

Transcript for "Christos Ikonou and Karen Emmerich Interviewed by David L. Ulin"

25

00:04:57.780 --> 00:05:02.760

David Ulin: So why don't we just start, and I think that what let's let's start with some background information.

26

00:05:03.690 --> 00:05:13.530

David Ulin: I want to get a sense from both of you about how your working relationship started and I don't know if that begins, if I begin that with with you, Christos or.

27

00:05:14.070 --> 00:05:19.410

David Ulin: With you Karen I know for the for in terms of translation Karen you had told me that you had pitched.

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00:05:20.100 --> 00:05:27.810

David Ulin: The first book to archipelago, it was it wasn't something Christos has worked with something that you came upon and then wanted to.

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00:05:28.260 --> 00:05:35.430

David Ulin: wanted to share so maybe that's the best way to start an increase those we can kind of move it come back come in talk about it from your point of view as well.

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00:05:36.900 --> 00:05:41.880

Karen Emmerich: yeah i'd be really curious to hear the story from physicist point of view, because I remember when we met first.

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00:05:42.720 --> 00:05:57.960

Karen Emmerich: At the coffee shop in Athens, you know, I have a really, really strong memory of that moment, and I also have a strong memory of you know walking in the bookstore and you know downtown Athens and I was just looking for something to read on vacation and you know it.

32

00:05:59.640 --> 00:06:12.240

Karen Emmerich: The cover caught my eye happened to pick it up and won the prize, so it had the sort of banner around its cover and then I immediately was just like I just loved it I just loved every single word, and I think.

33

00:06:13.350 --> 00:06:20.730

Karen Emmerich: I probably I don't even know how I got your email I tracked you down somehow and I just said, I want to translate this book.

34

00:06:21.390 --> 00:06:35.400

Karen Emmerich: And then you know archipelago I had already been working with and when she'll read some of the stories, you know she was blown away too, but i'm curious yeah do you, I have a terrible memory so piece was maybe you have a better you know memory of this.

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00:06:36.330 --> 00:06:41.160

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: that's that's that's the higher member of things still yeah your email and then.

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00:06:42.960 --> 00:07:02.220

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: We we met, we met in a coffee shop in downtown nothing's and we had our first conversation about the book and how how how you're thinking of proceeding with the translation and all these things and I had I had.

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00:07:03.420 --> 00:07:09.090

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I think a couple of translations already about the book in Italian, I think I mean in France.

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00:07:09.600 --> 00:07:27.300

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: And I always you know thought that translating one of my books in English will be something very difficult because of you know situation with the translator translating literature into English and yeah that was that was a.

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00:07:28.890 --> 00:07:41.880

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: great surprise for me and I always I had already I already knew currents work because it's it's a very big name in here in Greece.

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00:07:42.900 --> 00:08:00.030

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: As far as you know, translating Greek letter Toronto English is concerned, so yeah it was it was great for me and he was um He has done a superb work really I mean current you're the best.

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00:08:02.250 --> 00:08:06.780

Karen Emmerich: it's funny, though, because I think that we, I mean this is not answering your question, David necessarily, but I think.

42

00:08:08.100 --> 00:08:23.340

Karen Emmerich: You know, when I translated this story for for the magazine I picked like the hardest I don't know if you agree, it feels to me like the hardest possible but there's something about it it's just so pleasurable and I think you know.

43

00:08:24.600 --> 00:08:31.650

Karen Emmerich: I think that there's something something about the way that you write, and I would write, if I were a writer.

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00:08:32.640 --> 00:08:36.120

Karen Emmerich: That they just work together really well, and so it doesn't like.

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00:08:36.210 --> 00:08:48.900

Karen Emmerich: Those those all of the harness all of the difficulty and the puns and you know you know cultural references and all of the stuff that you're doing with language, and it really long sentences like it's just so much fun.

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00:08:50.190 --> 00:09:02.160

Karen Emmerich: So yeah and I would just note also that Jill school i'm in the editor of archipelago books, then after after putting out the first.

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00:09:02.940 --> 00:09:14.430

Karen Emmerich: Something will happen you'll see signed the next collection of short stories, without ever having read it just she had that much confidence and because, as a writer that.

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00:09:14.970 --> 00:09:29.160

Karen Emmerich: that she was willing, I didn't tell her to she did it first and then, and then the book sort of came to me, I mean I had read it, but I I I was so pleased because that's that's a really I think it's a pretty rare thing for a publisher to do to.

49

00:09:30.030 --> 00:09:38.880

David Ulin: Just yeah, I think, to sign, a sign a book on unseen and then are they planning to do I know they're there are other two other books that have not been translated into English as of yet are they.

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00:09:39.390 --> 00:09:46.770

David Ulin: Are they planning to do those books and this story is is from one is from one of those books, the story that the airline story that is.

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00:09:47.550 --> 00:09:49.410

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Right yeah I don't.

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00:09:51.150 --> 00:10:06.030

Karen Emmerich: know I mean we haven't had a conversation about it um, I guess, we should, because now, a couple of a couple of them a couple of the stories from the next book of short stories that are available in English like we've done translations.

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00:10:06.360 --> 00:10:08.130

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Did you hear about the old price.

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00:10:08.190 --> 00:10:09.750

Of the auction reprice.

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00:10:11.520 --> 00:10:12.870

Karen Emmerich: I did David did you hear.

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00:10:12.930 --> 00:10:14.190

David Ulin: did not know.

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00:10:14.250 --> 00:10:14.550

yeah.

58

00:10:15.810 --> 00:10:17.970

David Ulin: we're gonna we're gonna break some news, right now, this is.

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00:10:20.790 --> 00:10:21.870

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: One of the stories that.

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00:10:23.250 --> 00:10:33.300

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: From this from from my most recent book volcano daughters that current his translating because one the old Henry price.

61

00:10:33.360 --> 00:10:37.200

David Ulin: that's fantastic congratulations, is that that's the story that appeared last summer in the yellow review.

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00:10:37.560 --> 00:10:38.610

Karen Emmerich: And they are yeah that.

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00:10:38.610 --> 00:10:46.620

David Ulin: was a lie that's, a fact that that's that's a great story that's a wonderful congratulations i'm really happy to hear um let me ask you a priestess I you know i'm a.

64

00:10:47.610 --> 00:11:02.670

David Ulin: First of all, I do you want to say, I had a similar reaction when we were first kind of looking at at possible nominees for this prize, you know reading I immediately was captivated from I can't remember whether I.

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00:11:03.810 --> 00:11:08.700

David Ulin: Which of the two books I looked at first good will come from the sea or something will happen you'll see but.

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00:11:09.480 --> 00:11:17.010

David Ulin: But you know from the first story, I thought, what is this who, who is this what am I in the presence of, and I was completely captivated both by the voice.

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00:11:17.370 --> 00:11:28.710

David Ulin: And the kind of assurance of the pros but also by the sort of social vision and the kind of humanity of the stories and they know that you've talked about in the past about.

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00:11:29.250 --> 00:11:36.960

David Ulin: writing about you know sort of how would I put it i'm writing about culture and politics or the culture and politics of the times and of the.

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00:11:37.230 --> 00:11:47.430

David Ulin: characters you're writing about, but through that lens of personal interaction and character detail and you've resisted the idea or the label of being a writer of the austerity.

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00:11:48.390 --> 00:11:52.410

David Ulin: And I wonder if you can, if you can talk a little bit about that kind of bigger vision when you're.

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00:11:53.220 --> 00:11:58.650

David Ulin: When you're looking for a story, or when you know when a story ideas coming to you or when you're just sort of you know.

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00:11:59.130 --> 00:12:10.800

David Ulin: Taking things in what makes you know what what makes a particular thing a story for you, you, you talk about knowing pray US but also not wanting to have all of your characters be echoes or reflections of yourself.

73

00:12:11.340 --> 00:12:22.830

David Ulin: which I think is a really, really essential idea in terms of this kind of broader social vision and i'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about how those different influences or impulses operate in your writing.

74

00:12:23.730 --> 00:12:24.960

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: yeah and.

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00:12:26.880 --> 00:12:46.890

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: The first thing is that I have, I have never had some kind of you know, have an agenda and it's not like he you know I i'm thinking that I will now I will write a story about you know one employment or poverty or whatever I don't do that I can I cannot do that it's.

76

00:12:47.910 --> 00:12:55.410

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I most of the times, my stories come in a you know, through a voice, I mean.

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00:12:56.880 --> 00:13:07.410

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I I tend to listen to a voice in my head to hear a voice in my head and if this voice keeps coming again and again, and on and on.

78

00:13:07.800 --> 00:13:18.120

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Then I you start to pay attention to what this voice is saying to me, and I think that most of my stories are I have.

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00:13:18.630 --> 00:13:26.520

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Written most of my stories and in this manner, I mean with it without voice in my in my head and then what I am looking.

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00:13:27.090 --> 00:13:39.120

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: For always is for you know Jenny genuine sentiment genuine feeling and some kind of interesting interesting language that's two things that I.

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00:13:39.600 --> 00:13:52.680

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: pay a lot of attention to genuine feeling and an interesting language i'm not sure if I can explain it what is an interesting language to me, or what is.

82

00:13:53.820 --> 00:14:06.300

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: genuine feeling for me, but I I can feel it I can feel it and then I I start to write whatever is it I throw it on the paper I don't.

83

00:14:06.750 --> 00:14:15.390

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I mean, in this first draft, I never pay, in addition to pay any attention to you know structure or characters or.

84

00:14:15.780 --> 00:14:26.190

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: All these things, the details, I try to put the heart of the story, on the paper that's something that's very important for me because I want to capture this this.

85

00:14:26.790 --> 00:14:42.450

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: pulse, you know this this this this beating heart of the story, and for me is that is the most important thing that a story that I I write is something that is beating heart within something that is.

86

00:14:43.980 --> 00:14:44.670

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: don't know if it's.

87

00:14:47.190 --> 00:15:00.330

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I hope you understand what i'm trying to say right and so that's that's the that's the, the main concern for me and then I start to think about the story if if whether it has any you know.

88

00:15:02.370 --> 00:15:04.890

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: social or political.

89

00:15:10.140 --> 00:15:31.770

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: If I can, if I can attach it to something that is going on right now but I yeah I I have never understood why they I mean I ended, I can understand it, but I it's not it's not something that I, I I want for my books to be read through.

90

00:15:33.210 --> 00:15:37.500

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Very specific political and social climate.

91

00:15:38.700 --> 00:15:56.610

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Because I always think that you know the writer is someone who stands on a crossroad and then there is a meeting point with their time and their place, but that but, for me, is always in demand mentioned of.

92

00:15:57.720 --> 00:16:06.750

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: have something universal and something that goes and something timeless and so that's that's how I usually perceive.

93

00:16:07.950 --> 00:16:10.020

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: My stories with a with a kind of.



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00:16:12.150 --> 00:16:15.480

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Through the eyes of eternity or something like that okay.

95

00:16:15.540 --> 00:16:23.700

David Ulin: yeah no that makes a lot of sense Karen in terms of translation, I want to talk and Christmas and New York have done have been translated as well and i'm curious about that, but.

96

00:16:24.060 --> 00:16:32.190

David Ulin: Through this so can can you talk a little bit about the process of sort of translation and the re render or the rendering of the work and i'm out, you know.

97

00:16:33.270 --> 00:16:38.460

David Ulin: How to make the story come to life in a language that isn't it's it isn't its original language.

98

00:16:40.200 --> 00:16:47.790

Karen Emmerich: yeah and, of course, I mean it's a different every time with every you know piece, and every author, but I do i'd like that.

99

00:16:48.570 --> 00:16:58.170

Karen Emmerich: You know, Chris has just talked about voices being where things start a voice in your head and then also trying to get the beating pulse of this like for voice.

100

00:16:58.650 --> 00:17:09.570

Karen Emmerich: You know the story on the page, because it seems to me like as as soon as I like as soon as it feels like the voice clicks, then I feel a confidence of.

101

00:17:12.000 --> 00:17:23.910

Karen Emmerich: Like being able to translate that the his stories are incredibly full of wordplay you know things that are so specific to the language.

102

00:17:25.140 --> 00:17:35.550

Karen Emmerich: That you really have to, or like I as a translator feel like my job is not to make you know I don't have to have the pun, be in the same place, necessarily, if I can that's great but.

103

00:17:36.990 --> 00:17:38.880

Karen Emmerich: I have to be.

104

00:17:40.050 --> 00:17:50.070

Karen Emmerich: Putting I have to sort of have the same kind of voice and that's that's more important than the sort of specific content of a given word or something.

105

00:17:50.430 --> 00:17:58.230

Karen Emmerich: And there's sometimes like in them, it will come from the sea, there were there were passages that were just like really riffing you know it would just like.

106

00:17:58.500 --> 00:18:09.210

Karen Emmerich: There would be the underlying you know wordplay that would go on for pages and then there would be you know even like more turning up the volume turning up the volume so sometimes.

107

00:18:09.570 --> 00:18:17.190

Karen Emmerich: As the translator like that's that's one of the reasons why it takes such a joy and translating hostesses work because you really have to turn up the volume.

108

00:18:18.630 --> 00:18:25.890

Karen Emmerich: it's not it's not about sort of like Oh, let me, you know pick some meaning up from this page and dump it down on this other page like which is.

109

00:18:26.340 --> 00:18:43.050

Karen Emmerich: translation is never that anyhow but it's really about a performance and it's just like so fun and I think it's something that's made me find new tools, sometimes I find myself incorporating a lot more Greek into the English like with the story that.

110

00:18:44.250 --> 00:18:49.740

Karen Emmerich: I just did for the for the magazine I yeah I just I had to find a way of.

111

00:18:50.790 --> 00:18:54.960

Karen Emmerich: Like working in some Greeks, so that certain kinds of puns would work.

112

00:18:56.280 --> 00:19:02.820

Karen Emmerich: And yeah I just I do also you know it's interesting to see the way that the stories are received and sort of.

113

00:19:04.590 --> 00:19:04.890

Karen Emmerich: Like.

114

00:19:06.030 --> 00:19:12.210

Karen Emmerich: filtered or or packaged as sort of literature of the crisis, or whatever that doesn't feel like what they are to me at all.

115

00:19:13.470 --> 00:19:19.260

Karen Emmerich: And of course there's a reflection on security, you know, in many of the stories, but I think.

116

00:19:20.400 --> 00:19:31.860

Karen Emmerich: The sort of like the heart of the story is, to me, is always about release like specific people having specific relationships in a way, under conditions that are historical conditions.

117

00:19:32.250 --> 00:19:43.860

David Ulin: yeah I think that for clarity is I mean is absolutely kind of but to me it's it's it's I mean certainly it's a political or economic security, but it's really an existential for clarity in the sense that you know all of us, I mean all of us are facing.

118

00:19:44.220 --> 00:19:52.500

David Ulin: That kind of prosperity just by virtue of being breathing creatures on the planet, and so I think there's something really interesting and.

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00:19:53.220 --> 00:19:58.560

David Ulin: and profound about that, as I say, not that it minimizes the crisis, but that the crisis is just.

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00:19:58.920 --> 00:20:06.600

David Ulin: One of the factors of prosperity in that come into play, I want to talk a bit about the story of dreadful constellation which we're publishing.

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00:20:07.500 --> 00:20:13.440

David Ulin: In airlines and I think you're right, I mean, I think I was saying before you came on the call care and I was saying to Christmas, that I.

122

00:20:13.860 --> 00:20:21.720

David Ulin: You know I don't read Greek but reading the translation of the story, I was aware, or I mean the translation made me aware.

123

00:20:22.110 --> 00:20:30.570

David Ulin: of some of the wordplay in ways that I wouldn't have been aware of, if I were if I were reading just to kind of by the numbers translation of.

124

00:20:31.440 --> 00:20:42.870

David Ulin: The story, and so I mean, let me let's start with let's start Christmas we'll start with you in terms of writing and Karen I want to talk about how it was rendered one of the things that I find fascinating about the story is that it seems to be both the kind of.

125

00:20:44.700 --> 00:20:47.700

David Ulin: it's a little different from some of the other stories that i've read but it's also.

126

00:20:48.270 --> 00:20:53.760

David Ulin: it's also kind of I don't want to say, I guess, a recapitulation in certain sense of various kinds of themes and.

127

00:20:54.060 --> 00:21:01.740

David Ulin: And one of the movements that I really love in the story i'm going to try and not spoil them is trying not spoil this for people who haven't read it, although hopefully they'll read the story.

128

00:21:01.770 --> 00:21:02.460

Karen Emmerich: arcs and then.

129

00:21:02.520 --> 00:21:03.960

Karen Emmerich: You know the conversation but.

130

00:21:04.020 --> 00:21:11.940

David Ulin: You know the way that it moves from you know, in the initial kind of the initial tension or the initial conflict which is someone who's lost his job.

131

00:21:12.270 --> 00:21:20.280

David Ulin: And can't tell his wife and he's waited three weeks and he's just trying to figure out when Am I actually going to save this and then all these things happen.

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00:21:20.790 --> 00:21:27.330

David Ulin: And, at a certain point in the middle of the story, and I don't know if this is true in the Greek version it shifts from first person to third person.

133

00:21:27.690 --> 00:21:39.030

David Ulin: And it shifts from present to past and then that that closing section when he comes home and he's sort of going over this, what happened and thinking about it as a as an actual story.

134

00:21:39.510 --> 00:21:52.890

David Ulin: And it's got that kind of you know that kind of Meta fictional sort of component going on, so all of these movements in in you know, in a tiny space and 789 pages of writing, can you talk a bit about kind of how this story evolved.

135

00:21:54.690 --> 00:21:57.720

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: yeah I think it's you know some kind of.

136

00:21:58.920 --> 00:22:01.560

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: hallucination no it's it's.

137

00:22:03.210 --> 00:22:08.160

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: And I I tried to do something that.

138

00:22:09.450 --> 00:22:25.680

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Actually, I have never I had never did before, because it's it's actually about you know story about writing a story that's that's the end I I I wanted to try to do something like that, because.

139

00:22:26.790 --> 00:22:38.970

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I have always I feel always this urge to to to open up the horizon, you know, to try to do new things and go to New places and all these things, and then I think that.

140

00:22:40.200 --> 00:22:56.370

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: If I were to to put the whole effect of the story in just a single word that will be this it's it's something like a hallucination thing because it's something that I feel very strongly very strongly about it.

141

00:22:57.720 --> 00:23:06.900

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Because most of the times when I write a story, and then I go back to it and try to rationalize it try to think about what I have done.

142

00:23:08.790 --> 00:23:21.840

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I mean loss, I mean I it's like being a you know, in a state of trance it's like being out of my like an out of body experience you know I I cannot recall many things and.

143

00:23:22.980 --> 00:23:23.460

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: that's.

144

00:23:24.480 --> 00:23:35.670

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: That I tried to this feeling of getting lost in the story in in how how you perceive the story, I tried to put it on the paper and.

145

00:23:36.330 --> 00:23:52.860

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I tried to do it in a more in a in a very compact way you know I don't be because that you know it creates some kind of dynamic because it's a it's a it's a story that it takes all the time to go.

146

00:23:54.810 --> 00:24:14.640

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: To all over the place, you know, and I tried to do to get it back to get together and that was for me, all this movement, as you said, it was very it was a big challenge for me and I, I wanted to do it, I wanted to do, and I want to do and that's.

147

00:24:16.290 --> 00:24:17.820

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: that's how I tried to do it.

148

00:24:19.080 --> 00:24:27.780

David Ulin: Karen can you talk a bit about some of the challenges of you are just talking a little bit about them, but specifically some of the challenges of translating the story both I think in terms of those.

149

00:24:28.170 --> 00:24:42.660

David Ulin: Those movements in those 10 shifts in those person shifts but also in terms of the the illusions, I mean there's even allusions to Christos his own work right there's a yeah at some point, you know, the wife says something will happen you'll see which is the line that makes me laugh.

150

00:24:44.010 --> 00:24:44.460

David Ulin: I read it.

151

00:24:47.310 --> 00:24:56.820

Karen Emmerich: yeah i'm glad you mentioned, that is because I mean so part of the like oh writer about security, like the story is not just this one there's so funny.

152

00:24:57.960 --> 00:25:08.430

Karen Emmerich: they're really dark and serious and hard and violent but they're also really funny so that was one of the it's like a challenge but it's also a pleasure to try and make things funny.

153

00:25:09.840 --> 00:25:19.590

Karen Emmerich: I mean, one of the things about the like so there's the the the name of the wife is on the piano, which is a you know.

154

00:25:20.490 --> 00:25:28.050

Karen Emmerich: And the guy saying like Oh, I have to man up, I have to be an address, I have to be a man, and so, unlike what kind of a name is liana for a woman anyhow, you know.

155

00:25:28.500 --> 00:25:43.830

Karen Emmerich: So that's upon that I have to sort of work in but then there's like the story in the beginning proceeds as a series of like, then I do this myth that I do this, you know my thought my thought my thought then then then and the thought then becomes this sort of like.

156

00:25:45.300 --> 00:25:48.300

Karen Emmerich: meditation on like Meta miss.

157

00:25:49.410 --> 00:25:58.260

Karen Emmerich: Afterwards, what comes after the state of being now, so it was like there's these two paragraphs that are just you know, really, really.

158

00:25:58.740 --> 00:26:04.620

Karen Emmerich: Like funny and and complicated for a translator I have no idea how they you know.

159

00:26:05.280 --> 00:26:12.090

Karen Emmerich: How they come across in English, but I was trying like when I read it, at least as a person who's who understands both Greek in English, I think they're fun.

160

00:26:12.750 --> 00:26:26.820

Karen Emmerich: To like having you know, highlighting this person as someone who you know knows that oh in English it's easy you just take a post on everything you know, and you have done with a call today.

161

00:26:29.100 --> 00:26:40.470

Karen Emmerich: Being able to play on the Multi lingual on the fact that, like all most places or multilingual places right so that there's like some they're like Translink will puns that are happening.

162

00:26:41.400 --> 00:26:49.890



Karen Emmerich: And, and then that gave me the freedom to sort of you know, I think I added a couple of sentences, but I didn't notice or you thought it was fine.

163

00:26:50.940 --> 00:27:04.590

Karen Emmerich: But I said, like Oh, we could have this part I think we could probably keep it going and English to, and do you know do X y&z so I just like play a little bit more and that's something that I learned actually from Alison waters and a translation she did and of.

164

00:27:06.390 --> 00:27:13.620

Karen Emmerich: prehistoric times and i'm not going to name the author because it's I don't know how you have mispronounce, but you can look it up an archipelago archipelago website.

165

00:27:15.270 --> 00:27:20.640

Karen Emmerich: And like she has this there's this passage, where she has a footnote at some point.

166

00:27:21.540 --> 00:27:26.070

Karen Emmerich: And the passage is saying like oh I don't know how the translator could possibly do X.

167

00:27:26.460 --> 00:27:37.140

Karen Emmerich: And then she translates that passage, but then there's like a little footnote, and she just kind of riffs on it and rewrites the passage and that was the first time, when I was like whoa you're allowed to do that.

168

00:27:39.480 --> 00:27:43.950

Karen Emmerich: So I would you know just like hat tip to to allison monitors there.

169

00:27:45.390 --> 00:27:51.960

Karen Emmerich: For to making that seem like a possibility that it's okay to add a sentence, as long as you're also says it's okay.

170

00:27:52.860 --> 00:27:54.000

David Ulin: I loved it, I mean I love.

171

00:27:54.090 --> 00:28:03.060

David Ulin: The whole riff on the metal roof, but particularly even on sort of you know what happens with the with a word that starts with a vowel does it just sort of is it like you know the two.

172

00:28:03.480 --> 00:28:13.110

David Ulin: You have to put in a hyphen or do you just sort of bleed it directly and so these kind of you know what's fascinating to me is that these linguistic concerns how words are made or how they appear on the page.

173

00:28:14.160 --> 00:28:21.810

David Ulin: become part of the fiber of the story, not as like an intellectual conceit but as part of the emotional movement but kind of the referee, as you as you were saying.

174

00:28:22.170 --> 00:28:29.220

David Ulin: As you were saying Karen i'm curious about this, I want to talk a little bit more about this about the kind of collaborative relationship.

175

00:28:29.820 --> 00:28:39.750

David Ulin: or conversation let's say between writer and translator increased us, I want to ask you, first, both from the point of view of the writer, but since you have done, have worked as a translator and have translated work.

176

00:28:40.440 --> 00:28:46.950

David Ulin: into Greek does that what's, what is your what's your sense of the kind of creative relationship of the.

177

00:28:47.310 --> 00:28:54.360

David Ulin: Of the writer and the translator and then Karen i'll ask you for your thoughts on this well as well, I hope they I hope they line up and that we're not we're.

178

00:28:54.990 --> 00:29:06.660

David Ulin: not creating a device here but krista said, can you talk a little bit about you know, both from the point of view of having been translated into a variety of languages and also your own kind of experience from the other side of the desk.

179

00:29:08.130 --> 00:29:09.630

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I think that you know.

180

00:29:11.430 --> 00:29:13.110

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: It it's it's like.

181

00:29:14.520 --> 00:29:24.870

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: You know it's like walking walking together it's it's two persons are working together and not always at the same you know direction, I mean.

182

00:29:26.730 --> 00:29:35.130

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: The translation of this particular story by Karen I read it, and I I instantly felt and.

183

00:29:36.270 --> 00:29:38.130

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: It was very, very.

184

00:29:39.150 --> 00:30:01.410

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: very moving and very it was very beautiful feeling that see gave my text, a new dimension see took the text and put in push it to some other direction, and that was something that it's I mean I I I I found new things about the story through here translation.

185

00:30:04.590 --> 00:30:13.080

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: i'm completely honest about it, I mean I mean it I I saw new things in the story through here translation, not through the original text.

186

00:30:13.560 --> 00:30:26.280

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Right, so that that's that's for me, I mean that's the the you know the greatest compliment you can you can do to do the translator, to put it to take the text and.

187

00:30:27.390 --> 00:30:42.360

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: To give it new dimensions, without, of course, you know this distorting the the text and all these things and I I think that's one of the one of the the assets for a translator and Karen.

188

00:30:45.150 --> 00:30:47.820

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Has it it's the this sense of.

189

00:30:49.110 --> 00:30:58.680

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: God and he has a superb sense of rhythm of the language of the rhythm of the language and for me and as a noun speaking as a translator to that's very important.

190

00:30:59.220 --> 00:31:05.610

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: To take to do to take this deck of the pegs from this language and put it in another language, but you.

191

00:31:06.180 --> 00:31:15.630

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: You have to try to do to keep the rhythm or to give rather to give her a new rhythm to the language to to to to capture the rhythm of the language, the.

192

00:31:16.140 --> 00:31:28.770

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: You know this, there is this the prosody you know the melody the flow of the language and that's for me for me that's very important as a writer and as a translator because I always.

193

00:31:30.030 --> 00:31:32.040

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I mean, at least for my stories, I always.

194

00:31:33.750 --> 00:31:44.370

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: have thought that it's a good way, not just to read them, but to listen to them so rhythm is very, very important for me.

195

00:31:46.050 --> 00:31:47.280

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: And also, I think that's.

196

00:31:48.600 --> 00:32:04.800

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: One of the one of the best things about kindness work is that she has a living relationship with a Greek language I mean it says not a translator in your desk you know see knows things.

197

00:32:05.610 --> 00:32:25.380

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: A lot of things about Greece and culture and all and that I don't know I don't I don't want to speak for her, but I think that helps right Karen I mean if you have a kind of you know, things about them in your you know Greece it's not that you know how things work here right.

198

00:32:26.640 --> 00:32:27.180

Karen Emmerich: yeah I mean.

199

00:32:28.290 --> 00:32:33.420

Karen Emmerich: You know pandemic has put a put a pause on my travel, but I.

200

00:32:34.560 --> 00:32:40.830

Karen Emmerich: Think, thank you, Chris for what you said, also because it just like I was actually getting you know, like that so it's so kind.

201

00:32:42.300 --> 00:33:00.150

Karen Emmerich: To think that you could see you know I think of translation as sort of interpretive work right and so you're giving i'm giving you a view and and sometimes yeah that so that it does feel like high praise to me and I recognize it as such, and I, and I really appreciate it.

202

00:33:01.980 --> 00:33:16.590

Karen Emmerich: um, but I think yeah it does one of the things that I feel as a translator is really important is to know when you don't know something and to know that you yeah sure you know, like Greek Greek is the language that I speak in my daily life, and you know and.

203

00:33:17.940 --> 00:33:20.010

Karen Emmerich: But I also have a.

204

00:33:21.930 --> 00:33:27.030

Karen Emmerich: huge network of people who can help me with don't know what something is.

205

00:33:28.140 --> 00:33:36.060

Karen Emmerich: So that and that's something I think like translation is also a collaborative work, the same way that other forms of writing it are so.

206

00:33:37.020 --> 00:33:51.930

Karen Emmerich: And that's something that you get from a lyft relation ship right like you have a network of people who you say hey you know what is this weird words that feels like it's probably you know Cretin, or something like whatever and then somebody helps you with that.

207

00:33:53.490 --> 00:33:54.030

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: yeah right.

208

00:33:55.260 --> 00:34:03.870

David Ulin: yeah i'm intrigued by this i'm intrigued by the idea of it's sort of that interpretation of quality, it almost feels to me i'm going back to what Christos was saying about rhythm and melody.

209

00:34:04.410 --> 00:34:08.640

David Ulin: That you're coming in, as the translator and essentially performing.

210

00:34:09.240 --> 00:34:14.490

David Ulin: Your own version of the score you know I don't want to reduce it to the idea of like a cover version of the song, but in some way.

211

00:34:14.790 --> 00:34:24.630

David Ulin: You know if the writer is performing the piece in some way when he or she is first writing it you as the translator are performing it in a different way, because you're using a different.

212

00:34:25.200 --> 00:34:32.070

David Ulin: Obviously it's a different language, but it has to be somehow rhythmically or musically consistent, I suppose.

213

00:34:33.000 --> 00:34:33.660

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: yeah that's right.

214

00:34:35.460 --> 00:34:43.800

David Ulin: Let me ask you about short stories my favorite form of all and you're committed short story writer, and I want to get a sense and.

215

00:34:44.250 --> 00:34:52.260

David Ulin: Also i'm curious about translating stories as well, but I want to get a sense from you please tell us about the appeal of the short story or the draw of the short story as a kind of.

216

00:34:52.860 --> 00:34:57.030

David Ulin: primary means of of expression as you as you were just saying when we were talking about.

217

00:34:57.960 --> 00:35:05.130

David Ulin: The story that is an airline there's something so condensed about it and there's so much happening within it, but happening.

218

00:35:05.460 --> 00:35:20.070

David Ulin: In this very, very narrow space, the space of of a single reading right, you know 15 minutes or so, you could read read that story i'm curious about you know both aesthetically and in terms of its kind of punch or its power, what is it about the short story that's so attractive.

219

00:35:21.720 --> 00:35:30.840

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Ah it's brevity, first of all, I mean it's and it's also, I think, of course, normally has its own.

220

00:35:32.520 --> 00:35:35.010

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: challenges, but the sob story it's.

221

00:35:36.300 --> 00:35:38.520

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: it's a very challenging for I mean.

222

00:35:39.810 --> 00:35:40.950

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I know it sounds.

223

00:35:42.030 --> 00:35:57.330

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: commonplace, but it's it's it's really a very at least, as I say things it's something that it's very demanding, because we have the story, and you have to do it with intimacy we've had to do with with clarity, where you have to do it.

224

00:35:58.350 --> 00:35:59.040

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: In a very.

225

00:36:00.360 --> 00:36:07.410

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: In a fast way you know, and you have all these things that you have to to put together, but at the same time, you have to.

226

00:36:07.770 --> 00:36:21.450

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Do to do to be very careful, because you don't want to to to Barton this to put too much weight on the story, because the story for me is always like you know, like a boat, you cannot put too many things on the board, because it will.

227

00:36:22.890 --> 00:36:32.970

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: It will sink, it will go down to the bottom of the sea, so you have always it's an act of a 10 out of balance, every time so yeah that's that's.

228

00:36:35.040 --> 00:36:40.530

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I don't I don't mean that not again, not only has it all the novel has its own.

229

00:36:41.880 --> 00:36:54.840

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Challenges and all these things, but then probably the most, the most important thing for me about stories this sense of reason I, I think that.

230

00:36:56.340 --> 00:37:01.860

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: You have you can have a novel and sometimes a great novel that has some.

231

00:37:03.030 --> 00:37:13.350

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: You know, a false rhythm right but I don't think that you can do this with the source story in the store story, you are, you know you are naked in the broad.



232

00:37:14.190 --> 00:37:24.030

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: daylight up, I mean if you even take if you take a four step wrong step it's supposed to the to the to the reader because it has.

233

00:37:24.780 --> 00:37:37.290

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: They have just you know it's like poor said it's in one sitting, you know you you read a story in one sitting so everything that is wrong.

234

00:37:37.830 --> 00:37:44.670

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: In a short story, it will come up instantly on on the same, on the other hand, with a novel.

235

00:37:45.390 --> 00:37:53.010

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Because we have you need more time to read it, and all these things, some things that are you know, maybe wrong, it will be it's.

236

00:37:53.490 --> 00:38:10.080

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: It will be more reason for the for the reader to put it behind and go on other stuff but I don't think you can do that with with assault story for me it's again it's a very big talent and I want to take this talent goes that's that's how I.

237

00:38:12.120 --> 00:38:18.960

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: that's what I want to do, I want to you know, to get in and get out as fast as I can.

238

00:38:19.860 --> 00:38:23.670

David Ulin: And I was just it's funny you say I was just thinking about that as you were talking, you know novel.

239

00:38:24.120 --> 00:38:29.790

David Ulin: i've read plenty of novels that I admire where they fall apart in places where they don't always work but there's so they're big.

240

00:38:30.150 --> 00:38:37.710

David Ulin: So I can either put that away or i'm not expecting it to be consistent throughout, but in a short story, particularly a short short story.

241

00:38:38.430 --> 00:38:43.320

David Ulin: One you know one thing out of place can can throw the whole thing off kilter and so I think that's absolutely.

242

00:38:43.620 --> 00:38:53.460

David Ulin: Right Karen is there for you in terms of translating is there a difference in the challenge or the approach to translate a short self contained piece of work or a longer.

243

00:38:54.120 --> 00:39:05.280

David Ulin: or a longer work or is it just simply the you know it might making too much of this and it's simply that each work brings its own set of challenges and requirements to to to the process.

244

00:39:06.630 --> 00:39:19.500

Karen Emmerich: yeah i'm trying to think if I mean you know when if you're dealing with something that does feel sort of i'm not Crystal and but, like everything the boat can't sing the boat also can't sink in another language.

245

00:39:20.610 --> 00:39:27.780

Karen Emmerich: You have to make your float and I, but I guess, I would say, you know just to know how you know.

246

00:39:28.890 --> 00:39:38.520

Karen Emmerich: Your books crisis also you know they're short stories but they're also connected in some way or their echoes are there are characters who get referred to another stories, you know.

247

00:39:39.270 --> 00:39:47.040

Karen Emmerich: I wouldn't call it like a novel and stories by any means, but they sometimes that can also be a challenge because you're sort of.

248

00:39:48.120 --> 00:40:02.910

Karen Emmerich: there's a different kind of balance and so, if something gets sort of phrased in one way in one story, and then the phrase repeats or even you know good will come from the sea that phrase keeps on coming up in the course of the book.

249

00:40:03.330 --> 00:40:13.860

Karen Emmerich: But it's not the same every time and so making like preparing the ground for the phrase around it, because the phrase can't change, so the surround sort of have to.

250

00:40:14.760 --> 00:40:26.070

Karen Emmerich: allow it to like thrive in its local place but then also across the stories, so there are those kinds of challenges that come up with your work, particularly.

251

00:40:26.490 --> 00:40:35.850

Karen Emmerich: But I yeah I guess I haven't really thought too much about the difference between translating long pros and translating short pros in those terms.

252

00:40:36.840 --> 00:40:46.740

David Ulin: I want to ask just before we before we wrap up about that kind of the construction of the collections because i've noticed that as well and I it's one of the things I admire about the collections.

253

00:40:47.550 --> 00:40:53.190

David Ulin: Is the fact that they are framed as books they're not just sort of you know here here's here's a bunch of stories.

254

00:40:53.610 --> 00:41:03.060

David Ulin: And you know here's this here's the stories from the last couple of years, and you know so in terms of your own kind of conceiving of the books Christos.

255

00:41:03.600 --> 00:41:10.950

David Ulin: At what point does that sort of larger shape and I feel it's a an intuitive shape to or the conversation let's say between.

256

00:41:11.250 --> 00:41:15.150

David Ulin: The stories in the book at what point does that begin to assert itself is that something that you're.

257

00:41:15.540 --> 00:41:26.280

David Ulin: Aware of and looking at from the beginning, or is that something that once you have a kind of mass of stories you start to see how they're in conversation with one another kind of develops from now.

258

00:41:27.450 --> 00:41:28.950

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Now for.

259

00:41:30.720 --> 00:41:48.330

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: For I think it's different every time because I mean in something will happen, you see, I and in good will come from the sea, I think I started with a sense of the place, I mean, though I I was thinking about.

260

00:41:49.800 --> 00:42:00.630

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Finding some way to to to connect the walk and connect one story with the other through the sense of the place, so the first book is.

261

00:42:01.170 --> 00:42:14.250

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: By Rios and is the stories are setting virus and the neighborhoods around the report and the the other book, we said on a notch and I named island someone in need somewhere in the GM.

262

00:42:15.840 --> 00:42:30.480

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: See em that's that's that's how I conceived this too, but I am these two books and the the the other book that working or daughters it's a little bit it's a little bit different because it's not there is not.

263

00:42:32.850 --> 00:42:42.840

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: The place is not doesn't play such an important rolling the stories, but there is other you know I always try to find some kind of.

264

00:42:44.250 --> 00:42:44.700

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Have.

265

00:42:45.810 --> 00:42:58.050

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: some kind of ropes that Taiwan story to the other, and I, I tried to find in the volcano God and what what this rob this kind of.

266

00:43:00.420 --> 00:43:04.530

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: connection will be, and I think they're the connection is that you know.

267

00:43:05.790 --> 00:43:07.200

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I mean one of us.

268

00:43:08.370 --> 00:43:10.950

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Connected thing is that most of the.

269

00:43:11.970 --> 00:43:19.650

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: protagonist of the story, our women in the in the in this book are women so yeah I always try to do do.

270

00:43:20.670 --> 00:43:21.960

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I I try.

271

00:43:23.070 --> 00:43:23.790

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I always.

272

00:43:25.110 --> 00:43:33.270

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: try something different, but for me the most important thing is that I that was very right, it was quite right, you said I always.

273

00:43:34.590 --> 00:43:49.200

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: See the book see see the stories as a book I don't I cannot work other way, I mean you know the in any in any other way, I know that are many writers do different things that there are writers, who just.

274

00:43:49.620 --> 00:44:09.870

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: collect stories and put them together, I cannot do that because I want to to create a worth you know award something like a small universe, so I need to put all these things together, and I always think what I write in a in the light of a book of something you know.

275

00:44:11.790 --> 00:44:14.880

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: Big so yeah maybe it's.

276

00:44:16.440 --> 00:44:18.360

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: One of the reasons that I have not.

277

00:44:19.710 --> 00:44:24.210

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: I have never tried to write a novel or I don't know because it's.

278

00:44:26.340 --> 00:44:33.900

CHRISTOS OIKONOMOU: You need to do, I like I like this, all these little bits coming together.

279

00:44:35.010 --> 00:44:39.090

David Ulin: yeah it feels like a neighbor I mean, even if it's interesting to think about in terms of place, which I.

280

00:44:39.600 --> 00:44:45.570

David Ulin: think is right in those books but it feels like a neighborhood it feels like the kind of like we're moving through a neighborhood in the way that.

281

00:44:45.810 --> 00:44:50.790

David Ulin: We would, if we were moving through a neighborhood and encountering different people in different lives in overhearing different kinds of.

282

00:44:51.570 --> 00:44:59.310

David Ulin: kinds of things and I think that that is somewhat that quality of sort of almost over, for it or caught a glimpse out of the corner of an eye on that aspect is.

283

00:45:00.090 --> 00:45:18.090

David Ulin: Certainly, for city dwellers so it's such a recognizable kind of rubric and such a way of moving through the world I think it's really powerful.