in a time of famine and spoke to a man whose daughter was cradling a long-dead baby. It was a fictionalised account, yet this reader believed it was true and believed that he was there on the day that Olga walked free from prison.

He was only one of several people who told me they believed the diaries were real. In a 2011 interview on ABC Melbourne, radio presenter Jon Faine asked me where I found my grandmother's diary. This may have helped confirm to me that I had some success in writing in the voice of a woman of a different era and culture, but it raised the

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<sup>91</sup> This man approached me in the Sydney War Memorial after I had given a speech in 2012 at the Oxi Day commemoration.

question of whether I had done enough to make it clear that this was an historical fiction. I thought I had done enough. Perhaps I hadn't.

This has a parallel in the staged historical event, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which is an imagined depiction of the last days of Jesus Christ. Clearly this has many invented elements, including songs, choreography, an elaborate staging. There was little risk of an audience believing that the words spoken on stage were the actual words used in the Middle East two thousand years ago, especially with lines that use modern phraseology such as 'mass communication' and 'what's the buzz'. It could be argued that the inclusion of these phrases obviates the need to spell out that the work is fiction. But lyricist Tim Rice did want his work to have an element of history to it:

*".. Rice approached the story as history instead of scripture.. that the action of Jesus Christ Superstar is .. a version of how it might have been. Because he treated the story as history, he took the facts he could establish and filled in the blanks himself" (Miller 2007, p.129).*

It could not be a completely historical, because the source material was itself incomplete. Miller says that the gospels (on which Rice drew his basis for the Christ character) had very thin descriptions of the other characters portrayed in the musical i.e. Mary Magdalene, the priests and Pilate:

*"Rice had to flesh them out, to give them personalities, inner life, motivation, backstory" (ibid., p.129).*

To do this, Rice gave the characters words that they never uttered. Rice concocted discussions among the priests about the rebel Jesus Christ which explained their fear of the man.<sup>92</sup> Mary Magdalene expresses her love for Jesus<sup>93</sup> after she washes his feet. In both cases, the characters are presented as more than simply the priest and former prostitute as portrayed in the Bible. Tim Rice did what all stage writers

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<sup>92</sup> In the songs *This Jesus Must Die* and *Then We Are Decided*.

<sup>93</sup> In the song *I Don't Know How To Love Him*.

do. He took the story and made it a form of entertainment for an audience. Rice knew that because an event is significant to history, it does not follow that the story of that event writes itself as a theatrical drama. Would theatre-goers be misled? I don't think so.

Likewise we could ask whether they would be misled by the almost entire fictionalisation of the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in Colm Toibin's play, *The Testament of Mary*.<sup>94</sup> Toibin brings to life the characteristics of motherhood, grief and willpower. All these factors were raised in the New Testament gospels, but Toibin's craft in expanding and fictionalising the story makes these elements, and consequently the character herself, jump out to an audience as someone who may be relatable to a modern audience. Her lines give a detail to the thought processes of a mother watching her son being killed:

*"It is only now that I can admit this, only now that I can allow myself to say it. For years I have comforted myself with the thought of how long I remained there, how much I suffered then. But I must say it once, I must let the words out, that despite the panic, despite the desperation, the shrieking, despite the fact that his heart and his flesh had come from my heart and my flesh, despite the pain I felt, a pain that has never lifted and will go with me into the grave, despite all of this, the pain was his and not mine."* (Toibin 2012, p. 126)

Toibin's Mary is speaking years after the crucifixion, and there are no records of Mary reflecting back on the day of Jesus' death. Yet the story is the stronger for this passage, which ties up Mary's mental anguish as one entwined with both her memory of her son being horrifically killed in front of her with her own guilt of feeling that her pain would never be enough. The audience would understand this as an extrapolation that draws on the author's understanding of humanity more than from any historical record.

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<sup>94</sup> Discussed in In Appendix 3 (h) *The Testament of Mary*.

Similarly, a play about writer and critic Quentin Crisp has Crisp demonstrating motivations he may never have had. In *Resident Alien* he is depicted as an elderly man, living alone and no longer the toast of New York life. Yet it was this period and not Crisp's flamboyant earlier life that inspired playwright Tim Fountain.<sup>95</sup> Fountain invents Crisp's disappointment, stoicism and dignity in this fictionalised account of one night in Crisp's life when he was alone in his apartment. The story of this fallen socialite becomes a work of entertainment and poignancy, where in the words of one critic: "words, gestures and environment ricochet off one another" (Brantley, 2001). It is this fictionalisation that made a rather sad episode into living, insightful entertainment. The drama of the play comes through the exposition of Crisp's thoughts as he slowly dresses for a planned interview that never happens, then again in his slow undressing in disappointment at the journalist's snub. In this scenario, the character of Crisp is revealed to an audience which has been made sympathetic not only to a once-famous critic and bon vivant, but to an old rejected man living alone.

The through line in these examples is how fictionalisation brings the story of the central character to a wider audience. When the soundtrack to *Jesus Christ Superstar* was first released in 1970 with Deep Purple's Ian Gillan singing the role of Jesus, millions of teenage hard rock fans may have found themselves singing lines about what Jesus had sacrificed, as the last days of Christ became a pop culture tour de force. Similarly (and on a much-reduced scale) *Someone Else's War* reveals the story about Greece in the second world war. With Tobruk, Singapore, the Western Front, the Blitz, Pearl Harbour, the Holocaust, North Africa, Dunkirk, Mussolini, Hitler's incursion into Russia, the Norwegian Scorched Earth, the Bletchley Codebreakers, and the atom bomb, the battle for Greece was one of the less noted parts of the war. ABC broadcaster Jon Faine told me after our 2011 ABC interview that until he read *Someone Else's War* he was unaware of the impact of the World War II on Greece. If *Someone Else's War* had been written as a history work, Faine may not have read the book. Both he and his audience would probably not know about the events in the war in Greece, and certainly not Olga Stambolis' part in it. As FitzSimons found, making his books into personal stories, ripping yarns, entertainments, novels, or at least histories written in an accessible way, may help the story find wider audiences.

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<sup>95</sup> Discussed in *Appendix 3 (f) Resident Alien*.

In summary, for thousands of years authors have used invention and amendment of facts in their storytelling. They may have done this to increase the impact of their stories, or they may simply have done it to increase the story's entertainment value. When there has been little or no research on that personal story, or when feelings, tone, thoughts, dialogue, detail of places and times are unknown, the ancient writers negotiated that information gap, authoring works that have endured for more than two thousand years. It is a testament to those ancient writers that their works are still of interest today. Many of the same issues that faced Homer and Herodotus applied to the writing of *Someone Else's War*. For all three authors, oral narratives have been the primary source. All the stories had gaps which needed to be filled if the narrative was going to make sense and lead the reader through the story successfully. Perhaps, it may be argued, if people are so absorbed in the story and choose to believe that it is entirely true, then this is in itself a measure of the success of the writing. I argue the problem exists where a work is depicted as a non-fiction work but contains fictional elements. In the next chapter there will be an analysis of how some of these principles were used in adapting the novel *Someone Else's War* into the play *Lady of Arrows*.

### Chapter 3: From Novel to Play: Strategies of Conversion

“.. drama is life with the dull bits cut out”  
(Alfred Hitchcock, cited by Gow 1968, p. 33).

This chapter is the substantive component of this exegesis. It explores the conversion of the source novel *Someone Else's War* into the play *Lady of Arrows*. I start with a rationale for the decision to produce this story as a play, before moving onto how I applied the Adaptation Theory discussed in *Chapter 2 Literature Review* to this adaptation. I provide a timeline of the significant events that took place in the development of this play from first writing to the finalising of the script after the January 2019 workshop and include landmarks such as first readings, workshops and rewrites. There is a discussion about authenticity: how to make the play sound and look as if it is true to the times and places in which it is set. The issues of authenticity apply to both the novel and the theatre play, but a stage performance has its own authenticity issues, including authenticity in dialogue, description, look, word usage, staging and tones. The main body of this chapter follows my journey as I write the play, examining my choices in writing style, structure, basic staging, the protagonist's voice and point-of-view, particularly in contrast to the way they were applied in the source novel. Some of these decisions changed as I moved towards the final script, and I explain those changes, including those brought about by the workshop.

Some of the play's changes came in response to new information gained from my research trip to Greece in November 2017 and reflections I had made on other performance works.<sup>96</sup> Apart from these plays and screenplays, the adaptation was also influenced by ancient Greek writing, particularly Aristotle's criticism of theatre writing.<sup>97</sup> These readings raised ideas for techniques that playwrights have been using since the first plays were recorded (or at least, the oldest plays that have survived).

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<sup>96</sup> These plays are outlined in *Appendix 3 – Other Works (and Conscious Responses)*.

<sup>97</sup> Aristotle's criticism is discussed in *Chapter 3.1 (b) Structure and the double thread*.

It should be said here that the journey of a playwright is an individual endeavour, and my process is specific to this play. It may not all apply to all theatrical adaptations because the nature of the story, the degree of fictionalisation, the size of the production, and even my approach will be unique. My journey may not be another's experience, but my work may assist others undergoing the adaptation process.

In the Introduction to this exegesis,<sup>98</sup> I explained the reasoning for writing the novel, *Someone Else's War*. I wanted to adapt this novel into a play because where books tell, theatre depicts, and I wanted to physically depict my interpretation of the events that affected my grandmother. As a starting point I wanted to get an insight into the people of that time: how they talked, the way they interacted and how they worked, particularly in the stressful and unique time of invasion and occupation in Greece in the 1940s. To do this I looked for plays that were written about the war and a woman's role in it. This was a search that yielded limited success. I found no Greek wartime plays that actually told of wartime Greece. They may have existed, but there are no artefacts from any such plays. The National Theatre of Greece produced plays and operas throughout the war, but it listed no war-based dramas among its significant plays - at least until it founded the Second Theatre in 1956 which encouraged new local playwrights (The National Theatre of Greece, 2017).

That there was little theatrical storytelling about the war is understandable. Greece was an occupied country. It would have been dangerous for underground members to depict the operations of the resistance during this time of Axis occupation, and the danger did not end with the defeat of the Germans. In the five years after the Germans left Greece in 1944 there was a five-year civil war which involved the left wing ELAS<sup>99</sup> and DSE<sup>100</sup> resistance groups fighting the British-backed government forces. This violent clash of Greek against Greek meant that Greece's live theatre scene would have been interrupted for a decade or more, at least from the start of the German occupation in April 1941 until after the civil war's end in October 1949.

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<sup>98</sup> See *Chapter 1.2: How I approached and researched the Olga Stambolis story*.

<sup>99</sup> The Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) the military arm of the National Liberation Front (EAM).

<sup>100</sup> The Democratic Army of Greece, founded by the Communist Party of Greece in 1946.

What is also important is that the activities of the resistance have not been significantly dramatised for the stage in the decades since. The closest example of such a work is *Distomo: Bleeding Humanity*, a 1999 play by Greek author A.S. Tsouras. This tells of the atrocity in the central Greek town of Distomo, where a German SS patrol killed almost all the inhabitants in 1944.<sup>101</sup> It is also significant that this play about one of the major events of the war was only published in the local Municipality of Distomo, not nationally. In the post-war period, there was a renaissance of sorts in Greek theatre, with playwrights such as Kambanellis and his plays *The Seventh Day of Creation* (1956) and *The Courtyard of Miracles* (1957). While both looked at the displacement of Greek populations, neither of these plays were set during the war.

The war was more richly depicted in screenplays. There were several film adaptations that touched on the Greek resistance, including the following Greek productions:

- *Teleftaia Apostoli (The Last Mission)*<sup>102</sup> a 1949 film which had a central character that worked with the resistance and was betrayed to the Germans by her own mother;
- *O Thiassos (The Travelling Players)* a 1975 Greek film directed by Theodoros Angelopoulos, has a plot about collaboration during the war and the ensuing civil war; and
- *The Barefoot Battalion*, a 1953 film which told the true story of orphans who helped the resistance by stealing food and aiding in the smuggling of American servicemen out of Greece.<sup>103</sup>

There were also post-war film dramatisations that contained references to the war in Greece such as the internationally-produced *The Angry Hills* (MGM, U.S. 1959); *The Guns of Navarone* (Columbia, U.S. 1961); *Who Pays the Ferryman* (BBC, U.K. 1977);

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<sup>101</sup> However it was not about the resistance itself, although its action takes place because of resistance action: the Germans committed the massacre after the patrol had been fired upon by resistance members, and the patrol leader believing, wrongly, that the people of Distomo had been giving aid to the Greek assailants.

<sup>102</sup> A Greek language film directed by Nikos Tsiforos as an adaptation from his own novel of the same name.

<sup>103</sup> Directed by Gregg Tallis and written by Nico Katsiotes who adapted it from his own story (Boudoures, 1953).

*Escape to Athena* (ITC, U.K. 1979); *For Your Eyes Only* (MGM, U.S. 1981) and *Eleni* (Warner Brothers, 1985), but most of these films, Greek and international, had resistance fighters as secondary or remembered characters. None of these productions told the story of a resistance fighter such as Olga, working day to day challenging the German occupation.<sup>104</sup>

It should also be stressed that most of these are male-centric films. All have male heroes, except for *Teleftaia Apostoli* and *Eleni* but in the case of the former the drama focusses less on the operation of the resistance and more on a family story; the latter has little resistance work, rather the heroine dies not in the course of fighting in the resistance, but for her opposition to it.<sup>105</sup> This lack of storytelling about women in the resistance was extraordinary because of the huge numbers of women who were a part of it. Chimbos estimates that one third of Greek woman had a role in the resistance (2003). There is certainly photographic evidence that the women andartes worked closely with their male comrades [see photos below].



Women Andartes 1 (Photo courtesy of the Foreign Ministry of Greece)

<sup>104</sup> *The Barefoot Battalion* is a partial exception, telling a story about children working in the underground.

<sup>105</sup> This film is based on the novel by Nicholas Gage and tells of Gage's mother who was murdered by Greek communists during the civil war. It explains how Gage's mother risked her life to secretly send her son to America, a decision that led to her execution.



Women Andartes 2 & 3 (Photos courtesy of the War Museum of Rendina)

Some women took on senior roles in the resistance armies. The photos below show women ELAS fighters instructing male fighters on using semi-automatic weapons.



Women Instructors 1 (Photo courtesy of [epitropesddiodiastop.blogspot.com](http://epitropesddiodiastop.blogspot.com))



Women Instructors 2 (Photo courtesy of the War Museum of Rendina)

Given the roles women played in the resistance, it is surprising that Chimbos found that little has been written, locally or internationally about these women (2003, p.28). This may also be surprising for a country where strong women proliferated in ancient epic poems and plays. These ancient dramas had strong female characters often central to the stories such as Aeschylus' *Clytemnestra*, Euripides' *Medea* and Sophocles' *Antigone*.<sup>106</sup> Whittaker (2017) says of ancient Greek theatre:

*"..it is extraordinary how many powerful women there are, in that there's powerful goddesses, there's Clytemnestra, all these amazing women"* (Whittaker, 2017).

Clearly, much has changed in two thousand years. No-one has dramatised the story of Lela Carayannis, the woman who led Olga's likely resistance cell, and who was tortured and shot by the Nazis (Chimbos 2003, p.32). Her wartime home was later made into a national monument by the President of Greece (Pararas-Carayannis, 2018), but even so, her story remains largely unknown, certainly outside of Greece. This added impetus to me to push the focus of the play to the feminist elements of a woman and her place in the war; a mother estranged from her children; a woman dealing with an initially male-dominated resistance in a country controlled by fascist males. On reflection, I can see I was being ambitious: I was not only telling my grandmother's story, but also the story of the theatre of war and of the social mores: all this in a ninety-minute stage drama.

At the beginning of the process however I saw no such hurdles. I just wanted to write the play. I started by formulating a schedule of milestones that I would need to achieve to get a script written. Below are the milestones as the script developed from January 2017 to the time of submission for examination in 2020. Of course, this timeline would develop and change as the years passed. For example, I did not envisage that the playwriting would end up accompanying a PhD journey, so this part of the process was added in the later years.

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<sup>106</sup> It should be noted that these plays were written by men, performed by men and performed to male audiences (Power, 2017).

**January 2017:** The first draft of *Lady of Arrows* (then called *Olga's Ring*) had been sketched out during a short, intense period of writing. This was well before the research trip to Greece in November 2017. This I saw this draft as an important first stage, a reference point from which development could springboard. In this first draft were concepts that remained until the final script, including having Olga tell her own story in retrospect from her room in Sydney fifteen years after the war. This draft was based on the concept of a one-woman play and introduced the idea of having voices off stage playing the parts of others in her imagination. This draft of the play came to 14,000 words.

**May-July 2017:** The second draft of the play was written as I observed other plays and read classic texts and movie scripts [the conscious responses to which are outlined in *Appendix 3 – Other Works*]. I wanted to see which storytelling elements and techniques in these other productions might work in telling the Olga story. This draft also helped to reveal what information was needed to tell this story in a performance medium, and thus what I could try to discover in the upcoming November 2017 research trip.

**August-October 2017:** At this stage in the process I decided to follow a technique used by many playwrights in the development of their work. This involved seeking critical feedback on the first draft from other artists (directors, writers, actors). The individual members of this feedback group were shown the second draft to inform the development of the play. They did not write elements of the play, nor did their comments necessarily change anything. Some offered positive feedback or gave opinions on elements they thought needed work. However, it was not an information gathering exercise where a survey of opinions was being constructed as research in itself. This initial feedback group consisted of directors Gary Young (Australian resident director for *Mamma Mia*, and author of the musical *Jekyll*); Robert Hewett (author of the award-winning *Gulls*), and Theresa Borg (co-director of the *Life Like* theatrical company). Also in this group was actor Jackie Rees who was to play the role of Olga in the 2019 workshop.

**November - December 2017:** A research trip to central, western and northern Greece yielded new information, including new facts about Olga's work. Some of these findings and discoveries were incorporated in the next drafts [see *Appendix 4 – The Greece Research Trip* for the rationale of the research trip, itinerary and the outputs].

**December 2017:** Actor Jackie Rees read sections of the play with me which we were in Greece. In these sessions we were able to address issues like pace, accents, tone and, at times, script clarity. We were able to discuss the intent of the words and the subtext. For example, Olga's little room at the opening of the play is meant to convey not only a reduction in Olga's circumstances, but also a reduction in her state of mind. She has gone from a worldly woman able to mix in wide circle, to a woman living in a little flat in a closed community. These subtleties were reinforced by scene readings and informed Rees' delivery choices, even if some parts of the script would change over subsequent revisions. It was also during these readings that the idea arose of incorporating Olga's diary as a major plot device.

**January – February 2018:** The information from the research trip and the suggestions raised in the reading and discussions with Rees were considered as the play entered its third draft. It was also at this point, while reading Nikos Kazantzakis' *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* (1959) that I came upon the idea to relate the Olga story to the events in Homer's *The Odyssey* [for the rationale see *3.1 Writing of Lady of Arrows*]. This led to additions such as quotes from *The Odyssey* at the start of each scene. I also decided to re-examine the structure by listing the scenarios as they appeared in the play in order. The purpose of this was to get an overview to see how the play developed. As the play was developing into a complicated piece of storytelling with several through lines, I was concerned that important elements might have been missing in the narrative, and that the journey to the climax might have been too complicated or slow. *Appendix 9 – Lady of Arrows 2017 Rundown* is list of scenes in the play from this early draft. From this scenario I could see that the scenes were of an unnecessarily unequal length. Some involved several scenarios, while others were very short, perhaps too short, and lacking detail. With several storylines converging (Olga's spy work; her arrest; her childhood; her marital breakdown; her children growing up; and her return to Australia), this rundown showed that this early draft was complicated, and may have

been difficult for an audience to follow. This led to the restructuring that simplified the story and made the focus Olga's work in the Greek resistance from 1941 to 1945. The other elements such as her family and the reason why she was in Greece could still remain in the narrative and add emotional spark, but they would no longer be the central tenet of the piece. This would also lead to the development of one of the biggest differences between *Someone Else's War* and *Lady of Arrows*: the nature of the climax. In *Someone Else's War*, it is the nature of why and how her baby son had died; in *Lady of Arrows* the climax stays with Olga in Greece. It is her escape from the Nazis when the cell is destroyed. This climax also brings in information gathered during the November 2017 research trip about the Bouboulina resistance group and its destruction. *Appendix 10: Lady of Arrows April 2018 Rundown* shows how the rundown looked once these factors were taken into account.

**February-April 2018:** After feedback from director Gary Young, I decided to convert the script into a play for three actors. I started work on this conversion.<sup>107</sup>

**May 2018:** After amendments were made to convert the play into a work for three actors, actor Jackie Rees and I did a first reading of the entire play. Rees read the part of the central protagonist (Olga), and I read the other thirty-four characters. Each act was timed, with appropriate space left for the suggested movement and spacing implicit in my directions. This was done to give a rough indication of the running time of the play. The first act ran to forty-two minutes, and the second act ran to forty-seven minutes. This working duration presented a feasible load for the three actors. The reading raised several issues ranging from simple typographical errors to excessive wordiness. Two scenes where the protagonist told stories were changed after the reading. They were converted into small blocks of prose with new dialogue for the three actors. After these rewrites, the play was sent to director Gary Young so he could give feedback and prepare for a reading.

**July 2018:** The first feedback came from the director Gary Young on the second draft. He suggested reducing some of the stage directions.

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<sup>107</sup> The rationale for this change is explained in *Chapter 3.1 (e) One actor or three: An Aeschylean flexibility*.

**October 2018:** The first reading of the play took place in the presence of the director. Jackie Rees and I read all the parts. The director was not involved in reading parts. The participants read their parts sitting at a table and there was little physical acting. Accents weren't used, only voice acting. There were several purposes to this reading, such as to

- see if the play worked as a drama;
- determine whether the humour was successful;
- assess whether scenes, acts and the total duration were too long or short;
- see whether the writing had a successful cadence;
- find out whether there were important parts of the story missing; and to
- discover whether new parts were needed to aid audience comprehension.

Feedback from the actor and the director led to some rewriting (mostly suggestions about stage directions and information for the actors to understand the roles they were playing, such as the year the scene was supposed to have happened and the characters' motivations). There were also typographical errors discovered, and practicalities about entrances and exits that needed to be considered in the writing. These suggestions were incorporated in the script.

**October-December 2018:** The script was updated to take into account the feedback from the October 2018 reading. Stage directions were changed, and the script format was cleaned up in preparation for it to be used in the January 2019 workshop. Negotiations were conducted with RMIT University, Melbourne for its Studio A in Media Street to be made available, along with their cameras and recording equipment for parts of the final reading of the play to be recorded on the last day of the workshop. RMIT also agreed to provide a table and chairs, and some props for the play reading. Two actors were also sought during this period, with the director making recommendations about the cast. The director and the author also had some discussions during this period about writing, scope and the staging limits for the play. There was also some discussion about music and whether it should be included in the workshop. The actors were chosen and

sent the script. La Trobe University Internal Research Grant Scheme Funding was sought to pay the actors for the workshop. This grant was approved in November 2018.<sup>108</sup>

**January 22-24 2019:** The three-day workshop of the play took place at RMIT University in Swanston St, Melbourne. The purpose of this workshop was to see how the play worked as practical theatre piece both in story and in narrative. This was a minimalist model with the actors reading excerpts in a closed session under the Young's direction. I was also present. On the final day of the workshop a visual recording was made using the studio's cameras. This was an on-book reading, where the three actors read from the script. This was done because there was not enough time to memorise the entire script and all thirty-five characters. The workshop was also not conducted with full staging, with the props being limited to chairs, tables, notepads, and books.

**January 24-30 2019:** The visual recording of scenes from the workshop reading was edited. Links to these recordings is included in the final script [*Appendix 8 - Lady of Arrows script and links*].

**February-October 2019:** Another revised script is produced which incorporated the changes made in the workshop. This is the final draft included as *Appendix 8 - Lady of Arrows script and links*.

I followed the schedule as documented above. Some dates had to change according to availability of directors and studios, but it stayed mostly within a period of weeks of the initial schedule.

In the next part of this chapter I explore the issues in the writing of the play, but before doing this I need to address an unexpected parallel to ancient Greek writers. This parallel enriched my writing of the play and led to new elements that were not present in the first draft. This developed when, at the start of the process of doing this PhD, my principal supervisor Chris Mackie asked me why I chose to write Olga's story as modern version of Homer's *The Odyssey*. This observation was a surprise, because at no stage in

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<sup>108</sup> La Trobe University HUSS Internal Research Grant Scheme Round 1, 2019 Grant # 2019-1-HDR 0004.

the writing of the novel had I intended to make it a work comparative with this ancient text. As I read *The Odyssey*, I started to see the parallels between the two works.<sup>109</sup> The parallel was incomplete however, because of the novel finishing in 1943, well before the end of Olga's odyssey. The second world war was still continuing at the novel's end (the Trojan war had truly finished by the end of *The Odyssey*), and where *The Odyssey* ends with Odysseus reconciling with Penelope, Olga's final reconciliation would not happen until 1952, nine years after the novel's final pages. So having had some years to reflect on the novel, I started to see the value in seeing where Olga ended up and what kind of person she became, like in *The Odyssey* when we see Odysseus return to Ithaca to slay his suitors. *The Odyssey* could not have finished before this climax. Likewise, Olga's play could not have finished before the audience knew what happened to her and how she turned out. In 3.1 (d) *Formulating Olga's character* I explain how this became central to this adaptation.

The parallel with *The Odyssey* was also relevant in a number of other ways. I started exploring quotations from *The Odyssey* as a way of introduction to each scene, particularly scenes which contained parallels with the ancient text. In some ways Olga was undertaking a journey in a way not dissimilar to Odysseus: trying to get home, overcoming obstacles, and matching wits with beings of overwhelming power. As I moved on with the writing, I found each scene had elements that could be related to a scene in the ancient texts. I considered having quotes either being projected onto the back of the stage at each dark section (between scenes), and/or read out in a male voice. One example is a well-known quote from *The Odyssey*:

*"out of sight, out of knowledge"* (Lattimore 1967, Book I, 243).

This is used to introduce the scene where Olga finds out that her husband in Australia has not only found another woman but has had Olga declared dead so he can marry this woman. Other quotes are used to highlight the stronger themes found in *The Odyssey* as well as the play such as dislocation; family break-up; being alone in dangerous scenarios; and using intelligence (Greek: *metis*) to overcome extraordinarily

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<sup>109</sup> For a full rundown on these similarities see *Appendix 3 (a) The Odyssey*.

strong adversaries. In using these quotes, the parallels between the works are raised as scene-setters. As the writing of *Lady of Arrows* continued, I saw more parallels between the two works. Olga and Odysseus were stranded away from their homes for many years; they both tried to get home and were stopped by events and the actions of others; both fought battles in times of war in lands far from their home - battles that may have had a strategic influence on the safety of their families; their families at home believed them dead and tried their best to cope; and finally for both cases all these concepts enveloping into the Greek concept of *nostos* (νόστος), with *nostos* defined as:

*“A homecoming or homeward journey as a literary subject or topos; specifically, the return of Odysseus and the other Greek heroes of the Trojan War, as narrated especially in the Odyssey”* (Oxford Dictionary 2018).

This homecoming was not simply the return to a place. It is the struggle to get home that consumes much of the story of both *The Odyssey* and *Lady of Arrows*. This homecoming was always in my mind as I started the adaptation process. In the case of Olga, the homewards journey was in two directions: heading back to Athens to find her birth home; and to Australia where her family was now living.

### **3.1 Writing *Lady of Arrows***

Adapting *Someone Else’s War* into *Lady of Arrows* was my first attempt at a literary conversion. Apart from one attempt to co-write a musical play,<sup>110</sup> I had not previously written for the stage either. This meant that I was learning this mode of writing as I went, from the first draft, which I had begun before the PhD process, to the final script produced after the January 2019 workshop.

I understood early in the process that substantial changes were needed to make Olga’s novelised story work for the stage. In the literature review I explained why I felt

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<sup>110</sup> A musical based on the life of Australian musician Johnny O’Keefe (the unpublished and unstaged *Say That You Love Me*, 1995).

that a simple transposition<sup>111</sup> of *Someone Else's War* would not work for the theatre. The rapid movements between time and space in the novel's short chapters and the style of writing used in the novel meant that a direct transposition would be unworkable. Scenes would be too quick, the fast changes too onerous for a production to carry out. In essence, I needed to start writing the play from scratch. I needed to make decisions about point-of-view, length, style, structure and voice. Outlined below is a rationale for these early decisions, including references to other works and theory. I should note here that some of these decisions changed as the playwriting process developed.

### 3.1 (a) Writing style: novel v play

My first hurdle was handling the difference between writing for reading and writing for acting. This difference is highlighted by Australian actor Max Gillies, who tells of how playwright David Williamson has a singular rhythm to the words in his scripts, a rhythm that only comes out when read aloud:

*"A lot of his words don't fall naturally. His sentences are ungrammatical and repetitive, his syntax is confusing, he can be long winded.. you spend a good deal of time struggling with it."* (Williamson 2009, p. 14)

Gillies, in this one quote, hits on the difference between a novel and a play. For a performance work, the test of the writing lies in whether it succeeds when read out aloud, acted and presented on stage. It may not flow as a novel.

Another difference in writing for the two media is that where novel readers have no more than words on the page for information, a play script has action to augment these words. Works of mime tell entire stories and no words are used. I learnt early in this process that action speaks as loud, if not louder, than words. The performers give the words this action. Unless a playwright directs, stages, designs and acts in their play, the final production must be a collaboration involving a creative team of actors, director, sound and lighting operators and set designer. Curtis likens the creative team to a sports

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<sup>111</sup> Following McGibbon's *Transposition* method [see Chapter 2].

side with the director as the captain of the team bringing the story to the stage (2014, p. 18). The director/captain may suggest script changes and decide on the staging and interpretation; the lighting and sound designers may apply their own tone to the play; the set designers will give the play its look. Finally, there are actors who will give life to the characters. Because of the involvement of these other creatives, an original script will rarely make it to the stage without some amendments. It often needs to go through a process of workshops to hone the writing and staging, sometimes involving producers who may suggest changes for the play for commerciality reasons.

This means that even when the playwright is still involved in the production of their work, the play may still transform into something not originally presented in the text. Referring to the first production of his play about the mother of Jesus Christ, *The Testament of Mary*, Irish playwright Colm Toibin says he was surprised at the following turn of events in a pre-production meeting:

*“Some of us who worked on the production had recently experienced loss, and there was a great deal of discussion about how we had dealt with the pain of that. Much of that discussion made its way into the production”* (2017, p. 9).

This play changed because of the input of the other creatives. It follows then that the words in a play are subject to the interpretation of all of these artists on the captain’s team, but significantly not the writer:

*“Playwrights almost never tell us directly what the script ‘means’. What the playwright wants to say is usually buried within the script so we need to work it out, based on our intelligence, imagination and experience”* (Curtis 2014, p.24).

Indeed, it is significant that it is not usual for playwrights in a workshop to demonstrate how they envisaged the words to be played. At one stage in the workshop

for *Lady of Arrows* I stood and acted a line the way I had envisaged it. The director gave me the sense that had overstepped my bounds. I had crossed over the line into the role of the actor and director. I would not do it again. This is significant because, as McRoberts says, it is the actor's role to interpret the playwright's words:

*"Performers bring the story to life in ways which colour our responses. We are used to conventional fiction that the actors are the characters. With skilled performers, as in *Proof*, the illusion is plausible: we suspend our disbelief, forgetting that these are actors on a set, and feeling for them as the 'real people' they are playing"*  
(1995, p. 8).

This may mean the actor's interpretation could - in the extreme case – end up being entirely different to the playwright's original intention. This could happen for a number of reasons:

(1) the actor may have their own view on the story, changing the delivery to suit her own bias and experience, or

(2) the actor's delivery can inadvertently change a meaning with a change of inflection. This is exemplified by a tool used by performance teachers; an exercise where the students are introduced to the line: "*I Didn't Say Minnie Stole My Blue Pen.*" The meaning of this sentence changes with the word emphasized by the actor. There are eight words in the sentence, and there are eight separate meanings that can be conveyed. This is a tool available to actors to add their own layer of interpretation. But a nervous night, a lapse in concentration, a stumble from the lips may inadvertently change the emphasis away from the written intent, even if it had been rehearsed in a way that conveyed the scriptwriter's intention.

As the writer of my grandmother's story, I wanted to know that what came onto the stage was not different to what I envisaged, but this is not always possible. Because my protagonist suffered guilt at having abandoned her children (and had possibly

attempted to kill them), the actor playing her may portray her as a fractured, fragile character; or less benignly as a bad mother who put herself before her offspring. Both interpretations of her character might be read into the lines I wrote in the first draft. The only ways to guard against this misinterpretation of my vision was to be obvious in the script, to demonstrate that she did love her children; to have her explain why she left them (and to make a good case of it). The balance here is not to over-explain. As I wrote the script I kept in mind how subtle emotional elements could be included: having her cry on receipt of a letter from her son; feel anger that her husband let her daughter be in Darwin when the Japanese were so close; and express joy when her family asks her to return to Australia.

### **3.1 (b) Structure and the double thread**

Early in the writing process I realised the structure of the play would need to be radically different to that of the novel. In *Someone Else's War*, there is irregular movement from one time to another, moving from Australia in 1939 to Egypt in 1915 and then to Greece in 1941. I did these fast time movements to unfold the development of the Olga character by unpeeling her background and giving continuous exposition to the reader by contrasting her wartime actions with the early life incidents that informed her character development, explaining why she does what she does. Apart from the time shifts, *Someone Else's War* also has several disparate strands: the Greek war story; the Australian home story; the story of Olga's childhood. In Australia, the scenes are in three cities: Sydney, Darwin and the country town of Moree. There are also several scenes in various locations across Sydney, such as the family shop in Ultimo, The Greek Club, the Pyrmont markets, Nellie's rental house in Mosman, the Deaf Institute, the Greek debutante's ball and Pyrmont Bridge. In Europe, the action moves between Athens, Thessaloniki, Alexandria and country Greece.

In a play, such rapid movements can be problematic because unlike a novel reader, the audience member has no opportunity to revisit an earlier scene for clarification. While a play's story does not necessarily need to be linear, it does need to be clear. It may have been possible for me to write a play that includes all the novel's

locations and their associated scenes, but this may have been difficult to stage clearly and for an audience to follow. To address this, my first thought was to use a minimalist approach: to limit it to perhaps only one of these elements. I thought an audience would not be able to follow a complicated story. However, Aristotle has more faith in an audience's ability to follow tangled plotlines:

*"..the structure of tragedy at its best should be complex, not simple"* (cited in Dorsch 1974, p. 48).

He goes on to say that some critics of his day considered that a "double thread of plot" the best way of presenting a story. As mentioned earlier in this section, the source novel *Someone Else's War* has such a double thread: one thread tells the story of Olga, while the second thread is about her family in Australia at the same time. I felt this double thread was worth exploring as a starting point for my storytelling. To use this natural double thread, I decided there needed to be an intersection of the two stories. In the earliest stages of preparation for writing the play, I considered having the two stories placed side by side on the stage. On one side is Olga in Greece, on the other side is her family in Australia. Occasionally the two stories would entwine, helix-like. An example might be when letters are exchanged between the two, or if news of the war reaches the other side. But this concept would assume that the events in Australia are as powerful as the events in Greece. It also requires a conversion into two points-of-view, one being Olga, and the other being, perhaps, her daughter Nellie.

I discarded this option in favour of what I considered to be a stronger single point-of-view: the personal story and remembrances of Olga after the war. By doing it this way, Australian events could be incorporated as Olga's memories. The baseline would always remain in 1960 Sydney, and Olga's memories would move back and forth in time and across the world. The intersection of the strands of the helix could thus be through time (her memories) and space (her daughters coming into her current existence through letters or by being in the 1960 frame of reference).

As explained in the next section, in this way the double thread would be more of a triple thread: (1) Olga in 1960; (2) her memories of Greece in the war; and (3) her

memories of her life before the war (which was Australia and her childhood in Alexandria) making the play a play about memory.

### 3.1 (c) The Point-of-View, remembering and reflecting

*“Playwrights establish a point-of-view about their subjects and their characters. The same event can be seen as tragic by one writer and comic by another; the same action can be considered admirable or despicable.”*

(Wilson 1994, p. 155).

Being a memory play necessarily means that the voice is singular: that of Olga. This is in contrast to the source novel which has many voices and points-of-view that were specific to the novel medium. Parts of the story were told through fictional diaries and letters, and the narrative moved between first-person diary exposition and explanation<sup>112</sup> to a third-person narrative that revealed events both in Greece and Australia. In the novel I moved between these points-of-view as I desired. In a play, the form of storytelling is oral and physical. The stories needed to be adapted to a form that was apt for an audience member being told and shown yarns, not for a reader flipping pages. There was no space for confusion. It must always come back to Olga who has the only narrative voice in the play.

As explained in the last section, I made this perspective retrospective, coming from Sydney in 1960, with Olga speaking to the audience from the small add-on room where she was now living. This setting is intended to be the baseline of the play. Everything happens from her point-of-view as memories and re-enactments from these memories. The voice of her daughter calling her to dinner leads us into the first memory, which is that of the same daughter as a child. Olga’s memory may take us to Europe in 1942 or Egypt in 1915, but it always returns to that baseline of that little Sydney house in 1960. This also happens in the one-woman play, *The Testament of Mary*.<sup>113</sup> The

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<sup>112</sup> This occurs in Olga’s diaries, which I wrote in the first person to give Olga a direct communication to the reader.

<sup>113</sup> See Appendix 3 (h) *The Testament of Mary*.

protagonist Mary speaks to the audience from her house years after the crucifixion. She has just been visited by disciples of Christ, who wanted her permission to rewrite the story of her son, Jesus Christ (Toibin 2012). This dramatic meeting with the apostles, though never seen, is the through line for the play. It sets the basis for her reminiscence and eventual self-awareness.

I decided a similar kind of motivation was required for *Lady of Arrows*. Olga needed something to force her to revisit her past in a like way and perhaps not just to reveal what had happened to her, but to make her acknowledge her part in the past. She had to face her actions and the consequences of those actions, and have her character develop because of it. I made this motivation for *Lady of Arrows* her wartime diary, sent to her fifteen years after the war by the son of a friend. The simple presence of this diary brings back her memories, just as Mary has had her son's crucifixion jolted by the visit of the Apostles. Although the audience isn't to know for several scenes what is in the package, Olga does. It is eventually revealed that the package is her own wartime diaries, which she had left with her comrade in Greece. This diary device would bring back the memories of the war and her part in it. From that point onwards in the play, the story-telling can come from two sources: (1) the diary, from which she could read short passages to remind her of events, and (2) her own memory, which might have been sparked by what is in the diary. In other words, Olga could read passages and then relive the action that was to ensue, or to explain her actions to the audience. The use of the diary as a narrative device also offered the tantalising option of having her contradict her own written words, proving that over the years she has developed some self-awareness and recognised some self-justification in the original diary. Through the memory jogged by the diary, Olga 'hosts' the events in her story from the first to last scenes. There is never any suggestion that there is another person telling the story. From the first line, the protagonist speaks to the audience directly. She remembers the events of her life, and these events are depicted for the audience as if they are picked out of her brain. With this in mind, I started writing this memory play with the protagonist assisted by voices from off stage by two other actors who play a range of characters but are never seen. They are as Olga remembers them. Nothing in this play is outside the sphere of Olga's knowledge. For example, when I introduce the rest of the Stambolis family in Act 1, Scene 1, this is as Olga remembers it. We cannot and do not go

to the fish and chip shop in Sydney in the times Olga is absent. Everything must be from her experience and her memory. There are several scenes where it appears that Greek resistance workers and British recruiters are talking about Olga in her absence. But this is written as Olga's thoughts. She is on stage at the time, looking at them. These discussions are as Olga imagined they might've been, rather than a direct depiction of them as they happened. We do not show anything that Olga could not know, surmise or find out about later (such as the when the Australian pilot Bill tries to contact Olga's family in Act 2, Scene 6).

This does not mean that Olga cannot invent. She can imagine words that may never have been actually spoken. For example, Olga's guilt about the death of her baby may be expressed when her husband's voice intervenes:

*MICHAEL'S VOICE*

*Don't forget Christopher.*

*OLGA*

*How could I forget Christopher?*

(Act 1, Scene 2)

Michael may never have said these words. Olga, in her guilt, may be imaging him on her shoulder constantly badgering her to remember their baby Christopher who died in Greece. This death is a major motivation for her actions from this point onwards in the narrative. She blames herself for the death. Her marriage dissolved because of the death. In this way, Michael's off-stage voice not only contributes to the narrative but propels the story forward. This also happens in the voices of radios, and conspiratorial off-stage voices which may be memory or Olga's paranoid imagination. I leave it up to the audience to decide. In intimate scenes such as in Act 2, Scene 1, where she is interred in a below-ground jail cell, Olga recreates this alone on stage, reacting to only the voice of the other inmates from off-stage, melding with her monologue to be as it might have been in that dungeon. Olga is barely visible speaking with other inmates through the bars of their Averoff Prison cells. The other women react to her, but to the audience they are all just voices in the dark, just as they would have been to Olga. Olga's

isolation is almost complete. It is just after this scene that the fourth wall is broken. Olga talks to the 1960 audience as if it is present with her in prison in 1941. She has moved deeper inside her own psyche. 1960 is forgotten.

This does not mean that the whole story would necessarily be told in the first person. As mentioned, there are the scenes where she acts out what has been happening to her with the other two actors, such as the scene where Olga is being interrogated by German officers in the Greek police station. These scenes have second-person narratives in dialogue. Olga is not describing. Her memory is re-enacting. I saw this as an opportunity to bring in more elements of her behaviour, her exploration of mortality. Or as Arthur Miller wrote:

*“.. the problem which the Greek drama put so powerfully before mankind. How are we to live?” (1955, p. 12).*

Miller’s statement highlights the issue facing some, but not all, dramatic playwrights. Certainly, my source novel *Someone Else’s War* was about one woman’s life and how she coped with the distresses in that life. In adapting the novel into *Lady of Arrows*, I took that story and went further: I set it after Olga has had space for reflection, and had time to consider how she had coped; how she had, indeed, lived her life as a young wife, mother, deserting wife and ultimately war participant. I decided to try to bring this reflection in right at the beginning with Olga talking directly to the audience. The idea was to have audience get to know her as a character before judgements could be made about her actions. In fact, she could start her judgements about herself before the audience could:

*“But there is one question that I can’t answer. Won’t answer. The one they don’t really want to know the answer to: ‘Why did you leave us? Why did you go to Greece when we needed you the most?’ Everyone asks. Even if they don’t ask, they ask with their eyes. They even ask in the way they turn their eyes away” (Kafcalouides, 2011, p. 6).*

This is one of the few paragraphs that is almost unchanged in the adaptation:

*“Endaxi, maybe I go into too much detail. They asked. But there is one question that I can’t answer. Won’t answer. The one they don’t really want to know the answer to: ‘Why did you leave us? Why did you go to Greece when we needed you the most?’ Everyone asks. Even if they don’t ask, they ask with their eyes. They even ask in the way they turn their eyes away” (Appendix 8 - Lady of Arrows script and links, p.6).*

That these reflections are brought in early in the play and put directly to the audience was particularly important for the Olga character, because her deeds may be repellent to some (such as leaving her children for sixteen years; or murdering young German soldiers). I wanted to show the audience that this decision weighed on her; that she suffered for her actions. This would be the start of their journey to find out who Olga Stambolis was. With the addition of the sixteen years since the close of the novel’s events, I had a clean slate to make a new Olga for the audience to discover.

### **3.1 (d) Formulating Olga’s character: fearless, fashionable and damaged**

With memory being the theme of the play, the character of Olga is a different woman to the one in the novel. At the end of the novel she is barely 40 years old. At the opening of the play she is a 56-year old woman looking back on her life. She has presumably passed through menopause, she has reconciled with her children, and she has reconciled with what her life has become. Between the end of the novel and the opening of the play she has returned to Australia, no longer the active spy, but a mother and grandmother being cared for by her daughter. It is a major change. Thus, the play completes her story, taking Olga to the end of her life, finishing her journey in a way the novel never could.

Setting the opening of the play in 1960 also allows Olga to tell her story in a setting that was safe (she would not be able to talk so openly in German-occupied Greece in 1943); to give her enough space - sixteen years later - to reflect on the events of the war; and to give her an age of maturity that could give her storytelling the poignancy that comes with an older person reflecting on her life. In the novel Olga reflects to a degree, but only as the events are unfolding. By adding this extra buffer of time, she has moved out of the danger of war, aged, and reconciled with her children (to an extent).

Having decided on her being an older woman reflecting on her life, I now had to set her character to suit the context of what happened to her. I never met Olga, so I had to formulate her character. I combined descriptions of her with the character traits of her offspring. I chose to represent her as closely as possible to how she was described to me by people who knew her in 1960: strong, feisty and intolerant with a sense of humour. She was a person who could criticise herself, and even laugh at her younger self. Her self-deprecating humour is used early in the play:

*".. knit something. It gives you time to think, and you might even make something nice. And if you make something that's garbage, give it to someone you don't like"* (Appendix 8, Act 1 Scene 1).

Some personality clues were given by photos that show Olga as a young Alexandrian woman. The photo below shows her dressed in a bohemian androgynous attire, smoking a cigarette. This was obviously a studio photo and she may have dressed for the portrait, but the fit of the clothes and shoes raises the possibility that this was her own attire:



Olga at 20 (Photo courtesy of the Stambolis Family Collection)

Some years later, a photo taken in Sydney would show the young mother who dresses her children in the clothes and hairstyle of 1920s Greece rather than the Sydney fashions of the time (noting too the semi-androgynous clothes that Olga was again wearing herself):



Olga and Family in 1929 (Photo courtesy of the Stambolis Family Collection)

Fifteen years on there is the photo below which was taken on the day the Germans had been pushed out of Greece in 1944. Despite the privations of the times, Olga was still dressing with individual flair, with a neck brooch and styled hair while the women around her have a more generic wave curl which could have been self-styled:



Olga in Athens in 1944 (Photo courtesy of the Stambolis Family Collection)

From these I began to construct a character who was not afraid to be different to the accepted style of her time (in Australia at least), and also not afraid to dress her children in the European mode. There was a fearlessness in her, not just during the war, but originating from her young adulthood. This inspired me to knit in scenes where she describes how her stepmother, Mother Hadjidaki, was a kind of renaissance woman who had encouraged her self-belief and individuality.

However, in developing this character, I needed to be aware that we had to get to the point in the play where Olga comes close to killing her own children. This is based on true events in 1936 after the death of her baby. From this, I could draw several

character options: she was at the end of her tether, possibly even mentally ill. She was certainly mentally exhausted when she left her family to return to Greece that year. At the opening of the novel twenty-four years later, she appears to have put all this behind her, but the arrival of the diary brings it all back for her.

The character of Olga developed with each script draft, with the writing of each scene perhaps. She is all but destroyed when her baby dies, but eventually learns she has no option but to carry on, which prepares her for her work in the resistance. The resistance gives her the purpose she needs, and she obsessively carries out the work set for her. This leads to more work and a slow rebuilding of self-esteem. This is how Olga is built towards the character we see in the opening, but the building blocks of this character are revealed gradually over the course of the play. Her final bravery is shown in her willingness to remember the circumstances of the death of her baby. That is the character I drew: a brave woman who found her redemption through fighting in the war, committing what were sometimes nightmarish deeds and facing up to the memory of them. Through the war she redeems herself to herself, but to live with herself in the post-war period, she had to forget. Until the package arrives in 1960.

### **3.1 (e) One actor or three: An Aeschylean flexibility**

In the first drafts, I made this one-to-one storytelling, with only one actor on stage, and off-stage voices playing the remaining parts. I felt that since this was a personal story, that having just one character on stage would provide the ultimate method of this personal storytelling. I felt this format could give the audience a single companion for the journey of the play. All events could be told through the experience of the protagonist, and the audience would be inside the mind of one person. This retelling of events could be skewed, falsified, contain self-justifications that may be ill-remembered, but if acted with good craft, the audience would be able to see the line between truth and fantasy. I also wanted them to see frailty. They could see humanity of a flawed individual. As a playwright, this was an enticing prospect, because it follows what was attempted in the novel: to present an intelligent but guilt-ridden and damaged individual who found some redemption in helping others. In the novel, Olga was

interesting not just because of her deeds, but because of her faults. So that's why the initial working decision was to have *Lady of Arrows* as having only one actor on stage.

However, as I prepared for the first reading of the script, I revisited this decision. I had seen that in some of the comparison texts, the one-actor concept did not always succeed. In the play *Greek Goddess*,<sup>114</sup> the central character, as written, struggled to hold the stage for the entire performance.<sup>115</sup> The producer had cut the length from two hours to one hour in the days before the first performance to allow the single actor to maintain intensity. Similarly, I had decided whether Olga's story could be sustained by one actor; whether this one character would have the authenticity to be able to relate such a broad story alone.

While I was having doubts about the sustainability of a single-actor piece, I saw the three-hander play *Good Muslim Boy*, which has two secondary actors playing dozens of roles each.<sup>116</sup> This performance showed how having other actors on stage could help sustain the storytelling while adding extra layers of dramatic power. This observation led to a change in the writing of the third draft in April 2018, where I brought in two other actors, making a total of three actors on stage. One actor would play Olga, and two other actors, (I eventually decided on one male and one female) would play the rest of the roles. This was liberating for the writing for several reasons:

- Having two actors making dialogue on stage opened up the chance for the secondary actor the chance to act with physicality, not just voice. In scenes such as the interrogation scene,<sup>117</sup> the interrogators can project a more physical menace as well as a vocal one.
- The physical presence of these actors also gave the actor playing the protagonist someone to play against: a visual point of reference and someone for the actor playing Olga to physically interact with.
- The secondary actors would not necessarily be limited to playing characters of their own sex. They could play characters of both sexes with a visual

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<sup>114</sup> See Appendix 3 (g) *Greek Goddess*.

<sup>115</sup> Maria Mercedes, who played this character told me that the character was hard to play alone on stage for such a long time and the play should have been cut even further.

<sup>116</sup> See Appendix 3 (j) *Good Muslim Boy*.

<sup>117</sup> See Appendix 8 – *Lady of Arrows script and links: Act 2, Scene 1*.

demarcation to the audience, such as the male actor donning of an old woman's head scarf. Conversely, the female actor may play a male. This gender swap opened up many deeper possibilities. Having a woman play a masculine soldier, for example, can break the barriers of the typical male-female divide. This may be a useful device in the production of *Lady of Arrows* where there are depictions of resistance women working as operatives in the underground, giving orders to kill, and killing. In the war scenario of *Lady of Arrows*, the gender lines have been broken and men and women carry out the same tasks.

However, there are still scenes where the secondary characters remain as voices from offstage. As discussed in 3.1 (c) *The Point-of-View, remembering and reflecting* there were points where I wanted to keep a sense of isolation for the central character such as when she is in Averoff Prison, segregated from other prisoners and the guards. The sense of aloneness is crucial to this scene. The voices of other prisoners may be heard, but not seen. The audience is thus directed to the reactions of the protagonist, and not the physicality of these secondary characters.

In this whole play there is only one character who is not a memory. This is Olga's daughter Freda calling Olga to dinner near the beginning of the play in Act 1, Scene 1. I decided this too should remain an offstage voice. I wanted Olga to be the only real presence on stage, and that this voice be no more than a prompt for Olga's memories. Freda's voice quickly changes to that of a young girl, starting the transition back in time to 1930. The audience bears instant witness to Olga going from being in a caring 1960 family environment where her daughter cooks her dinner, to the aloneness of remembering.

And she stays alone from this point onwards. When other actors do appear, they are from Olga's memory only. I had decided Olga must be alone with her memories. There may be other actors coming on stage but they out of Olga's head. She is still alone.

In making this change from a one-actor play to a three-actor play, the writing of the play once again follows (although unwittingly) the way of the ancients. I was to find,

after I had made the decision to make this a piece for three on-stage actors, that this was what happened in early Greek drama. The first Greek dramas had no central or lead actor. The dramas were presented by a Greek Chorus of equals. Then, a central actor, a leader, a *coryphaeus*, stepped out from this chorus and became the protagonist<sup>118</sup> for the storytelling, with the chorus providing responses. Then Aeschylus increased this number of actors to two. Sophocles took this further and drew three principal actors (Wells 1925, pp. 209-210). This demonstrated that the ancient Greek writers were willing to be flexible and break the norms of the writing structure of their period. I too exhibited this flexibility in changing *Lady or Arrows* to a three-actor play, but I made the change unaware that I was doing what the ancients had done more than two thousand years before me. It should also be noted that at times the supporting actors in *Lady of Arrows* say their lines from positions upstage (towards the back of the stage), as a form of Greek chorus. This happens when Olga plays herself as a young actor in two consecutive scenes, playing directly to the audience, thus making the audience an Alexandria theatre audience. When these memories conclude we go back to the 1960 Olga. The baseline returns. The audience is reminded that what they have just seen is a memory and we always return to 1960 Olga.

### 3.1 (f) Getting the length right: inclusion, excision and intervals

A novel can be digested at the pace of the reader, but a play needs to suit a theatre audience's needs. Audiences cannot put the play down and make a cup of tea. They cannot choose to consume by episodes. They are captive to the decisions of the director and writer, and likewise the writer and director are captive to the needs of their audience. Foremost of these considerations is the length of the play. In adapting *Someone Else's War's* 97,818 words into a play required quite some cutting. Using a simple journalistic estimation of three words per second, the novel's word count would translate to almost nine hours, and that doesn't include intervals, unspoken scenes and dramatic pauses.

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<sup>118</sup> The term originated with ancient Greek poet Thespis who had one of the Greek chorus come forward to become a central focus in his work.

That said, plays can have huge variances in length. According to the Guinness Book of Records (2017), the longest play in history ran for 24 hours and 20 minutes. David Edgar's stage adaptation of Dicken's *Nicholas Nickleby* ran for nine hours. *The Odyssey*, if read out aloud, would have a duration of twelve hours.<sup>119</sup> It is believed the shortest play was Samuel Beckett's 1969 revue piece, *Breath*, which ran 24 seconds, but even this may have been beaten after a competition was launched for plays with less than 100 words was carried out in 2012 (Clark, 2012).

It is probably of most value to look at plays that are less extreme and more equivalent to *Lady of Arrows* which has a small cast and is a memory play. In this respect Colm Toibin's *The Testament of Mary* has this equivalency. It is a short, single act play of 9,312 words. In its 75 minutes we are led through an emotional journey of Mary's self-realisation in a way not dissimilar to what Olga goes through. Not every question about the life of Mary is covered in the script, nor are all the questions about her life answered, but in the running time the essential journey is completed, culminating in her revelation of her feelings of guilt at leaving her son's crucifixion and her post-traumatic stress of watching him nailed to the cross. This was covered in those 75 mostly harrowing minutes. No more were needed.

In discussing the length of a play, Arthur Miller argues:

*"There are perfectly wonderful things one can say in one sentence, in one letter, one look, or one act"* (1955, p. 15).

Here Miller was making the observation in the context of his plays *A Memory of Two Mondays* and *A View from the Bridge*, which are both short, single act plays. He argues that a playwright should say what they wish to say, then stop. But, he says in the same passage, the demands of Broadway in the 1950s were for plays of a certain length, and at least two acts. I thus had to consider what a potential producer might be requiring in terms of duration.

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<sup>119</sup> If based on a count of three words per second, and that is not allowing for pauses and dramatic re-enactments.

It became clear to me that the story in *Someone Else's War* needed quite some editing and excision for it to be appropriate for the stage. Having built the novel's narrative so that each chapter built on the one before it, I risked collapsing the story if I took out the wrong straw from the narrative house of sticks. As the novel's writer I, perhaps unnecessarily, considered all the scenes in the novel to be essential to the story. I was to find it wasn't always so. As Aristotle says, effective playwriting means there is no need to put everything in:

*"In writing his Odyssey he did not put in everything that happened to Odysseus, that he was wounded on Mount Parnassus for example, or that he feigned madness at the time of the call to arms, for it was not a matter of necessity or probability that either of these incidents should have led to the other... For if the presence or absence of something makes no apparent difference, it is no real part of the whole"* (cited in Dorsch 1974, 43).

This may apply to scenes which might be powerful, but if they are not essential to the narrative, then by Aristotle's rule, they may or must be removed. For example, in the source novel for Olga's story, *Someone Else's War*, there is a rape scene. Olga is raped by a group of Germans in Syntagma Square on the day the Germans reach Athens. This is an invented scene. It is meant as an analogy of the invasion, but it is also a depiction of what was happening to some women at this time, while also providing a final motivation for Olga. For the play *Lady of Arrows* this scene was taken out. I felt the motivating factors were strong enough without the need for the rape.

But to tell Olga's story in play form there was still plenty of ground to cover: the protagonist's memories of the war, her 1960 situation, her family, her childhood and the travails of her marriage.<sup>120</sup> Occasionally - but rarely - whole sets of the novel's dialogue were largely kept intact such as the interrogation scene (Kafcaloudes 2011, p. 216). Also, many of the locations and activities used in *Someone Else's War* remained in *Lady of*

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<sup>120</sup> The elements cut are listed on this and the following pages.

*Arrows*, but were cut down, with some detail removed, dialogue taken out, and the minutiae of action being excised, while the scenes remained in the play. This included Olga's recruitment by the British Operations; her efforts to rescue stranded airmen; her arrest and interrogation; her time in prison; her letter dialogue with her daughter; her marriage; and her childhood and friendship with the children in the Greek royal household.

I omitted many of the background historical scenes that were in the novel, such as the ultimatum from Italian ambassador Grazzi to Greek prime minister Metaxas, the cabinet meeting after that ultimatum, or the sinking of the Greek ship *Elle*. The latter was a deliberate sinking carried out by the Italian navy to provoke Greece into war. This was in the novel as a motivating incident. It is not in the scope of the story of *Lady of Arrows*. I also considered the Metaxas scenes unnecessary to Olga's story in the play.

The excision applied to characters too. In a novel there is scope to have many more characters than you might have in a play because each of these characters can be given a life of their own. For example, in the novel *Elias the Pisser* shows his nature (and gains his nickname) by urinating on a corpse. The moments preceding the killing of the corpse also show Elias' cowardice. Elias' character is to recur in later scenes in the novel doing equally immature acts. In the novel, he is partly comic relief, but also a demonstration of one of the types of characters caught in the war scenario, trying to find his place in it, and not succeeding. In the play Elias was excised because he was not necessary to the final narrative. There also just was not the time to include him.

Also removed were other characters that were minor in the novel and I deemed unnecessary for the play. These are listed below.

In Greece & Egypt:

- Drago Stephanellis [fictional Italian attache] (Kafcaloudes 2011, p. 32)<sup>121</sup>
- Count Grazzi's wife & daughters [fictionalised versions] (ibid., p. 40)
- Ellie the prostitute [a fictional character] (ibid., p. 54)

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<sup>121</sup> The page references are when the character first appears in the novel.

- Mrs Pevlakis [a fictional Italian ambassador's secretary] (ibid., p. 65)
- Rena [Stambolis' fictional contact for the resistance] (ibid., p. 81)
- The British ambassador's family [fictional characters] (ibid., p. 110)
- The British ambassador [a fictionalised character] (ibid., p. 113)
- Proteus [a fictional resistance leader] (ibid., p. 244)
- Greek Nicky [a fictional deaf Greek boy] (ibid., p. 274)

In Australia:

- Olga's son Nicky [true character]<sup>122</sup> (ibid., p. 12)
- Ultimo Police detectives [fictional characters] (ibid., p. 37)
- Michael Parrelis [a true character, a cousin in Australia] (ibid., p. 44)
- Constantine and Greek Club members [fictional] (ibid., p. 146)
- Ted the dock worker [fictional character] (ibid., p. 156)
- The Kafcaloudes family in Darwin [true characters] (ibid., p. 209)
- The market stall holders [fictional characters] (ibid., p. 284)

Many of these characters have been taken out because they do not further the narrative (Parrelis, Constantine, Ted, Mrs Pevlakis); are potentially confusing for an audience (Stambolis' son Nicky and Greek Nicky); would make the story too long (Ellie the prostitute, the Kafcaloudes family); or are implied and don't need to be a presence (the British Ambassador). These changes were also necessary because of the new point-of-view, which was now coming from Olga alone. She did not know Mrs Pevlakis, or Mick Parrelis, so her memories could not tell of them.

Even with these cuts, the first draft of *Lady of Arrows* ran to 14,428 words (including directions and character names). In terms of total word count, this first version of the play was only around one seventh the length of the novel, highlighting the challenge I faced in reducing the story for play form. On stage this translates to under two hours, depending on the director's pacing. Davies (2000, p. 21) suggests that a word count of 10,000 to 12,000 words (including stage directions) is a good focus point for a play's duration. Of course, this is a general guide - In a fast-paced drama, 10,000 words

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<sup>122</sup> I was mostly concerned that this character could be confused with Olga's other son Christopher.

could translate to an hour stage time. However, in a slower psychological drama, this word count could lead to a much longer production.

In the novel *Someone Else's War*, the timeline for Olga's activities followed closely the timeline of her own life (although for dramatic tension the following facts are not necessarily revealed in a linear way).

- (1) Olga Mavromati is born in Athens in 1906.
- (2) She is given away by her birth mother to a seamstress in Egypt.
- (3) She marries Michael Stambolis and goes to Australia in 1922.
- (4) Olga and her husband raise five children in Sydney.
- (5) She receives a letter from her birth mother seeking reconciliation.
- (6) She returns to Greece with two of her children to find her mother.
- (7) Olga's son Christopher dies in Greece and her marriage collapses.
- (8) She returns to Australia in 1936 to salvage the marriage.
- (9) This attempt fails and she leaves for Greece again the same year.
- (10) Olga gets caught up with the Greek underground as the war starts.
- (11) Her husband in Australia has her declared dead and remarries.
- (12) She finally returns to Australia in 1952. Michael dies while she is en route.

This story involves some complications for a playwright. Olga returns to Greece twice, in 1930 and 1936. To write about both these trips could be confusing for the audience. I considered for the sake of simplicity, having Olga not return to Australia in 1936. But the motivation for Olga to leave her young daughters was a central element in the play. She needed to know that she was a danger to herself and her family if she stayed in Australia. She needed to reach this realisation by facing her husband, feel the shunning and guilt over the loss of her son, and going to the mental brink where she seriously considered suicide. This had to happen in Australia; to simply feel shame in Greece was not a strong enough imperative for Olga's self-realisation, and there was the potential that an audience would blame her for abandoning her children without a good cause.

While this return to Australia remains in the story, I have compressed the time involved. She no longer leaves Greece in 1930, but five years later. This gives her a short time at home with her husband and family. In real life it took some years for Olga to realise the marriage was dead. In the play it is a matter of weeks, weeks of alienation, blame and coldness in the marriage that, combined with her own guilt, force her to the brink of a mental breakdown, and then to the decision to return to Greece.

The next structural decision was whether to run the play in one act or several acts, or even to divide it into two plays that could run in consecutive performances. In 2017 several plays were running on London's West End using this format: the Old Vic's production of Alan Ayckbourn's *The Divide* had a total running time of eight and a half hours, and this was broken up into two parts that ran on alternate nights.<sup>123</sup> Likewise, the stage production of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* runs in two parts in its West End and Australian incarnations: the first part has a running time of two hours, forty-five minutes and the second part only ten minutes shorter (Official London Theatre, 2017). Although I could have written *Lady of Arrows* as a longer play, splitting it into this kind of multi-session production would divide Olga Stambolis' journey, interrupting the story and the tension. The audience needs to travel with Olga both in her journey to self-awareness, but also on her emotional journey. To leave the theatre after the first section would be to leave the mind of Olga Stambolis. It is also a major commitment for a theatre company, effectively doubling the costs for each performance. For these reasons, the idea of two-plays-in-one, and the length required to do this was not an option. I decided that the play would run as a single sitting.

I then needed to decide on the number of acts. In a play "acts" are the broad sections into which the play is divided. Sherlock defines it as:

*"An episode within the larger structure of the play,  
defined by rising action, climax and resolve"* (2013).

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<sup>123</sup> Except on Saturdays, when Part 1 was staged at the matinee, and Part 2 was staged in the evening performance on the same day.

Based on this definition, each act should have its own cycle of action, and not just be a cycle of action split arbitrarily to give the audience and performers a break. Some plays are formatted as a single act with no interval, but these are shorter plays, or plays where the tension is such that giving the audience a break will require reigniting the tension again after the interval. This is the case with the play *Resident Alien*,<sup>124</sup> which despite being presented in two acts in its U.S. productions, was converted into a single 73-minute act for its Australian production (in Melbourne in 2016). Watching this Australian production, I could not see the benefit of splitting it into two acts. As discussed in chapter 2, the protagonist moves from being apparently bedridden to fully clothed in preparation for an interview with a journalist. When the interview doesn't happen, he slowly undresses, effectively reversing the action of the first part. There was no cataclysmic moment that warranted an interval. I argue that eliminating the interval made the play stronger because his disappointment about the aborted interview becomes our disappointment, and that pathos stays with us through the undressing in the second half of the act. An interval would only serve to dissipate our empathy. The Australian director made the right choice in converting the play to one act.

*The Testament of Mary*<sup>125</sup> is also staged in one act. Here too there is no relief for the audience. The tension is maintained throughout because there is no interval. Given the nature of the story, this is an effective decision given that we are witnessing the mother of Jesus' psychological journey. There is no place for a break. There is no need for a break, which would be counterproductive. Another reason for keeping a play to one act may be more mundane. Arthur Miller explains that his *A View from the Bridge* was written as a one act play because:

*"..quite simply, I did not know how to pull the curtain down anywhere before its end. While writing it, I kept looking for an act curtain, a point of pause, but none ever developed" (1955, p. 16).*

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<sup>124</sup> See Appendix 3 (f) *Resident Alien*.

<sup>125</sup> See Appendix 3 (h) *The Testament of Mary*.

Therefore, in this case Miller made it one act because he couldn't find a reason or place for an interval. That said, breaking a play into three or more acts can also provide a powerful effect. *Heroes of Past and Present*<sup>126</sup> is a series of five one-act pieces, each being a distinct story. The acts do not flow on from each other. The intervals serve as breakers between the stories. The stories are short, mostly 10 to 15 minutes, but the audience does not leave the auditorium. Neither is there a raising nor fading of lights between acts. The cast members simply leave the stage and then return a couple of minutes later in their new roles in the next story. In this way the tension is not dissipated. The audience is not let off the hook.

Intervals can though be used as a narrative device to create anticipation. In these cases, the first act may end with a moment of tension which will stay with the audience during the break. Far from dissipating the tension, a cliffhanger ending of the first act may actually build tension, building anticipation in the audience to see what happens next. In the 1967 movie *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* the intermission served as such a tension point, with the car falling off a cliff at the end of the first act. It wasn't until the audience returned for the second act that they saw the car sprout wings, allowing Chitty Chitty Bang Bang to fly, and saving the driver Caractacus Potts and his children. In *I Am My Own Wife*,<sup>127</sup> the first act ends with the allegation that Van Mahlsdorf was an informer for the Stasi (Wright, 2004, p. 61). This cliffhanger revelation leaves the audience with a moment of surprise, and also sets up the action of the second act.

In *Lady of Arrows* there was such a natural break in the story, a place for the first act to finish with tension. This tension point for the break has some similarity to that in Van Mahlsdorf's work. Where in that play there is the allegation of the protagonist being a spy, in *Lady of Arrows* the first act ends with Olga being arrested. This arrest is an unexpected drama point that leaves a powerful question for the audience to ponder in the interval: would she get out of it? It was for this reason that I chose this point for an interval for *Lady of Arrows*. Having decided to have this tension point and interval, the writing then had a focal point. I could write the play with the plan that we would lead up to this end-of-act arrest. Following the interval would come the events in jail and her life

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<sup>126</sup> See Appendix 3 (e) *Heroes of Past and Present*.

<sup>127</sup> See Appendix 3 (d) *I Am My Own Wife*.

following the incarceration. This said, as the January 2019 progressed I came to question the need for the interval. This is discussed later in this chapter in 3.2 *The Workshop*.

### 3.1 (g) How to do it: staging, lighting and sound

Staging was something that was largely outside of my experience when I started the adaptation. As I had never worked in a theatre production, and I had no idea about the mechanics of a stage. I was broadly aware that the play had to fit in the confines of a stage space. I was also aware that not all stages were the same size. Some have proscenium arches that divide the stage from the audience; some such as Melbourne's Hamer Hall have no proscenium, enabling most of the audience to see all of the stage.

As a playwright I had a broad vision of what I wanted the stage to look like. I had intended to include in the script some staging directions, such as having the bedroom convert into a prison cell, through the use of lighting and the moving of props. I suggested dividing the stage into two, or possibly three sections, each one decorated differently to set a scene. My direction had the bedroom/prison cell one stage right, the central one to have more space for walking, running and action. Stage left would have some props for ancillary scenes. After reaction from directors and actors, I found that writers giving such detailed stage settings was not the norm for theatre productions. These staging ideas are elements for a director and designer to formulate. I cut down these things. However, an author's general vision for the play is important. For example, in *Resident Alien*,<sup>128</sup> the fact that the play is set in the protagonist's dilapidated New York flat for the entire play sets the scene and emotional base for the story. This was a story about a man who had fallen from grace. The set needed to reflect that, as well as the fact that he was now confined to a small space. Having seen this play, I thought it important for the script to retain some stage suggestions. It calls for the stage to have no wings, which are called 'flats' that provide cover for the actor coming in from the side of the stage (Davies 2000, p. 59), nor raised rostra. By doing this we always have Olga's character visible to the audience. This is to remind that this is a story of memory, while

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<sup>128</sup> See Appendix 3 (f) *Resident Alien*.

still highlighting her vulnerability to the audience because the actor, like the character she portrays, has nowhere to hide.

With the play opening with Olga in her small bedroom at the back of her daughter Freda's house in Sydney's eastern suburbs in 1960, I originally envisaged it as a static set, much in the way of *Greek Goddess*,<sup>129</sup> which never changed scenes. This lack of change was because the central character in that play was depicting a talk that was given by Melina Mercouri to an audience from a New York stage in 1967. We are watching that New York stage with Mercouri on it; we are the 1967 New York audience. But for Olga to stay in her bedroom for every scene would be a limit on the director, because the remembered scenes have many locations. In Greece alone the play moves between the central Athens police station, the Piraeus docks, central Greece, Athens' Onomos Square, Averoff Prison, the royal palace, a theatre, cafes, resistance hiding holes and black-market transfer houses. In Australia there is a fish shop in 1920s Sydney and her home in 1960 Randwick.

All these locations (except the 1960 Randwick house) are the memories of the 1960 Olga, with her always in that little house, but the story does not need to stay only in that house. As the character relates the events of some of these locations, the stage becomes these locations through changes in staging, with these often being only slight changes. An example of this was the scene where Olga gets off the boat from Australia with her children in the 1920s. The positioning of a trunk on stage and a heavy bag on stage takes us to the Piraeus docks. Keeping the 1960 bedroom a constant presence on the left of the stage anchors the audience into always being aware that what they are seeing is a memory.

With the character being in front of the audience continuously, the staging brings demarcation between the present and the memory. The first scene to be written was the opening scene in the small bedroom in the back of that 1960 Sydney house. A later scene used the same part of the stage to show her underground prison cell in Averoff prison. These are two greatly contrasting places, and the staging and lighting will help make a fast shift between the two. Yaron Abulafia (a theatre lighting practitioner) says

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<sup>129</sup> See Appendix 3 (g) *Greek Goddess*.

lighting can do more than set a scene. He says it can heighten atmosphere and emotion; it can reflect the inner world of the character; and even indicate the decline of a character:

*".. light's aesthetic features are designed to reflect upon the 'inner world' of a fictive character, its mental condition, or the interrelation between different characters, as informed by the written/verbal text"*  
(2016, p. 108).

For a playwright composing a play based on an evolving character, this has particular application, because the Olga character is, in essence, reflecting upon her own inner world throughout the entire play. She is a character who may have mental health issues, and I write her being at times ebullient and confident, at other times riddled with self-doubt and guilt. She is able to risk her life to sabotage, spy, rescue and kill. In contrast there are occasions when she is barely able to function. Thus, lighting could be one of the tools throughout the play to signify emotional changes through changes of colour to black and whites; dramatic shifts to signify dramatic developments in the storyline, or more subtle changes to create a tension in the audience, to create a foreboding. Although the final lighting will be left to the lighting designer and the director, I started writing with the intention that these lighting direction suggestions would be throughout the script, starting with the simple lighting of bars, which converts Olga's safe 1960 Sydney house into her 1941 Averoff Prison cell.

It is not just lighting that can aid the depiction of a story in a play. I needed to consider whether music should be included. As *Lady of Arrows* had originally been planned as a strictly dramatic piece, I had not intended there to be any musical performance in *Lady of Arrows*, except for a single musical theme, a piano piece titled *Olga's Theme* written by Jackie Rees in 2006. However, having done the research trip to Greece in November 2017, I came to appreciate the role music played in the war effort. Singer Sofia Vembo became a national hero for her songs that ridiculed Mussolini and celebrated the Greek victory over Italy in 1940. I started to think they could help explain the emotional state of the Greek people of that time. An example of this was the use of

Vembo's anthem about Oxi Day - the day the Greek prime minister refused the Italians access to Greek land, a refusal that started the Greek-Italian War in 1940. Rather than a whole song, in many cases a single verse and/or choruses of a song could be used or reprised throughout a scene. Depending on the choice of the director, they may be performed live by the protagonist or another performer with live or recorded backing. This is assuming that in the playing of a single verse, the audience would understand the music's significance, particularly as Vembo sings in Greek. Even Greek audiences may not understand this part of Greece's musical history. In this case the Vembo music may not explain anything at all. That said, Vembo recordings in the background, either at the start and end of scenes or acts could add power and a sense of time and location to the play. But the music adds another layer of complexity to the production, requiring permission from the Vembo estate and publishers. Because of these issues the January 2019 workshop featured no music, but when the play is staged commercially I intend that the use of music will be revisited.

### **3.1 (h) Authenticity**

Having formulated characters, the writing continually threw up issues of authenticity. A little further on I talk about language and how this can vary from place to place and time to time, but there are physical issues about era that go further than just language. This includes manner, dress, the way people interacted physically, and behaved generally. Did Greek daughters shout out to their mothers in 1960 that dinner was ready? Did Greek mothers shout back? All of this is, of course, entwined with where they were. What was the slang in Sydney in 1928? The behaviours in one country would differ to those in another. The novel *Someone Else's War* was set in Greece and Darwin, which were places I had only visited a handful of times. Also, although I lived in Sydney, the setting of the Stambolis shop was across the city from where I grew up and it was in an area unfamiliar to me. However, it was possible to see the locations, walk the streets where the characters walked and see the houses where they lived, albeit seventy years after the events depicted. In Greece, the Athens streets where Olga lived and look at the buildings where she worked were extant. I could see the environment and experience the smells, the heat, the cold and the dusty corridors created by the high pre-war

buildings. I could also visit the centres outside Athens where so much resistance fighting occurred. I could see where the resistance trained (Rendina and Karpenisi) and where the British Special Operations Executive operatives and Greek andartes hid and planned attacks (for example in Theodoriana) and where they carried out these raids (such as at the Gorgopotomos Bridge in eastern Greece). I too could see the land that the andartes saw. I could walk the goat tracks; experience the cold they felt; traverse the passes they had fled through; sit in the caves where they hid; and walk the distances they had to go each day between meetings and operations in 1943. I did that in the research trip to Greece in November-December 2017. Trips such as these, and those made in 1988, 1991, 1995, 1998, 1999 and 2012 gave me this sense of place. Or at least a sample of what it may have been like in the 1940s. This was because over the course of seven decades many things had changed in Greece. Most of the 1940s inhabitants who might have witnessed the true events in the novel will have died. The towns and cities will have been affected by tourism. Water will have become reticulated in some; tracks have become roads; roads have become highways; some highways have by-passed some villages altogether. Some villages where peasants slaved over partially barren ground in 1943 have now become seasonal villages - places where international skiers can lodge in winter, paying rents that these houses' owners seventy years ago could never have imagined possible. Meanwhile in Athens the years of European Union-enforced austerity has ironically brought back to the city the shutters and dirty roads not dissimilar to the worst days of German occupation. But regardless, the times have given us a new Athens, a tourist centre where the Parthenon now resides in a museum for protection from the elements and a cast replica of it sits on the Acropolis; where the people's Plaka has its streets full of souvenir shops, and where large outdoor restaurants have replaced many of the cheap tavernas of days past. For the play to be authentic, I needed to peel back the years and to find how this land and its people were in those days. Photographs of the era were useful, and also people who were in those places in the war provided some clues early in my research for the novel. Sometimes I had to simply use guesswork.

The sense of place and time applies not only to wartime, but also to early 1960, from which Olga's remembers the past. This is eight years after Olga returns to Australia. She is arguably a different woman, now dependent on her children and dressing in a way that was less cosmopolitan and typical of what Australian women of that era were

wearing. On arrival in Australia in 1952, she did not dress as other women in Australia at that time. She showed herself to be a woman of eclectic and cosmopolitan tastes wearing clothes of European style and éclat. My mother told me Olga's clothing choices were not available in Sydney:



Olga in 1952. (Photo courtesy of the Stambolis Family Collection)

However, the play opens eight years later. By this stage it seems Olga has toned down her style, wearing clothes not dissimilar to the general fashion for women of her age [see photo below, taken in 1960].



Olga in 1960. (Photo courtesy of the Stambolis Family Collection)

This gave me scope to speculate on whether she had gradually lost her sense of identity (living as she is in a small room and, as I have said, somewhat reliant on her daughter), and then across the course of the play and the remembering, she regains her identity, having faced the issues that have caused her to doubt herself. Costuming may be important in this transformation. Although the costuming decisions will be made by

the production team, the script will suggest that Olga wear clothes authentic to the 1960s. Because she moves into memories and depictions of events dating from 1911 to 1944, the costume would most likely need to be easily adaptable, perhaps through the use of scarves, coats and layers. But this is a decision for the team staging the play.

As well as a sense of time and place, the play needs to give a sense of language, both the way of speaking of 1960 and the Greek language particularly as it was spoken in central Greece in the 1940s. This was a difficult issue for me. I speak little Greek and have little understanding of the inflection of the modern Greek language, let alone how it differs from the way it was spoken in 1943. This task was made easier because the play is almost entirely in English. There are Greek words used throughout. These were included as pointers to remind the audience that this is largely a Greek story being told by a Greek-born woman. I also believed that authenticity was served with these words coming into the speech, because throughout his childhood English-speaking Greeks my mother and aunts often interspersed an occasional Greek word into their speech.

One thing I could not do was know how a Greek-Australian woman sounded in 1943. There were no recordings of Olga's voice. Her family members say she had a Greek accent, but a cultured accent, an accent that her daughter Nellie liked to call a 'city' accent (as opposed to the twangier 'country Greek' accent). Nellie claimed to speak 'city' like her mother Olga, so Nellie's clipped, formal Greek tone was what I had in mind when writing Olga's voice in both the novel and play. When staging the play, the director and actors will decide the accents for the production. It may be that Olga will be given a country Greek accent, an urban Greek accent, an Australian accent, a neutral English voice or a mixture of these. Help available in this respect is a 'dramaturg', who works with the director and actors to ensure authenticity. (Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, 2017). The dramaturg will research the era of the play and advise on the set. They also work with the actors on authenticity of accent and style of performance. The playwright may collaborate in the writing stage with a dramaturg, but playwriting is mostly a solitary process. As the writer of *Lady of Arrows*, I will not stage my work, direct it nor act in it. When it is staged, a director will take the words and stage directions and bring the story before an audience. In doing so he or she may choose to work with a dramaturg to authenticate the style of delivery authentic to the

time and place. But these are matters for the producer and director. All I as the playwright can do is write the words as close to how Olga may have spoken them.

### 3.1 (i) Giving the play a name: stick with the old?

With Olga telling the story, I felt that the name for the play should focus on her. The novel's name, *Someone Else's War* said nothing of the woman. It spoke nothing of Greece or women. I also felt it didn't have 'zing'. In fact, after the novel was published, I discovered there were several other books with a similar title.<sup>130</sup> I considered several new names for the play. Originally, I called it *Olga's Ring* which signified the circles of people surrounding her: her resistance cell; her friends; her Australian family; her Greek family; the soldiers she saved. I felt however that this title was somewhat generic and would not pique interest for a potential audience. It also said nothing of war. About a month into the PhD process I settled on *Unbroken* as a working title, but it too had a generic feel and I always intended that it would be superseded. In December 2018 I revisited the title. By this time my supervisor Professor Chris Mackie had me exploring the ancient Greek parallels to the play. I began looking to the Greek gods and goddesses for an inspiration for a title. Artemis, who is the Goddess of the Hunt stood out as a possible source of a title because it signified the strength of women, particularly Greek women, particularly the idea of a woman in battle and the power of women to change the world. I listed many possible titles that touched upon the Artemis theme.

Initially I settled on *The Lady of Arrows* because of the reverse of the theme of arrows that could not only signified the arrows that Olga fired as a warrior, but the arrows that had struck her in her heart (such as when her husband married another woman bigamously). After I told him of the new title, Chris Mackie alerted me to the fact that in *The Iliad* Homer depicts Artemis as not only the Goddess of the hunt, but also the Goddess of women's death.

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<sup>130</sup> *Someone Else's War: Fighting for the British Empire in World War I* by John Connor; *Someone Else's War* by Rose Christo; *Someone Else's War: Mercenaries from 1960 to the Present* by Anthony Rogers.

*"Zeus has made you [Artemis] a lion among women, and given you leave to kill any at your pleasure" (Lattimore 1951, Book XXI, 471).*

The title also suited the play because although the play depicts the killing of several people in front of the audience, the most important and powerful of these deaths are of women: two actual resistance workers who are murdered by the Germans: Lela Carayannis, the leader of Olga's resistance cell, and Nikotsara the Greek fighter who I depict in the play as a figure of strength to the imprisoned fighters, and whose death makes these prisoners despondent. I eventually decided to drop "The" and just call it *Lady of Arrows*. I did this for several reasons: it was simpler and more succinct, but mostly because Olga was not the only fighter in the resistance in the war in Greece. To retain *The Lady of Arrows* may suggest that she was a one-off hero. She was not; the resistance had many women fighters both in the urban underground and in the regional areas.

### **3.2 The Workshop**

The final process in the development of the play as the creative element of this PhD was a workshop. This was a process that tested the strength of the script, found areas for improvement, and gave an indication of whether the play was able to be staged. There is no set parameter or method for a workshop. As one *The New York Times* reviewer writes:

*"What is called a workshop can be anything from short and sweet -- an afternoon's rehearsal and a quick reading by actors seated around a table -- to long and gruelling, involving weeks of rehearsal, daily rewrites and advice from everyone from dramaturge to audience members" (McKinley, 2004).*

As *Lady of Arrows* was still in development, the purpose of the workshop was not to gauge audience reaction. It was to see if the script worked, so after discussion with the director we decided not to have an audience present. We wanted this to be an intimate setting where the actors could experiment with their characters, and I could assess the success of each of my structure and writing. An audience may have found this constant stopping and discussion tedious. Having other people in the space may also have been distracting for the director and the actors.

As I wrote about in 3.1. (a) *Writing style: novel v play*, I had not previously written for the stage except for being the co-author of an unpublished and unperformed musical script. I had acted in a video for the ABC Legal Department,<sup>131</sup> but I am not a trained actor. The requirements of a stage actor are relatively new to me. I may write the words for an actor, but it is only in the playing of the script that I will see whether the words I wrote can succeed on stage.

This was the primary purpose of a three-day workshop of the play that ran from January 22 to 24, 2019 in the main television Studio A at RMIT University in Melbourne. It involved a director, Gary Young (Andrew Lloyd Webber Award recipient for his musical *Jekyll*, and director of the Australian version of the international musical *Mamma Mia*) and three actors: Jackie Rees (Helpmann Award nominee for her role of Madame Girya in the Asian and Australian tour of *Phantom of the Opera*), Hannah Fredericksen (Sydney Theatre Award nominee for her performance as Sandra Dee in *Dreamlover*) and Stephen Mahy (who played lead role of Danny in the Asian and Australian tours of *Grease*). The central character of Olga Stambolis was played by Jackie Rees, while the other parts were divided between Fredericksen and Mahy.<sup>132</sup>

Jackie Rees is my partner. From the earliest days of the writing of the play, I wrote it with her in mind for the character of Olga. Not having known Olga, I modelled part of the envisioned gestures and body movements on Jackie's own, using her as a rough template for the physicality of a woman of Olga's age. I also thought it was significant that my family said that Jackie bore a strong resemblance to Olga as she appeared

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<sup>131</sup> A video accompaniment to *The ABC All-Media Court Reporting Handbook*, (ABC Books, 1994).

<sup>132</sup> The wages for the actors and the director were partially paid for by the second round of a La Trobe University School of Humanities and Social Sciences Internal Grant Scheme grant (#2019-1-HDR-0004).

around the war years. Both have strong physiques, and similar hair, eyes and jaw lines. It helped the construction of the character to imagine Jackie saying the words. Because of this, the process of writing alone felt less of a vacuum. In the lead up to the workshop I showed Jackie passages so I could see if the cadence of the lines rang true when read aloud by a woman of the Olga age range. As Jackie prepared for the workshop, we also investigated accents together. As she was the actor playing Olga, she wanted to play the character with an accent that might have approximated Olga's own. Accents weren't essential for the workshop; it may have been sufficient for her (and the other actors) to use their natural modern Australian accents because the purpose of the workshop was to see if the script was workable, not to convince an audience of authenticity of character. The actors were not in period clothes [see photos later in this section], so likewise the use of accents was immaterial to the ultimate purpose of the workshop. However, Jackie wished to use an accent because she believed it helped her to get closer to the character she was portraying. My sister, who knew Olga, said Olga's accent had no Australian edge to it, so we didn't want an Australian Greek accent. One of my journalism students at RMIT had an Athenian accent, having been born and raised in Athens and subsequently learning English in Athens. The student recorded three of the play's monologues. Jackie used these to help her reproduce the Athenian Greek voice. Jackie based her enunciation on the assumption that if Olga spoke six languages well, she would have spoken them with a clear diction. Although there was nearly a century between the childhoods of Olga and my student, it was a starting point for an accent for the workshop process. Fredericksen and Mahy also researched accents for their roles as Greek, British and German characters.<sup>133</sup>

The workshop operated in four overlapping stages: the first reading, the second reading, the blocking, and the recording. The first stage followed the usual workshop format of the director, actors and writer sitting at a table in the studio reading through the script, with each actor reading their parts as written. The first reading in the workshop was done without comment until the end of the read. Actors played the roles as written in the script. There was no physical acting or staging. The actors remained seated at the table although they could use accents and intonation. The purpose of this read through was to see whether the storyline made sense, how an unamended script

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<sup>133</sup> Because Fredericksen and Mahy had to play so many characters with different accents butting up against each other, they chose to use accents to help in the demarcation of these characters.

would have sounded to the ear, how the script could be staged, and whether, in this play that has actors playing multiple parts, the actors could play their allocated parts without confusion. A discussion was then held about these issues. The value of the interpretative collaborative process was evident from this early stage. While all the actors agreed they thought the script made sense, the director Gary Young said he had one concern. It was about the play's fast movements between years [see 3.2 (b) *Too Many Characters*].

Then followed a second reading (still at the table), where Young made suggestions about blocking<sup>134</sup> and writing. Young asked the participants to call a stop any time they may have been confused by the script and its moving timelines. At this point several minor suggestions were made. I amended the script to take these issues into account. The actors wrote the changes on their scripts and that night I printed new versions of the script for each actor and the director to be used the next day.

We started the second reading with the setting of the opening of the play. I had written it as a scene with lights switching on and off three times. Each time the lights came on, Olga was to be in a different position, each time getting closer to the newly received diary. Director Young suggested this could be augmented by the sound of a heartbeat. This link takes us to the moment of this discussion.

#### [Workshop Discussion](#)

This second reading also offered the actors the chance to use accents and gauge the success of their interaction with the others in the same scene. Here is an example, where Olga (played by Jackie Rees) is on her first mission with fellow fighter Stavros Dementopoulos, played by Stephen Mahy.

#### [Workshop Resistance Scene Reading](#)

On the second day the workshop moved into its third stage. This was the blocking of the play on the studio floor to see if the ideas raised in the first stage were practical. I gave the actors the updated scripts, and we moved the reading table, turning it into a

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<sup>134</sup> The positioning of the actors and props in places on the stage space [see Glossary].

prop table that could be used as an office desk, the front edge of a trench, or a card table in a military barracks. The TV studio was turned into a space approximating a theatre stage in width and depth. Young set an elementary staging, with a chair acting as Olga's bed, and a small desk serving as her prison cell table. Stage wings were marked out. This allowed the director to envisage his placement of the actors on the studio floor. Over the day he experimented with entrances and exits, working through how actors should weave into and out of each scene. The whole play was then worked through with the actors holding and reading from the printed script.



Hannah Fredericksen (R) rehearses her movements as Jackie Rees and director Gary Young work through the script in preparation for the first reading on the studio floor (Photo: ©Phil Kafcaloudes).

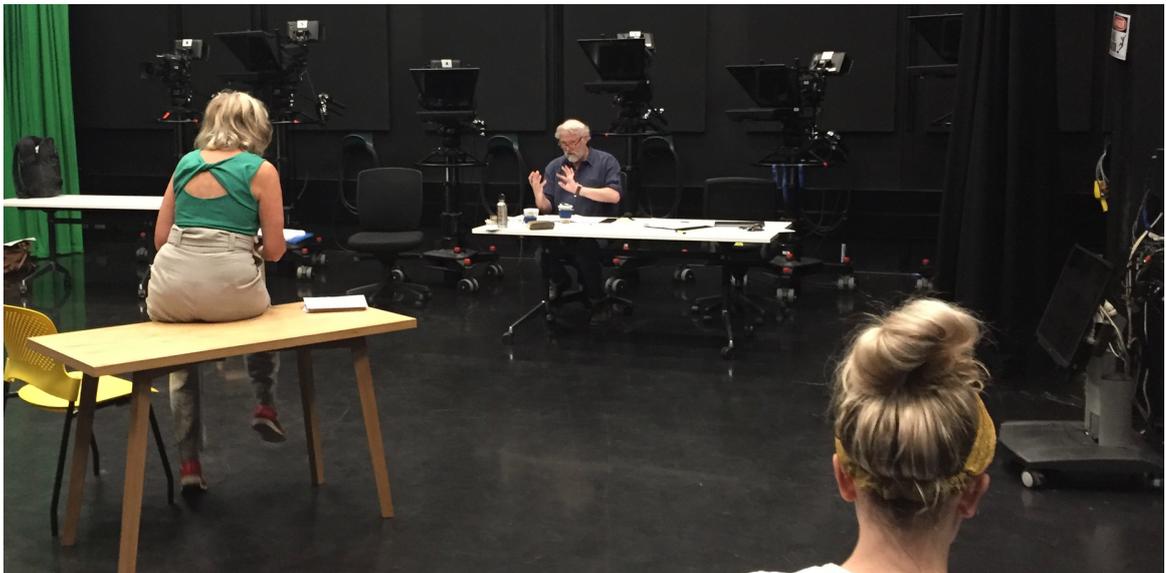
In this next excerpt, director Gary Young sets a base position for the start of the play, where the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> actors have chairs set in a place. This is where they will wait for their cue and return to after their scenes. Young calls the opening scene and then suggests how the actors can begin.

### [The First Scene](#)

This blocking work was central to the development of the play. It uncovered a range of problems or areas for improvement [see 3.2 (a) to (j) below]. Both acts were attempted, with most of the work being done on Act 1 in the remaining time on this second day. Several slight amendments were made to the script after difficulties arose

about entrances and exits of Mahy and Fredericksen's characters. These were mostly changing the entrances from stage left to stage right and vice versa. These parts of the scripts were rewritten that night and, as I had done after the first day, I reprinted the updated parts of each actor's script for use on day three.

On the morning of the third day, the studio's five TV cameras were placed along the wall behind the director and arranged so that they could capture every part of the stage. The central camera was set to a 'wide-shot', capturing almost all the stage. Other cameras were locked off<sup>135</sup> to capture certain areas of the stage.



The cameras are set up to capture the final workshop run-through (l-r: Jackie Rees, Gary Young and Hannah Fredericksen) The 'wide shot' camera is behind Young. (Photo: ©Phil Kafcaloudes).

Once the director was satisfied with the blocking of the play, the scenes were recorded on the RMIT TV cameras. This recording would go to post-production over the following weeks. A link to the final edit of parts of these recordings is presented with this thesis at the top of the post-production script [*Appendix 8 - Lady of Arrows script and links*]. Elements of the recording are embedded in the thesis below to highlight points as they are raised.

The workshop was invaluable not only because it affirmed to me that the story could work as a stage production, but because it revealed a list of issues that needed to be addressed. Overall, the workshop did what it was supposed to do: it led to improvements in the writing, found holes in the staging and led to a tightening of the

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<sup>135</sup> Set so it stayed in that position for the entire recording

script. These issues are listed below where I state the issue, and then follow it with the resolution I decided on to fix it. These decisions were made with the advice of Young and the interpretation of actors Fredericksen, Mahy and Rees, but the decisions on whether or not to make these changes, and the actual script changes were mine alone.

Young's experience as both a director and a writer was invaluable at this stage in the workshop, particularly as this was the time when the lines, phrases and stage directions were examined in detail.

The following is the list of issues that Young and the actors brought up at various times during the workshop.

### **3.2 (a) The Time Shifts**

The play involved many shifts in time. As written, the play opens in 1960 with Stambolis remembering the events of her life. The next scene jumps back to 1915, then 1918, then on to 1930, then to World War II. Young was concerned whether the audience would understand these jumps, particularly when Olga's long-dead husband suddenly appears. We looked at each of these movements in time and space, and we discussed whether these movements and character appearances were comprehensible. One such character written in the pre-workshop script was Olga's sister Anna who appears as a memory from the past, a ghost figure who just turns up upstage on Olga's shoulder. Young said this sudden appearance posed too many questions including what year this happened and how and why she suddenly appeared.

To resolve this, I agreed this appearance by Anna was confusing the timeline and needed to be dealt with. We workshopped a number of ways this could be remedied while still retaining the essential information presented by the Anna character. I took the character out of this scene, removing her five lines. We ran the scene with this amendment and this change appeared to remove most of the confusion. The movements back and forward through time in the opening scene was retained because I considered it essential to explaining Olga's motivation. The alternative would have been to have Olga tell the audience of the events of 1915 when Olga is a young actor

struggling with her first performance. I felt that showing a re-enactment of these events would be more powerful and a switch in the storytelling method. Young experimented with several ways of contrasting the 1960 Olga with the 1915 Olga. He suggested the use of amended lighting, brightening the stage when Olga is acting in her first production. The sudden brightening of lights gives a sense of the 1915 theatrical performance while adding a tension to the young Olga as she steps onto the stage to perform. To my eye it worked well and the performance of Rees, changing Olga from an older woman to a nervous child did all that was needed, along with the lighting change, to make the contrast. However, the juxtaposing movement to a later theatrical performance in 1918, where Olga is much more confident, was more problematic. We were already in a theatrical scenario, so lighting was already set for a stage scenario. What I wanted to do here is to juxtapose the nervous inexperienced Olga with her character some years later to show how she had developed as an actor and as a person. Several options I considered to make the transition included having a host welcoming the audience, mentioning that it was the 1918 season and that Olga was their lead actor. I decided against this because I felt it was a hackneyed technique and this host would also interfere with the back-to-back portrayals of the two Olgas. Young said he saw no problem with the audience understanding this was transition from the two time periods, particularly as the actor playing Olga obviously makes the contrast from shy girl messing her lines to a strong woman playing a princess attacking the audience. I am not certain about this. When the play is staged this will be a matter for the director who might use a set change or staging to make the demarcation of the years. I chose to leave the script as it was at this stage.

### **3.2 (b) Too Many Characters**

The reading identified another potential character confusion. In Act 2, Scene 7, I wrote a conversation between resistance cell leader Lela Carayannis and an unnamed Greek resistance fighter about Olga's erratic behaviour. This male character appears only once. Young felt this new character would be a distraction: the audience would be wondering whether or not this character was the existing resistance fighter Stavros.

To resolve this, I agreed that there was no need for this character to be different from Stavros. After discussion I agreed that this character should be transmuted into Stavros to remove the confusion. Changing this person to Stavros would have the added benefit of giving the actor playing Stavros an opportunity to incorporate Stavros' characteristics into the playing of this character. It also seemed to ring true for me, because a senior operative like Lela would not be likely to discuss the mental health of another senior operative with a someone who was not senior in the resistance.

### **3.2 (c) Confusion of the characters' sexes**

Stephen Mahy and Hannah Fredericksen each play a range of characters. Because some scenes require the presence of two female characters besides Olga, and others require two male characters, both Mahy and Fredericksen play male characters and female characters at times in the play. In Act 1, Scene 1, Mahy played Young Nellie opposite Fredericksen who was playing Young Freda, her sister. The reading of this scene was successful because Mahy was able to play Young Nellie with the attributes of a young girl that could be seen by the audience. There was no confusion. There can however be confusion when the actor is not seen and is only an offstage voice. In Act 1, Scene 3 Stephen Mahy voiced the role of young Nellie, a girl of thirteen, as an offstage voice. To an audience this male voice may have been confusing. The audience may have believed he was voicing a different, male, character.

To resolve this, the role was given to Fredericksen. While this eliminated confusion, it led to another dilemma because Fredericksen appeared as a different character almost immediately afterwards. However Young was able to change the way that later character was introduced, enabling Fredericksen to play both parts.

### **3.2 (d) Do we need an interval after all?**

Earlier in this chapter, I explain my decision to make this a two-act play. I investigated a range of plays and musicals, examining their lengths, number of intervals,

even whether, like the epic Harry Potter play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, it could feasibly be staged over consecutive nights. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I decided on a play of two acts to be staged in the one evening or matinee. The natural place for an interval came roughly halfway through the script in Act 1, Scene 3 when Olga is arrested by the Gestapo. She has just received a letter from her family telling her that her daughter Nellie has moved to Darwin. Olga laments that her husband has sent Nellie to place so close to the Japanese who are in Singapore and New Guinea. Olga tells the audience that being far away in Greece she never realised her girl would be so close to danger. Then she says she didn't realise that she herself was so close to danger. At this moment a German officer tells Olga that she is under arrest. Then comes the interval, and after the break Olga is in her cell explaining what happened to her.

Young questioned whether we needed an interval at all. He said that tension had built nicely to this point, and he wondered whether it would be a mistake to let the audience off the emotional hook. He had timed the run of this first act to 47 minutes. He said that because this was done as an on-book reading, the play was naturally slowed in pace. He estimated a genuine theatrical playing time would be closer to 44 minutes. He said he was worried that was too short for a first act. He said that if the whole play ran under 100 minutes, then it was feasible to do it as a single act. To resolve this, we agreed to leave it in two acts at this stage, but it may be merged into a single act when staging the play for an audience.

### **3.2 (e) Unnecessary breaking of the tension**

In Act 2, Scene 7, at a point leading to the climax of the play, Olga had suppressed her memory of what destroyed her marriage - the same memory that forced her out of Australia and to Greece. In the build-up to this climax I had put in a lighter interchange that lasted five lines:

*MRS MAVROMATI*

*Answer me girl. You can't leave without some kind of payment for all we've done for you.*

OLGA

*You have a birthmark on your foot.*

MRS MAVROMATI

*I see. You walk out on us to go back to your rich husband,  
and all you can do is criticise how we look.*

OLGA

*Show me your foot.*

*(Mrs Mavromati runs backwards. Olga follows her. Her  
son runs after them.)*

MRS MAVROMATI

*Leave me and my foot alone. Murder. Help.*

As Fredericksen and Rees acted out this scene it became not just a light-hearted scene, but a comedic scene. Everyone on the floor laughed: actors, director and me. We moved on to the next part of the scene, but a little later Young asked if we could revisit this scene. He said the comedic scene had been niggling him. He questioned whether it was appropriate to break the tension at this point just as a great personal tragedy was about to be revealed. I had written it with buffers on each side, with passages that take us back into the lead-up to the tragedy. I believed this was enough to maintain the tension. Young said releasing tension in a play is often good, but the build to the climax is something delicate. He said one should be very careful about messing with it. Young warned against giving the audience a break, fearing that this was exactly what we were doing with the comedic birthmark scene.

I was not convinced when he made this argument in the studio. Later I remembered that just before this lighter scene I had written that a terrorised Olga scabbles through her diary to jog her memory about a tragic truth. She had suppressed this memory for fifteen years, and the audience was being taken on her journey to remembering it. This was the start of the tension of the tragic build up to the revelation about the death of her infant child. On reflection I agreed that this was the wrong place

for light relief. I wrote the lighter lines out of the scene so that it was transformed into a purely dramatic scene.

*MRS MAVROMATI*

*Answer me girl. You can't leave without some kind of payment for all we've done for you.*

*OLGA*

*You have a birthmark on your foot.*

*MRS MAVROMATI*

*I see. You walk out on us to go back to your rich husband, and all you can do is criticise how we look.  
(They freeze.)*

*OLGA*

*(To audience.)*

*I wasn't criticising her. That birthmark. I have one just like it. On the top right here. The same as hers. This woman who was not like me, nothing like me. She really was my mother after all.*

### **3.2 (f) Adding action to emphasise the dialogue**

In Act 2, Scene 5, Olga is in a British military base in Cairo, having just accompanied her latest group of British and Australian soldiers out of occupied Greece. For her, the flush of excitement at the rescue has passed and she reveals that she feels worthless. She has lost sight of the value of her work and can just see it as an avoidance of what she believes she should really be doing: being a mother to her children. In the way I had written the scene, Olga was simply talking with an Australian soldier. The soldier tries to persuade her of the value of her work by telling the other servicemen nearby that this is Olga Stam, the woman who had saved so many soldiers. The soldiers gather around her, making a fuss of her. Olga is heartened, remembering how she saved so many people

over the years, the individuals she had forgotten because she had worked so intensely over so many years. In the last stages of the workshop we played this scene and Young asked me what I thought Olga and her soldier should be doing on stage as they spoke. I said I had just pictured them standing among other soldiers, talking. For the director, this obviously was not possible. There are only three actors in the play. With two of them talking, this leaves only one actor left to form the crowd.

To resolve this, Young suggested Olga and the soldier do something as they talk. He asked what would soldiers do in a military base as they wait to be transferred. One of the actors suggested a game of cards. A card game would be simple to stage, needed no more than two people and it was a most Australian of pastimes. I decided on poker, a simple five card version played between Olga and her soldier. Young suggested that this poker game be more than just stage directions. He suggested I write in some dialogue of card playing, interspersed with the heart-to-heart conversation. I found the idea intriguing: a dual conversation within a conversation. The scene now needed just Rees and Mahy. There was no need for a crowd. Fredericksen was able to come into the scene towards the end as another character. I rewrote the scene, adding in the poker and the playing references. Here is a section with the added words underlined:

*AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER*

*Oh, yes. It was all planned. That's why I came here. She was supposed to follow me. The contact went to her house to get her. But she told them she didn't want to leave. She said Greece was her home, and she was going to stay there until the Germans were thrown out. You going to bet or are you going to sit there admiring your cards all day?*

*OLGA*

*(Throws a brown coin in the middle.)  
Tuppence. She sounds like a hell of a woman.*

*AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER*

*You see why I need to be with her. Meet you and raise you another.*

*OLGA*

*She is a woman who knows her home. And I raise you.*

*AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER*

*(Pauses. Looks at his cards.)*

*Why don't you go home? Sydney, isn't it?*

This last line added an enchanting nuance for the actors. The Australian soldier is looking at his cards, perhaps quizzically, and this quizzicality could be either because he is thinking about his next move, or because he is confused about why Olga is still in Greece. Thus, the actors could have a dual focus: the subject of the dialogue and the game of cards. The card game also helped to set the scene. They were depicted as relaxing and waiting. For the first time since the war started, they weren't in any immediate danger. They were in a British base in Cairo and were not under the threat of the Germans.

### **3.2 (g) Dealing with a changing point of view**

As *Lady of Arrows* is a play that depicts a memory, Olga is remembering events as they occur to her. At times she is immersed in the scene, such as in Act 1, Scene 3 where she is conversing (in her memory) with her husband in Australia and then with a British officer in Athens. At other times she talks directly to the audience, explaining what she is feeling at the time. Going from talking to the other characters, then to the audience, could be confusing for the audience. In the following scene Olga's birth mother in Greece (Played by Fredericksen) and Olga's brother (Mahy) attack Olga for not bringing more gifts from Australia. This is a central scene that sets the motivations for all three characters. It also the first of the events that lead to the play's climax. It was dramatic on the page and needed to be just as dramatic on stage. In the script Olga breaks out of the scene and talks to the audience. This presented a problem in that Olga's focus has

changed. She is at one moment in an Athens bedroom with her relatives, and one line later, she is talking to the audience.

*(Light comes up and Olga is sitting on the end of the bed.  
To audience.)*

OLGA

*Well what could I expect? A great reunion? A  
homecoming feasting? A village turnout? Well, actually  
yes. I wanted all that. We go in and there's an old woman  
on a sofa, all smiles too. We barely said hello when the  
questions started:*

MRS MAVROMATI

*How big is your husband's restaurant?*

MRS MAVROMATI'S SON

*How many homes do you own?*

MRS MAVROMATI

*Did you bring us any money?*

MRS MAVROMATI'S SON

*Where are the gifts?*

MRS MAVROMATI

*When can you bring us to Australia?*

OLGA

*(To audience.)  
Michael and all his bragging about his seafood  
restaurant. Not a baby coo for Christopher. And Nellie.  
Her precious little cloth dog. She gave it to her cousin, a  
little girl. The cousin held it up to the old woman, who  
asked, no more smiles now, mind you..*

MRS MAVROMATI

*Is that all you've got for us?*

OLGA

*(To audience.)*

*Is that all you're got for us. If they had looked at Nellie's face, they would've seen a little girl hurt like no little girl should be hurt.*

For the audience Olga's change of focus (from Mrs Mavromati and her son to the audience and back again) did appear to be confusing in the workshop. Who was Olga speaking to? Could she be heard as she was being harangued by the other actors? Olga talking calmly to the audience in the midst of this abuse seemed wrong, and there was also the problem that she could not be heard amidst the shouting of the other characters.

To resolve this issue the director decided to have Fredericksen and Mahy freeze while Olga spoke to the audience. The other actors stop, immobile, holding their positions. This freeze demarcates between the frenetic Athens scene and Olga's exposition to the audience in 1960, as shown in this link to the scene in the workshop with the freeze included.

#### [The Freeze Technique](#)

If this freeze did not happen, and Olga spoke to the audience at the same time as the maelstrom from her mother and brother, the audience may not be clear about where Olga is and to whom she is speaking. The silence of the freeze also allowed Rees leeway to deliver the line in a softer tone if she chose.

### **3.2 (h) Strengthening support between the actors**

In the original script, *Lady of Arrows* was a one actor play. Although I changed this to a play for three actors, there was one scene I had not changed. It was a scene where the character of Olga would have benefitted from having the other actors interacting with her. This was late in Act 1, Scene 1 where the young Olga is depicted as acting in her first play. She is depicted as an extremely shy, stuttery and nervous girl. She gets her lines wrong again and again. This nervousness was written as a stutter where she just can't get the words out. On the page it looked feasible. On the floor it looked forced.

To resolve this director Gary Young suggested putting Fredericksen and Mahy in the scene, acting as the play's slave girl and guard. Rees started using the other actors as foils for the scene. In playing the scene Rees took the stutters and played them slightly differently, with the stutters becoming more of a forgotten line. Fredericksen's slave girl became a silent prompter, then a frustrated prompter, slapping her forehead as the young Olga kept getting her lines wrong. The changed scene as played in the workshop is shown in the link below.

#### [Olga Child Actor Scene](#)

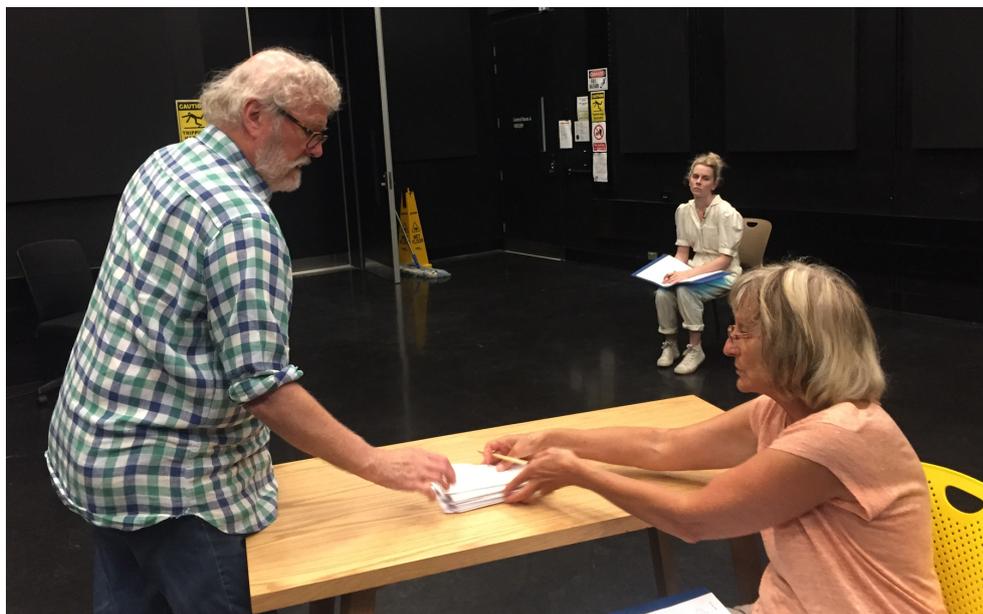
This vignette, which was only ever intended to show Olga as a nervous girl out of her depth, became a comedic scene, ending with the actors playing the slave girl and the guard miming whispering complaints about this young failed would-be actress. Not a line was changed, apart from excising one of the stutters. The interpretation of the director and actors had transformed the writing into a scene made much stronger and a contrast with the scene that followed, in which Olga returns as an older, more experienced and confident actor.

### **3.2 (i) The need for a focus point**

Earlier in this chapter I discussed how Olga's wartime diary, which is sent to her from Greece in 1960, became a major plot device by being a catalyst for Olga's memories, with its arrival kindling her memories without her actually opening it for most of the play. In the last scenes the diary is opened, with its contents reminding Olga of

the circumstances of the death of her child, an event that she had driven from her mind for many years. Aside from being a memory device, the diary's origins are also part of the story, with the resistance twice demanding Olga destroy it. The purpose of these references is to show the importance to Olga of a record of her wartime work. She wanted something to prove to her daughter Nellie that her work was worthwhile; that she wasn't away from them for nothing. As the playwright, I had written the diary to be present at the opening with Olga trying to touch it, but not being able to. As originally written, I had the diary disappear because it no longer needed to be present for every scene. In contrast, the director believed that because of the importance of the entwining roles the diary played in the story, the diary should have a physical presence throughout the play. He suggested it should be placed in a prominent position and always seen.

I found the suggestion of an omnipresent diary an interesting idea, but I did not know how this could be achieved with the rapidly changing scenes and staging. Young provided a simple solution. The table which is Olga's bedside table and later the British and German officer's desks would always have the diary on it. Even if the diary is not mentioned in those scenes, it could still be there, as an almost ethereal presence. Young suggested that it could be lit in a way that would demarcate it from the rest of the scene. As the playwright watching the scenes, with the diary sitting untouched on the table, I felt this staging had taken my original idea about the importance of the diary and made it more pronounced. When the diary is referred to, it is there as a prop. When it is not referred to, it is there as a reminder that this is what forced Olga to face her past.



Director Gary Young discusses placement of the diary with Jackie Rees (Photo ©Phil Kafcaloudes)

### 3.2 (j) Keeping it real

In Act 2, Scene 3, Olga is in jail. She and the other prisoners wonder whether they will be rescued. One prisoner, Maria Dakis is told she is being released.

OLGA

*Oh, to see Maria on that morning. She had her bag and her dress and her hat. So many hopes for one woman.*

MARIA

*I promise Olga to get word to your family, to tell them that you are alive.*

One of the actors questioned whether in the maelstrom of arrest and imprisonment, whether Maria would have had her hat and coat with her. It seemed like a reasonable query. I emphasise poverty throughout the jail scenes, with Olga referring to the fact that they have nothing in their cells but buckets, a bed and a blanket.

For Maria Dakis to have retained her hat and coat may have been possible, but it jarred with the poverty and near naked feel of the jail cell. However, I liked the way Olga uses the hat and coat as signs of hope for Maria, that Maria was returning to the life she had before she was jailing. On reflection I didn't want the sudden appearance of this hat and coat to distract the audience. To resolve this issue, I rewrote the line so that Maria's hope come from her countenance, not her clothes.

OLGA

*Oh, to see Maria on that morning. So many hopes for one woman.*

Fredericksen played Maria as being joyful, hopeful. That was all that was needed to make Olga's line ring true. This ebullience also made the following lines more powerful, where Olga reveals that Maria was not released, but taken upstairs and shot.

All of the changes that I have listed here from 3.2 (a) through to 3.2 (j) helped the script get to where it may be realistically staged. The opinions of three experienced actors and an experienced director all contributed to an intense period of development. That is what a workshop is supposed to do in giving an author a chance to see if their work might translate from paper to the stage. Workshops can be overdone though. McKinley (2004) writes about plays that have been workshopped so many times that they have suffered what he called “death by workshop”.

*“..whereby a writer is told to zig and zag, cut and paste, work and rework so many times that the piece ceases to make any sense at all and is put away, never to be taken out again (2004).*

McKinley refers especially to a play by American playwright Elyse Singer that saw:

*“..a slow-motion haemorrhage of its energy -- gnat bite by gnat bite. She has made any number of changes to her script over the years -- adding and subtracting dialogue, cutting and adding characters, changing the order of scenes around” (2004).*

Singer’s play *Frequency Hopping* was eventually staged in 2008, and its writing of received poor reviews (Balcalzo 2008). One can only surmise whether the inadequacies of the play were attributable to the script or because it had been tweaked too many times in workshops. As McKinley says, sometimes the play just needs to be staged to see if can work (2004). Although it is not stated in McKinley, I suspect that Singer’s play was workshopped before an audience, and audience reaction (be they theatre company commissioning agents, potential producers, or members of the public) led to the many changes that caused her angst.

My workshop experience was certainly different to that of Singer. Mine was a closed workshop with no audience. Several producers asked to be present to watch it, but the director refused. He wanted no outsiders distracting from the workshop process. He felt that it would be most helpful for this play to be developed in a room with only the three actors, the writer and him present. With only three days, he had no ambitions

for the workshop to present a finished production for an audience at the end. This said, at the end of the workshop Gary Young believed the play was ready to be put through the next stage of the development process: submission to theatre companies in Australia and in Greece [see *Chapter 4: Conclusion*]. This was heartening. If he had suggested another, perhaps longer workshop, this would have indicated that there were more problems that needed to be sorted before it could be presented to professional theatre companies. It was also encouraging because it suggested that in the opinion of this experienced playwright and director the writing was of a standard worthy of the stage.

As I have outlined, many issues arose in the workshop, and all these issues were considered. The suggested changes were in most cases, agreed to, although there were several cases where the changes were not made, such as the elimination of the interval. That is not to say that these changes may not happen when the play is being commissioned. Through all of these suggestions and amendments, and the playing of the scenes by the actors, the workshop made the play stronger and proved it could be staged, and that the many characters and their quick changes could be done in a manageable way by three actors on a simple set. It was an invaluable experience that enabled me to get to the stage where the play could be offered to theatre companies.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

*“Memory is the mother of all wisdom”*

- Aeschylus (*Prometheus Bound*, 475)

This PhD process has been profoundly valuable to me as a playwright and as a researcher. By the final stages of the process I had honed the play *Lady of Arrows* into a form that, according to the workshop director and the lead actor, was ready for submission to a major theatre company. From watching the play in the workshop, I too saw that there was a synergy in the scripting, a coming together of the scenes, the dialogue and the structural conceptions. I became confident that the scenes I had written wereactable, and the emotion that I wanted was present in the workshop reading. This is demonstrated by interest shown in the play by Pamela Proestos, the Festival Director of the Greek Festival of Sydney who has commissioned it for the festival’s 2021 season. Also, early in 2020 both Dr Irene Moundraki, Head of Drama at the National Theatre of Greece, and Katerina Zafeiri, the project co-ordinator at The Athens Centre showed interest in the play, with the latter offering to stage it in 2021. I had appointments to meet both groups in Athens in May 2020 to discuss the possibilities, but this trip was delayed because of the coronavirus outbreak. The meetings will be moved to September 2020, or perhaps early 2021 depending on when borders will be opened again. I will also be unveiling scenes of the play in a special presentation at the Athens Centre, with Jackie Rees reading parts of the play.

This exegesis was a fellow traveller to the adaptation, explaining my thinking and the changes made to *Lady of Arrows*, resulting in the version that came out of the January 2019 workshop. This script is included with this thesis as *Appendix 8 - Lady of Arrows script and links* and includes a link to the video of scenes of the play recorded on the last day of the workshop. When I started the PhD candidacy early in 2017, I had written a first draft of the play. The version of the play submitted with this exegesis for the PhD in 2019 is substantially different from that first draft. Many of the changes occurred in the course of the candidacy because of the candidacy process itself, with my principal supervisor Professor Chris Mackie suggesting I look to the ancient Greek writers as companions on this journey. Homer, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides

were with me throughout the process. Their desire to tell history, the fact that they had similar issues in sourcing their stories, and perhaps even their Greekness gave me a sense that I was not writing in isolation, but rather that I was part of a long tradition. That I was writing a Greek story cemented this bond. Many times throughout the process I felt I was going the way of the ancients, including a realisation that when converting my novel into a play I was echoing Virgil who, like me, wrote his *Aeneid* as prose before converting it into poetry (Mackie, 2017b).

Barely a week would go by when I would find an ancient quote that fitted into the exegesis or the play itself and encouraged and challenged me to try new things in my scripting. Even the quotation at the top of this conclusion, also from the ancients, gave me succour as to the value of doing this kind of research. I had already decided to make *Lady of Arrows* a memory play when I found this quote serendipitously on a wall at RMIT University. Perhaps Aeschylus was wanting to pass on a message?

One of the most surprising things about the process was that I often made decisions unaware that these choices echoed what these ancients did. An example was when I decided to go from having a single actor to three. Unknown to me, this mirrored the work of Aeschylus and Sophocles [see 3.1 (e) *One actor or three: An Aeschylean flexibility*]. However many ideas developed after watching and reading the works of the ancients and others, as outlined in the same section and in *Appendix 3 - Other Works*. A powerful development for me and the play was the November 2017 research trip to Greece, partially funded by La Trobe University's Internal Graduate Research Scheme. At the very end of the trip it led me to information about a resistance cell called Bouboulina that operated in the place, time and methodology that matched that of Olga's cell. Whether this was her actual cell is not certain, but even if it was not, it offered information about how this kind of cell operated. When the novel was written (2001-2010), facts about the Greek resistance were scarce. The new information gained on this trip, including the work of resistance operatives such as Lela Carayannis who had founded the cell, informed the play and became incorporated in the script.

Although the exegesis accompanied the writing of the play, it pushed me to examine an issue that had dogged me since the publication of the novel, which was the

validity of fictionalisation of elements of a story. As I write in *Chapter 1.2*, Olga left an oral history that was passed onto her children, with much of it being unsubstantiated. I was to find in the course of this PhD process that I was not alone in being a writer with scant and sometimes questionable sources. I also found that the writing of both *Someone Else's War* and *Lady of Arrows* followed the Homeric tradition of using research and knitting together unverified oral histories into established facts to provide a piece of work which provided much truth but also an element of invention in order to make compelling storytelling. Eight years after the publication of the novel I found I did not need to feel ashamed of this invention. I had followed in the footsteps of the ancients, so long as I did not mislead people about the nature of the writing.

This PhD process led to the writing of a play, but as this exegesis shows, it produced much more than that. I was able to demonstrate that while oral histories can be powerful sources when used as the basis for works of fiction, fiction writers must be open about the nature of their work. If the writer fills the gaps, then the work is a fiction/non-fiction hybrid. To claim it is anything else is misleading. Homer, for instance, never claimed to be telling an entirely factual story. One eyed giants and ethereal temptresses were hardly provable elements in Greek history. Neither were his heroes Odysseus and Achilles. Their existence still causes debate even about the nature of Homer's stories; whether he was telling a tale, presenting a folklore, or knitting fables into a much bigger whole.

However, as a writer telling a story that was based in fact, I took succour in the fact that the historian Herodotus also invented - by taking us into the minds of his characters, even if he claimed that what he produced was historical record. This takes his case into something different altogether. His works were ripping reads, embellished stories that no doubt deviated from what actually happened. They were not histories in a sense that an academic researcher or journalist might believe today. This does not devalue his work. It simply categorises it differently to today's non-fiction writer. Like Homer before him, Herodotus invented, and because of this his work cannot be considered a faithful reproduction of history. He wrote from inside his character's minds, yet he was not privy to these minds. Neither was he privy to private conversations. But his work is still read after 2,500 years, and historians and academics

(who today may demand a higher standard of historical accuracy from their students) still make reference to his writings. Indeed, without them our knowledge of the Persian Wars would be much less.

From the ancients I learned that fictionalisation can be valuable; that storytelling can be enhanced with the addition of fictional elements. My mind keeps going back to the midnight meeting between Greek prime minister John Metaxas and the Italian ambassador Grazzi. I explain in *Chapter 2 - Literature Review* how in the novel I knitted a scenario from the barest of facts. This was however one of the elements of the original novel of which I believe worked well. Metaxas and Grazzi are portrayed as two men who are forced into circumstances that neither desired. I even chose to make these men friends to highlight the regret each will feel as they move, in the course of that one meeting, into enmity. In reality, the two men may have loathed each other, but we don't know, because history does not record the nature of this relationship. So I invented one, and it worked for the telling of this story in the novel. I exercised artistic licence as have so many writers before me. However I place a caveat here: if I had known that Metaxas and Grazzi loathed each other, I would have written the scene to reflect this enmity. I did not change facts, only used storytelling to fill gaps between those facts.

Plays present an extended set of fictional layers on top of those in a novel. This is because the factual nature of the story is subject to the interpretation of a creative team, not just the solitary writer. A playwright may imagine a line be read a certain way, but the director may desire a line be read a different way, and finally the actor may recite it using their own interpretation. This means there can be three tiers of fictionalisation. Indeed, in the workshop there were moments when the actors read my words and brought out (by inflection, tone and emphasis) something different to the meaning I had intended. The actors may also have interpreted things differently each time they perform the work. They may non-verbally communicate to show fear when I wanted bravado, or flirtation when I wanted kindness. The playwright may be present at rehearsals, but there is a sense that by this stage the play has become the creative toy of others. In this way, the staged depictions may come close to what I had intended, and what I had intended may be close to what happened in real life, but this cascade of invention and multiple interpretation makes this the longest of long shots.

Consider also that if the original facts are wanting, then regardless of creative interpretation, the final stage production may have little to do with truth, especially if in doing the original research, the facts just aren't out there for the playwright to find. This was case the with both the novel *Someone Else's War* and the resultant adaptation *Lady of Arrows*. As I wrote earlier, I knew little about the Metaxas-Grazzi relationship, but I also knew little about the specifics of Olga's work: who she rescued, how she came to have shrapnel in her arm, how she was shot in the leg. She never told her children and she certainly didn't write about it.

This lack of information has sparked many questions for me about why we do not know more about the war in Greece and particularly the broader roles of women in it. I explained in Chapter 3 that apart from spies like Olga, women played central roles in the resistance, with younger women fighting and teaching weaponry alongside male andartes, while older women supplied fighters with food and ammunition, but while there are photographs of them engaging in these activities, we have no extant written histories, biographies or memoir about these women. Perhaps there will be more stories about particular elements such as Lela Carayannis' Bouboulina cell in the years to come, but given that the cell ceased operating seventy-five years before this exegesis was written, it must be doubtful that more first-hand accounts of the cell will come to light. In the case of Greece in World War II, most of the written personal accounts so far published were produced by foreigners, or the offspring of the subjects of these stories. This is the case for a website dedicated to Lela,<sup>136</sup> which is written by her grandson, but tends towards hagiography with a biography, photos and some short paragraphs about the nature of the organisation and Lela's arrest and execution. I would like to research why so few of these stories have been told in permanent form. I suggested in the introduction that a lack of literacy may have been a factor, as might the stringent economic times after the war. In my 2017 research trip, older Greeks happily told the stories of their war experience, but their stories were oral and have never been published in a permanent form.

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<sup>136</sup> The site is *Lela Carayannis: A Tribute to Greece's National Heroine* <http://www.drgeorgepc.com/LelaCarayannis.html>. It is administered by Lela's grandson, Dr George Pararas-Carayannis.

As an extension of this research, I suggest that there would be value in comparing this lack of war testimony to the proliferation of memoirs by people involved in other theatres of the same war such as France, Germany, England and Australia. The research would also have a qualitative element to it, examining the reasons for the lack of Greek memoirs, and whether there was simply a wish to forget the horrors of war and get on with their lives. Certainly, there is no reason why this assay of storytelling should be limited to autobiography or memoir. For a country that has such a strong tradition in theatrical storytelling, I would intend that my research assay would include any war stories that have been told, like mine, in theatrical form in Greece. I believe Olga fitted into the category of someone who wished to forget the war, but at some point she chose to pass her stories on to her children. As I conclude this exegesis, I remain acutely aware that this story would have died had I not written it into the novel *Someone Else's War* and subsequently the play *Lady of Arrows*. I am also aware that there could be tens of thousands of stories of the Greek war that have already died. My research suggestions here might help save some of them.