ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process of working on this dissertation has been solitary and social, rewarding and at times frustrating, pragmatic and irrational, marked by frantic writing and writer’s blocks. In many ways, it felt like flying in a hot-air balloon: you have to take distance from the rest of the world, temporarily lose the ground under your feet, suffer from vertigo, and sacrifice a lot of excessive weight to get where you want. But although this exciting venture was for a big part a ride for one, I was fortunate to have several people around me who contributed to the course this ride took by inspiring me, offering their feedback, advice, and support in different stages of the process, and making sure that I land back on earth safe and sound. To these people, I owe a big thank you.

A warm thanks goes to my fellow PhD students at the Comparative Literature Department in Leiden throughout the past five years: Janna Houwen, my current office mate with whom I have shared some of the joys and sorrows of writing a PhD, Vincent Meelberg, my first teaching mentor, Colin van Heezik, Yanfeng Bian, Eric Chen, Mei Cheng, Thera Giezen, Jacqueline Hylkema, Bram leven, Itandehui Jansen, Sean de Koekkoek, Jessie Kuo, Stefan van der Lecq, Tracy Lee, Mohammad Tariq, and the late Jeroen Mettes, whom I remember with a deep sense of loss. Our “meeting point” in the last couple of years has been the theory seminar in Leiden. I am grateful to my fellow PhD students and all the participants of this seminar—among which Niels Cornelissen, Doris Einsiedel, and Daan Wesselman—for the discussions, attentive readings, and productive escapes from the solitary undertaking of writing a dissertation. I particularly want to thank the seminar’s organizer, Ernst van Alphen, for his inspirational guidance, insightful comments, and expertise, as well as for his belief in me and my work and for his constant support and encouragement.

I also thank the staff at the Comparative Literature Department in Leiden: Yasco Horsman, Isabel Hoving, Madeleine Kasten, Frans-Willem Korsten, Liesbeth Minnaard, and Peter Verstraten. I could not have dreamed of having a more talented and supportive group of colleagues. Thanks to you, I experience the department in Leiden as a second home. I am grateful for your knowledgeable advice and guidance both in my work and in my first steps in teaching. I owe a special thanks to the distinguished members of our “postcolonial group” in Leiden—Isabel Hoving, Liesbeth Minnaard, and Sarah de Mul—for our heated discussions about literature, politics, and our role as academics over several delightful dinners, which resulted in a book project. All the way from this project’s inception to its (nearing) realization, business and pleasure were never so integrally intertwined.
For the institutional and financial support of my project, I am grateful to the Institute of Cultural Disciplines in Leiden (LUICD), both for providing a stimulating academic environment and for their generous financial support. This support made it possible for me to participate in several conferences and seminars abroad, as well as spend a semester at Columbia University in New York. A special thanks to Lia ten Brink and Lenie Witkam from the secretary’s office of LUICD for always being so efficient, helpful, and warm-hearted.

Just as I had the privilege of working with two amazing supervisors—Ernst van Alphen and Mieke Bal—from the universities of Leiden and Amsterdam respectively, I was also fortunate to divide my academic life between Leiden and Amsterdam, thus getting the best of both worlds. Thanks to Mieke Bal, I had the opportunity to participate in the ASCA (Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis) theory seminar for three consecutive years. This seminar had a decisive influence on my first steps in the academic world. In it, I learned how to present my work, how to engage in teamwork, how to combine abstract theoretical thinking with attentive analyses of cultural objects, and how to tackle the complexities of interdisciplinary practice. I am deeply grateful to the founder and organizer of the seminar, Mieke Bal, for welcoming me in its circles, as well as for being a constant source of inspiration and for pushing my work and my thinking forward with her constructive criticism. I also thank the talented group of scholars who took over the seminar’s organization in the last year I participated in it: Murat Aydemir, Hanneke Grootenboer, and Mireille Rosello. The seminar’s participants also deserve many thanks for the heated discussions and the challenging exchanges of ideas that turned the seminar into a unique intellectual laboratory and a thriving social hub.

With some fellow PhD students from ASCA I had the pleasure of setting up two of the CASA (Cultural Analysis Summer Academy) meetings, an international graduate conference, and an edited volume. Through all these activities, ASCA has not only been a site of intellectual labor, but also a place from which valuable friendships emerged. A warm thanks goes to Carolyn Birdsall, Begüm Firat, Vesna Madzoski, Ihab Saloul, and Pieter Verstraete; to Saskia Lourens for her friendship, contagious enthusiasm, and warm-hearted spirit; to Paulina Aroch, until recently my neighbor, for her help with translations from the Spanish and for sharing her insights, humor, company, and priceless idiosyncrasies. And of course Noa Roei, with whom we went from sharing the same job six years ago to sharing so much more: thank you for your generous friendship and support. My heartfelt gratitude goes to two brilliant women who did me the honor of being my paranymphs: Bregje van Eekelen and Astrid van Weyenberg. Thank you both for being such devoted friends through good and bad times. Thank you, too, for offering your professional help time and again: Bregje, for your insightful comments and unique editing skills; Astrid, for your valuable help with the Dutch version of this dissertation’s summary. I also owe many thanks to Tim Yaczo, my editor, for brushing up the text of my dissertation so meticulously.
I also want to thank the participants and organizers of the seminars and workshops I attended at the OSL Research School for Literary Studies (Onderzoeksschool Literatuurwetenschap) in Utrecht. Through my involvement in these activities, I had the opportunity to get acquainted with fellow PhD students from Literary Studies departments throughout the Netherlands and exchange ideas about our projects and the state of our discipline.

Outside the Netherlands, during the summer of 2006 I took part in the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell University, a productive summer of intensive training in critical theory. I want to thank the SCT faculty, and especially professors Ella Shohat and Robert Stam for their inspirational seminar and their feedback on my work. I also owe many thanks to the participants, and particularly Arne de Boever and Olivia Harrison: our acquaintance during this summer school turned into a valuable friendship, unraveling against an international backdrop: Ithaca, Amsterdam, Paris, New York, and (hopefully soon) Los Angeles.

In the past few years, many scholars kindly offered their advice and ideas on parts of my dissertation, as well as their support in different aspects of my academic life: professors Derek Attridge, Andreas Huyssen, Vassilis Lambropoulos, and Christian Moser. I particularly want to thank professors Eduardo Cadava, Vangelis Calotychos, and Stathis Gourgouris for their insightful commentary and intellectual generosity, which enriched my work and my stay at Columbia University.

During the first two years of my doctoral research in Leiden, I also worked at the University of Amsterdam for the making of the first big Modern Greek-Dutch / Dutch-Modern Greek dictionary. The colleagues and friends I had the privilege of working with in this team-project gave me a delightful and stimulating distraction from my dissertation. I still miss the brainteasers of barely translatable words and idioms, but most of all the weekly contact with Arnold van Gemert, Marietje Wennekendonk, Jelmer Nicolai, Marc Lauxtermann, Marjolijne Janssen, Arthur Bot, and Tatiana Markaki. Thank you for your warmth. Thank you, too, for preventing me from losing hold of my language.

This journey would not have been the same without those friends—some in close proximity and some miles away—who were not directly involved in my research project, but whose encouragement and company were just as crucial forces of motivation: Maria Theodosiou, Laurien ten Houten, Alexis Mavromatidis, Kleio Katsafarou, Dimitra Schotman, Ipek Celik, Dimitra Binou, Dora Pandeli, Artemis Papakostouli, Stavrroula Manoli, Anna-Maria Baka, Dimitris Nikopoulos, Yannis Achtaridis, Kalliopi Bogogiannidou, Vicky Tsoukala, Maria Milapidou, Christos Manolis, and Olga Vassiliou. A special place in this group belongs to Michaël Deinema: I am truly thankful that our relationship has transformed into a meaningful friendship that I value dearly.

Words cannot capture my gratitude to my parents, Spyros and Soula, and my sister, Angela, for their love, patience, and unconditional support, especially in the difficult times we shared in the last couple of years. Thank you for always being there for me despite the
distance between us. Another person who deserves credit is my grandmother, Zacharoula, whose positive attitude and energy despite her old age and tumultuous life have been nothing short of inspirational for me.

My final words of gratitude are for Jan Hein, without a doubt the greatest barbarian in my life, and a harsh but deeply engaged critic of my writing. For sharing life with me, for messing up my routines, for putting up with me, for arguing with me, for forcing me to constantly deviate from my course, for challenging me to discover the limits of my thinking and exceed them: thank you. Thank you, most of all, for loving me and knowing me so well.
Maria Boletsi was born on June 15, 1979 in Corfu, Greece. After finishing her secondary education at the Experimental Highschool of Thessaloniki in 1997, she studied Classics and Modern Greek Literature at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, where she graduated cum laude in 2001. During her studies in Thessaloniki, she spent a semester as an exchange-student at the Department of Modern Greek and Byzantinology of the University of Amsterdam (1999-2000). Upon receiving her degree in Greece, she moved to the Netherlands and continued her studies there. At the University of Amsterdam, she received a bachelor’s degree in Comparative Literature (2003) with a minor degree in English Literature, and a research master’s degree in Cultural Analysis (2005), both cum laude. Her master’s thesis was awarded the third thesis prize of the University of Amsterdam, as well as the Herman Servotte thesis prize from the University of Leuven, Belgium. Parallel to her graduate studies, from 2003 to 2006 Maria also worked at the University of Amsterdam in the team for the making of the first extended Dutch-Modern Greek / Modern Greek-Dutch dictionary (Prisma 2008).

In September 2005 she received a Ph.D. position at the Institute for Cultural Disciplines (LUICD) of Leiden University. During her doctoral research in Leiden, she had the opportunity to teach at the Comparative Literature Department, co-organize workshops and international conferences, and present her work at several international conferences and symposia in Amsterdam, Ghent, Leeds, Leiden, Los Angeles, New York, Princeton, Thessaloniki, Vancouver, and elsewhere. She also participated in the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell University, Ithaca (2006) and spent a semester as a visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York (2008-2009).

Maria has published articles on C.P. Cavafy, J.M. Coetzee, Jamaica Kincaid, literary speech acts, migration, Balkan nationalism, and barbarism, in several edited volumes, as well as in journals such as *Comparative Literature Studies*, *Arcadia*, and *Thamyris/Intersecting*. She has also co-edited the volume *Inside Knowledge: (Un)doing Ways of Knowing in the Humanities* (Cambridge Scholars Press 2009). She is currently co-authoring a book on contemporary Dutch literature together with Isabel Hoving, Liesbeth Minnaard, and Sarah de Mul.