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La Guerre Civile grecque
L' exploration de la friction dans la fiction

The Greek Civil War
Exploring Friction in Fiction

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La Guerre civile grecque: Explorant la friction dans la fiction

Nikolaos Poulopoulos*

Des coups de feux sont tirés et des hommes tués en Grèce
dans la même guerre qui est ailleurs menée avec des mots.
A.C. Sedgwick[1]

On changea jusqu'au sens usuel des mots par rapport aux actes,
dans les justifications qu'on donnait.
Thucydide[2]

En contemplant les événements de Corcyre et le commencement de l'archétype de la guerre civile grecque, la guerre du Péloponnèse, Thucydide expose les facteurs psychologiques et les comportements sur le vif, avec une attention particulière sur la relation entre les nouvelles réalités et *la langue*: «A la faveur de l'insurrection on vit s'abattre sur les cités des souffrances nombreuses et terribles, comme il s'en produit et s'en produira toujours, tant que la nature humaine reste la même». «De ville en ville, l'insurrection», - comme certaines maladies virulentes – «a suivi son cours», et au milieu de la tourmente, des atrocités, des changements de pouvoir et d'allégeance, de l'effondrement des subtilités sociales et de la croyance religieuse, *on changea jusqu'au sens usuel des mots par rapport aux actes, dans les justifications qu'on donnait*: «Une audace irréfléchie passa pour un dévouement courageux à son parti, une prudence réservée pour une lâcheté déguisée, la sagesse pour le masque de la couardise, l'intelligence en tout pour une inertie totale. Les impulsions précipitées furent considérées comme qualités viriles, et les délibarations circonspectes comme un beau prétexte de dérobade». Les mots exprimant des valeurs sont sans doute les plus sensibles dans une langue. A une époque de crise sociale et de luttes intestines, le sens même des mots peut faire l'objet de contestation, en même temps que d'autres défis plus évidents pour la société elle-même. Thucydide, nous pouvons le voir, accepte cette vérité désagréable: il en sera ainsi «aussi longtemps que la nature humaine reste la même».[3]

* McGill University

En effet, la langue semble avoir échoué, une fois de plus, face à l'animosité et aux images terrifiantes de la période troublée de l'occupation de la Grèce par l'Axe et de celle de la Guerre civile qui s'en est suivie, comme révèle l'épigramme laconique de Sedgwick. Certes, il y avait des cassures linguistiques et des lacunes historiques incomprehensibles avec lequelles un écrivain a été obligé de travailler en vue de reformuler et de donner même un aperçu des divisions les plus amères et de la violence qui ont ravagé la Grèce dans les années 1940, résultant de la superposition des conflits menés par intermittence avec des degrés d'intensité et des niveaux différents, du plan strictement personnel et local au niveau national, et à partir du niveau régional au niveau international. Cette violence a commencé dans la campagne sous l'occupation ennemie, s'est ravivée à Athènes, peu après la libération, et s'est transformée dans une guerre à grande échelle de 1946 jusqu'en 1949.

Michel Foucault propose une histoire soi-disant efficace, composée de contre-mémoires, comme une opposition nécessaire à l'histoire traditionnelle. Foucault affirme que:

> *Tout ce à quoi on s'adosse pour retourner vers l'histoire et la saisir dans sa totalité, tout ce qui permet de la retracer comme un patient mouvement continu, tout cela, il s'agit systématiquement de le briser… Elle ne laissera rien au-dessous de soi, qui aurait la stabilité rassurante de la vie ou de la nature ; …L'histoire « effective » fait resurgir l'événement dans ce qu'il peut avoir d'unique et d'aigu. Événement : il faut entendre par là non pas une décision, un traité, un règne, ou une battaille,mais un rapport de forces qui s'inverse, un povoir confisqué, un vocabulaire repris et retourné contre ses utilisateurs, une domination qui s'affaiblit, se détend, s'empoisonne elle-même, une autre qui fait son entrée, masquée.*[4]

Les œuvres littéraires grecques qui seront abordées dans ce volume remplissent le rôle de contributions à la «contre-mémoire» ou «mémoire effective» pour l'histoire et la culture de la Guerre civile. Les auteurs qui ont été pré-occupés dans leurs travaux avec des récits de la Guerre civile grecque ont maintes fois réécrit le passé conflictuel non pas comme un panorama objectif et unifié de l'histoire, mais plutôt, en termes «de manifestations des plus aiguës» de l'expérience et de l'appréciation historiques, soulignant ainsi la subjectivité et la fictionnalité de tout compte rendu des événements. Une telle écriture cherche à libérer le lecteur d' une perspective souvent

dogmatique, ou de l'aveuglement envers les événements et les héritages de la Guerre civile grecque, et au contraire de provoquer une participation plus active dans l'histoire. Après tout, l'histoire - comme Ann Rigney le maintient de façon réfléchie - est imparfaite en ce sens qu'elle n'est jamais fermée et complète, mais sujette en permanence à la remise en question et à la révision à la lumière de la découverte de nouvelles connaissances et de l'apparition de nouvelles perspectives. Pour cette raison, les écrivains de fictions historiques essaient souvent de représenter un passé qui se prolonge toujours au-delà de leur portée et au-delà de la puissance du langage qui le représente.[5]

Une telle tentative est illustrée par la nouvelle de Valtinos *Orthokosta* (1994); dans cette œuvre il s'efforce de combler une lacune de la (pré-) histoire de la Guerre civile avec une série de récits anecdotiques qui oscillent délibérément entre histoire et fiction. En fait, *Orthokosta* semble souscrire pleinement au discours de tropes rhétoriques et techniques narratives du nouvel historicisme dans lequel des anecdotes sont «mises en pièces, les pièces modifiées, inversées, réarrangées», de sorte que les événements historiques, auxquels elles se réfèrent peuvent s'écarter des représentations déjà reçues de ces mêmes événements. L'anecdote, en conséquence, remodèle la réalité historique, comme «elle aurait pu existé», faisant revivre les différentes façons dont l'histoire est vécue et concrètement reproduite par les lecteurs contemporains de l'histoire littéraire.[6]

L' approche quasi-révisionniste d'*Orthokosta* de la véracité et de la représentabilité historiques est examinée dans le présent volume par Dimitris Paivanas, qui décrit méticuleusement les détails et interprète l'agitation provoquée parmi les critiques après la publication du roman controversé de Valtinos. Le roman, affirme Paivanas, à travers une série de témoignages, semble absoudre les bataillons de sécurité de la stigmatisation de leur passé violent, et de priver, en même temps, sur les plans historique, et esthétique, le plaisir cathartique au lecteur de gauche. En outre, la fiction de Valtinos parvient à défier le ton idéologique de gauche de cette période et de mettre en évidence, si non guider, les tendances changeantes dans l'historiographie de la Guerre civile grecque.[7]

En examinant le même texte de Valtinos, Iakovos Anyfantakis retrace la structuration des témoignages d'*Orthokosta* dans le contexte historique de leur formulation. Ces compte-rendus anti-mnémoniques, micro-historiques, selon Anyfantakis, tentent d'articuler une tentative commune, bien que fragmentaire, de réfléxion qui est parfois mal récupérée en raison de la

férocité et de la violence brute des événements rapportés.

La question de l'histoire en tant que narration et représentabilité a implicitement ou explicitement tourné autour de la Guerre civile car c'est un événement qui défie les catégories que nous avons pour comprendre et parler de la réalité. Elle nous oblige en permanence à plutôt tester «les limites de la représentation» et nous pousse à voir l'expérience traumatisante comme paradigmatique de notre relation avec le passé.[8] Dans *Pyramida 67* (1950) d'Apostolidis, la *problématique* de la représentation historique en raison de la fragmentarité du monde apocalyptique de la Guerre civile et les limites de la diction pour la transmettre, force l'auteur / narrateur témoin oculaire d'aller-au-delà de la vérité historique objective- dans le domaine phénoménologique de la perception et de la conscience. En outre, comme Kersitn Jentsch-Mancor le suggère, avec l' accent auto-référentiel récurrent qu'il met sur une histoire, un soi, et un texte disjoints, le roman d'Apostolidis oscille entre le modernisme et la métafiction historiographique post-moderne.

La Caisse (1975), est un autre texte fondateur sur les limitations et les tribulations de la langue de (re)-itérer la vérité historique de la Guerre civile. La narration confessionnelle d' Alexandrou, comme l' observe Emmanuela Kantzia à travers le prisme de la théorie des actes de langage, est une tentative de briser les barrières de la langue par des gestes et des performances. Par conséquent, *La Caisse*, comme un discours performatif, s'abstient de s'emparer du passé historique en soi; au lieu de cela, par le langage et *la praxis*, elle tente d'inscrire à nouveau, sinon transcender, ce passé dans le présent.

Pour certains, les guerres (la Seconde Guerre mondiale et la Guerre civile), la dévastation et l'incertitude socio-politique subsequente ont créé plus qu'un traumatisme physique et une rupture. Comme Stamatia Dova le fait valoir, celui-ci remet en question les modes de pensée traditionnels sur la relation de l'individu à soi et aux autres. En fait, la Guerre civile et l'instabilité socio-politique qui a suivi ont provoqué une réévaluation de la représentation de l'individu qui dans le roman de Zei, *La Fiancée d'Achille* (1987), prend la forme d'un paradigme mythologique. En déployant la *mise* en *abîme* (le tout se déroule dans un scénario de film contemporain sur les militants actuellement vieillissants de la résistance voyageant en train) sur une vaste toile (Athènes, Rome, Paris, Tachkent, Moscou), le roman retrace la vie des réfugiés grecs de décembre 1944, à travers la guerre civile, la junte des colonels, et la période de la détente en Union soviétique. L'histoire est

une tentative post-homérique de se réapproprier la représentation de «soi» vis-à-vis de «l'autre» et de la société en général et de la ré-aligner dans une ère post-héroïque, après la Guerre civile.[9]

Le présent volume rassemble un groupe de critiques qui sont en train de reconfigurer les instabilités complexes et imprévues qui surgissent dans les conversations «à propos» et «entre» la fiction et la friction de la Guerre civile grecque. Certes, le climat actuel de changements disciplinaires et des allégeances interdisciplinaires constitue un moment idéal pour réviser les stratégies critiques du passé et d'expérimenter ou en réinventer de nouvelles. Les voix représentées ici constituent un "nouveau début" - un double témoignage qui, tout en recherchant la continuité entre le passé et le présent, vise à remodeler les pratiques critiques, les performances critiques nouvelles et l' accueil critique. Comme le sujet examiné, ces essais sont complexes, variés et même contradictoires parfois. Ce volume est donc un bel ajout au «canon en pleine expansion», qui vise à donner un sens à une tragédie absurde de l'histoire. Il s'agit d'un travail collectif qui, en dépit de sa diversité en termes de recherche, d'approche, et de langage académique, s'efforce d' exposer et expliquer certaines répercussions sociales, critiques et littéraires très importantes de la Guerre civile grecque.

NOTES

1. Sedgwick 1948: 486.
2. Thucydide, 3.82.4.
3. Ibid., 3.82.2-5.
4. Foucault 1971: 147-8.
5. Rigney 2001: passim.
6. Laden 2004: 8-9. Voir aussi Fineman 1987:57, qui se réfère à l'anecdote comme un *historeme*, qui est, comme la plus petite unité minimale du fait historiographique. Et la question que l'anecdote pose donc est de savoir comment, en associant étroitement la littérature et la référence, l'anecdote possède sa force narrative particulière et riche en événements.
7. Pour l'évolution des tendances dans l'historiographie grecque de la Guerre civile, voir en particulier Marantzidis et Antoniou, 2004: 223-31.

8. Ce sujet n' a été discuté qu' incidemment par Ambatzopoulou, 1998: 123-30; et Liakos, 2007: 225-8. Pour une prise de conscience semblable de (non) représentabilités traumatiques de la littérature de l'Holocauste, voir Friedlander, Probing the Limits of Representation.
9. Voir Ricks 2007: 231-44, qui analyse comment les écrivains grecs ont recours à Homère dans la recherche de paradigmes mythologiques à être utilisés en réponse à des conditions graves de luttes fratricides.

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The Greek Civil War: Exploring Friction in Fiction

Nikolaos Poulopoulos*

Shots are being fired and men killed in Greece in the same war
which is elsewhere waged with words .
A.C. Sedgwick[1]

The ordinary acceptation of words in their relation
to things was changed as men thought fit.
Thucydide[2]

Contemplating the events in Corcyra and the inauguration of the archetypal Greek Civil War, the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides exposes the psychological factors and the behavioral patterns at work, with particular attention to the relation between the new realities and *language:* "The sufferings which *stasis* brought on the cities were many and terrible, such as have occurred, and always will occur, as long as the nature of mankind remains the same." "From city to city, *stasis*" –like some virulent disease– "ran its course," and amidst the turmoil, the atrocities, the shifts in power and allegiance, the breakdown in social niceties and religious observance, *words* could be seen to change their accepted valuation: "Reckless audacity was identified as the 'courage' of a loyal ally, and prudent hesitation as 'cowardice.' 'Moderation' became a cloak for unmanliness, and ability to see all sides of a question 'inability to act' on any. ... A man with violent impulses was invariably 'reliable,' anyone who opposed him was 'suspect.'" Words connoting value are, no doubt, the most sensitive in a language. At a time of social crisis and internecine strife, the very meanings of such words may be subject to challenge, along with more obvious challenges to society itself. Thucydides, we can see, accepts the unpalatable truth: it will be so "as long as the nature of mankind remains the same."[3]

* McGill University

Indeed, language seems to have failed, once again, in front of the animosity and the terrifying images of the turbulent period of the Axis occupation in Greece and the subsequent Civil War, as Sedgwick's laconic epigram reveals. Admittedly, there were linguistic fragmentations and unintelligible historical lacunae within which a writer was obliged to work in order to rephrase and convey even a glimpse of the bitter divisions and violence that engulfed Greece in the 1940s, and which resulted from the overlap of conflicts that were fought intermittently with varying degrees of intensity and at different levels, from the strictly personal and local to the national, and from the regional to the broadly international. This violence began in the countryside under enemy occupation, flared up in Athens soon after liberation, and exploded into full-scale war in 1946 until 1949.

In his *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice,* Michel Foucault posits a so-called effective history, composed of counter-memories, as a necessary opposition to traditional history. Foucault claims that:

> *The traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must be systematically dismantled … "Effective" history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature … [and instead] deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations. An event, consequently, is … the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it.*[4]

The Greek literary works that will be discussed in this volume fulfill roughly equivalent roles as contributions to "counter-memory" or "effective memory" for Civil War history and culture. Authors who were pre-occupied in their works with narratives of the Greek Civil War have been repeatedly rewriting the frictional past not as an objective and unified panorama of history, but rather, in terms of the "most acute manifestations" of experience and historical appreciation, emphasizing thus the subjectivity and fictionality of any record of events. Such writing seeks to liberate the reader from an often dogmatic perspective on, or blindness toward, the events and legacies of the Greek Civil War, and to provoke instead a more active participation in history. After all, histories, as Ann Rigney thoughtfully maintains, are imperfect in the sense that they are never closed and complete, but permanently subject to question and revision as new knowledge is discovered and new perspectives are opened up. For this reason writers of historical fictions often try to represent a past that

always extends beyond their grasp and beyond the power of language to represent it.[5]

One such endeavor is Valtinos' novel *Orthokosta* (1994); it strives to fill a lacuna of the (pre)history of the Civil War with a series of anecdotal accounts that deliberately oscillate between history and fiction. In fact, *Orthokosta* appears to fully subscribe to New Historicism's discourcive rhetorical tropes and narratological techniques in which anecdotes are "broken in pieces, the pieces altered, inverted, rearranged," so that the historical events they refer to may diverge from received renditions of the same events. The anecdote, accordingly, remodels historical reality "as it might have been," reviving the ways history is experienced and concretely reproduced by contemporary readers of literary history.[6]

Orthokosta's quasi-revisionist approach to historical veracity and representability is examined in this volume by Dimitris Paivanas, who meticulously details and construes the friction that was stirred among critics after the publication of Valtinos' controversial novel. The novel, Paivanas proffers, through a series of testimonial accounts, appears to absolve the Security Battalions from the stigma of their violent past, and to deprive at the same time, on historical, as well as, aesthetic terms, the cathartic pleasure by its leftist reader. Moreover, Valtinos' fiction manages to challenge the leftist ideological tone of the period and to highlight, if not steer, the shifting trends in Civil War Greek historiography.[7]

Examining the same text by Valtinos towards the end of the volume, Iakovos Anyfantakis retraces the structuring of *Orthokosta's* testimonies in the historical context of their formulation. These counter-mnemonic, micro-historical accounts, Anyfantakis claims, attempt to articulate a communal, albeit fragmentary, recollection which at times is mis-retrieved due to the ferocity and brute violence of the reported events.

The question of history *qua* narrative and representability has implicitly or explicitly revolved around the Civil War, since it's an event that defies the categories we have for understanding and talking about reality. It rather forces us to continuously probe the "limits of representation" and stimulates us to see traumatic experience as paradigmatic for our relationship with the past.[8] In Apostolidis' *Pyramida 67* (1950), the *problematique* of historical representation due to the fragmentariness of the apocalyptic world of the Civil War and the limitations of diction to convey it, force the author/eye-witness narrator to move beyond objective historical truth and into the phenomenological realm

of perception and consciousness. Moreover, as Kersitn Jentsch-Mancor suggests, with his recurrent self-referential emphasis to a disjoint (hi)story, self, and text, Apostolidis' novel oscillates between modernism and the post-modern historiographic metafiction.

The *Mission Box* (1975), is another seminal text on the limitations and tribulations of language to (re)-iterate historical truth re the Civil War. Alexandrou's confessional narrative, as Emmanuela Kantzia through the lens of speech-act theory observes, is an attempt to break the barriers of language through gesturing and performance. Accordingly, the *Mission Box*, as a performative discourse, abstains from laying hold to the historical past per se; instead, through language and praxis, it attempts to re-inscribe, if not transcend, that past into the present.

For some, the Wars' (World War II and the Civil War) devastation and the subsequent socio-political uncertainty created more than a physical trauma and rupture; as Stamatia Dova argues, it called into question traditional ways of thinking about the individual's relation to self and others. In fact, the Civil War and the ensuing socio-political instability provoked a reassessment of the representation of the individual. In Zei's *Achilles's Fiancée* (1987), this takes the form of mythological paradigm. Unfolding *mise* en *abîme* (it is set inside a contemporary movie script about the now aging Resistance activists going on a train journey) on a vast canvas (Athens, Rome, Paris, Tashkent, Moscow), the novel traces the lives of Greek refugees from December 1944, through the Civil War, the Colonels' Junta, and the thaw in the Soviet Union. The story is a post-Homeric attempt to re-appropriate the representation of the 'self' *vis*-à-*vis* the 'other' and society in general and to re-align it in a post-heroic, post-Civil War era.[9]

The present volume brings together a group of critics who are in the process of reconfiguring the intricate instabilities and contingencies that emerge in conversations "about" and "between" the fiction and friction of the Greek Civil War. Certainly, the present climate of disciplinary shifts and cross-disciplinary allegiances constitutes an ideal moment to reassess past critical strategies and to experiment with or reinvent new ones. The voices represented here constitute a "beginning again" – a double witnessing that, while courting continuities between past and present, seeks to reshape critical practices, critical re-performances and critical receptions. Like the subject examined, these essays are complex, diverse, and even contradictory at times. The volume is, therefore, a fine addition to the burgeoning canon that strives to make sense of an absurd tragedy of history. It is a collective work which, despite its

diversity in terms of research, approach, and academic language, delves to expose and explicate some very important social, critical, and literary repercussions of the Greek Civil War.

NOTES

1. Sedgwick 1948: 486.
2. Thucydides, 3.82.4.
3. Ibid., 3.82.2-5.
4. Foucault 1977: 153-4.
5. Rigney 2001: *passim*.
6. Laden 2004: 8-9. See also Fineman 1987: 57, who refers to the anecdote as a *historeme*, that is, as the smallest minimal unit of the historiographic fact. And the question that the anecdote thus poses is how, compact of both literature and reference, the anecdote possesses its peculiar and eventful narrative force.
7. For the changing trends in Greek Historiograpy re the Greek Civil War, see especially Marantzidis and Antoniou, 2004: 223-31.
8. This topic has been only tangentially discussed by Ambatzopoulou, 1998: 123-30; and Liakos, 2007: 225-8. For a similar awareness of traumatic (un)representability of the Holocaust literature, see Friedlander, *Probing the Limits of Representation.*
9. See Ricks 2007: 231-44, who analyses how Greek writers resorted to Homer in search of mythological paradigms to be used in response to the grievous conditions of fratricidal strife.

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Cold Wars after 1989: Thanasis Valtinos' Orthokosta and its Reception[1]

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine l'accueil reçu par le roman *Orthokosta* de Thanasis Valtinos (1994). Depuis sa première apparition, *Orthokosta* a bénéficié d'un accueil peu favorable, principalement de la part de critiques de gauche, qui ont monté ce qui semble être une campagne systématique visant à discréditer les pretentions apparentes du roman à la vérité historique. L'œuvre a été créditée d'une volonté de «révisionnisme» de l'historiographie de la Guerre civile grecque. En effet, son auteur a été étiqueté comme un "ex-gauchiste» qui devient «réactionnaire» après la chute du «socialisme réel" en 1989. Ces observations sur le texte et son auteur ont été accompagnées par des évaluations esthétiques du roman qui remettent en question sa valeur littéraire. Cet article soutient que *Orthokosta* a contesté la construction des identités de gauche basée sur le Parti pendant la période de l'après-dictature en Grèce et a critiqué implicitement l'idéologie populiste des années 70 et 80 en Grèce. Des historiens et des intellectuels de gauche se sont appuyés sur ce climat idéologique pour construire à la fois leurs identités politiques et leur version de l'historiographie de la Guerre civile. Comme une œuvre de fiction, *Orthokosta* pose des questions sur le discours institutionnel, qu'a sacralisé la Gauche dans une telle historiographie et défie l'esthétique littéraire que ses créateurs ont implicitement adoptée dans sa construction.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the reception of Thanasis Valtinos' novel *Orthokosta* (1994). Since its first appearance, *Orthokosta* has enjoyed a less than favorable reception, predominantly from leftist commentators who have mounted what seems to be a systematic campaign to discredit the novel's apparent claims to historical truth. The work has been credited with prompting a turn towards "revisionism" in the historiography of the Greek Civil War. Indeed its author has been labeled as a "former leftist" who turned "reactionary" after the demise of "Real Socialism" in 1989. These comments on the text and its author have been accompanied by aesthetic evaluations of the novel which question its status as literature. This paper argues that *Orthokosta* challenged the basis for the construction of Party-based

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leftist identities in post-dictatorship Greece and criticized implicitly the populist ideology of the 70s and 80s in Greece. Leftist historians and intellectuals relied on this ideological climate to construct both their political identities and their version of Civil-War historiography. As a work of fiction, *Orthokosta* questions the institutionalized discourse that sanctified the Left in such historiography and challenges the literary aesthetics that its makers implicitly espoused in constructing it.

Since the publication of his novel *Orthokosta* (1994), Thanasis Valtinos (1932–) stands accused of reviving an allegedly falsified representation of the Greek Civil War, and of pursuing a retrogressive path towards similar misinterpretations of the conflict, promulgated by its conservative victors from the 50s to the end of the military dictatorship in 1974. The cultural ambiance in post-dictatorship Greece can loosely be described as a climate of "leftism" which was largely inspired by the 1973 Polytechnic events and was to gradually develop into the ideological climate of populism in the 80s.[2] Valtinos, whose early work was appropriated in the late 70s by the leftist intelligentsia as part of its own canon of texts, was, in 1995, decisively denounced as a reformed "conservative of the pre-dictatorship period".[3] It was claimed that with *Orthokosta* Valtinos had not only regressed but also had defected to the other side, an alleged switch attributed largely to the dissolution of European Socialism after 1989.[4] Indeed, it has been consistently suggested that Valtinos would or could not have composed *Orthokosta* at all, if the Berlin Wall had not been torn down to be made available to tourists in small fragments as Cold War memorabilia.[5]

The purpose of this paper is to investigate aspects of the ideological climate which seems to have legitimized, consistently and for over a decade, such responses to *Orthokosta* and, to some extent, to assess the reception's validity as an interpretation of Valtinos' novel. The paper is divided in two parts corresponding to these aims.

1. Orthokosta and the Left's historiography on the Civil War

The publication of *Orthokosta* was followed by a concatenation of reviews and articles in the literary and daily press which announced the beginning of a long and complex controversy. The text divided the critical community and was criticized on both ideological and aesthetic grounds. The intellectual skirmishes were described in the daily press as a "second Civil War", a

sensationalist description which survived until later although in mildly varied form.[6] Despite the fact that a number of critics spoke in the novel's defense, some of them well known leftists themselves,[7] its negative reception proliferated.[8] In 2003, Valtinos was again characterized as a "neoconservative" who was recoiling to the "hard-core reactionary nationalism [the Greek term is *ethnikofrosyni*] of the German Occupation".[9] In 2004, *Orthokosta* was criticized for confusing the reader by abstracting a personal view to the status of historical truth and for defying historical research on the agreed chronological beginnings of the internecine conflict;[10] in the same year the novel was proclaimed as a "symbol of a revisionism" in the historiography of the Civil War[11] and in February of 2005 Valtinos was described as a reformed "rhetorician of the new Right".[12]

These assessments were largely the result of the "*Orthokosta* controversy" having expanded, in big-bang fashion in the first five years of the new millennium into a number of research fields with historians, anthropologists, political scientists and literary critics becoming involved in a revived discussion about the Civil War. The implications of research findings in historiography were seen as being in accordance with the challenge that *Orthokosta* presented to certain political identities of the leftist intelligentsia and its post-1974 reliance on a particular representation of the Civil War. As a result, a causative link was established between *Orthokosta* and so-called "revisionist" historians who were seen as contesting the Left's historiographic truths about the Civil War.[13] I doubt that this causative link can be scientifically demonstrated.[14] However, Valtinos' novel seems to have raised an issue with sections of the leftist intelligentsia in Greece which, after 1974, appear to have treated the matter of the Civil War as resolved once and for all.[15] The novel also appears to have brought the discussion of a sensitive historical topic out into the public forum once again, like other works of Greek fiction had done earlier.[16] Since 1994, however, *Orthokosta* has spawned critical commentary that sought to legitimize a variety of views on the subject of the Left's motives and conduct during the Civil War.

The critic who is generally credited with starting the *Orthokosta* controversy was the leftist social analyst and political commentator Angelos Elefantis. His main objection was the text's excessive focus on atrocities committed by ELAS (=National Popular Liberation Army) during the so-called "first phase" of the Civil War (1943-1945). Elefantis argued that, by eliminating references to the "ideological imperatives" that had, in Elefantis' view, fueled the Communist struggle during the Resistance and the violence in the ensuing conflict,

Valtinos was misrepresenting the Left's role in it. Elefantis' review set off a chain reaction of commentaries that sought to confirm, elaborate, or question his claims.[17] Commentators of *Orthokosta* were divided in three general groups.

The first group consisted of those who criticized the book for its alleged attempt at exonerating the "Security Battalions" (Τάγματα Ασφαλείας) which in leftist historiographic discourse were, and continue to be, treated as collaborationist traitors. Commentators also reacted to the less than flattering image of the leadership of ELAS, the military leg of EAM (= National Liberation Front), and the KKE (= Greek Communist Party) which was behind them. Indeed, some commentators sought to restore explicitly the dented image of these organizations through their own interpretations of their role in the Civil War attributing a biased treatment to Valtinos.[18] A second group of commentators praised the book mainly for giving voice to identities generally ignored in the "dominant discourse of official historiography"[19], and for capturing the sheer irrationalism of the civil conflict.[20] The third group was an extension of the first. Its two members claimed, in conjunction with underlying ideological objections, that the novel was not literature at all because it had failed to transform the 47 loosely connected testimonial narratives that comprise it into an "aesthetic form".[21] There was also a single commentator who claimed that she had difficulty getting through the book, and admitted to reading its pages diagonally in an effort to avoid the scenes of graphic violence and bypass its unfamiliar place names and excessive number of characters.[22]

On the basis of the above, it is evident that *Orthokosta* was criticized on both ideological and aesthetic grounds. The former are linked to biased, balanced or neglected aspects in representations of the Civil War and the latter to the reading public's aesthetic expectations from a text that announces itself clearly on its cover as a novel. It is significant that the discourse generated using *Orthokosta* as a pretext seems to have followed both of these directions with historiographical commentaries and literary contributions. Some of the people who produced it were in some way connected with Elefantis who had contributed himself to the construction and promotion of the Left's positive role in the Resistance and the Civil War. Elefantis wrote a series of articles some of which are now collected in a volume that includes a reprint of his review of *Orthokosta*.[23]

In 1995, the literary critic Tzina Politi claimed that *Orthokosta* "exposed the dominant discourse of official Historiography" [sic] on the Civil War.[24] This "dominant discourse" gained, somewhat belatedly, one of its official exponents in Giorgos Margaritis' two volume history on the topic. I'm no historian, but,

on the basis of the language used to describe some of the darker sides of Communist leadership, the work can, to an extent, be described as a somewhat sentimental tribute to the historiography of the Left.[25] It is not surprising that Elefantis is mentioned in the acknowledgements as one of Margaritis' "truly wise teachers".[26] In 2004, Kostas Voulgaris, a writer, self-proclaimed literary critic, and confessed disciple of Elefantis, published a hybrid text that was half fiction half commentary on *Orthokosta.* His expressed wish in it was to dislodge Valtinos' text from the literary firmament but he also acknowledged the impossibility of the task. In addition, he voiced the need for an "anti-*Orthokosta*" that would challenge Valtinos' text, not on historiographic, but on literary grounds.[27] Voulgaris had previously attempted to achieve both in his own literary endeavors and literary analyses.[28] Elefantis' own contribution to this was a semi-autobiographical fiction that draws on the language and themes in a number of texts by Valtinos including *Orthokosta*.[29]

These historiographic, critical and literary texts are supplemented by a variety of other commentaries involving *Orthokosta*[30] and the impact that the text has had, in conjunction with recent developments in historical research, on certain circles of the leftist intelligentsia. Indeed developments in the historiography of the Civil War attributed mainly to so-called "reformist" historians were contended with, and questioned in, an ongoing debate that took place in the Greek daily press in both polemic and less contentious articles.[31] *Orthokosta* is often connected, both explicitly and implicitly, with these developments. It is, in my view, significant that the skirmishes also involve, directly or indirectly, the issue of Postmodernism which is often associated with inclinations towards neoconservatism, relativism, depoliticization, and other theories, supposedly of transatlantic origin, whose alleged aim is to erode the foundations of historical knowledge and the hard-earned freedoms and cultural victories of post-dictatorship Greek society.[32] It appears, therefore, that apart from a camaraderie that evolved amongst a group of commentators who appear united against what the name "Valtinos" is thought to represent[33], *Orthokosta* was related to a more general challenge that part of the intellectual community in Greece feels has been mounted against it. To a large extent, this challenge begins with the questioning of the Left's contribution to the Resistance and the ensuing Civil War. After 1974, in post-dictatorship Greece, a number of individuals forged their political identities on the basis of this contribution[34] and felt challenged, if not offended, by Valtinos' novel in 1994. It is perhaps noteworthy that occasionally in the commentaries there are objections to the content of current historiographic discourse from

people who actually participated in the events and feel that their experience has been distorted or that their perceived social integrity has been threatened.[35]

The controversy that began around *Orthokosta* in 1994 was not new to Greek cultural life. The same issue was the cultural *thème du jour* in the early 60s, with the intellectual debate that took place over Stratis Tsirkas' first two novels of his trilogy *Drifting Cities* (*Ακυβέρνητες Πολιτείες*). The issue then was, as with *Orthokosta* twenty three years later, the questionable conduct of the Left's leadership during the Civil War, although this seems to have been partly overlooked in the commentary on the recent republication of the trilogy in Chrysa Prokopaki's critical edition.[36] In 1962, Dimitris Raftopoulos, who spoke in favour of *Orthokosta* at its inaugural launch and contributed to the relevant debate, had commented on the first of Tsirkas' novels claiming that it revealed the "breach of revolutionary legality" by people who were responsible "for the repeated failures of the [communist] movement" in Greece.[37] Indeed the issue was raised again in 1974 by Aris Alexandrou's novel *To kivotio* (*The Crate*), a text that comments allegorically on the ideological void, in the form of an empty crate, carried by the Communists during the Civil War.[38] It is perhaps an indication of Margaritis' perceived similarity between the ideological effects of historiography and "realistic" fiction, that his own project is presented in the introduction as an attempt to "correct a historical misunderstanding" which he attributes explicitly to Aris Alexandrou's novel *To kivotio*.[39]

This is a striking example of how historiographic and literary discourses interact and supplement each other in Greek culture. Perhaps, it is also the reason why Valtinos felt that another, less allegorical and more graphically violent, literary text on the Civil War was needed, to add to his own earlier treatment of the theme in his novella *The Descent of the Nine*. This text was first published, against Valtinos' knowledge, in the September issue of the literary journal *Epoches* in 1963, in the very midst of the debate about Tsirkas' novels and came out in book form for the first time in Greece in 1978.[40] The *Descent of the Nine* contains allusions to wasted and pointless Communist violence resulting in the ideological disappointment of some of those who employed it. Yet, in 1979, the text was read as commenting on "the tragic defeat of the [leftist] movement".[41] As I have argued elsewhere, this interpretation is an ideologically charged misreading of the text with its own genealogy and sociopolitical context, which resulted in an appropriation of Valtinos' texts by the leftist intelligentsia after 1974 and in his perception as a Party-affiliated leftist in the eyes of some commentators. It has also shown remarkable resilience until recently and, indeed, as one might have expected,

was revived in juxtaposition to *Orthokosta*.[42] The latter text could be treated as both a belated reaction to the misreading of Valtinos' earlier piece and to a new, post-1974, historiographic falsification of the civil conflict which was to be generalized in the populist climate of the 80s.[43]

In very general terms, it appears that after 1974, the issue of the Left's illegitimately violent conduct during the Civil War was thought of as best forgotten, a matter which served those members of the leftist intelligentsia who sought to construct a new role for the Left in the political scene of post-dictatorship Greece. Part of that construction was the exaltation of the positive role played by ELAS, EAM and the KKE in the people's struggles against fascism during the Resistance and the ensuing Civil War. Forgetting or misrepresenting aspects of the past seems to have also served the political aspirations of the political party of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) which exploited the "leftist" cultural atmosphere to its political advantage and eventually won the elections in 1981. The decade that followed has been described as "The Populist Decade" in a volume edited by the pre-eminent historian of Modern Greece, Richard Clogg. During that decade the contributions of the Left to the Resistance were officially recognized and war pensions were awarded to its once persecuted members.[44] However, in 1989, Valtinos was one of 120 writers and artists who signed a petition protesting to the policies and overall conduct of the PASOK government, especially in the cultural area. The gesture almost duplicated the protest of "the eighteen" in 1970 against the censorship measures of the dictatorship which resulted in the historical volume of *Eighteen Texts*. The volume included Valtinos' own story "The Plaster Cast", a caustic satire of the metaphor used by the dictator George Papadopoulos to describe Greece as an ailing patient who was in need of corrective treatment from the "disease of Communism".

In 1989, the accompanying document of the 120 protested against the "violation of the rules of pluralism... the misinformation and biased control of the Media... and the frivolous and manipulating use of History...".[45] All of these, according to the same document amounted to a "symptom of totalitarianism that was unacceptable in a democratic government" and make up my general working definition of 80s populism. It seems paradoxical at first, but both Elefantis and Valtinos were united in their caustic criticisms of this climate. The former wrote a series of polemic articles against PASOK's populism in the periodical *O Politis*[46] and the latter openly expressed his disapproval in a series of interviews.[47] With the publication of *Orthokosta* the apparently united front between Elefantis and Valtinos against populism was

almost instantly transformed into antagonism. One might conclude from this that Valtinos' novel appears to have revealed the Left's dependence on, and contribution to, the populist climate of the 80s, partly through image-building of the Communist cause during the Civil War.

It appears, then, that *Orthokosta* presented a new challenge to a constructed representation of the Civil War and to the leftist political identities that were formed on its basis or found an opportunity to articulate their views in the ideological climate that evolved in the first two decades of post-dictatorship Greece. The constructed narrative can be described as a historiography that largely sanctified the role of the Left in the Civil War despite its occasional claims to distancing itself from previous oversimplifications.[48] In fact, the sanctification of the Left and the demonization of the Right is the underlying assumption in most negative assessments of the novel. This also helps to explain why, in the early stages of its reception Valtinos' novel was treated as an attempt at exonerating the "Security Battalions" which are indiscriminately treated as collaborationist in leftist discourse.[49] This assessment of the novel is indeed surprising as some of the most barbaric acts of violence in *Orthokosta* are committed by characters who had joined the ranks of the “Security Batallions” in order to avenge themselves against Communists, to legitimize their own violent inclinations or to seek protection in their ranks from the violence of ELAS.

The reading of Valtinos' the *Descent of the Nine,* as a text about "the tragic defeat of the [leftist] movement" is significant for another reason that pertains to the historiographic poetics of the Left in Greece and is indirectly related to the literary aesthetics of *Orthokosta*. With regard to this aesthetics, it is important to repeat here that at least one commentator criticized *Orthokosta* for not being literature at all and for failing to transform its 47 testimonial narratives into what she termed an "aesthetic form".[50] This response is echoed in other commentators’ assessments of the novel and is, to a certain extent, an understandable response to an extremely labyrinthine literary text.[51] The assessment also betrays some aesthetic principles or a set of reader's expectations which the text appears to fail to fulfill. The same thing seems to occur in the commentaries that focused the majority of their discussion on the paratextual aspects of the novel such as the cover, the prologue and the epilogue, finding, perhaps, the main corpus of the testimonial narratives too nebulous for comment.[52]

The challenge presented by *Orthokosta* to the Left's historiography of the Civil War and to the political identities which helped to construct it, is related

to what, commenting on the historiography of the Civil War, the historian Giorgos Mavrogordatos effectively describes as the romantic transformation of a military defeat into a historiographic triumph.[53] The paradox relates to a more general tendency that I associate with an aspect of the Greek version of Modernism. This is the tendency to view history in terms of an unjust, yet unavoidable, outcome, whose psychological or emotional wound can be healed through the aesthetic experience of an artistic use of language. In other words, to view history as a kind of cathartic tragedy, a necessity that was current up until a few years ago, at least according to one commentator.[54]

On the basis of the above, it would seem that the aesthetic becomes unavoidably involved in the way one views, writes, and the expectations one labors from, historical discourse. *Orthokosta* is not, of course, historiography. In my view, the text encourages its readers to acquire a less biased understanding of the Civil War, or even assumes such an understanding. It also violates the aesthetic of an elaborate or refined "neosocialist realism" on which leftist historiography of the Civil War in Greece appears to have drawn.[55] To say that in 1994 *Orthokosta* caused a controversy that shook a number of leftist intellectuals out of their unacknowledged populist complacency seems like an understatement, but the text also challenged the underlying aesthetics of leftist historiography that treated the outcome of the Civil War as a tragic defeat of the "leftist movement". As a linguistic construct, Valtinos' novel resists the transformation of the internecine civil conflict into a kind of literary laxative and ultimately denies the metamorphosis of historical trauma into literary pleasure. How exactly it does this is an issue I shall be dealing with in the next section.

2. Reading Orthokosta as literature

Orthokosta is a fragmented, discontinuous and disorderly narrative. It has in excess of 500 characters and that's just the named ones. Time indices tend to be general and non-specific while place indices are often excessively specific to the locality of Kynouria as the narrators tend to use local rather than official terminology. One of the primary effects of all these features, at least during the first two readings, is a confusion of the reader as to where and why events occur and what motivates the characters to act in the way they do. As Maro Triandafyllou admitted, these are not conducive to what might be described as comfortable armchair or bedside reading. One could therefore argue that the novel violates its reader's expectations for a narrative where logical narrative sequences are evoked or ultimately resolved, and characters act on the basis of

stable and consistent traits. This violation is thematically related to an irrationality of the conflict and to the meanings one can deduce or construct from the narrative treatment of the Civil War. In *Orthokosta* the reader is not encouraged to abstract the story to a facile metaphor that would either serve an ideology in the political spectrum of public life or help to decipher a definitive meaning for the Greek Civil War.

In *Orthokosta* the conflict is presented as a complex set of circumstances that defy demystification through anachronistically imposed characterizations on a wide variety of identities under the aegis of labels used traditionally to describe the opposing sides. The alliance of individuals to either side is presented as premeditated, compulsive, self-serving, fortuitous or inexplicable, but also as forced. According to the novel, one of the methods employed by EAM was the legitimate and illegitimate persuasion of people to join its ranks.[56] Often, in the event that these methods failed or were met with resistance, the non-complying characters are forced or instructed to join the other side in the interests of reinforcing the divisive spirit (e.g. pp. 46-7, 74, 115, and 296-8). The mass enlistments in the corps of the "Security Battalions" are presented as a reaction to the illegitimate actions of the Communists (e.g. pp. 23 and 105).

One might deduce from all this that in the novel there is an underlying critique of a crudely Marxist narrative which the members of EAM attempted to enforce on the social reality of the time while ignoring other aspects of the social dynamics. The interpretation of this historical and social development aimed at the creation of a climate that approximated the social conditions of a "class struggle" which is uncertain if they actually existed.[57] In *Orthokosta* there is a systematic resistance to facile categorizations of the characters to either side of the combatants. As a result it appears necessary to include any ideologically tinted characterization such as "Communist", "*elasitis*" (="member of ELAS"), "reactionary" or "*tagmatasfalitis*" (="member of the 'Security Battalions'") in quotation marks. This means that the descriptiveness of these terms is undermined to the extent that they cease to have a valid or stable referential meaning, whether pejorative or not.

On practically every page of the novel one comes across some form of criticism of the homogenization of a variety of views and people under the aegis of an ideological label. Some salient examples are the extortion of, or reprisal against, a person through the harassment of his or her family members (e.g. p. 17, *et passim*); the extermination of a group of harvesters who wave to a platoon of passing Germans with the latter misinterpreting their sickle-bearing salute as an ideological gesture (p. 264); an adolescent girl's error in embroidering the

royal crown instead of the hammer-and-sickle on the berets of a group of ELAS' guerillas is almost interpreted as intentional on her part (pp. 46-7); another example is the threatening of a young woman with her forced allocation to the brothels of Argos for her participation in a theatrical performance of the bucolic melodrama *Golfo* before an audience of guerillas (p. 93). On the basis of these examples, it appears that the novel comments on the issue of eschatological or dogmatic interpretation critically and explicitly. In short, Valtinos' text comments on the very arbitrariness of dogmatic absolutism that blurs judicious judgment leading potentially to premature and unnatural death.

Orthokosta is also full of differentiations between restrained ideologues and frantic partisans (on both sides), humanitarians and fortune-hunters. References to characters who refused to join EAM's policy of violence abound (e.g. pp. 177-9, 230, and 260f), while ELAS guerillas are not presented indiscriminately as homicidal maniacs. The narrators often refer to them as "kids" (p. 277 *et passim*), a reminder of the age-groups that often joined, or were forced to join, their ranks, while there is also a marked tendency to forgive them as in this example: "It wasn't their fault. It was others people's fault, above them" (p. 228). There are a number of references to the registration of people as members of EAM without their consent (e.g. pp. 53 and 65) and suspicions that historical personages who faithfully served the EAM movement, like Tsigris and Kondalonis, did so forcedly (pp. 45 and 124 respectively). There is an abundance of examples of people who claim to have suffered the violence of both sides (e.g. pp. 51-2, 90-3, 115-9, and 303), there are frequent references to the psychological, linguistic and physical violence exercised by both sides and less so to German brutality (e.g., pp. 53, 67, 68, 126, 217, and 219), there are instances of conflict amongst different groups of "Security Battalions" (p. 204) and plundering attributed to both sides.

On the grounds of all these it would seem that the readers who responded unfavorably to the novel didn't really read it or, at least, not carefully enough. The violence of the "Security Battalions" is presented as the result of "Communist" violence, but this does not justify the former by demonizing the latter. One may argue that "White Terror" or "reactionary" violence in *Orthokosta* is an implicit comment on the absolutist manner in which Communists were treated after the Varkiza agreement (12 February 1945) and, later, in the 50s, a treatment which fueled the political Manichaism and ideological extremism in the latter part of the 20th Century.

Orthokosta does not present the Civil War as a conflict between saints and demons. In the novel, lives are saved, alliances are formed, and conflicts occur

not on an ideological basis but on the basis of personal differences, individual ethos, interpersonal relationships, and anthropologically based antagonisms. This "de-ideologizes", in the political sense, the conflict and appears to explain the negative responses to the novel. Its critics seem to have propounded the maintenance of a kind of "Cold War" antagonism in the interests of sustaining and justifying an engagement to a specific political identity.

My comments thus far may give the impression that I am treating the novel as a historiographical text. However, the features of *Orthokosta* that I have commented on are part of an historical novel. In addition, one needs to be aware that the testimonial narratives that comprise the work are not presented as unbiased representations. There is ample evidence in the text that some of the events are not experienced first-hand but, instead, are hearsay narrations. Testimonies are also self-honoring texts where the speaker attempts to justify his or her own actions and amplify his or her contribution, benevolence, social position or understanding. This is clear, for example, in the fourth chapter of the novel. Moreover, in every testimony there is a good-faith agreement between the speaker and his listener or interlocutor that the truth is being told. However, in *Orthokosta* the issue is not so much historiographical truth as the role of personal and collective memory in the (re)construction of local community identities by means of narration.

The novel's narrators use the events of the past as elements in personal narratives that illustrate their ethics and the human endeavors their community appears to privilege (honesty, friendship, acquisition of personal wealth, love, marriage, child-bearing, family, music, creative and persuasive use of language) all of which, it is suggested, were under serious threat during the Civil War. Some salient examples of this are the arbitrary extermination of a musician (p. 19) and the death of a man who is said to have been drawn to Athens during the December events of 1944 because of his love for a woman (p. 73-5). The suggestion is that art and love cannot flourish under conditions of violent conflict. Once again, the violence of either side of the civil conflict is not silenced in *Orthokosta*, nor is it employed in a narrative that serves the interests of political parties. Contrarily, its memory is incorporated in narratives that illustrate its arbitrariness and the transgression of certain fundamental rules about what, according to the narrators, constitutes ethical human conduct. At the same time it is put to the service of its narrator's inclination towards a creative, persuasive and poignant use of language in telling stories about the local past.

Thus the stories told by the narrators of *Orthokosta* suggest the ethical principles and the institutions that their community privileges. These define its identity both individually and collectively. In these stories there is a distancing from generalizing and Manichaic assessments of people and events during the Civil War and a suggestion that the passions that once fueled the conflict have subsided (see, e.g. pp. 26-7). A contributing factor is the humor and the lexical irony that one comes across at times (see, e.g. pp. 131 and 137), and the restrained boasting in stories of survival, courage, resilience and inventiveness against the odds. Given that certain parts of the narratives in *Orthokosta* have this effect, it can be claimed that the novel is, to a certain extent, a tribute to the community of the author's birthplace and its collective will to survive. However, the novel could not be at a further remove from being an ode to the Kastri cluster of villages in Kynouria or to Arcadia and its people for that matter. Valtinos is aware that history is not a personified entity that evolves of its own accord,[58] but that it is people who make it happen and it is people who sustain its effects in their memory. So, the positive aspects of the community are counterbalanced by narratives and assessments of people and events which seem to illustrate an accentuation of a Manichaic view of both the past and the present. This does not mean that the novel argues for a kind of amnesia regarding the violence of the past. On the contrary, some of the subsidiary plots that are unraveled across the chapters lead to the revelation of its perpetrators on both sides.

It is quite clear in the text that the denial, the silencing or pretending to not remember the committed atrocities is not conducive to reconciliation in the community. In the second chapter, for instance, the narrator blames Potis Leggeris for pretending to not remember atrocities committed by ELAS, its collaborators (p. 14) and especially his brother. In chapter 41, the two narrators are two "reactionary" characters who avenged themselves against members of ELAS. Part of the time of reference is the year 1946 when the narrators arrest Anestis Poulios, a witness to the stripping of a dead body by ELAS guerillas. Poulios is beaten savagely and seems to suffer other unspeakable humiliations while being confined in a wine barrel. Despite this, the first narrator (Nikolaou) progressively takes the edge off his viciousness as he narrates. His story evokes how he himself pretended not to recognize his victim when they accidentally came across each other at a bus stop sometime during the early 80s. The episode reaches its climax with the recognition of the perpetrator by the victim who greets Nikolaou with restrained irony for not helping him get on the bus. The narrator is obliged to respond with a similar

greeting (p. 286). In this verbal exchange, and in the narrator's musings that follow it,[59] underlies an unarticulated apology and mutual forgiveness. It is of course ironic that this apology is articulated in the most unlikely context in the sixth chapter where an anonymous shepherd apologizes for the murder he committed against one of the narrator's co-villagers in 1922 (p. 48). The suggestion here is that gratuitous or poorly justified violence in the area had precedents. It is equally important that chapter 41 ends with the accentuated hatred of the second narrator (Christofilis) for another "Communist" victim of the "reactionaries". Thus, the identity of the local community, as it is presented in the novel, displays its inclinations towards both constructive and symbiotic aspects of human existence as well as destructive and antagonistic ones. Its characters also display an inclination towards forgiveness and mutual apology without always realizing these inclinations. The suggestion is that certain cultural factors are interfering with this realization. The post-1974 political and cultural ambiance which appear to have perpetuated them are only partly responsible.

In a number of narratives in the novel it is suggested that the very difference between linguistic persuasion and physical violence was eliminated during the conflict. The purposes served by this elimination were personal gain and the expression of personal antipathies whose resurfacing remains in the novel a forever imminent possibility. *Orthokosta* contains a number of chapters that are not related chronologically to the Civil War events. In one of these chapters the repeated attempts of two brothers to reconcile their differences over mutual land claims by legitimate means are repeatedly postponed (pp. 256-9). Civil War violence and inclination towards (self-) destruction is attributed to a great extent to these kinds of antagonisms and anthropological differences in the novel.[60] In it there is also evidence that violence inhabits the language of the community and that in its means of expression resides the potential of yet another violent outbreak.

In chapter 12, for example, it is implied that linguistic persuasion is a lot more constructive and less harmful than physical violence (pp. 99-101). The linguistic violence that underlies this persuasion ("The man was shattered, he broke his morale", p. 101) echoes the psalmist verse of the novel's motto (Psalm B, verse 9) and carries the meaning of persuasion. The ethical value of this persuasion can only be assessed retrospectively on the basis of its results ("And they lived happily for almost half a century. They had four children", p. 101). The treatment of people as objects to be shattered or broken up to components of their anatomy (e.g. pp. 323-4) as a means to persuasion

suggests the futility of the act and implies that during the Civil War the metaphorically violent expressions that reside in the community's expressional means were interpreted literally. It is, therefore, implied that under the conditions of violence that were initiated by leaders of EAM-ELAS, and which were subsequently perpetuated by the "reactionary" side, people avoided resorting to other more legitimate and less harming means. Instead, they chose to use physical violence rather than employ the language of negotiation and the persuasive power of the tongue, which, according to a well known colloquial saying in Greek, "has no bones but breaks bones".

Thus, *Orthokosta* appears to both praise and condemn the characters of the local community for their conduct during the conflict and seems to be exercising a kind of linguistic violence against biased treatments of its main subject matter. It praises the characters for their creativity and for the ethics they appear to privilege and condemns them for transgressing not only the code of these alleged ethics but also of a linguistic code that claims to assert a difference between literal and metaphorical meaning. This is directly related to the issue of arbitrary naming and forced characterizations of individuals in the novel with a view to maintaining antagonism. As one narrator puts it "They call you a traitor, you are a traitor" (p. 109). The question that evolves from all this pertains to narratology and concerns the sequence of cause and effect. If the ethical code of the community is deduced in equal measure from the institutions and behaviors it claims to privilege as well as from its actions, then this code includes violent behavior and arbitrary naming in the interests of eliminating the entity that refuses to be homogenized. Therefore, it becomes difficult to discern cause from effect, where the former is the narration about the ethical code of the community and the effect is the violence that its collective memory cites or commemorates. In other words it becomes difficult to tell whether violence has precedence over the discourse of the community or vice versa.

The novel illustrates the possibility of reconciliation and mutual forgiveness but also the difficulty of their realization under current ideological and cultural conditions, where "current" means both the time of the novel's composition, the time of reference in the narrations and the suggested time of evocation. It is not so much the memory of the Civil War that defers this reconciliation but the memory fueled by an ongoing attitude that separates the world into saints and demons, displacing the sensibility that might have otherwise led to reconciliation, mutual forgiveness and symbiotic conditions. This attitude is a Manichaism that resides in the political scene, as suggested by the narrators'

references to PASOK's indiscriminate award of war pensions to participants of the "Resistance" (e.g. p. 286), but it is also an antagonism that inhabits the community as a cultural trait. The theatre critic Kostas Georgousopoulos commented on this referring to the debate over *Orthokosta* as a national characteristic of the Greeks who "appear forever prepared to engage in a brawl even when there is no serious reason".[61] *Orthokosta* appears to comment on the unwillingness to change this "cultural trait" through the wholesale adoption of a persuasive narrative which would form the basis for its alteration or for a new arbitrary naming that does not carry the potential to violate corporal integrity. At this point, it becomes important to discuss the prologue, epilogue and title of the novel.

The testimonial narratives in *Orthokosta* are framed by two putatively extraneous segments which are italicized and are, therefore, semiotically set apart from the main corpus of narratives. The prologue presents itself as an excerpt, anterior to the timeframe of the Civil War, from the writings of the bishop Isaakios and is written in Puristic Greek (*katharevousa*). In it the narrator describes the area around the monastery of Orthokosta which was used as a prison camp by ELAS during the civil conflict. The description is lyrical and charts, in a general manner, the geographical territory in which most of the events of the novel unfold. The excerpt also contains some of the novel's basic themes such as plundering, the destruction and devastation of the monastery by military raids (in 1742) and its following reconstruction by a monk called "Varnavas". The monk's nickname is "Kafsoxyliotis" (= 'wood burner'), an ironic name given the dominant theme of arson in the novel. While the prologue describes the process of a reconstruction and evokes a lyrical description of the surroundings, the epilogue demolishes the lyricism by describing it as a "poetic evasion under duress of a coerced life" (p. 338). The message appears to be that violence as a theme cannot adopt lyricism and metaphor on a wholesale basis for the transformation of the discourse that deals with the topic into an "aesthetic form". *Orthokosta* does not deceive its reader with this kind of aesthetic hoax. For example, the area around the monastery cannot exclusively be treated as "beautiful and evergreen" and it does not cause "pleasure and delight" as claimed by Issakios (p. 10) since in the main narratives it is associated with plunder, fire, violence, and overall destruction. Indeed in the narratives themselves there is a tendency to give negative attributes to place names such as "Memos' field" (p. 72) where a character's killing is commemorated, the village of "Masklina" where the German headquarters were and where many characters sought protection from

ELAS, or an unspecified locality where mules instinctively refuse to approach (p. 160). However, there is also an element of doubt about their categorical or one-sided signification.

The same occurs with the characters of the novel with the information that accumulates about them almost never being consistently negative or positive. Some notable exceptions to this are the martyr-like figures of Themistoklis Anagnostakos and Alexandra Boini on the side of those who suffered premature and unjust deaths and the frantic "reactionary" Michalis Galaxydis who is presented as a short-tempered, impulsive and sexually repressed individual, an example to be avoided. Overall, however, there is a tendency towards what might be termed as a "double" or "contradictory signification" of the proper noun. This is related to a radical ambiguity that underlies the novel and concerns the significance attributed to narratives about the civil conflict. If the narrators commemorate its violence in didactic allegories that illustrate their desire to eschew the violence both at the time of narration and in the future, they are doing so in order to make the memory of this violence viable. The issue that arises from this is whether the possible viability is yet another form of self-deceit about the potential resurfacing of this violence. The epilogue of the novel provides an ambiguous but, in my view, interesting answer.

In the epilogue, the narrator mentions that the monastery was originally built in the Byzantine time of the Iconomachies that is in the time of another kind of fratricidal conflict between Christian dogmas. It has already been suggested that religious and political dogmatism are paralleled in the novel.[62] This reading is reinforced by the psalmist maxim at the beginning of the novel and by the information that Isaakios was incarcerated in the monastery for twelve years for "erroneous belief and simony" (p. 338), in approximately the same manner that captives of ELAS were held in the same place. However, this juxtaposition between religious dogmatism and supposedly politically-based intolerance is both drawn and undermined in the text as most of the atrocities committed appear to not have belief, or any kind of dogma, as their basis but impulsive, arbitrary and self-serving behavior. The building of the monastery during a time of conflict confirms this, as it is inconsistent with what occurs in the community of Kastri in 1944 where humans and buildings are destroyed in equal measure. The inconsistency accords well with the rebuilding of the monastery by the ironically nicknamed Varnavas as "wood burner". The resulting irony draws the reader's attention to the unjustifiably and inexplicably extreme conditions of the Civil War as these are presented in the

novel. It also draws attention to the significance of the themes of rebuilding, constructing and destroying for an understanding of Valtinos' text.

Narration and narrative are presented in the novel as creative or constructive activities. Yet, the meaning that is attributed to the title of the subsidiary narratives that make up the novel is full of negative connotations that relate to torture, destruction and unnatural death. However, the narrator of the epilogue states that the meaning of the place name "Orthokosta" eludes him or is unclear (the Greek term is λανθάνει, p. 337). In this formally expressed statement it is suggested that the signifier 'Orthokosta' is not irreversibly attached to its current signified. Contrarily, it may acquire a new significance in the future as it did in the past in the lyrical discourse of Isaakios. The novel is permeated by the potential of, or desire for, this new signification, but with a certain reticence on the part of the anonymous narrator of the epilogue who cannot see it happening at this point in time. Hence, his dismissal of Isaakios' lyrical description of the area as "poetic evasions" and as "inaccurate" (pp. 337-8). The implication is that a new narrative is required that will exploit the resources of historical memory for more creative purposes without falsifying them in the interests of a Manichaic view of the world. This narrative is, to an extent, *Orthokosta* itself, but there is also the underlying implication that it could have been different than what it is. The exploitation of memory includes the mythologizing of certain characters who will serve the narrative as types who symbolize the ethos of a community. In most cases, this community attributes greater value to the moral fibre of an individual than to the party, bloc or organization that he or she chose, happened or was forced to serve.

In conclusion, one might claim that the reality represented by the narrators of *Orthokosta* is at a considerable remove from the reality that leftist historiography of the Civil War presents. With *Orthokosta* Valtinos appears to be making, not a plea, but an imperative request for a different kind of historiography without pretending to produce one himself. The naïve requests of some commentators that the novel should comply with the agreed findings of historical research seem absurd as a result.[63] By contrast to the novel, leftist historiography of the Civil War seems like a form of realistic literature which is confined retrogressively to a melancholy aesthetic of Greek Modernism which treated history as a national tragedy and its otherwise active participants as prey to higher forces moving inexorably towards their unjust demise. This kind of tragic sense is undermined and restrained in *Orthokosta* as indeed it was in Valtinos' novella *The Descent of the Nine* in 1963. Through the narration of the events of a micro-history, both texts appear to request an as

yet unwritten historiography which, instead of claiming to be "correct" (*orthos*), by presenting the Civil War as a kind of "Star Wars" between the forces of good and evil, will restrain its inclination towards an ideological exploitation of the conflict. The discourse of this new historiography will be open to new narratives about the Civil War without displaying intolerance to their potential difference; nor will it attempt to homogenize them into a grand narrative of a "pandemic people's tragedy". In my view, this state of suspending unreserved scientific or hermeneutic eschatology is an issue of a literary aesthetic *par excellence* and one of the crucial features of Postmodernism.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented and submitted for circulation to the participants of the Second PhD Symposium on Modern Greece at the London School of Economics (10 June 2005). Since then, it was made available on the internet in PDF format (See: http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/hellenicObservatory/pdf/2nd_Symposium/Dimitris_Paivanas_paper.pdf.) This is a revised and updated version.
2. See e.g. Chouliaras 2003: 434 and Vasileiou 2004: 7. On 80s Populism see Clogg 1993.
3. Stavropoulos 1995: 34. See also Chatzivasileiou 1994: 19, Voulgaris 2001: 696, Karahalios 2001b: 1066 and Pylarinos 2003: 50.
4. Moraitis 1994: 16 and Stavropoulos 1995: 34.
5. See Kazantzaki 2004: 30. The author himself claims to have had the book practically finished since 1984 (personal interview 23.6.2001).
6. See Vasilakou 1994: 76 and "almost Civil-War-like debate" in Chouzouri 2004: 66.
7. The historian Philippos Iliou, the poet Titos Patrikios, and the literary critic Dimitris Raftopoulos (see Moraitis 1994:16 and Sella 2004: 47) formed the troika that was invited by the author to present the book on the day of its inaugural launch in 1994. Valtinos confessed to me in a personal interview (23.06.2001) that he had anticipated some reaction to *Orthokosta* from the leftist sector. The troika of the presentation panel appears to have been strategically chosen by the author to mitigate possible negative responses from members of the intellectual population. See also the somewhat provocative pre-publication of part of chapter 41 of the novel in Lambria and Bati 1994: 16.
8. Notable exceptions to this are Pylarinos 2003: 45-51, Kendrotis 2003: 149-175, Souliotis 2004: A50-1 and Ziras 2003: 41-53. The latter avoids commenting on the controversy of *Orthokosta*.

9. Kostopoulos 2003: 44.

10. Sella 2004: 47.

11. Voulgaris 2004: 19-20.

12. Kazantzaki 2005:19.

13. Raftopoulos 1994b: 51 and Kostopoulos *et al* 2003: 44-5.

14. Judging from the posthumously published proceedings, there was not a single mention of Valtinos or of the *Orthokosta* controversy in the commemorative conference on the Civil War held in 1995 (Fleischer 2003). Indeed, at least R. Clogg and L. Baerentzen had published on the subject of the Left's conduct during the Greek Civil War well before the publication of *Orthokosta*. See Baerentzen 1984 and Clogg 1987.

15. In 1978, Tsoukalas argued that the Civil War had ended in 1974 vis-à-vis its ideological and cultural implications (Tsoukalas 1984: 561). In 1995 Chouliaras wondered "When did [the Civil War] actually finish" (Chouliaras 2003: 429). Ironically, in 1994, Katia Lebesi of the "Kedros" publishing house had claimed that the theme of the Civil War was "a bit *passé*" (quoted in Chouliaras 2003: 428, n. 2).

16. See below and Paivanas 2005.

17. The novel was defended by a variety of commentators including journalists (Boukalas 1994: 14), historians (Philippos Iliou spoke in favour of the novel on the day of its inaugural launch- personal interview with Valtinos 23.6.2001 and see also Moraitis 1994: 16), literary critics (Daskalopoulos 1994, Chatzivasileiou 1994, Kouvaras 1994: 73-5, Raftopoulos 1994a and 1994b, Mendrakos 1994: 24, Fokas 1994: 129-33, Politi 1997: 229-45, Charalambidou 1997: 249-77, Calotychos 2001: 151-65) and other writers (Dimou 1994:65, Nollas 1994:12 and Fais 1995a:74), and, in a series of published interviews, by the author himself (Georgakopoulou 1994: 28-9, Vasilakou 1994: 76-8, Chartoulari 1994: 63, and, more recently, Chouzouri 2004: 66-7 and Pimblis 2004b: 12-3). See also Valtinos 1997 329-339, and the dialogue between Voulgaris and Karahalios in Voulgaris 1999: 49-55, Karahalios 2001a: 472-80, Voulgaris 2001a: 694-6 and Karahalios 2001b: 1066-7. Negative commentaries include Theotokas 1994: 61-3, Machairas 1994 and Machairas 2004: 11, Voukelatos 1994: 22-7, Karali 1994: 20, Kangelari 1994: 52-3, Moraitis 1994: 4 and Moraitis 2004: 11, Triandafyllou 1994: 160-64, Voulgaris 1995: 46-7, Stavropoulos 1995: 34, and the ambiguous Voulgaris 2004a.

18. E.g. Voukelatos 1994: 22-7 and Voulgaris 1999: 52-3.

19. Politi 1997:233.

20. Raftopoulos 1994a: 34.

21. Kangelari 1994: 52-3, and Karali 1994: 20.

22. Triandafyllou 1994: 161 and 163; See also Stavropoulos 1995: 34.

23. Elefantis 2002c. See also Apostolidou 2003: 248-63.

24. Politi 1997: 233.

25. For example, the atrocities committed by the Communists in Yugoslavian camps are not adequately discussed by Margaritis, despite the fact that a text that does discuss them to some extent is listed in the bibliography (Koutsoukalis 1989). The matter is described in very general terms as a "dark page in the history of the Greek Left" and is dramatized in highly abstract fashion when it is described as "another sad story of uprooted refugees" (Margaritis 2001B: 592-3, my translation).

26. Margaritis 2000A: 21.

27. Voulgaris 2004a. See also Voulgaris 2004b and Voulgaris 2005:19 where the commentator attempts to prove that Valtinos is in error on historiographic grounds betraying his treatment of the text as historiography.

28. See Voulgaris 2001b and 1995, 1999: 49-55 and 2001a: 694-6.

29. Elefantis 2001: 3-45. The Greek Civil War debate seems to have spawned a series of literary works. Some recent examples are Davvetas 2006 and Marangopoulos 2006.

30. See e.g. Elefantis 1995: 32-45, Elefantis 2002b: 24-28, Kourtovik 2000: 34, Sella 2004: 47, Kazantzaki 2004: 30, Alexiou 2004: 14, Pimblis 2004a: 22, Papaioannou 2004b: 12, Machairas 2004: 11, and Voulgaris 2004b: 29.

31. See e.g., Margaritis 2002b: 333-4, Kalyvas 2003a, 2003b, 2003c: 37-70, 2004a, 2004b: 38, 2004c: 12-3, Kalyvas 2004d: 40, Kalyvas and Marantzidis 2004a: 10-11 and 2004b:14-5, Elefantis 2002a: 14-7, Kremmydas 2002a: and 2002b, Exertzoglou 2002, Gazi 2003a: 18-21, Theotokas 2003, Liakos 1999:21-5, 2003: 12-7, 2004a: 12-3, 2004b: 14-15, Bohotis 2003: 32-5, Psychopaidis 2003: 36-42, Chartoulari 2003b: 32, Machairas 2004: 11, Margaritis 2004a: 6-7, 2004b:10-11, Mailis 2004: 11, Panourgia 2004: 22, Meyer 2004: 10, Papaioannou 2004a: 8-9 and 2004b: 12, Kairidis 2004: 11, Kambylis 2004: 12-3, Fleischer 2004: 12-3, Syros 2004: 44, Nikolakopoulos 2004: 10-11, Voglis 2004a: 20-8 and 2004b: 40-1, Lambropoulou 2005: A46, Lambropoulos 2005: 4, and Moschopoulos 2004: 3-7.

32. Unfavourable criticisms of Postmodernism include Terzakis 1988: 84, Elefantis 1989: 37, Tsoukalas 1996: 63-5, Tsinorema 1996: 42f, Theotokas 2002: 24, n. 3 and 2003: 25, Datsi 2003: 46, Bohotis 2003: 33, Papamichail 2003: 36-40 and Vagenas 2002. For less biased approaches see Gazi 2003a: 18-21, and Kindi 2003: 34-40.

33. See e.g. Voulgaris 2004c: 24.

34. See e.g. Elefantis 1979b: 68-9.

35. See, e.g. Kapralos 2004: 67, Venetis 2004: 44, Syros 2004: 44, and Apostolidou 1997: 16.

36. Sella 2005: 8 and Chartoulari 2005: 30-1.

37. In Prokopaki 1980: 65.

38. For commentaries on Alexandrou's *To kivotio*, see e.g. Raftopoulos 2004: 348-60.

39. Margaritis 2001A: 31, note 4.

40. *The Descent of the Nine* was written in 1959 and submitted to the periodical *Epoches* in 1963 against Valtinos' knowledge by George Savvidis, apparently as a literary contribution to the debate around Tsirkas' novels to which Savvidis himself had contributed (see Paivanas 2004b: 306-14 and 2005). *The Descent of the Nine* was described, somewhat ambiguously, as an "antipode" to *Orthokosta* (Mendrakos 1994: 24).

41. Tsaknias 1979.

42. For an extensive discussion of *The Descent of the Nine* see Paivanas 2005.

43. See Mavrogordatos 1999: 39.

44. Carabott and Sfikas 2004: 2.

45. Cited in Valtinos 2003: 79 and recently reprinted in Valtinos 2009: 206-9.

46. See Elefantis and Kavouriaris 1977: 14-25, Elefantis 1981: 6-15, Elefantis 1987: 11-14, Elefantis 1988a: 13-17, Elefantis 1988b 11-15, and Elefantis 1989: 28-37.

47. See, e.g., Liontis 1984: 50-4, Schina 1989 and Paivanas 2004a: 142-5.

48. See Elefantis 1979b: 68.

49. Moraitis 1994: 16 and Voukelatos 1994: 23.

50. Kangelari 1994: 53.

51. Triandafyllou 1994, Karali 1994 and Sella 2004.

52. Politi 1997 and Calotychos 2000.

53. Mavrogordatos 1999: 39-40.

54. Liakos 2004b: 15.

55. Fokas 1994: 33. See also Raftopoulos 1994b: 50, Georgakopoulou 1994: 5/29 and Kazantzaki 2004: 30. On "Socialist Realism" in Greece see the debate in Prokopaki 1980, Kotzia 2002: 404-14 and on its origins see Tsantsanoglou 2005: 8-10. See also Valtinos own view in Kalamaras 2009: 17.

56. Similar methods are attributed to the other side (p. 29). All page references to the novel are to the second reprint of the first edition (1994). All quoted translations from the novel are mine.

57. See Svoronos 1982: 27-9.

58. Chartoulari 1994: 63.

59. «And I thought, since we're all going to die, why, why did we do these things? It was the need for revenge» (p. 286, my translation)

60. See, e.g. «There was the village of Oria. They hated the people from Karatoula, there was a lot of hatred between the two villages» and «...you know what I'm thinking? I understand having differences, having self-interests, but up to that point, my man? Up to that point?» (p. 46, my translation). See also chapter 47. For an excellent commentary from an anthropological perspective on *Orthokosta* (among other texts by Valtinos), see Papailias 2005: 139-178.

61. Georgousopoulos 2004: 16.

62. Raftopoulos 1994a: 32-3 and Politi 1997: 231.

63. Sella 2004: 42.

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Constructing Meaning in Apostolidis' *Pyramid 67*

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RÉSUMÉ

Le roman Pyramid 67 d' Apostolidis va bien au-delà de la fonction d'un témoignage de fiction et son principal objectif est de documenter l'expérience individuelle d'un événement important collectivement. C'est, plutôt, une quête de vérité authentiquement personnelle, avec des perceptions et interprétations différentes du passé. L'oscillation constante entre l'observation et la réflexion, la focalisation externe et interne, rend une vérité qui n'est ni donnée ni absolue, mais partielle, provisoire, et construite. Le roman expose dans la fiction la façon dont la conscience individuelle crée une certaine réalité, ce qui représente à la fois le monde comme illuminé par la conscience ainsi que le processus phénoménologique lui-même dans l'acte de percevoir et d'interpréter les événements. Le lecteur, lui aussi, est amené à faire l'expérience de cette vision de la réalité, en assumant pour lui-même le point de vue d'une conscience constitutive.

ABSTRACT

Apostolidis' Pyramid 67 goes far beyond the function of a fictional testimony and its primary goal of documenting the individual experience of a collectively important event. It is, rather, a quest for truth that acknowledges authentically personal and therefore differing perceptions and interpretations of the past. The constant oscillation between observation and reflection, external and internal focalization, thereby renders a truth that is not given and absolute, but partial, provisional, and constructed. The novel displays in fiction how individual consciousness creates a certain reality, thus it both depicts the world as illuminated by consciousness as well as the phenomenological process itself in the act of perceiving and interpreting events. The reader, too, is made to experience this vision of reality, assuming to him-or herself the viewpoint of a constitutive consciousness.

The legacy of the Greek civil war can be read as a quest for historical truth that gradually evolves from partisan recriminations to the insight that

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reconciliation cannot rest with a single agreed narrative representing the truth about the past. In fact, reconciliation in Greek society is eventually achieved when perceived injustices are righted and the free articulation of differing interpretations of the past, by both Left and Right, are admitted within a democratic environment.[1]

In this article, I focus on the first novel that deals directly with the subject of the Greek civil war and exhorts such steps towards reconciliation, Renos Apostolidis' *Pyramid 67*. This novel does not only transcend the political and literary discourse of its time, but also promotes individual experience and perception as the only guarantor for truth about the past. 'Truth' is defined here not as the unmediated, objective transcription of events, but as a personally authentic, essential quality of 'reality.' This corresponds to Liakos' concept of a subjective sense of 'reality' conveyed through literature as distinguished from a logical, positivist 'truth' pursued by History.[2] As the latter points out, this is because "the *likelihood* [of an image] contains the possibility of being. Consequently, *reality* comprises what happened and how it could be. Thus, *truth* is something less than *reality.*"[3] As a result, Apostolidis' novel looks ahead to Greek civil war novels that problematize the intelligibility and representability of the past, especially during the 1990s.[4] For the purpose of this article, I shall examine how reality and, with it, meaning is constructed in *Pyramid 67*.

Published in 1950, *Pyramid 67* would remain the only direct representation of the civil war until the publication of Valtinos' novella *The Descent of the Nine* in 1963.[5] While authors thematized the Albanian war, the Occupation, the aftermath of the civil war and the dictatorship, they deliberately avoided dealing directly with the civil war itself.[6] It has been argued that the lack of temporal distance to events did not allow for the necessary distancing between language and reality.[7] However, since the civil war is dealt with indirectly within the context of the resistance by a number of authors during the 1950s, this phenomenon seems to be attributable to the highly (politically) controversial nature of the subject matter itself, as well as to psychological factors.[8] As Kotzias put it: "...in our country, certain things cannot be said and therefore cannot be written. This means that several of our authors avoid dealing with what is dangerous..."[9] Apostolidis himself therefore took an exceptionally courageous stand, not only by explicitly identifying with the narrator, but also by criticizing the absurdity and moral bankruptcy of both factions at a time when Emergency Law 509, which was issued in 1948 and which criminalized leftist sympathizers, tried to curb such openness.[10] Not

surprisingly, the novel received a mixed initial reception. It was either regarded as a "chronicle of the bandit war" or rejected as amoral due to its rejection of both the Left and the Right.[11]

Kotzias, moreover, points to psychological reasons:

> *In order to tell the truth, one needs to discover it and, in order to do so, one needs, amongst other things, to be able to bear it once it is found... I think that we cannot bear Greek reality, we want to forget it...* when you realize that the ground is giving way under your feet without letting you tread anywhere, it becomes very difficult to describe this sense of freefalling."[12]

Despite the fact that Apostolidis repeatedly refers to depicting this "painful truth" as the experience of death itself, he nonetheless intrepidly sets out to do so.

The author/narrator was very much aware of his privileged position as an eye-witness to the most decisive battles of the civil war, between 1947 and 1949, when he was conscripted into the national army-the word 'observer' recurs consistently.[13] Furthermore, in contrast to its sequel *A2,* which is written from a temporal distance to the events, *Pyramid 67* is an attempt to capture the immediate impact of the civil war on the human psyche. This is why the narrator writes continuously, obsessively taking notes and writing letters, even during attacks, inside the dugouts or on the back of his donkey.[14] As soon as he is discharged from the national forces, he begins rewriting his notes, which results in what the author called in his prologue to the third edition, "the personal testimony of a survivor of the hell of the civil war" (ια') and, during an interview in 2003, "the only book on the truth about the civil war."[15]

Elaborating on this documentary dimension of the novel and in consensus with critics, such as Hatzivasileiou, Nikolopoulou characterizes the novel as a personal testimony of the Greek civil war, albeit a liminal one.[16] With the function of the narrator as a witness, the text is seen to partake in the construction of discourse regarding the events of the civil war, whereby authenticity is achieved through textual techniques. It is termed liminal, as it differentiates itself from traditional Greek literary testimonies by focussing on the experiencing-self rather than on events, and by employing the subjectivity of the narrator's consciousness, as a guarantor of the testimony's authenticity.[17]

In this article, by contrast, I shall argue that *Pyramid 67* goes far beyond the function of a literary testimony and its primary goal of documenting the individual experience of a collectively important event. The constant oscillation

between observation and reflection, I believe, draws attention to the very process of perceiving and giving sense to 'reality.' In order to discuss the construction of meaning, I shall demonstrate how Apostolidis embraces notions of Husserl's phenomenology by displaying in fiction how individual consciousness creates a certain reality. From this viewpoint, the text both depicts the world as illuminated by consciousness, as well as the phenomenological process of perception itself, that is, the act of perceiving and interpreting events. I shall also refer to notions of reader-response theory to illustrate how truth is not simply reflected but how the reader is made to experience it, assuming to him- or herself the viewpoint of a constitutive consciousness, that is, consciousness that partakes in the construction of the world it perceives.

I maintain that Apostolidis' novel goes beyond the function of a literary testimony for the following reasons. Firstly, the text subsequently acquired the subtitle "testimony of the civil war 47-49" (in the second edition of 1968), as Nikolopoulou has pointed out, which was changed to "the book on the civil war" in its third edition of 1995.[18] This would indicate a change in emphasis, stressing the work's literary character and indicating that its ultimate aim lies beyond the simple transcription of events. Furthermore, in his prologue to the third edition, the author professes that *Pyramid 67* is not merely to be understood as the "personal testimony of someone who witnessed the hell of the civil war" (ια), but also as a "metaphysical book". Since the text clearly rejects spiritual transcendence, this could be loosely applied to abstract philosophical studies of what lies beyond objective experience.

Secondly, *Pyramid 67's* primary goal does not coincide with that of the witnesses of other Greek literary testimonies, namely their referential claim to provide an unmediated transcription of events, as the prologue to the text itself illustrates (5-9, in contrast to the author's prologue to his work):[19]

> *And, out of spite, I will talk to you about colours, smells, horrific sounds, about everything haunting and intoxicating! I swear I will indecently assault your fresh memory of that barrel that rested, for better or for worse, on this corpse that has now taken root inside you, by talking about life's froth, about all the futile, the promising, ... about life's whole surface! I will take you... to the threshold of the most detestable horror I prepare for you, that of the eight circles of Hell... (8-9).*

Instead, the narrator's aim is to provide an insight into the "essence" of his experiences and how he interprets them, as the metaphorical "transfer" ("this corpse that now has taken root inside you") suggests. For this purpose, he will

focus on what it *feels* like to experience the civil war the way he did. Again for Liakos, but also for Valtinos, the ability to covey the "sensation" (συναίσθηση) of events lies within literature, not historiography.[20] This stands in contrast to science, where sensuous appearance is regarded as nothing but a subjective distortion of the underlying true reality and is, therefore, to be transcended.[21] The last chapter, which also doubles as an epilogue, affirms that subjective perception is regarded as a vital ingredient for conceptual understanding, in order to "soften" people's unfeeling hearts and to make them embrace forgiveness and reconciliation (317), as the following quotation illustrates:

> *Now you have learnt; now you know. You are no longer a heartless unbeliever. Your heart has been turned into wax- it is for you that I have basically written all this (and said what I told you)...And then, think that I was a child... Unfairly chased, unfairly beaten – forgive the others, too, forgive me also, forgive all of them. And if they caused so much harm, they did not mean to – it is impossible, nobody can want so much death, so much pain. (317)*

Thirdly, this explains why the narrator does anything but efface himself, his opinions or his values, in favour of the presentation of events, in sharp contrast, for example, to Yannis Beratis' documentary novel on the Albanian war, *The Wide River* (1946).[22] On the contrary, he "assaults", in Beaudelairean style, the unsuspecting reader in the prologue in a didactic, irreverent, almost accusatory tone:[23]

What keeps me from telling you what I want, even if it does not make sense? Why would I care about you enjoying yourself? What forces me to not destroy with an aesthetically displeasing account your comfort of reading to while away your time?... Answer! (8)

I agree with Nikolopoulou that, in this way, the narrator draws attention to himself and the writing process, thereby undermining the realist convention of verisimilitude.[24] By contrast, literary testimonies conventionally aim at blurring the line between fact and fiction through the deliberate disguise of such strategies. Metafictional commentary is, incidentally, recurrent in the novel with the narrator wondering about the purpose of his writing, the intelligibility of reality, or the adequacy of language. The prominent role of the narrator is further highlighted by the large amount of reflection and interpretation that has been commented on by critics.[25] What is more, the narrator's "preaching" of humanitarian values also runs counter to science's sharp distinction between facts and values.

The novel foregrounds further literary techniques that are conventionally absent from fictional testimony by oscillating between external and internal focalization.[26] This dual perspective renders, thus, both the point of view of the observer and the observed. Since the narrator regards himself both as guilty of having partaken in a collective act of evil, as a "war criminal", and of suffering at the hands of both factions, his viewpoint is also that of the victimizer and the victimized. Liakos suggests that, in literature, traumatic experience is placed within its historical framework in order to be "acted out" (and "felt"), which allows for its symbolic displacement, and with it, understanding and healing. This, again, refers back to the same critic's concept of reality as conveyed by literature being closer to the essence of events (πραγματικότητα) than History.[27] This consistently changing viewpoint is disquieting and evokes a sense of fragmentation and discontinuity. Hence, the author seems to voice scepticism over the extent to which the world/the past can be understood through a solely rationalist, objective, and therefore "totalizing" method.

Similarly, the use of the second person, singular and plural, adds to the impression of multiple, and therefore relative, rather than absolute viewpoints. The second person singular is characterized by equivocation, as it addresses not only the recipient of the narrator's letters, that is, his mother and his lover, but also the narrator himself, and, though more rarely, other characters (263); when it refers to the narrator himself, it assumes the form of an interior monologue.[28] The following quotations serve to exemplify the various uses of the second person singular:

(1) [the narrator addresses his mother:] "Each evening I start out towards you on the same way...Oh, how heartrending do I hear you call me when night falls!" (40)

(2) [the narrator addresses his lover:] "You never had to lean over brain spilled and heaped up on the ground and say: 'Sorry, comrade, that it was not me..!' ... ('I love you and I cannot die!..) (171)

(3) [the narrator addresses the reader:] "Why do I insist now? Because I want you to feel my misery? For you to understand? For you to forgive me? (102)

(4) [the narrator addresses himself:] "Your body follows and tries to endure. Yesterday, during the battle to get to the summit, it was not you who was victorious... It was not you who won, just your body, which overcame its physical weakness – but its ridiculous victories do not count them among your victories and get all puffed up! (120) also (191)

(5) [the narrator addresses other characters, such as a captain:] "To hell with your blue eyes, young man! To hell with your calm! Become a man!" [as these are the narrator's thoughts, no inverted commas are employed, he also addresses a general in this way on the same page] (263) also (272), (303ff.)

Furthermore, the oscillation between external and internal focalization is reflected in the sliding from the first to the changing second person that is a constant in the text. While the first person denotes the narrator's function as observer, the second person singular draws attention to the way reality is perceived by different viewpoints as well as to the narrator's analysis of what he observes.[29] This has a dizzying, denaturalizing effect on the reader, undermining referential stability and radically unsettling his or her sense of coherence and continuity. Most disturbing of all is the oscillation between the first and second person singular that both refer to the narrator himself. Instances when the narrator addresses himself in the second person singular are alternated with homodiegetic narration, as the beginning and the end of the novel exemplify: "I am the last of a group of seven..." (5) and "I am crossing my arms, waiting, again passing through, on the way to new death..." (318).

This device of a split consciousness also serves to illustrate Barthes' awareness of the doubleness of the self, here, as both narrator and interlocutor.[30] This oscillation indicates a "fissure in the subject", thereby making the latter appear decentred and lacking in authority.[31] The second person plural, which addresses the reader, further adds to the interplay of various viewpoints, including that of the reader in his role as observer, and as I shall argue, constitutive consciousness. Apart from these techniques, the consistent oscillation between denotation and connotation suggests the interplay of different fictional levels – the literal and the metaphorical – which again reflect the oscillating external and internal viewpoints. Hence, literary techniques are employed not primarily in the service of the unmediated transcription of events or to guarantee the authenticity of the narrator's testimony. By drawing attention to the narrator and the writing process, the novel shifts its emphasis from mirroring events to the depiction of the process of perception and interpretation itself as it manifests itself in the writing process.

In order to illuminate this process and to discuss the construction of meaning in the novel, I shall apply notions of Husserl's phenomenology to the text, which study the structures of experience, or consciousness.[32] In *Pyramid 67*, the role of "συνείδηση," which comprises the notion of consciousness (but also that of conscience), is foregrounded as being potentially "sharpened" by

the effect of war: "Hasty and violent – enraged, exasperated, rapacious consciousness!.. At fever pitch!.." (203). By contrast, others, including the narrator's comrades-in-arms and his reader (before he or she has read the book), are seen to languish in perpetual metaphorical darkness – they are "unbelievers," "ἄπιστοι," who are identifiable with the "shadows" roaming the underworld. Since this state causes humanity to degenerate, it is seen both as a cause and a consequence of the civil war itself.

According to the phenomenological approach, meaning can only be created in the very act of perceiving and interpreting. LeSage points out: "The world is there only because it is perceived by human consciousness, which gives it its significance and its reality. Inversely, consciousness is nothing without the world, since consciousness means consciousness of something." Consequently, "the writer's purpose is the same as the philosopher's: to depict the world as it is illuminated by consciousness and to depict consciousness itself in the act of perceiving and giving sense to the world."[33]

Pyramid 67 ultimately engages in the narrator's quest, not for factual truth or single narratives of truth ("recipes of truth" 211), but for what one could term the "essence" of events, which is subjective, yet universal and, therefore, sharable with the reader, as the following quotation implies:

> *The world is so strange, and reality so bizarre, so why do you rule out that all these reasons for things your defeated and discredited logic comes up with are illusions, and that those simple, albeit implausible things, which were generated by hazy, free sentiments inside us, at moments of endless tragedy and pain, are the true underlying principles of life? (132)*

Rationality, by contrast, which maintains that reason is the primary source of knowledge, is strictly rejected as an approach in this quest. In an irrational world, "where can we get with logic?" (132), the narrator asks. In addition, he is mocked by Saltadoros, the narrator's only openly critical fellow soldier, for being an "educated criminal." By contrast, the quest for truth, which doubles as a quest for life and freedom, is linked to the phenomenological act of perceiving and interpreting, both expressed by the metaphor of sight. The observer's gaze is, therefore, embraced as a constitutive part of truth:

> ... maybe reality is only what appears to be – o n l y w h a t a p p e a r s, a n d h o w it a p p e a r s e x a c t l y !.. There, there!, that what lives, what is perceived by the ordinary person, what moves inside him so effortlessly. (183)

Truth is, thus, no longer seen as absolute and given, but subjective and constructed. In this way, the world is viewed as being illuminated by the perceiver's consciousness, or, in the narrator's words: "Truth, I called out to him, nobody owns, brother! You live it and you ascend with it! (211)" This is further expressed by the intertextual reference to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Little Match Girl" (first published 1845), and the haunting image of a dying child illuminating the world she perceives with her matches in a desperate attempt to survive (217).

From this it follows that truth is not exhaustible, but partial and provisional. The narrator intimates that, instead of a complete picture of events, all he can offer are fragmentary images (103), unrelated moments of "absolute value" (22), that is, moments which bear but glimpses of truth. Tellingly, the narrator metaphorically never arrives, even when the war is over or when he has finished writing his novel:

> Each day I set out on the same road, but I do not arrive... I sow letters and the night sets in and the next day dawns, and they ask for more...Each day, on the same road that does not let you arrive. (212)

By insisting on the indeterminacy of the referent and the fragmentariness of perception, the novel illustrates that "truth" is forever under construction in the process of signification.

This quest for truth is linked to and realized through the writing process, as is expressed by Kostis, the narrator's only true friend, who addresses the narrator:

> ... you are so educated and know so much, and you examine and scrutinize all, don't you have anything, don't you find anything you could tell us? We ask you if it will dawn and you tell us: I don't see!... we beg you to tell us something we can believe in!.. And you, nothing! (75)

Kostis eventually comments: "Let him think for us – leave him and he will write something. (75)".

Consequently, the oscillation between external and internal focalization renders the very quality of the phenomenological process of perception and conceptualization. Experience alone is deemed insufficient without reflection, if not meaningless, as the group of "unbelievers," that is, the forgetful and indifferent repeatedly referred to in the novel, illustrates. However, perception, in addition to mental processes, is seen as a vital ingredient of cognition. In

what follows, I shall examine how the act of perceiving and giving sense to the world manifests itself in the text.

The narrator does not simply record the images he receives, but constructs his own vision of reality by imposing new structures on the perceived data through the interpretative process.[34] For this purpose, he selects, simplifies, abstracts, compares, and infers.

We notice, for example, that while dates and place names are frequently employed, this is not done systematically and consistently, but impressionistically: while some episodes are clearly placed within historical time and space, others are not. Neither do the chapter titles refer to such factual details. On the contrary, at times, the use of these details is ironic, as the random references to days of the week and times or hours of the day prove (midday, three o'clock). Similarly, the oscillation between the narrator's experiences at war and his peacetime memories undermine the impression of linear chronology, pointing to his personal experience of time, as the following quotation further illustrates:

> Day outside or night?.. The clocks showed eight, they showed nine, they showed ten! But what eight? what nine? what ten? Day or night? Today or yesterday? Or the day before yesterday? (282)

Time, in the novel on the whole, is not perceived as objective and linear, but as subjective and circular, implied by the circular movements of the national army and the references to recurrent suffering in the course of history.

What is more, place names also offer little referential clarity, since we only find very few distinctive descriptions of these locations; they remain allusive. In fact, we are given a rather impressionistic idea of the army's meandering and often circular route, the constant ascents and descents, the numerous deserted villages, and the similar horrific details that make these scenes seem interchangeable. By selecting and organizing the data of his experiences, the narrator simplifies and reduces the world he faces. He thereby eliminates the chaos of the world that surrounds him, which again helps him make sense of it. His is an apocalyptic vision of God-forsakenness and cataclysmic destruction.

Due to the narrator's lack of orientation, which is repeatedly referred to, his vision of reality lacks continuity and coherence. Instead of an orchestrated plot, we find disjointed episodes, sometimes within the same chapter, that are, on the whole, nothing more than snapshots, "fragmented images," as already

mentioned. These episodes are not only dissociated but also non-teleological, as they are only vaguely oriented towards a temporal end. The dominating structural principle here is juxtaposition as opposed to transition. In this way, the author intimates that synthesis is incommensurate with our actual experience and understanding of events, especially traumatic ones.

In addition, the process of perception and conceptualization embraces the possibility of contradiction, since a vision of reality always remains provisional, as we have seen. The narrator's claim of the impossibility of finding truth, for example, stands in sharp contrast to the various "glimpses" of truth he offers in the course of the novel as well as to the epilogue ("now you have learnt", 317):

> *(Things of the interior and exterior world, all things, both have and don't have their meanings and their contradictions, and nothing in common!.. They are unintelligible, and impenetrable and inconceivable!..) (182)*

Equally, although he doubts the meaningfulness of writing and the adequacy of language as a medium, the very act of writing the novel itself proves the opposite. Furthermore, he contradicts himself when he affirms that values do not exist while promoting humanitarianism throughout the novel (33). Many further examples can be found in the text. These, therefore, suggest that it is the narrator's perception and his (re)interpretation of reality that shapes his writing.

What is more, the narrator's viewpoint is not a static one, offered from the fixed vantage point of corrective hindsight. As the prologue suggests, he is initially equipped with only a "bank" of experiences, whose sense he sets out to capture in the course his novel. The structure is, in fact, evolving, thereby mirroring the process of perception.

More obvious still, the use of images and metaphors/similes in particular are clear manifestations of the narrator's consciousness at work. Here, imagination becomes, together with language, both a filter of reality and a medium through which to express it.[35] The narrator literally stockpiles images and establishes internal relationships and correspondences between them, which is a key ingredient of constructive imagination and the construction of meaning.[36] I shall list the most important ones.

(1) The narrator's glasses are a recurrent image in the novel that is linked to the metaphor of sight, thereby signifying both perception and conceptualization. In addition, the Greek word for observer, θεατής, is related to sight, as already hinted at. Sight becomes equated with

knowledge and is opposed to the narrator's initial lack of sight and both physical and metaphorical disorientation.

(2) Knowledge, as achieved by the narrator and the reader in the last chapter, is also associated with the idea of Christian faith (believer versus unbeliever) – this is employed only as an idea, since the narrator questions the existence of God. This is again linked with the image of the cross, which stands for redemptive suffering in the New Testament and is associated with the recurrent image of the defiled body in the novel (125, Kostis is called a saint who bears the narrator's cross, 93). The image of the cross evokes the images of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and this, in turn, reflects the narrator's metaphorical death and resurrection through the writing of the novel.

(3) The image of light is associated with that of fire and stands for hope, life and freedom (41), while physical and metaphorical darkness are associated with death, animality and slavery. The images of light and darkness are, furthermore, equated with good and evil (171), truth and lie (75), paradise and hell (272), as well as love and hatred (266).

(4) Metaphors of animals of prey, and of wolves in particular, evoke the brutalization and degradation of man by means of war, while animals such as the donkey or birds are personified as human companions. Animality is linked to a blunted consciousness, forgetfulness (forgetfulness as the explicit opposite of the Greek word "αλήθεια", "truth"), and disorientation, which again is associated with death and slavery. This is exemplified by the narrator's characterization of his comrades-in-arms during an imagined dialogue with a bird: "You will see, bird, how people kill!.. – With what rage!... Just look and you will see what has become of the beasts, the likes of me... They are going to go to their death, come what may!.. And many, very many will die... (187)".These are the "unfeeling unbelievers" who act according to their instincts and lack all self-awareness.

(5) The army's endless marches and ascents and descents conjure up the images of the Odyssean *Nekyia*, Odysseus' descent into and ascent from the underworld, which is described in the 11th book of Homer's *Odyssey.* Similarly, it is seen that the narrator gains insight into his predicament through his experience, which he judges as vital to convey to his reader.

There are two principles of organization here; those of similarities and binary oppositions. This network of internal relationships between a free and highly personal use of images and metaphors, which is reinforced through the device

of consistent repetition, conveys the state of the author's mind and hints at the dark, confused, degenerate, inexpressible reality he perceives, as contrasted with the world which he knew and for which he yearns. Furthermore, this system produces an original conception of the musical qualities of art. Thus, the theme of war is developed and "orchestrated" by the sensitive manipulations of rhythms, tones, and colours inherent in carefully chosen words. In this way, the essence of reality is glimpsed through the subjective emotional responses contributing to and generated by the work of art.[37] As a result, metaphorization can be regarded as a parallel and similar act to human consciousness, since "we are conscious of something only as it *stands for* something else working symbolically, or as we abstract it, metaphorically."[38]

The most striking examples of how the perceiving consciousness imposes and constructs meaning are the increasing number of passages of what Cohn calls "autonomous monologue," that is, a form of interior monologue that is not embedded in the surrounding narrative.[39] These do not only increase in number but also in their degree of lack of referentiality, especially towards the end of the novel during the time of the decisive battle of mounts Vitsi and Grammos. They assume, at times, a delirious quality, as the following extract demonstrates, which conjures up images of purgatory:

> *Hell is Paradise, Lord! Give us your Hell, Lord! There are fires burning here, glowing metals!.. Your Hell is Paradise, Lord! Give us your Hell, Lord!... Take a hammer and hit! hit! hit!, make the Mankovets glow, for us to live! Conquer its Paradise's cold- conquer it, Satan! Fill your cauldrons and empty them there on top! Make us suffocate in your lava, throw all your fires on us!.. Take a hammer and hit! hit! hit!, make the Mankovets glow, set it on fire, ignite it, my Satan, so we can live, so we can live!... I believe in You, I worship You, I implore You! (272)*

This extract clearly moves away from the reportorial orientation of narrative orientation and the description of appearances towards an inner reality as presented by the mimetic mind, suggesting that truth is ultimately to be found through the mind's creative transformation of reality. This is further implied by the following quotation:

> *And expression becomes even more unadorned, elliptical, laconic– thought even more influential! (Who has time for "proof"! You go and find "proof"!) The superficial unity of logical states and "frames" will be completely abolished. Each expression will fragment at the moment of its generation – more violently, more abruptly!.. Even more so, because images*

> *express much better the crisis of meaning in life. And, inevitably, "thought" will less and less differ from "art" and "dream" and "death". Ratio will turn into irratio.... (204)*

Another example is the narrator's "hymn" to an iconostasis, in which he asks the women who traditionally bear the Christ-child to step down, as the latter is missing (281-282). Unlike the previous quotation, where the events at mount Mankovets, a mountain which is located in the vicinity of mount Grammos, lie at the heart of narrator's delusion, the hymn to the iconostasis seems to be unrelated to a physical event. Both examples are anti-representational and undermine fictional coherence; fiction here assumes an oneiric, fantastic quality. In the first example, reality becomes imbued with the supernatural while in the second, an artistic representation becomes real.[40]

Finally, I shall apply notions of reader-response criticism in order to examine the reader's role, which is foregrounded in the text. On the one hand, the novel is written to make the latter "feel" the experience of the civil war the narrator underwent in order to effect a change in their attitude and to engender general forgiveness and reconciliation. On the other hand, the reader assumes the novel's *raison d' être,* which is implied by the narrator's words: "Only now do I arrive at the pyramid!.. Have mercy on my exhaustion. As if you were the summit of a perpetual ascent (317)." In other words, the reader is to be immersed in the author's mode of experiencing the world while at the same time bringing the literary work into existence. The reader does not only have the power to deliver the narrator from his exhausting task, but also to allow the novel to exist outside itself, that is in the reader's mind.

Georges Poulet's phenomenological criticism as part of reader-response criticism helps shed light on this author/narrator-reader relationship. While Poulet does not assume that the meaning of the literary work is dependent on the reader, he claims that its "fate" or mode of existence is. Thus a book is the author's "means of saving his identity from death". The point of connection between the author and the reader is that the latter's consciousness becomes invaded by that of the former and he "feels" what he reads (45). Poulet describes what happens during the reading process:

> *I am aware of a rational being, of a consciousness; the consciousness of another, no different from the one I automatically assume in every human being I encounter, except that in this case the consciousness is open to me, welcomes me, lets me look deep inside itself, and even allows me, with unheard-of license, to think what it thinks and to feel what it feels... For*

> *the book is no longer a material reality. It has become a series of words, of images, of ideas which in their turn begin to exist. And where is this new existence? Surely not in the paper object. Nor, surely, in external space. There is only one place left for this new existence: my innermost self. (42)*

Thus, the reader's interiority plays host to the interiority of the author. In this way, as Tomkins stresses, the focus on the reader's consciousness is not equivalent to a reflector of the text's meaning, but to a mental attitude that produces a total apprehension of the text's subjectivity.[41]

Moreover, in the course of the novel, the role of the implied reader is essentially passive, he "learns" from his experience and is explicitly asked by the narrator not to exercise his potential role of a judge. Unlike the reader of Alexandrou's novel, *The Box*, for example, the reader is not forced to interpret with what he or she is presented, since an end and moral explanations are provided. This is, therefore, a variation on what Barthes calls in *S/Z* the "writerly text," which transforms the reader equally into a writer who recreates the text by filling in the gaps and by conceiving meanings for the narrative. Here by contrast, by "hosting" the author's consciousness, the reader undergoes the experience of "constructing" the author's vision of reality in unison with the latter, thereby becoming a constitutive consciousness him- or herself. Since art in a wider sense is understood to transcend reality and endow it with meaning, the reader learns to "partake" in the creation of truth and to apply this to his own perception of the world.

Conclusions

Apostolidis' problematization of historical truth, which shares with contemporary historiography the issues of the intelligibility and representability of its referent and the acceptance of "microhistories" and "fragments" as legitimate discursive forms, situates the novel on the boundaries between modernism and postmodernism.[42] It can be characterized as an example of "postmodernist historiographic metafiction" in that it demystifies totalizing-narratives – Lyotards' so-called "grand metanarratives" of our time – as found in the narratives that lay at the heart of the Greek civil war. In addition, it explores how we can "know" the past and "self-consciously acknowledges its existence as representation – that is, as interpreting (indeed creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it."[43] As has been demonstrated, the novel constructs only provisional realities and meanings and thereby points to the "radically indeterminate and unstable

nature of textuality" (46) characteristic of historiographic metafiction. In addition, subjectivity is decentred in the novel, as the narrator no longer assumes cognitive privilege. His sense of awareness allows him to share with the reader the experience of partial truth or truths. What is more, *Pyramid 67,* does not escape the past, but comes to terms with it and acknowledges its limitations as well as its powers.

While these characteristics would point Apostolidis' prose work in the direction of post-modernism, the novel is still very much rooted in modernism with its yearning to preserve the autonomy and individuality of individual existence in the face of overwhelming historical forces. Searching for new ways to make sense in a broken world, the novel is an attempt to transform pain into life-giving energy. This idea is reminiscent of Bergson's *élan vital*, which is also expressed by the image of the "perpetual ascent". This is combined with a fiery, dramatic language and the belief in the redemptive power of art, both directly and indirectly evoked through the extensive, unconventional use of images, metaphors and symbolic representation.

To conclude, *Pyramid 67*, as the epilogue informs us, is the image of a stone monument that functions as a demarcation sign. It becomes the overarching metaphor of the force of life that withstands the "fire" of war as well as the symbol of the never-ending quest ("endless ascent", 317) for truth and meaning. This is then a modern Odyssey with a twist, not because its protagonist has become weak-minded and forgetful, but because its Ithaca proves to be ultimately elusive and humanly unattainable. The Odyssey assumes the form of a textual labyrinth of consciousness and memory, of creating realities and meanings, which remain partial and provisional. These meanings are fragmentary, yet powerful insights into the "essence" of the civil war, transcending intolerance and hatred at a time when reconciliation seemed a rather utopian vision.

NOTES

1. Siani-Davies and Katsikas: 2009, 559.
2. Liakos (2007:155 and 227)
3. *ibid.*:155.
4. Kotzias (1989, 387) refers to the novel as a "catalyst" for future literary developments regarding the civil war. Examples are Aris Alexandrou's *The Box*

(1975), Pavlos Matesis' *The Dog's Mother* (1990), Thanasis Valtinos' *Orthokosta* (1994) and Aris Fakinou's *Stolen Life* (1995).

5. An exception is Plaskovitis' short story "The vine-shoots", which was published shortly after Apostolidis' novel and Nikos Kazantzakis' *The Fratricides*, which is, like Valtinos' novella, published in 1963. On the whole, direct literary representations that deal with the outright civil war are rare during the first three decades following the civil war. While novels such as Andreas Frangias' *The Plague* (1972) or Aris Alexandrou's *The Box* (1975) treat the civil war allegorically, had to wait until the 1980s and 90s to see a considerable number of such novels published. Among the best known of these novels are Nicholas Gage's Eleni (1983), Chronis Missios' ...*So you died early...* (1985), Alki Zëi's *Achilles' Fiancé* (1987), Aris Fakinou's *Odysseus' children* (1989), Pavlos Matesis' *The Dog's Mother* (1990), Thanasis Valtinos' *Orthokosta* (1994) and Aris Fakinou's *Stolen Life* (1995).
6. Kotzias: 1989, 387.
7. Nikolopoulou : 2004, 209.
8. Examples are Alexandros Kotzias' *Siege* (1953), Nikos Kasdaglis' *The teeth of the millstone* (1955) or Th. D. Frangopoulos' *Fight on the walls* (1954).
9. Argyriou *et al.,* 1989, 324.
10. As Voglis points out, "the law enabling the vetting of civil servants and the thorough purge of the State apparatus of leftists was passed in 1948. The law provided that only 'loyal' citizens would be employed as civil servants." (Polymeris Voglis, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2002;37; 523; The online version of this article can be found at : http://jch.sagepub.com)
11. For example, Barlas : 1952, in Hatzivasileiou : 1989, 243.
12. Argyriou, *op.cit.,* 324 and Kotzias *op.* cit*.,* 387-88.
13. A comparison with Apostolidis' notes in *Response to Pyramid 67* (1996), which contains direct references to passages in the novel, gives the reader an indication to what degree actual events have been reduced and thereby transcended.
14. In fact, the novel is based on the author's letters to his mother and to the woman who was to become his first wife, as well as on diary notes that he wrote on cigarette packages. See prologue to the novel and the article by Hatzivasileiou in *Eleutherotypia*, 19 April 2004.
15. Kalamaras: 08.12.2003.
16. Hazivasileiou : 1995: 54.
17. Nikolopoulou, *op.cit.,* 209.
18. *ibid.*, 210.
19. Examples are Stratis Myrivilis' *Life in the Tomb* (1924), Ilias Venezis' *The number*

31328 (1924), Stratis Doukas' *A Prisoner's Story* (1929) or Yannis Beratis' *The Broad River* (1946).

20. Liakos, *op.cit.*, 227. Valtinos: 1995, 333, equally distinguishes the "knowledge of History" (η γνώση της Ιστορίας) from the "sensation of History" (αίσθηση της Ιστορίας).
21. Zahavi: 2003, 127.
22. See Beaton: 1999, 235.
23. I am referring here, of course, to Charles Beaudelaire's introductory poem "To the Reader" of the collection *The Flowers of Evil* (1868), in which the poet implies that the reader is a hypocrite, that is, judgmental despite the fact that he is equated with the "refined monster" in the poem.
24. Nikolopoulou, op.cit., 215.
25. Xatzivasileiou, *op.cit.,* 1989 : 231. Tziovas: 1993, 205.
26. Tziovas *op.cit.*, 205, points to a double focalization, both external, on the events, and internal, through the narrator's consciousness.
27. Liakos, *op.cit.,* 225-227.
28. Hatzivasileiou, *op.cit.,* 1989, 231. While Hatzivasileiou refers to the function of the second person singular as an interior monologue, he does not mention that this is not its only function.
29. Hatzivasileiou (1989: 231) distinguishes between three main voices: the first person singular, which analyzes the events, the interior monologue of the second person singular, which allows an insight into the narrator's psyche, and the second person plural, which addresses "the others." However, no mention is made of the changing second person singular.
30. The first person referring to the narrator is as prevalent as that of the second person, as the first sentence of the prologue indicates: "I am the last of a group of seven..." (5).
31. Hutcheon: 1989, 38. This handling of point of view is reminiscent of Tsirkas' trilogy *Drifting Cities* (1960-1965) as well as Faulkner's novels.
32. Note that Hatzivasileiou (1989) refers vaguely to "remote Husserlian echoes" without specifying this. According to William Harmon and Hugh Holman, phenomenology can be defined in this way: "Phenomenology is a philosophical system that has proved to be the effective basis for a contemporary school of criticism. Phenomenology is a method that inspects the data of consciousness without presuppositions about epistemology or ontology... To the phenomenologist any object, although it has existence in time and space, achieves meaning or intelligibility only through the active use of a consciousness in which the object registers. Hence, phenomenology finds reality not in a noumenal

realm- in cause or material being – but in the psychical realm of awareness, to which it applies exhaustive analysis and description. Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, saw it as a psychology that distinctly separated the physical from the psychical and concentrated its attention on the psychical. To accomplish the analysis of the object as it registers in the consciousness, the phenomenologist suspends all presuppositions, inferences, or judgments about the object outside the consciousness." In Harmon and Holman: 1986, 371.

33. LeSage: 1962, 16-17.

34. A closer analysis of the text reveals that the principle of external and internal focalization does not coincide with a strict separation of alternating "objective" and "subjective" passages. On the contrary, passages of external focalization are often interlaced with the narrator's projected vision of the world. In this way, the process of perception, which ranges from the occurrence to the interpretation of sensory stimulation, is shown to shape rather than to mirror external reality. A good example of the way subjective meaning is projected onto external reality during the process of observation, is the description of mount Mankovets as a ship sailing unperturbed through a storm (278). In addition, the language employed is largely idiosyncratic, elliptical, highly dramatic, and repetitive, often defying conventional grammatical structures. The author even includes, seemingly arbitrarily, examples of *kathareousa*, Greek dialects as well as French, Latin and German words, the latter alluding to the Occupation. We also notice that the style becomes increasingly less referential towards the end of the novel, which indicates a tendency towards interiorization.

35. Equally, Ambatzopoulou (1998: 134) quotes Yorgos Veloudis, who remarks with respect to the traumatic literature of the Holocaust that "in order for the unfathomable to become fathomable by the imagination, the technique of verisimilitude has to be transcended: the basic material to render the world of the camp has to be conveyed through imaginary elements."

36. Kinney: 1978, 18.

37. This is reminiscent of symbolist poetry and Beaudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil* (1857) and its concept of *correspondences* or *synesthesia*, in particular.

38. Kinney, *op.cit.,* 261.

39. Cohn: 1978, ch. 6, 217-265.

40. Further examples are the personification of animals, especially the dog which assumes human traits (290-292) and the "poem" about Prince Rado, the lion, to whom a whole chapter is dedicated (303-308).

41. Tomkins: 1980, xiv.

42. Rigney: 2001, 84.

43. Hutcheon: 1989, 32.

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A Lifetime Squared: Of Performativity and Performance in Aris Alexandrou's *Mission Box*

Emmanuela Kantzia*

Language of action [is] the single and radical principle of all language.
Étienne Bonnot de Condillac
(through the mouth of Jacques Derrida)

RÉSUMÉ

La politique de confession dans la littérature grecque moderne de la Guerre civile est un sujet qui mérite d'être exploré à travers le prisme de la théorie des actes de langage. Dans l'œuvre d' Aris Alexandrou, *La Caisse,* le récit confessionnel semble à cheval entre la performance et la performativité. Le discours de la performance (déjà présent dans son œuvre précurseur *Antigone*) s'élabore au sein d'un cadre idéologique préétabli, où échangeabilité et remplaçabilité sont les signifiants primaires. Il est manifeste aussi bien dans les tropes rhétoriques (figures de style), qui abondent dans le récit ainsi que dans la logique «carrée» que le narrateur prétend incarner. Néanmoins, la tentative de ce dernier à agir en dehors du syllogisme du Parti s'effondre graduellement, la rhétorique privant la langue de son potentiel citationnel/itérable. Curieusement, c'est ce manque d'itérabilité qui transforme réellement la performance dans un performatif, rachetant le confessant si ce n'est que pour son intention de se faire entendre. Il est, par ailleurs, à noter, qu'en articulant la problématique de l'idéologie, la vérité et la Guerre civile, le roman d' Alexandrou résonne à la fois sur ses contemporains et les Anciens (y compris Platon, Sophocle et Thucydide).

ABSTRACT

The politics of confession in Modern Greek literature of the Civil War is a topic that deserves to be explored through the lens of speech-act theory. In Aris Alexandrou's *Mission Box,* the confessional narrative seems to straddle the lines between performance and performativity. The discourse of performance (already present in the work's prequel, Alexandrou's *Antigone*) works within a prescribed ideological framework where exchangeability and expendability are the primary signifiers. It is palpable both in the rhetorical tropes/fillings which abound in the narrative as well as in the "squared logic"

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which the narrator professes to embody. Nevertheless, the latter's attempt to act out the Party syllogism gradually collapses, rhetoric preempting language of its citational/iterable potential. Curiously, it is this lack of iterability that actually turns the performance into a performative, redeeming the confessant if only for his intention to be heard. It is, moreover, to be noted, that in articulating the problematics of ideology, truth and the Civil War, Alexandrou's novel resonates with both his contemporaries and the ancients (including Plato, Sophocles and Thucydides).

In one of the earliest reviews of *Mission Box*, Dimitris Raftopoulos refers to Alexandrou's textual strategy as a "mimesis of realism."[1] His description is most successful not only because it captures Alexandrou's politics of parody (or parody of politics), but, and most importantly, because it connotes a certain wilful paradox – for is not realism itself a kind of mimesis? Attempting to analyze this self-reflexive contradiction, we could assume the mimesis of realism to signify the mimesis of mimesis, in which case we would be dealing with a new twist to the old Platonic formula, or we could follow an Aristotelian thread and treat mimesis as some sort of act, some kind of performance.

Taking up an old argument, I will venture to argue that Civil War fiction of the so-called disappointed Left - and *Mission Box* in particular - deserves to be examined as some kind of performative discourse: that is as fiction that does not lay claims to historical realism, that cannot be dismissed or adopted as true or false, but that attempts to reinscribe the past into the present and, by so doing, is *acting* upon both the past and the present. Its "truth" therefore, if I may be permitted to use the term, is not only provisional, but also of a performative nature -which is to say that it belongs to the realms of both acting and action.

Clearly, the most obvious example where language is equated with *praxis* is the *Genesis:* "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." (I.3); "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." (I.5); "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: and it was so." (I.9) Creation here appears as an act of the word, an act of naming (*poesis* co-incides with *praxis*).[2] The kind of beginning (archē) that the Word signals is the beginning of a code which grants language its referential potential. Let it be noted that when Alexandrou was imprisoned in 1953, the Bible was the only book he had access to and

which he read "from morning till night",[3] a most ironic circumstance for one who had just finished the translation of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment.*

In 1955, a British analytic philosopher who had served in the British Intelligence during World War II delivered a series of lectures that were to be published posthumously by Harvard University Press under the title *How to Do Things with Words.*[4] Belonging to the philosophers of "ordinary language", J.L. Austin was primarily interested in elucidating the importance of linguistic context in everyday uses of language, by means of not only avoiding misunderstandings in communication, but also of correcting "the initial confusion into which philosophical doctrine and method have been plunged."[5] His point of departure in these lectures is a distinction he perceives between "constatives", that is linguistic statements that can be characterized as true or false, and what he calls "performatives," a specific use of language that is likened to action. His speech-act theory is an attempt to classify different types of language so as to derive the conditions for a statement a) to be a performative and b) to be a "happy" performative (that is to take effect as one). His treatise is often considered as a pragmatic attempt at classification and a most poignantly scholastic one at that (as a matter of fact all of the models which he tries to construct gradually collapse). Despite all the criticism that Austin's work has received, despite (or because of) his own proclamation as to its inadequacy, the work has opened up a new way of theorizing about language, the usefulness of which cannot be overestimated when it comes to the study of historical fiction.

Among the types of language of performative potential, one could list that of confession.[6] To borrow Austin's way of thinking, by saying "I confess that…" one does not simply describe an act; he or she is actually doing it. Moreover, if this act is not casual but actually performed in a legal context, then its repercussions are considerable. Not to mention a number of derivative acts that may spring thereof: persuasion, misleading, remorse, conversion, incrimination, acquittal –the list is endless.

And yet confession is a peculiar type of speech act, precisely because it tends to erase the difference between constatives and performatives. Surely the confessant is not simply reporting a series of events and one's involvement therein, but actually commits to the truth of his/her word. Nevertheless, it is precisely with respect to the truth/insincerity of the statement that the act will be judged as a "happy" (or "felicitous") one. In some cases, moreover, confession becomes synonymous to repentance, signaling a new beginning –and can even give rise to or serve as pretext for a conversion narrative. In this

respect, St.Augustine's *Confessions* would be an exemplary,[7] while C.P.Cavafy's "He Swears" a brilliant parody of the genre.

The politics of confession is a fascinating topic in the context of the Greek Civil War, confession being an integral part of the ideological apparatus of both (or all) sides. The declarations of repentance, for example, a practice that was initiated during the Metaxas dictatorship and became widespread after the Occupation, especially in the concentration camps, showcase Foucault's analysis of the confessional ritual as established in the West since the Medieval Inquisition.[8] This practice, if viewed as the Right's attempt at "the dissolution of the Communist Party from within through the creation of a climate of suspicion and paranoia"[9] brings to the fore the problematics of confession, or the way the latter tends to blur the boundaries between performativity and performance. In most cases the communists would sign the declarations under coercion, torture or the threat of violence.[10] The signing, however, could not always be denounced as a performance, given the fact that the names of the repentants were subsequently released so that they would be treated as traitors by their own.[11] On the other hand, one of the main mechanisms through which the Communist Party kept its members in check, was that of self-criticism, or the abuse thereof, particularly in attempts to silence voices of dissidence and ensure a common, a Party prism.[12] Both examples serve to show that confession as a process had degenerated not merely to a means of conversion, but in fact to the very mechanism of terrorism. This was only natural at a time when different forms and institutions of justice were competing in Greece in such a way as to bring into question the "fundamental relationship between justice and ideology."[13]

Aris Alexandrou (Aristotelis Vasileiadis) started writing his *Mission Box* in 1966, twenty years after the breaking of the Civil War and six years after the end of his second exile.[14] He completed it in 1972 in Paris, where he and his wife, Katy Drosou, moved after the military coup of 1967. Framed by his two exiles, while also looking back to the first uprooting from his Russian motherland, this pseudo-autobiographical novel becomes Alexandrou's apology and crowning of a lifetime. As the author confesses in a letter to Yannis Ritsos, all his poetry –which he judges as not quite meeting the standards of art– is vindicated only in having prepared him for this piece of fiction.[15] And yet it was not only Alexandrou's poetry that prepared him for *Mission Box*. In 1951 and while the poet was in Agios Efstratios, an exile even among his former comrades, he wrote a first version of his *Antigone,* which was to be completed in 1960. Raftopoulos has already pointed to the elements of plot

and character these two works share.[16] What interests me here, however, is another affinity between the two, and that is the issue of civil obedience – to which I will return.

Indeed, if there is one thing that stands out in all of Alexandrou's poetry, it is his attempt to communicate to a silent audience, to break the barriers of language if only through recourse to gesturing. It could not have been otherwise. His voluntary exit from the Communist Party, in 1943, marked his official seclusion from all political organizations. For the rest of his life he continued in a self-imposed exile: *fraternellement seul fraternellement libre.*[17] Denouncing all parties and political organizations, he proclaimed his solidarity with the earth's tortured and dispossessed, fighting against all forms of tyranny and oppression, as he so eloquently states in a poem entitled "Footnote":

Friend or foe, don't announce it anywhere.

Here I stand as a prisoner, obedient to the inner laws.[18]

This reformulation of Simonides' epigram[19] for Leonidas and his 300 who died in Thermopylae obeying the laws of their fellow Spartans, sums up the author's philosophy. As his Antigone, Alexandrou opts for imprisonment (a kind of suicide); in marked contrast to Leonidas, moreover, he refuses to obey any but the "inner" laws/words. This inscription is indeed addressed to a third party (friend or foe, presumably the *xenos*) who is asked not to transmit the message to anyone. And yet what does this wish to keep silent, exiled, secluded imply if not the wish to be heard precisely by the friend/foe? This, I believe, is the performative gesture, the speech act that is being made in *Mission Box,* albeit with certain twists.

Let us then turn to the novel[20] and try, for a moment, to read it through the lens of Austin's speech-act theory, that is read the narrator's (henceforth Writer's) discourse as some kind of performative.

First, in order for the speech act to be happy, there needs to be an "accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect."[21] In our case it would be almost impossible to identify which conventional procedure Writer's act would be invoking a) because his "speech act" falls somewhere in between a response to an interrogation, an apology, a deposition and a testimony,[22] b) because it is not certain by whom this procedure is accepted or sanctioned, under which law it falls: is he apologizing to a communist interrogator[23] (and if so does this interrogator belong to the same - Leninist, anti-dogmatic - faction) or to an Emergency Military Tribunal?[24] and c) because the procedure itself changes along the way.[25] This uncertainty, however, renders Austin's

second condition, namely that "the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure involved"[26] absurd.[27] The absurdity grows as the intended addressee remains silent –which is not to say, however that he is absent. It will be shown that his implied presence is what makes Writer's speech act meaningful. Similarly, it is useless to study Austin's third and forth conditions, that the procedure should be carried out correctly and completely[28]– although we must, in due time, return to the issue of completion.

And the question arises: is it possible to still hold on to the idea of a speech act when we are unable to judge its success as such? Here we need to turn to the final two conditions that Austin proposes: that the person evoking the so-called conventional procedure must a) really intend to use it appropriately and b) act according to his/her intention. If we assumed that these two conditions were fulfilled, then, even if we were not able to give a positive answer for the remaining ones, wouldn't we still be entitled to use the term "speech act" insofar as the speaker's intention is concerned? To put it another way. Suppose that, to use Austin's example, we were dealing with someone naming a ship, invoking a conventional procedure. Suppose, however, that the person doing the naming is not the appropriate one for the occasion (a dignitary), but, being a madman, he thinks that he is. Certainly his speech act would not be a happy one. Yet, so far as he is concerned, it would have actually been performed. I think that this is precisely the case in Alexandrou's *Mission Box*. Not that Writer should be treated as a madman necessarily, but his act should be judged with respect to its intention.

Clearly, it is this intention that constitutes the greatest puzzle of *Mission Box*. Writer's constant revelations of his own lies and the revisions which he makes turn him into an unreliable narrator. He confesses to his own stratagems, explaining that the different versions of his story were devised with a view to the projected addressee –and hence to his projected acquittal. He lies even at the moment when he pretends to have adopted a "Party prism" (174/183). And yet I want to argue that his very acknowledged unreliability not only gives rise to, but in fact proves his intention to apologize. Writer's apology turns into a performative precisely because it cannot take effect as a performance.

(How) does a performative differ from a performance? In a sense, the whole structure of Austin's speech-act theory rests on the assumption that a performance renders a performative unhappy,[29] while a line of contemporary theorists, following Derrida's seminal "Signature Event Context", have tried to prove just the opposite: that any notion of a performative presupposes that of

a performance/citation.[30] Both are right of course: if you are acting, then you cannot possibly mean your confession; yet if your confession cannot be acted out then it is meaningless. This is the very paradox sketched out in the precursor to *Mission Box,* Alexandrou's *Antigone.*

The play is organized in two acts that are variations on the same themes: betrayal and the burying of the dead. The Brechtian interlude that separates them announces the issue at stake, which is no other than that of rehearsing/acting. The first story takes place during the Resistance and the second during the Civil War. The main male characters and communist guerillas, Andronikos and Nikodemos[31] take turns as executioner and victim, while Antigone plays her standard role of burying the corpses and upholding the laws of kinship. While the play deserves a closer study, I will limit myself to some of the elements that elucidate our discussion.

First, the main characters (Antigone, Andronikos) wear masks –bearing the same characteristics with the faces nonetheless– a stratagem which creates a second stage upon the stage. The masks are there to prove the characters' attempt to suppress their individuality (Antigone's fear, Andronikos' selfishness) not because they are outlaws,[32] but in order to serve the party interests best.[33] Similarly, Nikodemos confesses that his name and identity no longer belong to him, but to the people who have idolized him and swear victory on his name.[34] Such loss of individuality, which can only be achieved through a mechanism of (self-) oppression, is justified in the name of the common goal or final vision. The masks themselves are not only there to cover up; their geometry seeks to contain, to shape or mold. As the ward confesses, the guerillas have a "squared mind" –or rather, as he corrects himself, Nikodemos is the one who has it[35] on behalf of all. In such a social organization, all the comrades think and act in one voice, or else become interchangeable. Nobody is irreplaceable. This is proven by the way traitors are treated: their executioner is to be determined through lottery. All comrades are implicated in (or, in Althusserian terms, interpellated through) the process of self-criticism as well as that of "liquidation," which are necessary for the reaffirmation of their faith and the survival of the party. We are here getting close to the logic of autarchy, which will come up again in *Mission Box.*

In both the first and the second act Nikodemos is ordered (by the Major and Andronikos respectively) to take part in what might be called a "suicide mission." Despite the predicted failure of this mission[36] it is deemed necessary first in order to raise the morale of the soldiers and secondly in order for the Major (and Andronikos) to extricate themselves from all responsibility for the

imminent defeat. Sent as a lamb to the slaughter, Nikodemos is given an envelope that contains a blank sheet of paper (the "sealed orders")[37] –yet another performance aimed to keep the soldiers in the dark. Despite his initial objections, Nikodemos agrees to play that part, perhaps because he knows that he is already a dead man and a dead corpse is, anyway, the best rampart.[38]

The only way out of this theatre is Antigone's way. Burying the corpses in the play becomes synonymous to unmasking oneself, disobeying orders, and hence speaking the truth. This becomes evident when Nikodemos' second, Klearchos, visits Antigone after she has been sentenced to death and awaits her execution. At his insistent questioning ("why did you do it?") she confesses that she wanted to tell a truth. Klearchos' cynical reply is that it is too much trouble and there are not enough corpses for one to speak the truth with.

Talking with corpses is exactly what Writer is trying to do in *Mission Box*. In a sense, his narrative is nothing but a discourse of, and with, the dead, structured as a series of overlapping and displacing elegies for his lost comrades. The only trouble is that there are too many corpses with which to speak and yet none of these corpses does speak. This is because the burying of the dead –the very synonym of transgression, the only means of violating the law– has actually been institutionalized, has become not only part of the volunteers' routine, but in fact its primary signifier, as evident from the oath they have to take in order to participate in this suicide mission:

> *Offspring of the masses, citizen of the People's Democracy, I solemnly affirm that I am willingly taking part in the mission, and I hereby swear that my every thought and every act will be dedicated to its success. I am prepared to even sacrifice my life for the advancement of the mission, which will lead to the ultimate victory in our land, contributing decisively to the universal triumph of socialism and the brotherhood of the peoples. And I will be deserving of general contempt and extreme punishment, should I violate my oath.* (61/60-61)

The text bears a remarkable similarity to the Athenian Ephebic Oath,[39] but with a significant difference. The volunteers pledge their faith not to the motherland, but to the success of the mission (which, in turn, will guarantee the universal triumph of socialism). Although it is tempting to liken this faith to a utopia, I think that such a reading is mistaken, because presumably the volunteers *do* or *have to believe* in the (eventual) payoff of their (potential) sacrifice. Nevertheless, it is this future brotherhood that undermines the present solidarity of the squad. For, the volunteers do not pledge to stand by

each other, but, on the contrary, to be prepared to show contempt and apply extreme punishment to each other. This is evident if one considers the context of the "volunteering ceremony": each mission member (henceforth: volunteer) takes turns reading the oath from the same slip of paper given to them by the Major (who reads it first) and passing it on to the next. In this way, each volunteer is sworn in front of the others, which means that he also hears the others swear in front of him. While his own individual oath solidifies his commitment, the others' oath stands as a negative reinforcement: the oath-taker realizes that if he violates his promise, his "comrades" are sure to deliver him the punishment.

And soon after they are asked to do just that. Clearly, the execution of Niketas and the other four "treacherous snakes" on the eve of their departure serves as a *prova generale,* aimed to test their commitment (and acting skills). Note that it is Writer who suggests that the execution squad be determined, as in *Antigone,* through lottery. The executed are buried half-naked, having taken off their shirts and, in the spirit of comradeship, offered it to the cause,[40] with the exception of Niketas who decides to hold on to his shirt so that he can pin his decoration on it (and who thus has to forego the last cigarette). It is the Major who assigns the burying detail, a procedure that is to be repeated throughout the mission and with every new body that needs to be cyanided. The same exact procedure is followed even after the group's mutiny and the cyaniding of the Major.[41] The five traitors are buried unlamented and without the proper honours,[42] "in a corner of the former bus station lot" and covered by "rusty automobile fenders, the punctured tires, the grimy iron scraps, and the empty steel drum" (158/150), in other words all the useless pieces of junk (since they, too, are by now useless). The remaining thirty four corpses of the mission members (forty all-in-all minus the only surviving one, Writer) are stripped naked, their pieces of clothing (and especially the underpants) being kept by their comrades as spares,[43] yet another sign that points to their exchangeability.[44] Similar are the semiotics of the last cigarette routine, the cigarette being a metonymical substitution of the corpse that is being slowly expended.[45]

Following this reasoning, one could construe the *Mission Box* (and its narrator) as an anti-*Antigone,* the double negative suggesting something akin to *gonē,* that is offspring, family, birth or descent. It is as offspring of the masses/people that the volunteers take their oath of allegiance. Their common address, comrade, literally means coming from or having been raised by the same parents –recalling the periphrasis which Antigone uses in her opening address to her sister Ismene.[46] But in stark contrast to Antigone's main

argument for lamenting and burying Polyneices, which is that her dear brother is irreplaceable,[47] the argument of the comrades is that "[they] should stop bawling and see how [they] could do double-duty, one part for [themselves] and one for [their] lost comrade" (212/204).[48] In this respect, it is interesting that in most cases where the address "comrade" is used it is accompanied by the adjective "lost," as if only in death do comrades become real comrades.

It goes without saying that Writer in *Mission Box* shares much more with Nikodemos and Andronikos –indeed with Kreon[49]– than he does with Antigone. For one thing, he has adopted and voluntarily accepted all of the party mechanisms of mind control. He brags about his spirit of alertness at times to a point of self-ridicule– as for example when he describes the frisking of the milkman which he undertook on his own initiative (136-138/130-132) or when he confesses to having actually visited his friend Alekos' house as a conscientious party inspector for the Occupation mess, even though he knew that the family had been selling the last emblems of its fortune to buy twelve cans of corn beef (203/193). His discourse is not simply neutralized,[50] it is the blind echo of an autarchic discourse.[51]

The discourse of autarchy (etymologically: that which constitutes its own origin or archē) in *Mission Box* is only palpable as a performance or mimesis, which is always a distortion of that very origin/archē. This is evident in the scene at the garage where the 40 men are briefed on the mission and the ceremony of volunteerism takes place. The setting itself is only too familiar, as a modern duplicate of the Platonic cave: an enclosed space with a steel double-door that shuts all comrades into complete darkness except for a "wall of light" (38/36) that blinds them emanating from the jeep headlights. The comrades can only discern reflections, shadows of objects, at least until their vision "gradually adjust[s] to the darkness" (38/37). In fact, they continue to march into the dark throughout the mission and Writer does so even after the end of it when he finds himself imprisoned in a cell, surrounded by walls, bed boards and a "small barred window way up high" (117/112).

In the same vein, Writer has inherited the "squared logic" of Klearchos[52] (an expression that could signify a number of things, including perfect, conventional, practical, commonsensical or conservative –all of which are extremely relevant).[53] In the study of syllogisms, the logical relations among categorical propositions are represented graphically through the so-called "square of oppositions." A close examination of Writer's linking phrases can show that he uses all possible relations in his reasoning:[54] contraries (propositions that can be both true and both false but not true at the same

time) are usually introduced through the disjunctive "or";[55] subcontraries (both could be true, but at least one of them is) which usually occur when Writer examines the probability of an event;[56] contradictories (one is necessarily true and the other one necessarily false), prominent in the process of decoding.[57] The most interesting and common one, however, is the relation of subalternity (if one is true, then the other one is also true but not vice versa) as embodied in the trope of *correctio: or rather*.[58] *Correctio* is a type of amplification, used especially for rhetorical purposes.[59] Writer, however, uses it not only to amplify his statements,[60] but at times to modify them as well, so that what might first appear as a relation of subalternity in fact proves to be one of contradiction –or else contradiction is masqueraded as subalternity:

> *I didn't need to be a genius to suspect that small envelope to contain not a routine order but a Party message, or [rather] –to call a spade a spade– a warning against subversion. (16/16)*[61]

> *the wounded who were unable to continue the march would be put to death, or rather they would be ordered to commit suicide. (51/50)*

In both examples, the modified version is neither an amplification nor an improvement on the statement, but in fact a completely different proposition. An "anti-subversion message" is more or less akin to a "subversion message" (working still, as it is, in the logic of factions) and is hence the opposite of a Party message, assuming that Party refers to a totality, the common interest. Similarly, even though a "suicide order" is a form of execution, it is not an act of punishment but one of (self-) sacrifice –and indeed, the executed are turned into heroes. In short, by turning all moral responsibility over to the victim (who thus becomes the instigator of his own death), an "order of suicide" forecloses any possibility of, precisely, subversion.

The importance of geometry in *Mission Box* has already been discussed.[62] There are three shapes competing in the text. The first is the circle, a symbol of perfection but also of entrapment: the cyclical route the squad has to follow, obeying the orders of the headquarters, the windlass around which Writer is treading like Sisyphus (187/181). A circle is a perfect shape, consisting of points that are equidistant from the center, which is the only point of reference (presumably, the Politburo). An alternative to the circle is the ellipse,[63] a shape that falls short of perfection despite its symmetry, since it has two foci (only if the two coincide does it become a circle). In fact what makes an ellipse elliptical is its eccentricity. Christophoros and Alekos are the two elliptical-eccentric figures in the novel.[64] The third shape is the square: the box, both a

metaphor and a metonymy of the mission and of the cause itself, a shape which contains all contradictions and turns subversion into submission. Writer's attempt to justify all of the Party's decisions, to play his part as ordered and to hold on to the cause could be likened to an attempt to square the circle.[65]

And yet there is an alternative mathematical formulation that competes with all of the above and to which Writer finally resorts: that of arithmetic sequences and geometrical progressions. That sequences and progressions preoccupy Writer is evident from his constant references to the letter n (ν), initially to mark on the map the points where one or more of the comrades died (the death sequence/progression) and in the end to calculate what it would be like to give a real account (a sum) of his life:

> […] *it's impossible to discover all the versions, and it's impossible to narrate the sum of my life, second by second, because each second instantly expands and encompasses myriad memories; and therefore each second of my life is multiplied by the sum of the seconds of my life and, if I'm not mistaken, I would need a lifetime squared to describe my life –bah, surely I'm in error, for as I said I failed the polytechnic entrance exam, I'm not strong in math, but if second n encompasses the sum of the seconds of my life, then n+1 holds not only the sum, but all the seconds from n through 1, each one of which is packed with the sum and therefore, I don't need a life squared, but a life in n and all of that raised to the n+1, or something of that sort, I told you, I don't know mathematics and neither do I care for your mathematical type, so won't you at long last get off my back (355-356/336).*

In an arithmetic sequence, each new number ν (n1, n2, n3, etc.) is equal to the previous one plus the common difference, whereas in a geometric progression it is multiplied by a common ratio. Alexandrou is probably referring to a geometric progression (even though the variable n is more common in arithmetic sequences) and he is looking for the product of the geometric progression in which n represents each successive second of his life (n1, n2, n3, etc.) and r (the common ratio) the sum of all the seconds. Staying away from mathematical types (as some of us did not even try the polytechnic exam), I would simply note that the characteristic of sequences and progressions is that they extend to infinity as opposed to geometrical shapes that are finite since their circumference is fixed. It is significant that Writer moves to the logic of sequences just as he abandons his initial suggestion (that he would need a lifetime *squared*) and that he ends this interjection with a rejection of all mathematical types and a plea to be left alone.[66]

It is in this shift from the logic of the oppositional square to that of sequences/progressions that one can locate the text's shift from a performance to performativity. This becomes clear if one considers why Writer, despite his *intention* to perform, to act out the Party syllogism, runs against the terrible obstacle of language. Although it would be tempting to use a Derridean thread and treat the narrative as an interminable play of signifiers and significations eluding the initial intention and context while proclaiming the opposite,[67] such a reading would not be entirely satisfactory. It would not be satisfactory, because we would have to downplay the importance of the major signifier, the primary context that is inscribed in the text from the outside –not as a contingency but as a *historical necessity*– and that renders all notions of iterability/citationality void, so to speak: the context of Civil War.

The way language is affected in times of civil war is first described by Thucydides, who is writing his account of the Peloponnesian War from the perspective of both the defeated and the exiled.[68] In Book III and while narrating the first civil strife (*stasis*) that breaks out in Corfu, soon to trigger similar events in other cities and stir, "so to speak, the entire Greek world",[69] Thucydides comments that among the first side-effects of civil war is the distortion of language: the "comrades"[70] change the usual meaning/value of words according to whim/righteousness[71] so that "inconsiderate boldness was counted true-hearted manliness; provident deliberation, a handsome fear; modesty, the cloak of cowardice; to be wise in everything, to be lazy in everything."(*Thuc.*III.82)[72] It is this simple yet profound observation that explains Writer's obsession with correct (not quite literal) meanings, in short his entire rhetoric,[73] which could be summed up by the seemingly innocent filling *outōs eipein* (the Thucydidean *hōs eipein*). Consider the following extracts:[74]

> *which both is and is not precise: it is an inaccuracy, but a legitimate [themitē] one, so to speak (84*)
>
> *imagine having a mission leader whose authority would be under challenge [airesin], so to speak (95)*
>
> *or whether I should conform to the spirit [pneuma], so to speak, of the command (100).*

In all these cases the filling/supplement appears as a symptom of Writer's guilt for his conscious disobeying authority, while simultaneously bringing into question the legitimacy of this authority. The words that it modifies (themitē, airesin, pneuma) are clearly related to legal/ethical issues, issues in

which Writer (and reader) is called upon to interpret *in their proper context* (which naturally cannot be the same to all as it is a matter of ideological construction). There clearly is a communication deficit, one that cannot be 'filled' by the self-referential *outōs eipein,* which, if anything, pronounces its own lack of referentiality.

The same can be argued with respect to the decoding of the calling card. Writer devotes four entire pages to his successive hypotheses of what the eight numbers on the cigarette paper might represent (one cannot help but picturing Alexandrou having a blast while writing this), only to conclude that "these letters could mean anything at all, fifty percent for and fifty against me" (335/317). It is not by accident that he examines variations of the words "apostate" and "reliable" (a very successful rendering of *prodotēs* and *embistos*) –naturally, this is all about faith: Suppose he were able to decipher the message of his calling card, would it really matter whether the word were "apostate" or "reliable," or would the two be equivalent, interchangeable, as they would have to be filtered through the ideological lens of the "(comrade) interrogator" in question?

To sum up, Writer finds himself in front of an impossible task: he has to fight against shadows.[75] Not only because his interlocutors are invisible (though they continue to affirm their presence through the ward, in very much a Kafkaesque or a Foucauldian way), neither because he cannot decipher his own predicament, but because he has to fight against prejudice. And the only way of fighting against prejudice is by opposing truth to rhetoric through a means that is itself rooted in prejudice: language. This task, however, is only too familiar.

In his own *Apology,* Socrates acknowledges as his greatest challenge the fighting of the prejudice that is rooted in the minds of his fellow-citizens as a result of his opponents' slandering. His only weapon, he confesses, is the truth. Not only this, but he opposes truth to rhetoric –a gesture which is quite common to all Socratic dialogues– claiming that the truth needs no deliberation, no ornament in speech[76] Socrates thus tries to answer his opponents' arguments by (cross)-examining them or engaging in the unprecedented process wherein the accused is actually questioning his prosecutors! Through his usual method of *elenchus* he is thus, in a sense, *acting out* his guilt while at the same time proclaiming his innocence (and vice versa). Yet the most important part of his performance is his parting speech. Faced with capital punishment, Socrates in fact places his faith on the law (yet another speech act), accepts or rather endorses the verdict, claiming it to be the

best outcome for him. Like a soldier in battle[77] –his simile is a deliberate one– he proclaims his determination to fight to the end, scorning the alternative of desertion. In short, he opts for suicide as the only means of fulfilling his mission. This is crucial: his original speech act of confession, turns into an act of accusation and ends up as an act of suicide.

This is Writer's task: he has to perform, to act out his innocence/guilt. Not through cross-examination, since he has access neither to witnesses nor to the prosecutors. Nor can he use language which has lost its iterability and is a no longer viable communication code. His only means of expressing intention and/or producing meaning is through gesture, which is, by necessity and through its eccentricity, the gesture of madness.[78] As Maurice Blanchot puts it, the search for madness signals the attempt to orient the very possibility of speech since "madness [is] a word in perpetual incongruence with itself and *interrogative* throughout, such that it would put into question its possibility, and, through it, the possibility of the language that would admit it, thus would put *interrogation* itself into question, in as much as it belongs to the play of language" (emphasis mine).[79]

Silence[80] is one such form of gesture as already suggested through Alekos' play[81] that foreshadows Writer's final act. Suicide is yet another.[82] It is the only means of bringing into effect, into completion, that barred performative (the intention to be heard), turning the confession into an accusation and the language of action into the principle of all language.

NOTES

1. Raftopoulos 1996: 351. Originally in a book review published in the journal *Iridanos* (5-6, 1976) and included in the anthology of criticism provided by Raftopoulos (1996). The same argument is repeated in *Aris Alexandrou, ho exoristos* (Raftopoulos 1996: 40-42, 285, 298-301).
2. Hence the motif of the Poet as Creator that lies at the core of, say, Elytis' *Axion Esti,* a work which is, in part, a response to the Civil War.
3. Raftopoulos 1996: 188.
4. J.L. Austin died in 1960. The first edition of this work was published in 1962 and based on his lecture notes.
5. Austin 1975: 3.

6. Austin does not refer explicitly to confession, although he deals with similar categories. He does, in fact, discuss "utterances of the law, and utterances used in, say, 'acts in the law'" (Austin 1962: 19).
7. See also the Christian tradition of the apologists (απολογητές), cultivated mostly by the Church Fathers, esp. Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Athenagoras, etc.
8. See Foucalut's discussion of the *scientia sexualis* and particularly his treatment of the word *avowal* (Foucault 1990: 59).
9. Panourgia 2008: 396.
10. Alexandrou was among the ones who signed the declaration, although his case is extremely peculiar. In brief, the poet had already renounced communism on his own. When he was arrested he falsely admitted to being a communist, most probably because his own conscience would not allow him to betray his former comrades. As a result, when he signed the declaration he was, in a way, confessing the truth! And yet he even renounced this 'truthful' declaration, which caused him another two years of imprisonment. Cf. Raftopoulos (1996: 165-170).
11. *Cf.* Panourgia 2008: 397. The official line of the Communist Party with respect to the declarations is a quite complicated matter. Margaritis, for example, claims that some of the repentants were subsequently absolved (2002b: 583).
12. See, for example Zachariadis' criticism of Ioannidis for his lack of a sense of self-criticism in his letter to him (10/10/47) which is clearly an attempt to bring him to reason (Eliou 2005: 224-229) as well as the memo sent by Karagiorgis to the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party denouncing Zachariadis' abuse of the process (Vournas 2007: 435-445).
13. Mazower 2000: 39.
14. Alexandrou was first sent to the British concentration camp of El Daba, in Libya (1944). During the civil war, and despite his having long left the lines of the Communist Party, he was sent to the concentration camp of Moudros in Lemnos (1948), Agios Efstratios (1950) and finally to the Averof and Aegina prisons from which he was released in 1956. According to Raftopoulos, Alexandrou's three exiles (to which he refers in his Parisian poem, "Acceptation") are a) his uprooting from Russia, b) the concentration camps (British and Greek) along with his imprisonment after the Civil War and c) his self-exile in Paris.
15. See his letter to Ritsos (11/2/1972): "Τα ποιήματά μου (όλο διστάζω να σου τα στείλω) τα βλέπω τώρα πια απλά και μόνο σαν οδόσημα μιας πορείας. Πολύ φοβάμαι πως δεν αντέχουν στο κριτήριο της τέχνης, εξόν ίσως από ορισμένους στίχους. Η μόνη τους δικαίωση είναι που προετοιμάσανε κατά κάποιον τρόπο το «Κιβώτιο»" (Ritsos 2008: 381)
16. Raftopoulos 1996: 222-225.

17. From Paul Éluard's "Mes heures" (*Le livre ouvert II,* 1942). Alexandrou uses it as a motto in his collection *Άγονος γραμμή.*

18. Translation mine. In the Greek: "Υποσημείωση": *Φίλε ή αντίπαλε μην τ' αναγγείλεις πουθενά. / Δεσμώτης τήδε ίσταμαι τοις ένδον ρήμασι πειθόμενος.*"

    See Alexandrou's interview by Dimitris Raftopoulos, included in the volume of his essays, *Έξω από τα δόντια:* "Δεν ανήκω σε κανένα κόμμα και σε καμιά πολιτική οργάνωση. Δεν είμαι μέλος καμιάς θρησκείας. Όπως το'χω ξαναπεί, *Δεσμώτης τήδε ίσταμαι τοις ένδον ρήμασι πειθόμενος.* Έχοντας περάσει από τα ξερονήσια και τις φυλακές, νιώθω πως είμαι συγκρατούμενος όχι μόνο με όσους υποφέρουν στα φασιστικά στρατόπεδα, μα και με όσους βασανίζονται στο Αρχιπέλαγος Γκούλαγκ. " (Alexandrou 1982: 181) The reference is to his poem "Footnote" ("Υποσημείωση") from his collection *Ευθύτης Οδών.*

19. Cf. Herodotus, *His.* 7.228: *Ω ξείν αγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις / ότι τήδε κείμεθα τοις κείνων ρήμασι πειθόμενοι.*

20. In all subsequent citations from the novel I am giving the page references to the Greek edition, followed by those of the English edition. Unless otherwise noted, I am using the translation of Robert Crist.

21. Austin 1975: 14.

22. See, for example, the very beginning of the novel where Writer "agrees with the chosen procedure", differentiating between an interrogation and a written deposition and then experiments with the verbs to "set down", "to speak for myself", "to testify in my own behalf", "to speak out", "to make myself heard" (Alexandrou, 9-10 in both). He soon realizes that he is dealing with an interrogation (41/40) but that his interrogators do not act their part correctly, challenging his statements and posing new questions (178/169), so that he is "playing a game without a visible opponent" (παίζω εν ου παικτοίς, 313/296).

23. Although one could not speak of a historical antecedent to *Mission Box,* the following incident is worth noting. In August 1948 and while the DSE forces in the Peloponnese were being rapidly wiped out, a small boat carrying ammunition from Albania was blown up before reaching its destination. A member of the crew (Vaitsis) whose logbook was discovered by the Royal Navy patrol was subsequently sentenced to death by a partisan tribunal (Vogiatzis 2009: 330-337).

24. Following the 1946 3rd Decree (Γ' Ψήφισμα) which proclaimed all political parties of the Left illegal, the parliament instituted Emergency Military Tribunals in the borderline areas as well as special tribunals in the rest of the country (Margaritis 2002a: 156-157).

25. That is to say, Writer himself, who is making up the rules of the procedure by conjecture, changes it. Thus, the writing material given to him after the

interrogation is a sign that he must proceed to a written deposition, the stamped and numbered sheets of paper collected and renewed by the ward every morning determine the size of each entry, etc. Writer presumes that he must not cross out anything in his text and that he must keep the order of the stamped sheets, nevertheless and as he grows frustrated, he starts violating these very rules.

26. Austin 1975: 15.

27. Writer first refers to his interrogators as the Highest Authority (100/97), very soon however he starts questioning their allegiance (wondering whether they belong to the antidogmatic, Leninist faction or the anti-dogmatic one), even their ideology (whether they are comrades, indeed, 178/169). All these doubts, however, become "of secondary importance" (186/177) when he suspects, or rather realizes, that no one is actually reading his deposition. For an analysis of how this moment in the text serves as an 'incision', structuring it into two parts see Raftopoulos (1996: 288-9, 303). In a former essay I analyze how the process of writing and the memory operations that guide it shift from the first to the second half of the novel (Kantzia 2003).

28. Austin 1975: 15.

29. See, for example, Austin's argument that "a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in a soliloquy." (22)

30. Judith Butler's analysis of iterability or citationality as "the operation of that metalepsis by which the subject who "cites" the performative is temporarily produced as the belated and fictive origin of the performative itself" (1997: 51) suggests that a speech act can not be comprehended as a deed of the doer, but as a reiteration of a previous speech act, which is ultimately that of authority.

31. Alexandrou uses the same names in *Mission Box*. Nikodemos is the Commander in city N, while Andronikos is the Acting Commander that replaces him, presumably after a mutiny.

32. It is important to note, however, that during the Resistance, Civil War and the years that followed while the Communist party was still illegal, performance was a matter of survival. Fake names and IDs had become the partisans' second nature, undermining their own individuality. See, for example, Dido Sotiriou's fictional account of Nikos Beloyannis' partner, Elli Pappa: "Η παρανομία σε κάνει να παίζεις συνεχώς θέατρο, έλεγε. Και είναι φορές που απ' την ταυτότητα ως το καλημέρα σου όλα είναι ψεύτικα!" (Sotiriou 1985: 23)

33. The suppression of individuality is striking given that *Antigone* is the *par excellenc* tragedy of singularity, where "Kreon and Antigone […] pursue each other to destruction by following the law of *monos phronein* [and thus] become *apoleis*" (Gourgouris 2003: 140-141). Note that Andronikos is executed for being a

traitor, but his real crime is that he is an individualist (Alexandrou 1982: 34).

34. Alexandrou 1982: 63.

35. "Σκοπός: Έχουμε τετράγωνο μυαλό. Ο Νικόδημος πα να πει το'χει ολομόναχος" (Alexandrou 1982: 24)

36. This would be the equivalent of the ancient oracle in *Oedipus Rex* or Oedipus' curse in *Oedipus in Colonus* which is fulfilled in *Antigone.* For a discussion of its function see Butler (2000).

37. A condensed version of the (empty) box and Writer's calling card in *The Mission Box.*

38. "Ένα κουφάρι είναι το μόνο σίγουρο. Δε βλέπεις; Ταμπούρι πρώτης." (Alexandrou 1982: 72)

39. Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 80-81. In J.O.Burtt's translation (1962): "I will not hold life dearer than freedom nor will I abandon my leaders whether they are alive or dead. I will bury all allies killed in the battle. If I conquer the barbarians in war I will not destroy any of the cities which have fought for Greece but I will consecrate a tenth of all those which sided with the barbarian. I will not rebuild a single one of the shrines which the barbarians have burnt and razed but will allow them to remain for future generations as a memorial of the barbarians' impiety." Note that the oath is alluded to by Socrates in his apology (*Ap.*28d6-29a1), a text which is discussed here in its relation to *Mission Box.*

40. A gesture which recalls Seferis' line, "για ένα αδειανό πουκάμισο, για μιαν Ελένη" in "Helen" (*Logbook III*).

41. "I admit that I admired him at that moment, since even in this situation he conformed to the regulations which he had established." (164/156-157)

42. As opposed to Grigoris to whom they render double honors (157/150). Both Mazower and Calyvas stress the negative reactions of the local population to the practices of mass graves and unburied corpses attributed mostly to "reactionary elements" of ELAS (see, for example, Mazower 2000: 27). The same practices, however were shared by EDES and a number of anti-communist gangs or paramilitaries (see, for example, Mihioties 2007: 11-162).

43. Alexandrou's choice of words "δεδομένου ότι δεν μας είχαν δώσει ούτε δεύτερο σώβρακο" (159) is somehow lost in translation: " they hadn't provided us with a single change of clothing" (151)

44. This becomes even more obvious if one considers the ancient burial rituals in which the dead were adorned with and surrounded by their personal belongings.

45. See Tsirimokou's discussion of the last cigarette routine in "The Last Cigarette" (1995) which echoes the English translation of Svevo's third chapter in *The Confessions of Zeno.* Of particular interest would also be Richard Klein's

discussion of a cigarette as a poem, a clock, the sublime, an 'I' (or a 'not-I'), a non-act, a soldier's friend, and so on. According to the author, "the last cigarette smoked before an execution […] creates the illusion that the death of all our dreams is willed, is chosen –that the execution is really a suicide that one will master till the end (Klein 1993: 141).

46. The word for "comrade" in Greek is "σύντροφος", he/she who has been brought up together with; Antigone addresses Ismene as "κοινόν αυτάδελφον", stressing mostly the element of brood.

47. *Ant.* 905-912.

48. This is the argument used by Writer to convince Rena that her brother Haris, arrested by the Germans during the Occupation is a "lost case", which causes his temporary rupture with Alekos.

49. See, for example, his statement that "he suspects the whole city" (182, my translation).

50. For a discussion of how Writer's style is neutralized see Tsirimokou (1995:39).

51. *Cf.* Vardoulakis (2009: 414). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, it would be worthwhile to examine the affinities between *The Mission Box* and Orwell's *1984*. To name just a few: the order that is pronounced by a voice in the dark while the members of the mission are gathered in the bus lot, "Back to your place, soldier!" (38/36) recalls the voice of the Big Brother in Orwell (1983: 220-221); in the same scene, Writer comments that "since [he] had turned [his] watch over to Capt. Paraskevas, [he] didn't know the precise hour" (48/47), a situation in which Winston also finds himself in during his imprisonment (211, 224); the dazzling light coming from the jeep's headlights (40/39) echo the dazzling lights that blind Winston during his interrogation (227), etc.

52. See Writer's claim: "σας απέδειξα με την πιο τετράγωνη λογική" (341). Cf. Ritsos' poem "Peripou tetragono" ("Almost a square"): "He had no arguments and yet he always insisted on the same position. / He sketched with chalk a square on the floor […]" (Ritsos 1982: 134, translation mine).

53. In the English translation: faultless logic (323).

54. I am here applying the terms to any kind of statement, although they are meant to refer to categorical propositions only (e.g. "All men are clever"). I believe that the catachresis is justified insofar as the entire narrative-apology itself (or most of it) hides behind logical propositions.
What interests me mostly in this analogy is the relationship between ideology and logic.

55. For example, when Writer guesses the movements of Velissarios: "he had entered the adjacent storage room, or he was observing me from the dark recess". (16/15-16)

56. See, for example, his reasoning behind suggesting the lottery for the members of the execution squad. If his lot is chosen (six), it could be read as both six and nine; however, if nine has already been chosen then it would necessarily come out as a six.

57. As, for instance, the headquarters' message "+a+o Horio" which could be either Kato Horio or Pano Horio. (177/167)

58. The Greek equivalent (επιδιόρθωσις) uses the formula "ή μάλλον".

59. See *Ad Herenium* 36, where [Cicero] explains that the figure is meant to produce an impression upon the listener by rendering the content of the amendment more striking.

60. See, for example, "I would still have been preoccupied –or rather, tormented" (15 in both); "Supreme Headquarters had selected us […] for a big, or rather a decisively significant mission" (49/48); "the operation would be terribly difficult, or rather, terribly dangerous" (50/49), etc.

61. The trope is more pronounced in the Greek: "δεν χρειαζόταν μεγάλη νοημοσύνη για να υποπτευτεί κανείς πως ο μικρός εκείνος φάκελος δεν περιείχε στρατιωτικές διαταγές, αλλά ένα μήνυμα κομματικό, ή μάλλον, για να λέμε τα πράγματα με το όνομά τους, αντιφραξιονιστικό".

62. See, for example, Raftopoulos (1996: 287-289).

63. See the passage on Christophoros' three circles-ellipses (324-5/306-307).

64. In this respect, Ritsos comment to Alexandrou is particularly interesting: "Θαρρώ πως με το χέρι σου (κι όχι με το διαβήτη) έσυρες τους τρεις πιο ακριβείς κύκλους-ελλείψεις σε αιώνια κίνηση." Ritsos is right, of course, to speak of "eternal movement", yet it is perhaps symptomatic of his reading that he refuses to see the difference between a circle and an ellipse.

65. Cf. Orwell's notion of doublethink: "To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them; to use logic against logic […]" (Orwell 1983: 32).

66. In the Greek: "αφήστε με ήσυχο επιτέλους" (356).

67. One could consider Writer's initial insistence of his writing being the best substitute, or rather equivalent to an oral confession in statements such as "οι λέξεις μπαίνανε από μόνες τους στη θέση τους" (11). The choice of where to begin his confession is referred to as a "καθαρώς τεχνικής φύσεως πρόβλημα" (10) and his account of the events as more reliable than that of the log since he is able to provide the necessary context (75). His privileging of the oral, his attempt to intend behind every word, however, naturally collapses partly as a result of his

own textual strategies and partly because of the medium itself which is imperfect, as brilliantly parodied in the scene where the soldier uses "Ηθανατος" instead of "Θάνατος" as a password and is subsequently shot (272/258).

68. Thucydides was one of the two Athenian generals guarding the area of Amphipolis that was finally conquered by the Spartan Vrasidas. For this he was sentenced to a 20-year exile, which he spent in Thrace, collecting material for his history.

    Another defeated Greek politician, Eleftherios Venizelos spent time in exile translating Thucydides. Thomas Hobbes, whose translation I am here purposefully using, completed the task in 1628, 13 years before the English Civil War broke out and a couple of decades before he published his famous *Leviathan.*

69. *Thuc.* III.82: *παν ως ειπείν το Ελληνικόν.*

70. Thucydides uses the word "φιλέταιρος".

71. *Thuc.*III.82: *και την ειωθυίαν αξίωσιν των ονομάτων ες τα έργα αντήλλαξαν τη δικαιώσει.*

72. The same idea is presented by Sotiriou in the depositions of a doctor to the foreign delegation: "Συναχτήκατε εδώ και ρωτάτε πώς άρχισε το μακελειό. Δεν ξέρουμε τη γλώσσα σας να σας αποκριθούμε. Και στη δική μας γλώσσα αναποδογύρισαν οι λέξεις και οι έννοιες. Ξαφνικά μας είπαν πως προδότης είναι κείνος που έδωσε το αίμα της ψυχής του για την Πατρίδα πολεμώντας τον ξένο κατακτητή!" (Sotiriou 1985: 71-2) For a discussion of how words lost their literal meaning in the Civil War, especially with reference to reconciliation vs. compromise as well as the different variations of the term civil war and the ideological mechanisms behind them, see Kotaridis and Sideris (Nikolakopoulos, Rigas and Psallidas 2002: 117-119).

73. Alexandrou's rhetoric would deserve a study of its own. Let me just note the recurrence of the phrase "let us not play with words" (για να μην παίζουμε με τις λέξεις) pronounced by the Major and adopted by Writer (41, 55, 79, 188, 310), the expression "έξω από τα δόντια" (91, 179) originally translated as "speaking out" and then as "to speak straight from the shoulder", also the title of the collection of Alexandrou's essays. In the same vein, Alexandrou's brilliant metaphors tend to erase the boundaries between the literal and the figurative: "Ποντάριζα σε σίγουρο χαρτί" (30, esp. if one takes into account his calling card), "δεν ξέραμε ακόμα τι καπνό φουμάρει ο καθένας μας (μεταφορικώς βεβαίως, γιατί είχαμε αρχίσει «να πλουτίζουμε τον Παπαστράτο" (221), "εκθέτοντας το «επισκεπτήριό» μου στον κίνδυνο να γίνει καπνός" (234, since the calling card is a cigarette paper), etc.

74. I am here providing my own translations as the redundant filling is omitted by Crist. For more uses of this phrase see also 77, 112, 136,149, 171, 183, 184,

201, 206, 208, as well as variations: *που λέει ο λόγος* (155), *γενικώς ειπείν* (140), *θέλω να πω* (161), *σχήμα λόγου* (309).

75. This is Socrates' claim in his apology (*Ap.* 18d.6-7: *αλλ' ανάγκη ατέχνως ώσπερ σκιαμαχείν απολογούμενον τε και ελέγχειν μηδενός αποκρινουμένου*).

76. *Ap.*17b.9: *κεκαλλιεπημένους λόγους.*

77. *Ap.* 38e.5-39: *ούτε γαρ εν δίκη ουτ' εν πολέμω ούτ' εμέ ούτ' άλλον ουδένα δει τουτο μηχανάσθαι, όπως αποφεύξεται παν ποιών θάνατον.*

78. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the discourse of madness, it is worth noticing Writer's direct and indirect references to the story of Vellerephontis.

79. Blanchot 1992: 45. Cf. Alexandrou's poem, "Advice to an AWOL": "There are ways to evade your prosecution / especially if you have something akin to melancholy / and if –bingo!– you write absurd verse e.g. / "That's why soldiers have eyes, in order to see" / or "Mister-Sergeant I suffer from daltonism: In every target I see I recognize my heart" (translation mine).

80. As Liana Theodoratou points out, silence is a dominant motif in post-war Greek poetry that echoes the Civil War trauma, especially in the works of Manolis Anagnostakis, Takis Sinopoulos, Titos Patrikios and Aris Alexandrou (Nikolakopoulos, Rigos and Psallidas 2002: 287-300).

81. See Vardoulakis' analysis of the play *Silence* and the criticism it receives in the context of "autarchic utopia" (2009: 415-6).

82. Suicide could also be viewed as a form of martyrdom, namely that of the Christian saints. This discourse of martyrdom appears often in accounts of communists who give their lives for their ideology. See, for example, the statement of the Archbishop of Athens, Spyridon Vlachos: "Έχω συγκλονισθεί από το ηθικό μεγαλείο του Μπελογιάννη. Το θεωρώ ανώτερο και από των πρώτων Χριστιανών, γιατί ο Μπελογιάννης δεν πιστεύει ότι υπάρχει μέλλουσα ζωή…" (quoted in Vournas 2007: 565) which echoes Beloyannis' own speech in court as presented by Sotiriou (1985: 257).

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Helen Versus Achilles: Illusions, Individuals and Ideals in *Alki Zei's* Achilles' Fiancée

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article traite de la représentation de l'individu en relation avec ses appartenances sociales, idéologiques et familiales dans le roman d' Alki Zei *La Fiancée d' Achille (1987).* Ce roman constitue une étape importante de la littérature politique grecque de l'après-guerre car il met l'accent sur le récit de lutte de l'individu pour la définition de soi, malgré la pression environnante conduisant à sa soumission complète à la cause commune. Cette nouvelle perspective implique également une réception intéressante du mythe d'Achille, que l'auteur déconstruit et reconstruit dans un dialogue tacite avec *l'Iliade* et ses modèles héroïques. Le protagoniste, l'épouse d'Achille, une femme d'âge moyen racontant sa vie à partir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale jusqu'aux années du régime des «colonels», concentre sur son dramatis persona les catégories de sexe, d'âge et de classe, créant ainsi une matrice de nouveaux critères dans l'analyse de la littérature politique.

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the representation of the individual in connection to its social, ideological and family allegiances in Alki Zei's *1987 Achilles' Fiancée.* This novel constitutes a milestone in postwar Greek political literature as it shifts the narrative focus on the individual's struggle for self definition despite the surrounding pressure to completely surrender one's personhood to the common cause. This new perspective also involves an interesting reception of the myth of Achilles, which the author deconstructs and reconstructs in a tacit dialogue with the Iliad and its heroic models. The protagonist, Achilles' wife, a middle-aged woman recounting her life from WWII to the years of the regime of the 'Colonels', concentrates on her dramatis persona the categories of gender, age and class, thus creating a matrix of new criteria in the analysis of political literature.[1]

Reading through *Achilles' Fiancée* one may think that the novel has nothing to do with the reception of Homer.[2] Although we see several direct references

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to the Classics in places crucial for the development of the plot,[3] it is the name Achilles that invites the comparison with the ancient heroic tradition.[4] The name also carries the weight of the symbolism on which the protagonist's rhetoric is primarily based: Achilles' fiancée suffers because of her association with the perfect warrior and views the life of the quintessential ideologue from a completely new perspective. As in a ring composition, the novel begins and ends with the fact that Eleni has been branded "Achilles' fiancée", a title that controls her life and misplaces her true identity (13, 348).[5] This is also the thread that runs through the narrative with the constant repetition of the phrase "Achilles' fiancée" evoking the conflict between her two identities.[6]

Names and double identities play an important role in the dialogue between the private and the public in *Achilles' Fiancée.* Early on in the narrative we hear of the need for a pseudonym as part of resistance routines:

I like him. His real name is certainly not Achilles, but it suits him. I will never call him by any other name. If it didn't go against the rules of secrecy, I would have filled up my exercise book margins with: ACHILLES ACHILLES. Next to the algebra equations. If only I could tell him that my real name was Daphne! Again, it's Panos' fault. "You have to choose a pseudonym for security reasons" he told me as soon as he enrolled me in the organization. "Great, I'll pick Alcestis." He laughed that little laugh of his which sounded out of tune. "Sure, why don't you pick Medea?" "Eleni, a common name!" Eleni! And I wore it all my life. Except for a very short time. In Rome. (16)[7]

Although the reader is warned that Achilles is not the character's real name, Achilles is not referred to by any other name in the novel. In her narrative Eleni never discloses her husband's real name and we are left to believe that the question never came up in their life as a couple. Thus Achilles is not revealed in his private identity to his wife or the reader but remains the admired revolutionary in all compartments of his life. The connotations the word Achilles has in the novel refer us directly to the established image of the hero in the literary tradition starting with Homer; we have every reason to believe that this is why Eleni finds the name Achilles perfectly suitable for her brave fiancée. Achilles embodies the ideal hero-warrior in ancient Greek thought, a representation that has not changed since antiquity.[8] The author, however, inverts the marked symbolism of the name Achilles in order to cast doubt and uncertainty at the seemingly unshakeable model of heroism embodied by her character.[9]

Eleni's fiancé is an exemplary resistance warrior, Communist Party youth leader and guerilla fighter who effortlessly puts the cause above himself (17,

23). He never doubts or criticizes the decisions of those higher than him in the party hierarchy and constructs his private self in a way that fits the profile of the perfect party member he wishes to be. In his relationship with his fiancée, to whom he appears to be faithful and devoted, Achilles acts with the best interests of the party in mind:[10]

> *"This is my fiancée." That's how he introduced me to someone we met on the street. Perhaps he did it for reasons of secrecy, to avoid mentioning my name. Achilles would have never said "my girlfriend." Until that day, he had never said anything to me. "Don't look at me in that strange way!" was the most tender thing he had ever said to me. This is Great Love. My love.* (16)

His connection to her is part of their resistance activities and as such it has to inspire and set an example (26). Thus, his body language and expressions of affection towards Eleni are governed by the guidelines of integrity and self-restraint that the model young communist must possess (17). Eleni's adoration for Achilles, albeit passionate and overwhelming, fails to mask the disconnect that creeps between them after the pre-marital consummation of their love:

The first time! In some basement that we used as illegal printing press. "It wasn't right", he said afterwards. "It's our workplace." (17) [...] I had imagined it differently the first time. (17) [...] Achilles leaves immediately afterwards. Where he is going, he can't afford to be late, even a second. It could mean death. (18)

Soon she begins to articulate the generalizing dichotomy between her public and private persona:

> *The girls are jealous of me. The fiancée of Achilles, who is not afraid in battle! He is only afraid to take me at night and go to the small room next door, where the guns and bullets are kept. He is not afraid of guns, of course. He is afraid of the others, what they will say, he sets the example. If they want to do the same...* (26)

She also, quite prophetically, conceptualizes her social profile as Achilles' fiancée, not wife:

> *Sometimes I feel that I will remain the eternal fiancée and that throughout my life I will sleep with Achilles in a hurry in the time between two of his political meetings or other jobs. And always in somebody else's bed. (26)*

Their wedding takes place under circumstances of extreme haste and danger, leaving Eleni even more unfulfilled and lonesome:

> *I got married! A girl gets married in a skirt and sweater. Without sugared almonds and flowers. Without guests and a bridal bed. Achilles leaves the same day. A guerilla, somewhere in the mountains. A guerilla! Even though the war and the Occupation are over. A guerilla! When in all countries a new life is beginning.* (25)

Three years later, when they meet again in Tashkent, they resume the game of haste and evasion:

> *-My Eleni! He hugs me hard. He doesn't say anything else. Achilles never says tender words when others are present. (161-2)*

The consummation of their marriage, delayed by three years, doesn't bring them any closer to each other:

> *Now I must go to bed and sleep, smelling of rose water, with a strange man. I wonder, does he feel I am a stranger? I take as long as I can. -Come on, at last! I lie next to him and turn off the light. Our ... wedding night! The first entire night that we will spend together. Achilles is in a hurry to take me. I am trying to chase away my memories and forget the endless steppe that stretches between us.* (170).

Eleni finds in Tashkent the same Achilles, morally upright, hard working and full of revolutionary spirit. Living in complete denial of their marital problems and the lost hope of a triumphant repatriation, Achilles prefers to maintain a static view of the world (189, 285). His rigidity manifests itself even more deeply in their private life, where he rejects every offer of Eleni's to start a dialogue about the past and especially the years they spent apart (177, 200):

> *I don't say anything more. I will never say anything more. Achilles wants the Eleni to whom he bid farewell to in a street corner before leaving for the mountains and he clings to that picture. There is no room for discussion. As for Daphne, I must make her die. Lying on a table and covered in hyacinths. Eleni has won.* (200)

Thus, shortly after their reunion in Tashkent, Eleni realizes that all channels of communication between them are closed:

> *I get ready to say something, that it seems to me out of place for anyone to wear a uniform like this unless he is going to be the protagonist in a war movie. But he is not going to make a movie, he is going obediently wherever they have sent him, and so my words will sound out of place. Anything I say, from the moment I arrived here, sounds out of place.*

> *Therefore, I will keep quiet. I must remain speechless. For how long? For ever, for a lifetime.* (181).

Besides all matters personal, Achilles refrains from engaging into honest dialogue with his fiancée and later wife Eleni concerning politics, the Communist Party, and anything remotely related to political ideology (197, 217, 236). Upholding his dogmatic respect for party hierarchy (202), he refuses to join in the evolution of political affairs even within the Soviet Union, namely the de-stalinization process initiated by Nikita Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 (256). This inflexible attitude ends up estranging him irreparably from Eleni (276-77), who seeks comfort and emotional support with her new friends Andreas, Serioja and Nadia and her teacher Mikhael Gregorievitch (257-58, 278). As Achilles and Eleni end up having in common only the Communist Party and their daughter, born in their first year together in Tashkent (243, 301), Eleni acknowledges that Achilles is "her greatest concern" (243). Moreover, Achilles' blind devotion to the Communist Party robs him of any tolerance in his interaction with others (244, 300-04). Thus he fiercely resents any opinions of Eleni's about the Soviet Communist regime and the Greek Communist Party line and cannot tolerate even her most innocent criticism of aspects of daily life in the Soviet Union (171, 199, 239, 260); the recipient of a state scholarship himself, he doesn't allow her to seek her own scholarship for higher education out of fear that they might be misconstrued to abuse the generosity of their host country (269).

It can therefore be said that Achilles' public persona marginalizes his private self, often creating a negative image of his positive character traits such as honesty, hard work, self-restraint, and selflessness. His characterization in the novel is adversely affected by the rigidity of his personal ethics despite the fact that he constitutes the epitome of uprightness and is a paragon of virtue even in the traditional sense. Nevertheless, Achilles is the kind of person who has a clearly defined ascending scale of affection, on which he places ideals and individuals in fixed positions and always according to his better judgment. Moreover, his judgment is primarily derived from his strict adherence to a set system of values based on honor and communist ideology. His perception of both this system of values and his ascending scale of affection remains unchanged throughout the novel, in spite of the multitude of setbacks he suffers during his years as guerilla war fighter, exile and political refugee. Finally, as we are only given a transient glimpse of the events surrounding his stealthy return to Greece, we can only imagine the pain of betrayal and

disenchantment that welcomed him home after a twenty-year long absence. Still, we are impressed by his perseverance, loyalty and sense of duty in spite of any adversity.

Inevitably, several questions arise: who is Achilles? is he a frustrated leader with the mindset of a delusional autocrat or an idealist who has a hard time parting with the past (167)? Is his formidable integrity of character an inherent trait or the acquired product of a conscious imaging effort aimed at promoting the character-building aspects of Communism (26, 30, 193-94)? Is his brave conduct during the Greek Resistance and the Civil War the only criterion by which his heroism should be evaluated (169, 236)? Can Achilles be blamed for all the pain and distress he leaves behind when he flees on the other side of the Iron Curtain (47, 58, 167, 175)? And finally, how heroic is Achilles and what's his connection with his Homeric prototype?

Perhaps Eleni's mini-epic of Achilles' ignominious *nostos* (homecoming) provides us with the most insightful look into his heroic profile:

> *A man with white-yellow eyebrows that meet in the middle, grey hair and a furrowed face walked swiftly through the streets of Athens. He was looking for a street that no longer existed, a friend, a comrade with whom he had fought at the frontline of so many battles. The Occupation, the December fighting... The friend was still there, he found him. They sent Achilles and he, always obedient to orders, without asking too many questions, not even one, went to the friend, who handed him straight over to the Security. Achilles is a brave man (palikari). Yes, she will tell Daphnoula that. As long as she doesn't start asking too many questions.* (64)

Eleni presents the reader with a compressed yet comprehensive overview of Achilles' own epic; she does it for the sake of their daughter Daphnoula, to whom she feels that she owes an explanation about her absent father (135, 137).[11] Nevertheless, she reaches into layers of memory that Daphnoula is unable to recall and cannot relate with, given the young girl's admiration for her father and his predicament (146-47). Eleni focuses on Achilles' *nostos* (homecoming), which, ironically, takes place after twenty years of absence, just like Odysseus'.[12] Yet Zei crafts Achilles' *nostos* in totally anti-Odyssean terms, with the protagonist returning to Athens during the junta, while his wife and daughter have already left for Paris. Although his return is a clandestine act, Achilles uses secrecy as a means of accomplishing his mission and not, like Odysseus, of protecting himself. In addition to that, he has no hope of resuming his status as husband and head of household, as Eleni has been

emotionally divorced from him long ago and is ready to make her feelings official (267-68, 278, 333). Deprived of family and friends to welcome him (64, 150-1, 302), Achilles defies the point of his own *nostos,* by returning to Greece on a secret mission and not as a result of overwhelming nostalgia.[13] His emotional connection with the homeland is filtered through the Party, as was the case with his relationship with Eleni and his entire entourage. Now in prison, Achilles is a silent character, reconstructed in the political rhetoric of two opposing factions, the junta establishment and the Greek political exiles in Paris. For the former, he is a traitor, a spy and a criminal (50, 64); for the latter, a victim, a leader and a hero (279-83). His trial mobilizes his old comrades and especially the successful Paris lawyer Kostas Kassimis, formerly known under the pseudonym Nikitas, who generously arranges for his defense (279-83, 302).

As expected of her, Eleni deploys her full loyalty to her husband and quietly caters to the romantic portrayal of their relationship put forth by the defense lawyer Genevieve, who suggests that Eleni have her life made into a movie. Eleni's rejection of the movie offer touches upon the multitude of issues faced by the idealized couple but falls short of revealing the truth (281-82). Similar was her response to stereotypes about the captain's fiancée thirteen years earlier, when Marie-Thérèse, her hostess in Paris, invited her to speak to a political gathering for women:

> *At the gathering where she spoke about the women political prisoners, they treated her like a very important person. The fiancée of the captain (capetanios) with the ancient Greek name!* (62).[14]

In this case, Zei also allows a fleeting dialogue between Eleni's husband and the ancient Achilles, as the French audience seems to experience a double excitement thanks to the combination of two versions of Greek fighting spirit in one name. The stereotypical necessity of presenting modern Greece to the West in some sort of ancient packaging is also hinted at by Panos:

> *For the foreigners, to understand you, you have to put into your conversation a bit of a Parthenon column.* (63)[15]

Coming full circle near the end of the novel, Eleni describes her own *nostos* in Odyssean terms with special emphasis on the sea as the key element of the Greek landscape:

> *We are flying over Athens. Scenes of homecoming, I knew them from books. Odysseus, twenty years, the day of homecoming (nostimon emar) ...*

> *just a little longer and I would have caught up with him. All-white Athens is shining, not because of the snow. THE SEA, the sea which doesn't look like the steppe at all!* (333).

The whiteness of the Athenian landscape dominates Eleni's visual recollection of her return home. Diving into the bright light of Attica, she defines the source of brightness first in negative terms, as if to dispel any misconceptions regarding the light's origin. Her attitude is clearly defensive, aiming at responding to the aesthetics of the snow-covered landscape that she was forced to get acclimated to in the Soviet Union (271, 346). She is also denouncing her previous false impression that Tashkent was near the sea, surrounded by a steppe like the sea (95, 159). Eleni's initial perception of Tashkent has connotations of sea and travel; she refers to it as a strange city somewhere in the Soviet Union, spelled with a letter that resembles Poseidon's trident without the handle and can relate to it geographically through its proximity to Samarqand in Uzbekistan, built on the site of Maracanda, the city destroyed by Alexander the Great in 329 BCE (14, 71, 95). To construct her persona of expatriate, Eleni borrows elements from Odysseus' myth, his wanderings at sea and his antagonism with Poseidon, as well as from the historical account of Alexander the Great. Both sources provide her with a Helleno-centric view of liminal spatiality, based on ancient Greek concepts of the hero who travels to the end of the earth in a journey of self-discovery and returns home to be reintegrated into his community after a series of challenging trials.[16] Her wanderings make her a hero in her own right, a long-suffering traveler yearning to experience the visceral sense of spatial belonging even during her search for a new homeland chosen strictly by political ideology.[17] Eleni's Odyssey takes her on a journey in "Steppeland" (161), where the heroine leaves behind a part of herself forever (266). Her *nostos,* however, reclaims her intellectual and emotional totality by putting to rest her fears that she would never see her mother or the sea again (203-04). Whereas Eleni likens the whiteness of snow to a winding-sheet, she conceptualizes her return to the glistening Aegean and the reunion with her family as a rebirth:[18]

> *Today I am born. I have an entire life ahead of me* (335).

At the same time, her prolonged absence and *nostos* help her articulate her own sense of Hellenicity by means of her love for the landscape, the language and her family in Greece (336-38).[19] Eleni, however, is not the average immigrant returning to Greece after years abroad: her brief and precarious reattachment to the native soil is violently terminated, causing her *nostos* to

enter a state of indefinite suspension due to the unpredictability of the Greek political landscape. It should be noted that Eleni, unlike her husband, returns to Greece as a pilgrim, without any expectation of validation or vindication (337); her homecoming fits the description of a warrior's *nostos* who has accomplished his mission elsewhere and returns home to a new life of peace and forgiveness.[20]

Achilles in Homer is defined as the hero warrior who has several characteristics at an absolute level, carries out an antagonism with a power higher than him and is destined to die young.[21] The characteristics that homeric Achilles is endowed with paint his heroic portrait with decisive brush-strokes: he is absolutely brave, honest and unrelenting in his pursuit of glory.[22] He is faced with an unfairly powerful opponent, the god Apollo, and he goes to Troy with full foreknowledge of death.[23] As a matter of fact, Achilles is the only Greek in Troy who knows that he will never come back. During Odysseus' descent to the underworld in the *Odyssey*, we see him lament his lost *nostos* (homecoming) and declare that death is the most undesirable state of being.[24] Yet he never regrets his death at Troy, which came as a result of his decision to exact revenge for Patroclus' death by killing Hector. Like Achilles in our novel, the homeric Achilles has a clearly defined ascending scale of affection, on which he prioritizes ideals and individuals through a process based on honor, loyalty and affection. Homeric Achilles subscribes to a system of values based on honor and *charis* (gratitude/reciprocal favor) and does not hesitate to sacrifice himself out of obedience to his ascending scale of affection. Scholars have argued for millennia whether his act is a foolish, egotistical and futile expression of individuality or the honorable, uncompromising and selfless fulfillment of his pursuit for glory.[25]

We may well assume that for Alki Zei's Achilles common cause and personal fulfillment is one and the same; from this point of view, his tendency to unquestionably defend every decision of the (Greek or Soviet) Communist Party is a manifestation of his natural propensity towards self-fulfillment rather than a token of continuous defiance at the ominous state of affairs he is confronted with. The question, however, remains: what kind of a hero is this modern Achilles? He may be interpreted as a plain, straightforward and easy to read dramatis persona or a complex character combining victim, oppressor and idealist. Like everybody else in his immediate circle of expatriates, the former guerilla fighter has to cope not only with the aftermath of their humiliating defeat in the Greek Civil War but also with the very real possibility that he may never return home. While he seems to deal successfully with the

former (167, 169), he fails to acknowledge the latter. For Achilles the road to victory is only temporarily closed, and his current hardship a trial of endurance and self-sacrifice required of all those who subscribe to the uncompromising pursuit of freedom (285). His instinctive opposition to every threat against his system of values permeates his attitude in every domain of life, rendering him inflexible and unapproachable. Engrossed in his efforts to undo the defeat his cause has suffered, he fails to see the dynamic changes that take place in the minds and hearts of his near-an-dear and especially Eleni, who comes to discover the atrocious disparity between risks and benefits in the life of "Achilles' fiancée."[26]

Like the homeric Achilles, the captain in our novel is a source of pain for his people. It has been suggested that the etymology of the name Achilles encapsulates the hero's role as agent of grief (*ákhos*) for his people and army (*laós*).[27] In *Achilles' fiancée,* any association with Achilles carries the penalty of political persecution in its most cruel and unrelenting forms (30-31, 58, 167, 175). As Eleni suffers increasingly at the hands of her oppressors, she quickly realizes that she is ruthlessly persecuted only because of her relationship with Achilles and not on account of any crime she herself committed (40, 46). I believe that during the year she spends as an outlaw in post-civil war Athens, Eleni undergoes a surreptitious change of heart. While she remains devoted to communism and offers herself to torture and imprisonment for the sake of the cause, she feels lost in the midst of such suffering and alienation (29, 31). Furthermore, she begins to lament her non-existent relationship with Achilles, their seemingly endless separation and all the opportunities for happiness they were denied. What seems to pain her more than anything is the fact that she has to maintain two identities that are totally incompatible: the character of the lucky bride, the captain's fiancée, enveloped in the epic aura of Achilles' heroic profile, and her actual self of social outcast who endures excruciating loneliness and isolation as a result of her association with Achilles (46, 58). In a role reversal, Zei's Eleni suffers for the sake of Achilles, as Achilles complains in the *Iliad* that he suffers because of Helen, "fair-haired and abhorred."[28]

We should also examine the role the names Daphne and Eleni play in the novel. Daphne, Eleni's real (and only) name before she joins the resistance, has romantic connotations of Classical Greece and overtones of sadness;[29] like Apollo's beloved nymph who, fleeing from the god's passion (and sexual aggression), was transformed into a laurel tree, young Daphne suffers a sudden and forceful transformation into Eleni as soon as she is touched by Achilles' affection.[30] Eleni takes over Daphne's public persona because of the latter's

association with Achilles and his notoriety (200).[31] The protagonist, feeling seriously deprived of her true identity, makes a gift of her real name to her daughter (211), who is referred to as Daphnoula (little Daphne) throughout the novel.[32] In her narrative, Eleni bemoans the fact that there are very few witnesses of Daphne's existence (289); they are, however, her dearest friends: Andreas, Serioja, Mikhael Gregorievitch and Jean-Paul.

Eleni's relationship with Jean-Paul, which lasts for almost a year, while she is waiting in Rome for a visa to join Achilles in Tashkent, causes an unbridgeable gap between Daphne and Eleni (109). Simply put, the two names come to symbolize polar opposites like happiness and unhappiness, joy and sorrow, love and loneliness, freedom and bondage, respectively. As Daphne emerges from the innermost recesses of Eleni's heart, the protagonist's potential to experience happiness rises to unprecedented levels. She becomes romantically involved with the Swiss painter she meets on the train to Rome and discovers, to her surprise, that she has never been happier (101). Still, the ghost of Eleni lurks threateningly in the background:

> *This is the only thing that separates him from me, his painting. What separates me from him is Eleni, Achilles' fiancée.* (108)

Eleni appears to be inextricably intertwined with the title "Achilles' fiancée" causing Daphne to slowly suffocate and eventually give in to the enforced metamorphosis (200). Daphne is a much less common name than Eleni and as such it entails a degree of individuality that attracts positive attention, even admiration.[33] Although the name Eleni was suggested as a security pseudonym by Panos on account of the fact that it was a common name (16), we cannot ignore its mythological connection to Achilles.[34] Be it Helen of Sparta or Helen of Troy, the name belongs to a powerful mythical figure of legendary beauty and sexuality.[35] According to the main version of the myth, Helen is the reason for the death of countless Achaeans, including Achilles, who meets his fate before the fall of Troy, stricken by the arrows of the Trojan prince Paris guided by Apollo. In the story of the Trojan war Helen is the much-desired prize, the award reserved for the winner, either Menelaus or Paris. Yet this is not the aspect of the myth that solidifies the literary bond between the two pairs of Achilles-Eleni. According to Pausanias and Philostratus, Achilles after death has Helen as his wife and they live together in eternal youth and immortality on the White Island in the Black Sea.[36] According to another version of the myth found in Ibycus,[37] Achilles marries Medea after death and they live in eternal bliss in Elysium, a paradise for virtuous and distinguished mortals; the

name Medea also comes up in the discussion Daphne has with Panos, when they are trying to find a pseudonym for her.[38] As we hear in the *Odyssey,* Menelaus is destined to posthumously inhabit the Elysium as well, thanks to his wife and daughter of Zeus, Helen.[39] We must finally admit that the joined immortalization of Achilles and Helen is not the most prominent aspect of the myth of the Trojan War, which is usually concluded with the return of Helen to Sparta, where we see her in the *Odyssey.*[40] Therefore the connection between the two pairs of Achilles-Helen becomes even more intriguing.

The idea of Achilles the guerilla captain named after the great homeric hero accommodates several aspects of the narrative: it generates considerable awe in the novel's internal audience, where Achilles is, irrefutably, a war hero; it allows the narrative voices of the author and Eleni to disassemble Achilles' shiny armor and look inside the empty shell without enlisting any further irony; it plays with the attributes of the homeric prototype, sending messages of deeper criticism or even juxtaposition with "milder" heroic models, like Odysseus; and finally, it creates the perfect entrapment for poor Eleni, who sees herself in life-long virtual custody of the prestigious title "Achilles' fiancée."

In the novel, Achilles embodies for Eleni the ideal lover who remains out of reach (25). While considering divorce, she finds herself unable to decide between a date with Didier, the third director of *The Horror Train*, or Eugenios, her old comrade (148-49, 229-30, 268).[41] The problem, again, is that she cannot shake off the title "Achilles' fiancée" (230); thus she chooses Eugenios because he knows the story of "Achilles' fiancée" (348). In addition to that, Eleni is represented in the novel as attractive and desirable to many men of her immediate environment, who view her connection with Achilles as irreversibly prohibitive to any potential advances. From age fifteen to forty-two, Helen/Eleni receives a multitude of compliments on her ageless beauty while she is identified as "Achilles' fiancée" (295, 321, 344). Except for the well-kept secrets of her romance with Jean-Paul, her Roman Paris, so to speak, and her brief affair with Dino in Athens (341-44), Helen/Eleni remains "Achilles' fiancée" for thirty years by both choice and necessity (25, 344).[42] In Paris, Achilles' invisible ownership of her, though outdated, reverberates though the Greek expatriates and forces her to offer herself a willing victim to further artificial imaging and emotional silencing.

No matter how hard Eleni tries to reconcile the polarities of her two lives, her predicament remains abysmal because she has no real connection to Achilles. I argue that this very fact, namely Eleni's realization that she is trapped in her marriage with Achilles for political reasons even though their

relationship has failed, constitutes the crux of Zei's innovative point of view. By political reasons I mean the compilation of causalities that makes her an indispensable accessory to Achilles' image and, in turn, controls her own identity: the fact that Achilles and Eleni froze in time as the perfect young communist couple, the dilemma of openly denouncing him versus being endlessly persecuted, the necessity to move on with her life as well as the moral and social obligation to stand by him (50).

The omniscient narrator who takes us through Eleni's life in Paris in the sixties and her own narrative voice reminiscing of the events from thirty years earlier are joined in an account that designates the collective history as background to the personal (213). Thus Eleni says little or nothing of major historical events unless they serve as stage for the drama of human relationships.[43] Their romance and marriage, which take place under extraordinary circumstances leaving little or no space for true bonding and personal enjoyment, the hurried consummation of their love and the emotional gap it created, and, most of all, Achilles' near narcissistic concern with standards of personal ethics suitable for a leader of his caliber dictate the narrative tone and claim center stage. As part of the autobiographical focus of her historical account, Eleni re-stages scenes of her life with striking accuracy and from her own angle of the set (213).

As I mentioned above, Eleni is defined as a dramatis persona by the criteria of gender, age and class;[44] we could attempt to describe Eleni as a middle or working class forty-one year old female who grew up in Athens and lives in Paris. Yet the character slips through our fingers with this description, as so much is left out: she is surprisingly young-looking, barely touched by time in twenty years; she is a bourgeois intellectual of the Left in exile; her class identity, although shaped by her communist ideology, encompasses a view of the world that does not preclude comfort and elegance.[45] Furthermore, she is sophisticated and well-dressed, warm and affectionate, sensitive and capable of relating to people. Eleni, is above all a woman and not afraid of it. Her attitude towards history is emotional and personal, enriched by colorful elements of material culture that add splendor to her set with the precision of an obsessive director and the non-canonical approach of oral history.[46]

Eleni dwells on details of no interest whatsoever to history books: the burgundy shoes and matching hat and gloves Lisa is wearing when she visits her in prison (46), the outfits of her fellow inmates who are taken for execution (50, 52), the new fashions she sees on the street the day she is released from prison (69). Clothes and fashion function as a token of individuality and

provide a medium of aesthetic connection with the social landscape. Eleni allows her penetrating gaze to wonder over people's attire in an effortless assessment of their prosperity, refinement and sense of beauty. Thus, she doesn't appear to be very impressed with the out-of-fashion outfits in a magazine at the Soviet Embassy in Rome (94), the equally outdated clothes of the women in Tashkent and the dull merchandize in Tashkent's stores (176). This last realization comes as a disappointment, given the fact that Eleni was hoping to purchase an entire new wardrobe in Tashkent so that she might not be reminded of Daphne from Rome (160-61, 176). All sorts of fashion details find their way in the narrative with special emphasis on the concepts of renewal and change; fashions come and go, just as people and ideologies change.

Zei artfully enables the female voice to translate emotions into objects, especially clothes, which she uses to connect scenes and maximize the theatrical potential of Eleni's reminiscences. Thus, the most beautiful and welcome gifts Eleni receives come from Serioja, whom she considers "the dearest friend of her heart" (154).[47] The elegant leather jacket Serioja gives her for her birthday in Athens, the waterproof burgundy boots he sends her with Nadia and the heavy fur coat that his wife kindly passes on to her are potent signifiers of their reciprocal affection and loyalty (86-87, 238, 273). The presents also indicate, especially as they reach Eleni in times of hardship and despair, that Serioja is always there for her, a miraculous source of inexhaustible generosity and love. Her mother, Lisa, also holds a special place in Eleni's recollection of personal items thanks to her motherly concern for her daughter's appearance combined with a unique talent in couture and style. Although Eleni is genuinely fond of her mother, she is often overshadowed by Lisa's charm (12, 87-88); Lisa chooses Eleni's clothes (69, 71) and encourages Eleni's political activities with impunity (12, 46-47, 57, 81, 241), while Eleni ends up suffering severe consequences (30-31, 37, 46, 53, 69, 83). The female narrative voice revisits the roles of mother and daughter in everyday, familiar scenes revolving around inner landscapes of comfort and beauty and their opposites: for example, the poorly-fitting grey lace evening gown that Eleni borrows from her mother for her first secret mission after she is released from prison becomes a metaphor for her now ill-fitting role of underground contact. In a similar metaphor, Lisa's old coat proves completely inadequate in the cold Moscow winter (269-73) but eventually Lisa redeems herself by sending Eleni a fabulous, "Capitalist made" fur coat that surpasses even the one Serioja gives her (298, 303-04). Thus their relationship fluctuates between remoteness and proximity, as Lisa fails her daughter by exposing her to

preventable risks but eventually redeems herself by coming to her rescue.[48]

The character who seems to coexist in perfect aesthetic (and emotional) harmony with Eleni is Jean-Paul.[49] With him she can be herself, use her real name, act her age and enjoy life's every pleasure without any need for apologies (92, 102, 104). Throughout her narrative, Eleni inserts several flashbacks from her days with Jean-Paul (170-71, 267); they all speak of happy times with a man she felt close to, as opposed to Achilles, and they include detailed descriptions of apparel. Jean-Paul shares her ephemeral happiness of buying a pair of cheap orange shoes (105), compliments her on the blue dress with the straw fringe at the hem (174-75) and loves her simple style (172). Achilles, however, looks at her in the blue dress as if she is wearing a carnival costume (175) and finds her clothes flashy (172). The antithesis between the two relationships is visualized by means of the blue dress, which juxtaposes two different places, two different men and a girl with two different names, Daphne in Rome's Ponte Sant' Angelo and Eleni in Tashkent:

> *I am the same person in the same dress who posed on the bridge with the angels. Now Achilles takes my picture in the boat that he rented for us to go on a ride in the artificial lake of the great park* (177).

Eleni's romance with Jean-Paul does not bear the marks of her ideological affiliation; to the contrary, their compatibility derives from Eleni's bravery to put away the mask of Achilles' fiancée and its attendant circumstances. Until then, thanks to Panos and then Achilles, her initiation to love had been a call to political activism.[50]

As the novel progresses, it becomes evident that the intrusion of ideology into Eleni's personal life has dire consequences for her emotional well-being. Moreover, the rivalry between ideology and identity incorporates the comparison of failed sexuality to failed revolution. Eleni's struggle and subsequent failure to establish an emotional/sexual connection with her perfect husband corresponds to the political failure of their generation of communists. The two waves of sorrow, one personal, the other collective, reside in Eleni's thoughts and torment her ruthlessly but cannot drown her voice, the voice of a forty-one year old woman awaiting history's permission to piece her life back together. In this process, Eleni's memory replicates scene by scene the filming of the movie in which she is a protagonist, employing dramatic devices that enable her to travel through time and space and look at the events of her life from the perspective of thirty years later. Through this intense yet unintentional revisionism (221), the dialectic of exemplary heroism

and beauty is well served by the pair of protagonists Achilles-Eleni, who fulfill and fail their assignment, while *The Horror Train* moves slowly to its destination.[51]

NOTES

1. On the literary and historical context of *Achilles' Fiancée* see Beaton 287, Clogg 121-65, Koliopoulos-Veremis 68-98, Tziovas 2003: 215-47, 274.
2. *Cf.* the analysis of the reception of ancient Greek myth in modern Greek fiction in Lambropoulos, passim. Zei's literary use of the myth of Achilles is perhaps not as direct as in the examples discussed in Lambropoulos' article but remains as important in the sense that it processes antiquity for narrative purposes.
3. 62-64, 333; cf. also Leontis 45-52 and Yalouri 77-82.
4. For a thorough discussion of the name of Achilles see Nagy 69-83.
5. All page references and quotations are from the 29th edition of the novel; see also cited references below.
6. The fact that Eleni, in her narrative, uses the phrase with remarkable frequency projects, I argue, a deliberately ironic view of her own notoriety.
7. All translations are my own.
8. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, s.v.
9. Achilles is referred to by former comrades with the flattering terms *leventis* and *palikari*, both meaning "brave (young) man" (194, 321).
10. Years later, at their reunion in Tashkent, Achilles underlines his claim to marital loyalty, but not fidelity, by emphasizing that, during their years apart, he may have had sex with other women to satisfy his needs as a man but never put anyone in Eleni's place (200). Eleni, reversing the theme, views herself as the woman Achilles occasionally has sex with (276). On the disparity of Achilles' standards for male and female reproductive behavior see Tziovas 2003:245.
11. This mini-epic encapsulates Eleni's portrayal of Achilles as her daughter's father, in other words, it contains the characteristics that she considers appropriate for the family's oral history. She cannot, however, avoid a certain uneasiness with her role of record keeper on account of her ambivalent feelings towards her husband; hence her wish that their daughter would not ask any further questions. Eleni may be seen here as the Muse assisting the epic poet to recall his material and then proceed with the performance of his song; she may also be seen as the epic poet himself, albeit an unconventional one, given the personal perspective of her narrative about Achilles (213). On time in *Achilles' Fiancée*

and on Eleni's unconventional way of registering time see Tziovas 2003: 240-41, 242 respectively.

12. Despite his imperishable glory (*kleos aphthiton*) Achilles has no *nostos* in the epic tradition, a fact he bemoans in *Od.*467-540. Odysseus' *nostos* constitutes a source of *kleos* (glory) in Homer; for both Achilles and Eleni in our novel *nostos* is a temporary and unfinished affair, coveted but interrupted and, eventually, canceled.

13. Yalouri (1-2, 176-7) discusses the concept of whiteness as characteristic of stereotypical perceptions of the landscape of Athens and its antiquities. Cf. also Koufou 299.

14. *Cf.* Tziovas 2003:228; Eleni's carefree and youthful appearance becomes an issue as it clashes with Marie-Thérèse's preconceptions of how Achilles' fiancée should look (124-25).

15. On the use of Classical antiquity as a means of modern Greek self-definition, see Koliopoulos 242-48, 263-75, Tziovas 2008 passim.

16. On the *Odyssey* as an epic of return and self-discovery incorporating the themes of death and rebirth see Segal 12-25.

17. On notions of Hellenicity and the Greek Left see Koufou passim.

18. The term *savano* (winding-sheet) appears also in the scene with Didier (149), as Eleni mishears Didier describing a rare French wine. In the same scene, a propos Didier's depiction of her as incurably homesick, Eleni compares silently the nostalgia she experienced as an exile in Soviet Union and in France.

19. Waiting at the Aliens Bureau in Athens to ask for an extension of her and her daughter's residence permit, Eleni is confronted with the establishment's view of her as a gangster's wife (336).

20. *Cf.* Nagy 35-38, Segal 187-92, Dova 63-64.

21. Nagy 26-7, 61-63, 177, Zanker 8, 77-79, 81ff.,96-113.

22. *Il.*1. 412, *Od.*11.467-70.

23. *Il.*9.413.

24. *Od.*11.467-540; on the dynamics of the encounter between the two heroes in Hades see Nagy 35-38, 166-67, Dova 57-58, Segal 37-45.

25. Michelakis 16-8, 186f., Whitman 1958: 181-220, 1982: 25-28, 86-93.

26. *Cf.* Tziovas 2003: 244. The process of Achilles' de-mythologization takes place in Eleni's mind gradually as their relationship fails, but is never completed. Her change of heart coincides with her coming of age as she begins to establish her own system of values.

27. The name of Achilles is directly related to his role in the *Iliad;* see also n. 4.

28. *Il.* 9.339, 19.325.

29. Oxford Classical Dictionary, s.v.; see also Ovid's powerful account (*Metamorphoses* 1.452ff.) of Daphne's myth.

30. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, s.v.

31. We should also remember that in the myth of Daphne and Apollo the nymph is transformed into a tree so that she may evade the god's sexual violence.

32. Daphne herself is addressed with the same form of endearment by her aunts during her summer vacation on the island (103).

33. Her near-and-dear who witness her existence as opposed to Eleni (289) react enthusiastically to the name Daphne (289); Didier thinks of the romantic novel *The Pastoral Story of Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus (2nd-3rd cent. CE) when Eleni mentions to him her daughter's name (150).

34. It should be noted that according to the mythical tradition Achilles and Helen share no romantic involvement while alive; see also discussion on p.11.

35. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, s.v.

36. Pausanias' account (*Description of Greece* 3.19.11-13) includes the information that Achilles and Helen live on the White Island with Patroclus, Antilochus, Ajax, son of Telamon and Ajax, son of Oileus. Flavius Philostratus (*Heroikos* 54.2-13) describes the creation of the White Island (*Leuke*) in the Euxine by Poseidon at Thetis' request; the island was meant to provide an idyllic home for Achilles and Helen to celebrate their love as immortals after death and a place for sailors to stay and set anchor. Interestingly, despite its limited attestation, this version of the myth is echoed also in the poem *Achilles after death* by Yiannis Ritsos (*Petres,* 68-9), where Achilles, presumably immortal after death, spends endless days waiting for Helen on the White Island.

37. Apollodorus, *Epitome,* v.5 changes the location to the Islands of the Blessed. Ibycus' version reappears in Simonides but is unknown to Homer, where Achilles complains about his predicament of being a shade in the underworld to Odysseus; see also p.9.

38. *Cf.* p.2; I don't know the extent of the author's familiarity with the different versions of the myth of Achilles but I would like to distinguish a network of allusions to various elements of this mythical tradition . It is of course likely that the alternative pseudonym Medea is suggested by Panos as an ironic response to Daphne's initial choice of the name Alcestis.

39. *Od.*4.563-69; association with Helen proves to be an invaluable asset for Menelaus, who will not die in Argos but will be sent by the immortals to the Elysian Fields, a place of pleasant weather and comfortable life.

40. In *Od.*4 Helen is the honored queen of Sparta and dutiful wife of Menelaus

sharing with her guests stories from the Trojan War.

41. The adjective used to illustrate her state of mind is *aneleutheros,* unable to be free, lacking in freedom of spirit and independence (230); her state of painful indecision regarding Saturday's date and the possibility of a relationship presupposes a certain bondage that Eleni herself does not seem to deny.

42. I would argue that Eleni's fatalistic view of her unfulfilled sexuality, synonymous with her romantic perception of Achilles as handsome and heroic, indicates her desire to transition from fiancée to wife, which never happens (25).

43. See also n.11.

44. See p.1. Although I consider all three criteria fundamental in Alki Zei's innovative technique, I find that gender overrides age and class from many points of view. Ultimately the novel is, I believe, a discussion of femininity as defined by a woman within a male-generated historical discourse.

45. On the modern Greek middle class see Koliopoulos-Veremis 194-99.

46. Instead of a dialogue between male and female worldviews, Achilles and Eleni may be perceived to represent two separate monologues, insular and deaf to each other's argument.

47. See also n.49 below.

48. *Cf.* Douka 115, 123-3, 172, 174-5; Myrsini, the protagonist of Maro Douka's *Fool's Gold,* seems to also have a difficult relationship with her mother. Moreover, she shares several characteristics with Eleni of *Achilles' Fiancée:* both women experience a violent intrusion of their ideology into their personal lives, suffer from the trauma of failed revolutionary and see themselves as disenfranchised or disoriented communists. They both join the cause as a result of romantic involvement with men who fail them emotionally but expect of them to meet the requirements of the traditional role of fiancée. In many ways both Myrsini and Eleni find their affiliation with the Left to act as a deterrent in their pursuit of personal fulfillment. On a parallel reading of the two novels see Tziovas 2003: 215-47.

49. Although her friendship with Serioja is exceptionally deep, Eleni experiences an inexplicable disappointment at the realization that he has a family (273-74). Their love for each other, however, transcends sexuality (155); see also Tziovas 2003: 245.

50. Panos is responsible for recruiting Eleni to the Communist Party and for introducing her to Achilles. When, one morning, during the German occupation of Greece, he asks her to meet him in the terrace of their apartment building, Daphne interprets (and accepts) his invitation as a secret rendez-vous (He wants to kiss me, thought Eleni to herself and went out of curiosity to see how it was because she hadn't yet been kissed by any boy. 11). Instead, Panos

suggests that she join the organization and that they go out together to write resistance slogans on walls. *Cf.* Tziovas 2003: 243.

51. If Achilles' assignment is to be brave and Eleni's to be beautiful, they succeed; if, however, their assignment is to be a couple, they fail. Their synergy, primarily motivated by external pressures, remains limited and fails to renew itself from within.

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Patterns of recollection and historical testimony in Thanasis Valtinos' *Orthokosta*[*]

Iakovos Anyfantakis[**]

RÉSUMÉ

Le but de cet article est de présenter une nouvelle lecture du roman de Thanasis Valtinos *Orthokosta* utilisant des outils historiographiques et littéraires, principalement par l'étude des discours développés sur les membres des bataillons de sécurité tout au long de l'après-guerre en Grèce. De plus, une tentative est faite de placer les 47+2 récits de *Orthokosta* (47 chapitres numérotés, et deux fragments situés au début et à la fin du livre, respectivement) dans le contexte historique de leur création (1984). Enfin, une analyse de la structure et du contenu des récits des personnes concernées expose les modèles d'une superstructure en partie responsable de ce qu'elles se souviennent, racontent, et tentent éventuellement de prouver ou de cacher. À un deuxième niveau, le présent article s'efforce également d' examiner les 10 récits du livre non directement reliés à la guerre civile, en vue de produire une lecture de celui-ci de nature à les correler et à les replacer dans le cadre plus large du travail de Valtinos.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present a fresh reading of Thanasis Valtinos' *Orthokosta* using historiographical tools along with literary ones, primarily by studying the discourse regarding the Security Battalions members throughout Post-War Greece. Moreover, an attempt will be made to place the 47+2 narrations of *Orthokosta* (47 numbered chapters, and two fragments situated in the beginning and the end of the book respectively) in the proper historical context of their creation (1984). Finally, an analysis of the structure and the content of the narrations of the individuals involved will expose patterns of a superstructure that is partly responsible for what they recollect, what they narrate, and what they possibly attempt to prove or hide. On a second level, this paper will also try to examine the 10 narrations of the book that are not directly concerned with the Civil War, in order to produce a reading of the book that can be correlated with and placed within the wider framework of Valtinos' work.

* Jane Assimakopoulos has assisted with the editing of this article.

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The publication of the first edition of *Orthokosta* [1] in 1994 was a milestone in terms of the perception of the Civil War in Greece.[2] No other novel has caused as much controversy, igniting a wide discussion in 1994 that is still very heated and affects both scholarly research and public discourse. Shortly after its publication, historians, book critics, writers, journalists, political scientists and intellectuals became embroiled in a public feud[3] concerning its historical accuracy and the new insights it brought to the understanding of the Occupation and the Civil War.[4] Since then, the novel has found itself repeatedly in the public spotlight because of the ongoing discussion concerning "revisionism" in modern Greek historiography—a discussion that began partly due to *Orthokosta* itself,[5] which explains why it is still of such great interest.

There are two main reasons why *Orthokosta* engendered such controversy following its publication: the portrayal of the Occupation from the point of view of former Security Battalion members[6], and the extensive references to violence committed by ELAS. In a way, *Orthokosta* was a groundbreaking work, as it was the first novel by a writer of such importance and nationwide stature to include voices of members of the Security Battalions. As Maria Bontila notes, collaborators with the Germans were usually presented in fiction as silent, background figures, as there was a common consensus on this point.[7] This was not a phenomenon pertaining solely to literature; a similar viewpoint was evident in films about the Occupation. Collaborators were portrayed as cowards and money–grubbing characters with physical defects – a caricature that has survived to the present day in contemporary culture in the person of the actor who played most of these roles, Artemis Matsas.

The attempt by the public to forget "shameful" aspects of its recent past, such as the collaboration of a part of the population with the enemy, is of course predictable. A similar reaction can be seen in the case of France and its memory of Vichy.[8] But the Greek case is unique because of the Security Battalions' meta-life in the collective memory. Despite being in the front lines of the winning coalition during the Civil War, the Security Battalions have remained a dark subject in Greece through the years. Although the members of the Security Battalions were not prosecuted for their actions, and although some were rehabilitated in the army and others even went on to become members of Parliament, there was no public reference to their past because the word "Tagmatasfalitis" (Security Battalion member) had a powerfully negative connotation for a large part of the population. As a result of the disapproving attitude toward the Security Battalions, even their compensation was indirectly

carried out by naming them participants in the national resistance against Germans along with E.D.E.S. and Battalion 5/42.[9]

When Thanasis Valtinos was asked if the individuals from his village who had participated in the Security Battalions and served as models for the characters in *Orthokosta* avoided talking about their actions during the Occupation, his answer was a clear "No". Nor did they regret their past or consider themselves traitors or collaborators.[10] It is therefore valid to suggest that a different model of recollection of the 1940s existed or still exists in Kastri and, perhaps, other communities, according to which participation in the Security Battalions was not something to hide but was instead firmly entrenched in the memory of these communities. Factors that might have contributed to this disparity between micro-level and macro-level are the power and privileges the former members had earned from the post-war State and the elimination of opposing viewpoints, due either to the physical absence (as a result of war casualties, exile, or emigration) or the political absence (through discrimination by the post-war State) of their rivals.

The collapse of the Junta in 1974 radically changed the social and political framework within which the Occupation was researched and remembered. Historical conferences began to be held, first abroad (London 1978, Washington 1978, Copenhagen 1984 and 1987) and later in Greece (National Institute for Research, 1984).[11] At the same time, Fillipos Iliou published KKE's archive from 1945 to 1949, thus establishing to a great extent a new disciplinary paradigm of the Civil War.[12] According to this new paradigm, scholars of history presented the ELAS army as liberators whose primary goal was the establishment of a democratic, parliamentary regime. The battle of Athens in December 1944 was caused by Great Britain's desire to control Greece without taking into account the transformations undergone by Greek society as a result of the resistance movement. After the Varkiza Treaty and the disarmament of ELAS, there followed a period known as the "White Terror," during which para-military bands in coalition with groups that had collaborated with the Germans terrorized those who had participated in or were sympathetic to ELAS. Due to this "campaign of terror," which was carried out with the consent of the State, those likely to be prosecuted fled to the mountains, forming the first small groups in order to survive. These conditions made it clear to the Greek Communist Party (KKE) that it would be impossible for it to participate in Greek politics under equal terms, leading it to boycott the 1946 elections and to move its operations to the mountains, and finally to create a structure to organize the fugitive groups that would evolve into the Republican Army.[13]

This interpretation was passed on to the public partly through the extensive publishing of memoirs by eye witnesses, the majority of whom belonged to the left.[14] They clung to an idealized version of the past, focusing on the hardships they had been through and overlooking possibly dark details concerning ELAS or the Republican Army, creating in this way an image of the left as the moral victor of the Civil War through its very defeat.[15] The change of era was marked on a constitutional level by the recognition of ELAS as part of the national resistance with an act of law by the newly elected PASOK government in 1982.

Thanasis Valtinos claims he had finished writing *Orthokosta* by the mid-1980s, setting the above as the historical context for its creation. The writing of the *Descent of the Nine* in the late 1950s was inspired by the sociopolitical circumstances Valtinos saw in Greece. Less than a decade earlier the country had been rocked by civil war, yet a mere ten years later all of this past drama was deliberately forgotten.[16] In this context, *Descent of the Nine* was a call for remembrance. One could see *Orthokosta* as a similar undertaking, but with exactly the opposite goal: to sound the alarm concerning elements that were being left out in an attempt to glorify the Greek resistance. There is another reason why the historical context is important in the reading of *Orthokosta* : it is the context in which the action of the book is set, the historical space in which the narrators return to their past and reconstruct it through their testimonies.

Since the late 1970s Valtinos had in fact been collecting testimonies from Kastri to use as models for verbal expression in his attempt to capture instances of oral speech with which to enrich *Orthokosta.* Nevertheless, those testimonies were never used as such in the actual body of his text. On the other hand, in *Partida*, a book he wrote about *Orthokosta*, Kostas Voulgaris suggests that some of the chapters of *Orthokosta* contain directly transcribed portions of such testimonies, concluding that the book is nothing more than an attempt to present the Security Battalions' side of the story in the guise of a novel.

In his interviews, Valtinos is always direct about the relationship of *Orthokosta* to the historic past: he describes events as he remembers them, as they were passed on to him by witnesses and recollected in the village, trying not to change anything, and asking those witnesses still alive for clarification concerning things of which he is unsure of. While some critics see loyalty to the past as a defect, it can bring a new dimension to the reading of *Orthokosta* if it is seen under the genre of a "non-fiction novel."[17] In this light, *Orthokosta* serves as a portrayal of the way individuals from the village of Kastri might talk about their past in the first years of "Metapolitefsi" (this term refers to the restoration of democratic political processes in Greece following 1974).

Classifying *Orthokosta* as a "non-fiction" novel provides us with a formula to approach this work by bringing together both the author's intervention in the formation of the novel and the fundamental question of the immediate connection between this novel and reality, without falling into the trap of discussing the relationship between art and reality, which has so often been to the detriment of *Orthokosta.*[18]

The novel consists of 47 numbered chapters preceded and followed by two book excerpts, which raises the total number of chapters to 49. The inclusion of the prologue and the epilogue as organic rather than secondary parts of the novel is in accordance with Valtinos' creative universe, in which every element of the printed text is an equal part of the fictionalization process of the book.[19] In *Orthokosta,* these two excerpts create the framework for the rest of the book, enclosing the other chapters between them. They are, furthermore, the only pieces of text that deviate from the linguistic environment of the rest of the book.

The prologue is an excerpt from *Depiction of the Land of Prasion and Thrireatidos* (*Gis prasion kai thireatidos katalogi*), a fictional book by Isaakios, Bishop of Reontos and Prastos.[20] This brief, two-page text describes the history of the monastery Orthokosta, destroyed by pirates in 1724 and rebuilt by a monk, Varnavas Kausoksiliotis (Varnavas Fire-wood). The text also includes a lyrical description of the area surrounding the monastery: wooded hillsides, deposits of silver, and a beautiful river crossing the land.

The epilogue, on the other hand, follows the clinical style of an entry in a modern-day encyclopedia. The subject is again the monastery of Orthokosta, but this time it is described through cold, hard facts: geographical coordinates and administrative classifications are used to define the place. The history of the monastery is researched through the etymology of its name, and no personal impressions are injected in the text. Following this, the "entry" refers to Isaakios' book of the 18th century, calling him a "fabricator" ("psevdis Isaakios"*)* and rejecting all the descriptions in his testimony, attributing them to "poetic escapism from a life of duress" (341). From the "entry" we learn that Isaakios spent the last twelve years of his life in the monastery, under confinement for heresy and simony.

Each text claims itself to be the true description of the monastery. Both are based on an authority, the first on that of an eye witness, the second on that of modern-day facts, leaving no room for doubt. Their nature extends the irony. The older account provides the only true description we have from that time; one can easily imagine it being used as an unquestionable source by

scholars, even by contributors to encyclopedias. An encyclopedia entry, on the other hand, is, by nature, the bearer of undisputed truth. Through the invalidation of the one text by the other, each of them suggesting that it alone holds the truth, we find a critical viewpoint about what constitutes truth–a view that permeates *Orthokosta*.

The 47 numbered chapters that form the main corpus of the book do not depart significantly from the issues broached in the two non-integral excerpts that frame them, and as such can be viewed in their turn as testimonies of events in the same region. The chapters have the form of oral interviews of individuals from Kastri transcribed on paper by an invisible hand and presented to the reader unedited.[21] In some chapters, a man in his fifties, well acquainted with the interviewees, clearly a fictional portrayal of Valtinos, interrupts the narration with questions, comments, and corrections to the narrators. Dimitris Raftopoulos notes that "the narrations are rarely complete; their beginning is frequently absent, while the episodes end or are altered when repeated by a different person. Most of the time, one can assume, an initial question has preceded and the text begins from some point in the response."[22] There appears to be no specific, predetermined subject that the narrators must talk about. The majority of the stories revolve around events during the Occupation and its aftermath, but there are other chapters about incidents far more recent or far older. Life in times of peace is not beautified in these recollections; quarrels, poverty, and violence are everywhere in them. The same harsh realism is used to describe their lives but they seem to have nothing in common with the "blood-thirsty animals" they would become during the war.[23]

The main theme of the book, however, is the Occupation and the Civil War as they unfold in the stories of the 38 remaining chapters. Local history looms large in these chapters, starting from the creation of the regional branch of ELAS in 1943. According to the testimonies, locals welcomed the resistance group and enlisted in the organization. Disputes occurred only when ELAS made clear its desire to take power in Greece after the Occupation, and persecuted those opposed to its plans. In February, 1944 ELAS created camps in isolated monasteries (Orthokosta, Loukou, Elonas) to detain its rivals; some of the narrators of the novel were held in captivity in these camps. The camps were dissolved in March, 1944 after German troops began operations in the region, and the prisoners fled to Tripoli to protect themselves. On March 31 the Security Battalions were formed in Tripoli by people being pursued by ELAS in an attempt to protect themselves. Three arson attacks were carried out in the village. In the first one, in May of that year, ELAS set selected houses of Security

Battalion members on fire. As a response, the Security Battalions, along with the Germans, routed the village, arresting those who were under suspicion for associating with ELAS and forcing the neutrals to move to Tripoli. ELAS burnt down the houses of the people who had fled to Tripoli a few days later, after accusing them of collaborating with the Germans. When the Germans left Greece, ELAS besieged the Security Battalions in the cities, leading to massacres in some cases (Meligalas) and surrender in others (Tripoli). The loss of ELAS' power after its disarmament in February, 1945, offered an opportunity for revenge to its victims. ELAS leaders were often lynched by mobs in retaliation. The Civil War is rarely mentioned in the testimonies; it did not affect community life in the way the conflicts of the Occupation did.

Even though there are many different narrators, there are few variations in the recollection of the past. The events are listed in a linear fashion, seldom using flashbacks, in a style that resembles Valtinos' early novellas *Descent of the Nine* and *The Life and Times of Andreas Kordopatis (Synaksari Andrea Kordopati)*. But the scenes appear to be cut off from the historical context in which they occur, deprived of interpretations and of connection to anything beyond local experience. Exceptions to this are the chapters narrated by the brothers Kostas and Giannis Dranias. Through them, a global view of events surfaces in the novel, an approach to Greek history that shifts away from the micro level and includes in its interpretation actions from the national and international political arena.

The disagreement of the testimonies in the book with scholarly history makes them look like products of a counter-memory[24] still in existence among the local population. A different perception of past events is at work within the community and is reproduced through micro-networks in the village. These recollections do not maintain a defensive stance toward the dominant historiography; on the contrary, they aggressively attempt to establish their own version of the past as the only acceptable interpretation of it. The conflict over memory is not without a reason. As Tzvetan Todorov argues, the act of remembering is not "a task of recovering memory [...] but rather the defense of a particular selection among these facts, one that assures its protagonists of maintaining the roles of hero or victim when faced with any other selection that might assign them less glorious roles."[25] In *Orthokosta*, the act of remembering is the act of redefining the sides of good and evil in the 1940s, defending under current circumstances the decisions the narrators made back then. The testimonies might be addressed to a person with whom they are well acquainted with, but in fact they are answers to the accusations of treachery

and collaboration.[26] A number of recurring patterns in their speech assists them in this attempt.

The routine violence repeatedly depicted in daily life describes a world where every decision is de-ideologized under the weight of survival. Moral values and ideas become a luxury in a time when one has to hide under a murdered woman's skirt and pretend to be dead to avoid execution; A man is killed because of a tune he played on his clarinet, and a father is forced to participate in a festive party with the murderers of his son on the same night as the killing. The atmosphere of terror and violence is well-suited to the organization of the narratives through the action-reaction pattern. The decisions that a given character makes are a response to an earlier action by ELAS–in most cases a necessary response in order to survive. This way of presenting the past frees the subjects from responsibility for their actions, casting them as mere reactions to ELAS' earlier wrongdoing, whether their actions are enlisting in the Security Battalions in 1944 or torturing to death an old captain of ELAS in 1946. This line of narration is used even when the story does not support it. In any case, the latter event is presented first and the narrators' earlier decision is reported in the story as its result. In other cases, certain events are falsely chronologized to reinforce the desired scenario. In addition to the above, there is the use of the massacre of Meligalas, the battle of Athens in December 1944, and the Civil War to confirm ELAS' evil ambitions and its decision to execute anyone who might stand in its way. By presenting the local resistance groups of 1943 in the light of the actions of ELAS in the fall of 1944 and of the Republican Army between 1946-1949, the narrators give the impression of a unified KKE, unchanged over time, in complete control over the structure of its organizations, thus providing a justification for the decision of the narrators to take up arms against it right from the start.

Of particular interest in the organization of the testimonies is the different ways in which the story of the final days of Markos Ioannitzis is presented by different persons in the novel.[27] Markos Ioannitzis was a liberal lawyer and ex-officer of the Greek army who came from one of the small villages on the outskirts of Kastri called Karatoula (the same village in Kastri where Valtinos was raised). Ioannitzis was killed by ELAS in the fall of 1943, and his death is often cited as the reason the interviewees opposed ELAS and enlisted in the Security Battalions. But while ELAS' cruelty and the unrightful assassination of the most respected young man of the village is their purported justification, in one testimony we read that Karatoula was one of the only two villages in the area without an EAM organization. The village was known for its support

of the King, so naturally it was against an army having social reconstruction and parliamentary democracy as its goal. This dimension in their relationship with ELAS never appears. On the contrary, they speak of the good will they showed toward the resistance up until Ioannitzis' murder.

The story of Ioannitzis' death is a recurring topic in many chapters, each exploring a different rumor concerning the exact circumstances of his murder; all of these recurring narratives, however, depict cruelty and disregard for human life by ELAS. The last dinner he had with his friends the night before his death-a biblical allusion to the Last Supper, at the end of which one of those attending the banquet will betray him-often comes up: a peaceful gathering of friends creates a stark contrast with the harshness of the times and the murder of Ioannitzis that follows. What remains veiled in all but one case is the content of Ioannitzis' conversation that night, announcing the beginning of a revolt against ELAS through the formation of a new military group in the mountains with the support of British liaisons. This information would transform Ioannitzis from an unsuspecting victim of ELAS to an opponent operating in the mountains with a motive and who, at that time, with so many incidents and conflicts occurring, was for ELAS a thorn in its side.

This kind of self-incrimination is further in evidence through the use of other methods. In his first testimony, in the fourth chapter of the book, Kostas Dranias talks about his service in Trikala in the summer of 1945, depicting an almost medieval scene, with fires burning all around the village at night for protection and the army locked inside the camps after sunset, terrorized by roaming squadrons of former ELAS members.[28] Members of the army still appear to be powerless, in contrast with the communists, who have the ability to achieve what they want: Dranias's battalion is transferred from its camp because of an article in the KKE newspaper, *Rizospastis,* mentioning the connections between the army and the para-military Sourlas group.

The testimonies of Kostas (chapters 4, 29, 33) and Giannis (chapters 9, 19) Dranias belong to a different category of recollection of the events. Kostas Dranias was the subcommander in the Tripoli battalion and served as an interrogator of civilians. German troops saluted Giannis Dranias on the street and he knew the pass codes in order to be able to circulate after curfew to visit his mistress. These testimonies are less in keeping with the one-dimensional action-reaction pattern of other testimonies intended to justify the narrators' actions, and instead subsume their actions under a strategy with nationalistic concerns. They construct a greater interpretive context for their actions, creating a bipolar system, with ELAS on one side and the powers trying to

protect democracy on the other. The two men do not restrict their testimonies to justifying all their actions as a response to ELAS violence, but instead give higher ideological dimensions to their decisions. Violence in these testimonies is condemned, even the violence of their inferiors. Kostas Dranias says in chapter 33: "The hordes from the Battalions grabbed whatever they could find. Kastri was burned down, of course. We went to Agios Petros, same thing there. Then down to Aigiannis, from there to Mesogeio Astros. And all of them barging into houses, plundering. As if they were in a foreign land. In a foreign country. A country I could never imagine"(234). Denouncing the violence and the atrocities, Dranias accepts the facts, which he knows he can't deny, but simultaneously discharges himself from the responsibility of these actions, attributing them to reasons unrelated to him. He condemns the extreme violence, referring to the reports he wrote exposing the problems to his superiors. His denouncement is accompanied by citing the lack of authority he had to stop the atrocities along with his ignorance of what was happening, and also his attempt to change things by forwarding an official report of what he had seen to his superiors. In two separate places he mentions that he left his office in Tripoli just once, and only to collect an ELAS captain who had decided to collaborate with them–all this to stress how little responsibility he had over what was happening away from Tripoli.

These social frames of memory appear throughout the book, not only in the stories by former Security Battalion members and their relatives but by those who had suffered at the hand of the Security Battalions as well. An explanation for this paradox might be that this narrational strategy is the only one they can use in recollecting their past. Two incidental references, however, on pages 114 and 248 respectively, open up a different possibility for understanding all the testimonies in the book.

The first one, the testimony of a man named Loukas, is about a night in 1946 when a group of fifteen para-military troopers came to Karatoula to capture Panagiotis Veremis, a former high-level cadre of EAM. According to Loukas, the men in charge of the group were not from the village; they were simply stationed there, but he doesn't know by whom. This detail changes the interpretative structure of the "White Terror" as an act of revenge, and instead suggests a vertical organization of the "campaign" with leaders of the groups being imposed from above in the hierarchy. Instantly, his wife interrupts him and asks him to stop talking (114). When he responds that what he is saying is true and should be mentioned by someone, his wife finally agrees, but says that he shouldn't be the one to jeopardize himself through such a testimony.

There is here, breaking through the lines of the text, a silencing of any events that are at odds with the common recollection of the past.

The second instance is in chapter 35, when a narrator starts talking about the circumstances under which the villagers of Karatoula enlisted in the Security Battalions, but he is interrupted by someone present at the discussion and is warned "not to say things he shouldn't" (248). This proves that there are things that should be said and others of which no one must speak. Since this important facet of the testimonies is passed from the tape recorder onto paper and then to us, the readers, informing us of the conditions under which memory is recollected, we can assume that the same conditions have affected the recollections we read elsewhere as well.

Let us examine the above in the light of the three "labels" used, often unfairly, to characterize *Orthokosta* since its publication: first, that it is a "left-wing novel"; second, the "Security Battalion's Holy Bible" and third, a "great historical novel". Starting from the latter, regarding the characterization of "historical novel" that has been attributed to Fillipos Iliou,[29] we can see that *Orthokosta* closely follows history not in its actual reporting of the events in the region during the Occupation, which are presented in a biased fashion throughout the book, but in the area of the representation of the actual speech of the former members of the Security Battalions. We may not learn what happened in Kastri by reading *Orthokosta* but we can learn how, and under what circumstances, the protagonists recollect it. Calling *Orthokosta* the "Holy Bible" of the Security Battalions reveals more about it than what first comes to mind. While the initial use of this label was meant to comment on the intentions behind its writing, if we leave Valtinos' intentions aside, since we can never actually know them but only make assumptions, we see that this second label describes the content of the book well. *Orthokosta* is indeed a kind of "Holy Bible" of the Security Battalions, in so much as it contains their truth, or their side of the story, the past they recollect (or reconstruct) in order to protect their past. But being their "Holy Bible" does not exclude *Orthokosta* from being a "left-wing novel" as well. "Left-wing," not necessarily in the interpretation Valtinos and Dimitris Raftopoulos give-that is, in so much as it is a different evaluation of ELAS and, in this way, allows the Left to come to terms with its own mistakes-but "left-wing" in the narrower sense that it reveals the patterns through which ELAS' rivals have built their own version of the events, presenting a "wall of voices," all leading to the condemnation of ELAS, but with enough flaws in this wall to enable the reader to see that this "truth" is constructed in many different ways.

Memory constitutes the basic element of unity in a community. A common memory of a common past is the first thing that is created in every community in order to establish bonds that will keep it together, regardless of whether the community is as big as a nation or as small as a village. For this reason, it is essential for all of its members to agree on a common way of recollecting the past, by choosing to make similar omissions in their testimonies, by using the same techniques and by naming (or categorizing) things in the same manner.[30] In this way, the testimonies in *Orthokosta* that refer to the Occupation and the Civil War construct not only a common way for villagers from the region to remember civil war, but also their validating system and their values.

If we take the 38 chapters that talk about the Occupation and the Civil War as a representation of local memory of that era, this leaves the remaining 9 chapters of the book as a depiction of the way they recollect other eras, both before and after the decade of the 1940s. In the book's 47 chapters, the decade of the 1940s is given the great majority of space, and this is an important factor in formulating the entire local memory. While all the other testimonies are fragments, without connection to one another and without connection to current events, the Civil War is still vivid, alive, an open wound that still shapes identities and standards of conformity. The memory of the '40s is too much for them to handle or include in the same system with all the other events. What happens in *Orthokosta* is that all the other memories not relating to the Occupation have no room to express themselves, as the Occupation was something so important that nothing else can be recollected. It is often argued in Greece that the Civil War[31] has been by far the most formative event of contemporary Greek history. Valtinos shares this opinion. If we reread this book and look at those chapters that do not focus on the Civil War, what we have is a book about local memory in a certain region, how it is formed, and what kind of structure it has. We are talking here about memory that is expressed out in the open, because what is hidden underground remains a mystery. In this respect, we can see common ground with two other well-known works by Valtinos, the novellas *Deep Blue Almost Black* (*Ble Vathy Shedon Mavro*) and *Woodcock Feathers (Ftera Bekatsas*). *Orthokosta* refers for the most part to memory that is spoken, to the forces that shape it, and to the channels that transform it and cause people to recollect things other than what they actually witnessed at the time. *Deep Blue Almost Black* is generally considered to be a book about memory and how it torments people, memory that cannot be expressed, but keeps growing while remaining locked inside a person like a cancer, in the end becoming the

person itself. The female narrator who talks into the tape recorder is simply trying, through words, to express and thereby escape from her memories, and concludes her monologue with the well-known lines: "Memory can't be put aside, memory just is..." In a similar vein, the novella *Woodcock Feathers* is about a quarrel between a married couple in which the husband's voice and his arguments are constantly drowning out those of his wife. Whatever she says, the dominant male voice has an answer, leaving her without an argument to prove her point. She tries to support herself in non-verbal ways, by hitting her husband or breaking the jewelry he bought her. She insists she has reason to feel the way she does, whether it is due to loneliness of the spirit or loneliness of the flesh. Whichever of the two it might be, there is something inside her that motivates her to persist in destroying her marriage, something she cannot express through words because she is not capable of arguing with her husband, or simply because words are inadequate to convey the import of her feelings.[32]

Keeping this in mind, if we look again at the prologue and the epilogue of the book, they give new meaning to their presence and to the 47 chapters that are interposed between them. Testimonies, recollections, memorials both written and spoken, all of these can convey only a small part of what a person has to say, as they are intermediated through so many filters –personal, political, idiosyncratic, or other– that in the end nothing of what we read, learn, or believe can be considered true, not even if we ourselves were eye witnesses, because we ourselves can also become inadvertent deceivers who will falsify what we know. Valtinos himself is subject to the same problem, and rejects the status of an objective compiler and editor of this book. Isaakios falsified his "description" because of his life of duress, which drove him to try to escape reality through lyricism. On many occasions Valtinos has described the life of a writer as the life of a monk, living in solitude, lacking worldly comforts, devoted solely to literature.

Orthokosta is an attack on the prevalent scholarly historiography of the Civil War through a number of witnesses' testimonies that refute it. It is also an attack on the validity of historic knowledge through its criticism of the veracity of the resources that scientific research uses. Whether they are testimonies or archives or even cold, hard facts, they are formulated through one's personal subjectivity, one's own viewpoints, fears and wishes, and are thus transformed. In this way, *Orthokosta* refutes its own claim as a vehicle of the truth, since it too is just a series of testimonies; in any event, people's experience cannot be conveyed in this manner, since it can never fit into words.

NOTES

1. All citations in this article refer to the last edition of the book in 2007 by Vivliopoleion tis Estias.
2. Contemporary periodization of the civil war sets its beginning in 1946 and its end in 1949. Most events around which the majority of the testimonies in *Orthokosta* revolve (arrests and confinement in the monastery, the creation of Security Battalions, the migration of the population from Kastri to Tripoli and Athens, the three arson attacks on the village) take place in late 1943 and 1944. However, the way events are presented, they conform to the theory of the post-war State of the "three phases" of the civil war (1943-1944, December 1944, 1946-1949). In the last decade, there has arisen a new group of researchers, originating from many fields outside traditional historical disciplines, who support a "reperiodization" from 1943-1949 (Kalyvas-Marantzidis 2004). *Orthokosta* is often used as a resource in their publications. For this and similar reasons, *Orthokosta* is a crucial book as far as a literary approach to the complexity of the civil war goes.
3. The collective volume *Gia ton Valtino,* which was edited by Theodosis Pylarinos, includes some of the most important texts concerning *Orthokosta* (223-303). In Vangelis Calotychos' "Writing Wrongs, (Re)righting History?: *Orthotita* and *Orthographia* in Valtinos's *Orthokosta*", Thanasis Skoupras' "H Orthokosta tou Thanasi Valtinou kai i kritiki" and Dimitris Paivanas' "The prose of Thanassis Valtinos. Postmodernism and the historiographical issue" there is a further analysis of the dispute. The latter work in particular attempts to draw a connection between the negative criticism about *Orthokosta* and the positive criticism about *Descent of the Nine* in the left wing press, to find out if either work was misinterpreted.
4. The Occupation and the Civil War are events that, in general, are hard to explore separately. In particular, studying the memory of the Civil War and the Occupation separately is impossible since the Civil War has been the filter through which the Occupation is approached by successive generations (Voglis 2008: 63).
5. Stathis Kalyvas cites *Orthokosta* as one of the reasons that helped shift his own focus to the mass-level (Kalivas, 2009).
6. According to Penelope Papailias, *Orthokosta*'s readers were annoyed because they were asked to "familiarize with a point of view different than the one of the disappointed communist: that of the hurt "enemy" (2007: 174). Similar is the approach by Fillipos IIiou who attributed the negative reception that Orthokosta had from left-wing intellectuals to their opinion that the ELAS violence should be interpreted through a left point-of-view (2003).
7. Bontila, 2006 pages 249-267.

8. Henry Rousso, p. 10.

9. Tasos Kostopoulos.

10. Personal interview with Thanasis Valtinos.

11. More on this subject can be found in 'Mia diskoli tetraetia" by Nikos Alivizatos (2008).

12. The first publication of the archives was in the pages of the left-wing newspaper Avgi in December, 1979 and January, 1980. This research was published in a book shortly after his death in 2004.

13. Two of the most important works according to this paradigm are *Istoria tou Ellinikou Emfiliou Polemou: 1946-1949* by Giorgos Margaritis and *Istoria tis Elladas ton 20o aiona, volumes C1 and C2* edited by Christos Chatziiosif and Prokopis Papastratis.

14. Giorgos Antoniou-Nikos Marantzidis, "The Greek Civil War Historiography, 1945-2001. Toward a new paradigm".

15. Giorgos Mavrogordatos, 1999.

16. A critique of Greek Society forgetting its past can be found in the last chapter of *Tria Ellinika Monoprakta* (Michel Fais 1994) and in *Stoiheia gia tin dekaetia tou '60*.

17. Valtinos rejects the label "non-fiction novel" focusing on the creative interference a writer gives to any story through his personal style and craft making it impossible for any story to be left untouched by the writer's fiction. He does repeat, however, on each occasion that in *Orthokosta* he remains loyal to the actual historical events as they took place in the area.

18. A great deal of the controversy around *Orthokosta* concerned the relationship a novel must have to reality and how much liberty the author can take when he sets his story in a universe of historical events. For further reading on this matter one can see Angelos Elefantis "Orthokosta tou Thanasi Valtinou", Dimitris Raftopoulos "H Orthokosta den einai sapounopera" and Thanasis Valtinos' interviews after the publication of the book in *Anti* and *Eleftherotypia* and the 2004 interview in *Ta Nea* "Sou skotonoun ti mana. Poia diakiveumata mou lete?"

19. An example of this technique in Valtinos's writing is "Grammata stin Filaki" from *Tria Ellinika Monoprakta* (1979), in the introduction to which he says he found the letters thrown in the toilets of Kalamos Prison in Chania. Because it is text, the reader perceives this as the truth, while it is in fact a trick by the novelist to create an atmosphere of reality in the preface. Vangelis Calotychos goes so far as to include the cover and the epigraph of the book in his own interpretation of the book.

20. Vangelis Calotychos has done a thorough analysis of the meanings that the word "katalogi" could carry and what it would mean for the novel (2000).
21. Gina Politi has written an interesting article in which she focuses precisely on how *Orthokosta* upsets the established historical discourse, giving voice to the hitherto suppressed, "silent" subject of history (Politi 1994).
22. Dimitris Raftopoulos, "To mithistorima tekmirion kata Valtinon".
23. Dimitris Raftopoulos, "Thanasis Valtinos: Orthokosta,".
24. More about counter-memory in the society can be found in George Lipsitz's *Time Passages: Collective Memory and the American Popular Culture*, pages 213-231.
25. Todorov, "The uses and abuses of memory," page 21.
26. More on this can be found in Penelope Papailia's article "Dinontas foni sti Dexia," pages 184-185.
27. Ioannitzis is a name Valtinos uses for a real person who shared the same goals as his literary alter ego. The real name of this individual can be found in some of the reviews of *Orthokosta*. Since this is not an article about the local history of Kastri but rather an article about *Orthokosta* and the relationships within its literary universe, it is unnecessary to mention it here.
28. The worst acts of terror came from Aris Velouchiotis and his squadrons, who roamed the area while being hunted by military and militia groups.
29. Fillipos Iliou said this during a speech at the presentation of the book. No transcript of that speech has been saved. The content of his speech can be partly restored through the newspaper reportages of the following day: Xari Pontida "To Paraxeno onoma enos monastiriou" *Ta Nea*, May 18, 1994, "Valtinos gia Tagmatasfalites", *Eleftherotypia*, May 18, 1994 , "Mnimi kai aisthisi tis Istorias", *Kathimerini*, May 18, 1994.
30. An interesting analysis of this from a social pcychologist's point of view can be found in "Joint remembering: constructing an experience through conversational discourse" by D. Edwards and D. Middleton.
31. In the context of the book, the latter phase of the Occupation and the Civil War coincide with each other.
32. This is a common theme in Valtinos' books. This article would run too long and stray too far from its subject if we were to search for similar passages in each of his books. A very vivid example of this, however, can be found in Valtinos' interpretation of Dionisios Solomos's *Flowers of the Abyss (Anthi tis Avyssou).*

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L'union pour la mediterranée: Une initiative française

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ABSTRACT

What about the Union for the Mediterranean? According to a joint approach, the idea of uniting the countries of both shores of the Mediterranean basin is particularly interesting. But are the means to achieve it sufficient? This French initiative, which has been the subject of much controversy within the European Union, now seems unconvincing. For this organization, the willingness of sharing and of peace is hampered by perennial disputes inherent in the Mediterranean. The cooperation within such a group, which focuses on the reconciliation between the Maghreb and Mashreq countries and the EU, is indeed difficult and complex. However, the prospect of completing this project is essential, since the UPM could ultimately limit the existing cleavages.

RÉSUMÉ

Que dire de l'Union pour la Méditerranée? L'idée de réunir les États des deux rives du bassin méditerranéen selon une approche paritaire est particulièrement belle, mais les moyens pour y parvenir sont-ils suffisants? Cette initiative française, qui a fait l'objet de nombreuses controverses au sein de l'Union européenne, semble aujourd'hui peu probante. La volonté de partage et de paix que porte cette organisation est entravée par des contentieux pérennes, inhérents à la zone Méditerranée. La coopération au sein d'un tel groupe, qui met l'accent sur le rapprochement entre les pays du Maghreb, du Machrek et de l'UE, est en effet difficile et complexe. Or, la perspective de mener à bien ce projet est essentielle, dans la mesure où l'UPM pourrait, à terme, limiter les clivages existants.

Issu du processus de Barcelone, qui réunit les États de l'Union européenne et les pays riverains du bassin méditerranéen, l'Union pour la Méditerranée (UPM) ou plus précisément le «Processus de Barcelone: une Union pour la Méditerranée» a été fondée le 13 juillet 2008, à l'initiative du président de la

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République française Nicolas Sarkozy. En effet, la consolidation des relations de l'Union européenne avec les États des rives méridionale et orientale de la Méditerranée est inscrite dans le cadre du Processus de Barcelone, lancé le 28 novembre 1995 sous l'impulsion de l'ancien président de la République française Jacques Chirac. L'objectif du projet était déjà de contribuer à la création d'une zone euro-méditerranéenne pour renforcer les échanges et les solidarités selon une approche paritaire.

1. L'origine historique de l'Union pour la Méditerranée

Les relations de l'Union européenne avec les pays riverains du bassin méditerranéen ont pour origine le rapprochement de la Communauté économique européenne (CEE) avec la région Méditerranée, débuté entre les années 1960 et 1970. Cette politique d'ouverture a permis la signature d'accords de coopération économique et commerciale avec certains États du Maghreb et du Machrek, ainsi que la ratification de traités d'association avec quelques pays de l'Europe du Sud-Est, en particulier la Turquie, Malte et Chypre. Par la suite, la collaboration euro-méditerranéenne n'a eu de cesse de s'affirmer et constitue aujourd'hui l'un des principaux axes de l'action extérieure européenne, notamment en matière d'économie et de stratégie. Jusque dans les années 1980, ces échanges régionaux avaient en effet une dimension essentiellement économique. Puis, la nécessité de mener une politique plus cohérente et globale dans cette zone limitrophe de l'Europe a entraîné la mise en œuvre d'un Partenariat euro-méditerranéen[1]. La Conférence entre les acteurs étatiques européens et méditerranéens, tenue les 27 et 28 novembre 1995 à Barcelone, a constitué l'acte fondateur de ce rapprochement. Le projet, également appelé Processus de Barcelone ou Euromed, est intervenu dans un contexte géopolitique particulier marqué par les conséquences de la guerre du Golfe (1990-1991), qui avait opposé les forces occidentales et l'armée irakienne, et la relance du processus de paix au Proche-Orient grâce aux accords d'Oslo (1993). Le but de ce partenariat, à dimension bilatérale et régionale, était notamment de concilier le besoin de sécurité de l'Europe vis-à-vis de la zone conflictuelle du Proche-Orient avec la volonté de développement des pays du Sud et de l'Est de la Méditerranée. Les enjeux sécuritaires propres à l'Union européenne, la conflictualité inhérente aux territoires de la façade levantine et la nécessité de soutenir les pays riverains du bassin méditerranéen par le biais d'une dynamique porteuse, ont impliqué une action à la fois consensuelle et conciliatrice (tentatives de médiation et de rapprochement), ainsi que la

définition et l'application d'une politique européenne spécifique pour appuyer cet élan (aides au développement accordées aux pays les plus pauvres). Comportant à l'origine trois orientations complémentaires, relatives à la politique et aux questions de sécurité, à l'économie et au commerce, ainsi qu'aux aspects socioculturels des échanges interétatiques, le Processus de Barcelone a fait l'objet d'une politique de relance par la Commission européenne en 2005, c'est-à-dire dix ans après son instauration.

Il convient de préciser que les États méditerranéens concernés par ce rapprochement, à l'exception de la Turquie qui a entamé des négociations d'adhésion avec l'UE le 3 octobre 2005, ainsi que la Libye, sont associés à la Politique européenne de voisinage (PEV) initiée en mars 2003 et instaurée l'année suivante à l'intention des États n'ayant pas vocation à intégrer l'Union européenne. Ce programme a pour objectif d'associer les pays du Sud à diverses activités de l'UE par le biais d'une coopération étroite sur les plans politique, économique, sécuritaire et culturel. Il a permis d'une part de renforcer les relations de l'Union européenne avec certains États proches de sa zone d'influence[2], mais il tend d'autre part à marquer une certaine rupture entre le centre européen et sa périphérie.

2. De l'Union méditerranéenne à l'Union pour la Méditerranée

Le 6 mai 2007, à l'issue du second tour de l'élection présidentielle française, Nicolas Sarkozy décide de lancer un appel pour bâtir une «Union méditerranéenne» sur une base paritaire. L'idée de ce rapprochement entre les États des deux rives de la Méditerranée est apparue deux ans auparavant, sous l'impulsion de Jean-Louis Guigou, ex-directeur de la DATAR[3], et de Panagiotis Rouménotis, ancien ministre grec des Finances et président du Centre d'analyse et de liaison des acteurs de la Méditerranée (CALAME). Prenant acte de l'enlisement du Processus de Barcelone, qui devait aider au développement des pays de la région Méditerranée, les deux hommes décident d'encourager la création d'une «Communauté du monde méditerranéen». Le projet est par la suite reconsidéré avec attention par des universitaires et des intellectuels français, lors du conflit qui oppose Israël au Liban au cours du mois d'août 2006. L'accent est alors mis sur la volonté d'apaiser les tensions israélo-arabes par la coopération et le dialogue dans un cadre international et consensuel. L'idée d'un tel rapprochement inspire aussitôt Nicolas Sarkozy, candidat à la présidence de la République française, d'autant plus que cette initiative est susceptible de constituer une alternative pour la Turquie, dont il

refuse catégoriquement l'adhésion à l'Union européenne. Selon toute vraisemblance, Henri Guaino, conseiller spécial du président français, est à l'origine de la reprise de ce projet, dont la dynamique s'inscrit à l'écart de l'Union européenne et le contenu tend à entériner l'échec du Processus de Barcelone.

Dès le mois de septembre 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy nomme un diplomate, Alain Le Roy, chargé d'étudier le dossier et surtout, de le mettre en œuvre. Puis, au mois d'octobre de la même année, lors d'une visite d'État au Maroc, le président français prononce un discours qui appelle les pays riverains de la Méditerranée à engager une coopération équilibrée et égalitaire entre le Nord et le Sud, notamment en matière politique, économique, militaire, culturelle et sociale. À cet égard, il tient à encourager, à l'échelle de la Méditerranée, un processus analogue à celui initié lors de la construction européenne, de façon notamment à tenter de rapprocher Israël des pays arabes et de surcroît, à conforter un élan de paix mutuel. Dans son discours, tenu le 23 octobre 2007 dans la ville de Tanger, Nicolas Sarkozy invite tous les dirigeants des pays riverains du bassin méditerranéen à une conférence au sommet au mois de juin 2008 à Paris (c'est-à-dire peu avant la présidence française de l'Union européenne) et ce, afin de marquer l'instauration officielle de ce projet commun.

La Méditerranée est un espace de civilisation partagée. Elle est en outre inscrite dans la plupart des problématiques géopolitiques de ce début du siècle et requiert, en cela, d'être associée à une dynamique particulière, d'autant plus que la Guerre froide y a limité l'influence de l'Europe et dans le même temps, a mis à mal les échanges intra-régionaux. En effet, la récurrence et la traduction des antagonismes Est-Ouest dans le bassin méditerranéen par le maintien de zones d'influence rivales, contrôlées par les États-Unis d'une part (intégration conjointe de la Grèce et de la Turquie dans l'OTAN en 1952) et par l'ex-Union Soviétique d'autre part (rapprochement de l'Égypte nassérienne après la crise de Suez en 1956; alliance stratégique entre l'URSS et la Syrie dans les années 1960), ont eu pour conséquence d'occulter la dimension européenne de la zone Méditerranée. Par la suite, la décolonisation et la guerre d'Algérie (1954-1962) ont marqué une rupture fondamentale entre les rives méridionale et septentrionale du bassin méditerranéen. Aujourd'hui, la politique des États-Unis dans la région et dans ses aires limitrophes est particulièrement active, notamment du fait de l'installation et du maintien de facilités militaires au Nord, à l'Est et au sein de la Méditerranée. Le projet global et strictement américain de «Grand Moyen-Orient» (GMO) ou de «Très Grand Moyen-Orient», développé par l'administration de l'ancien président des États-Unis

Georges W. Bush, qui vise à contrôler le pétrole arabe, à démocratiser et à sécuriser la région (en particulier Israël), de même que la stratégie américaine relative à la mer Noire et à l'Asie centrale, participent à une logique de domination en contradiction avec la politique européenne et russe actuelle. En effet, la volonté de la Russie de maintenir et de renforcer son influence dans son environnement proche, en raison de l'élargissement progressif de l'OTAN à l'Est de l'Europe (possibilité d'intégrer la Géorgie et l'Ukraine à terme) et du fait de l'expansion stratégique continue des États-Unis à proximité de son territoire (nouvelles bases militaires en Bulgarie, en Roumanie, dans le Caucase et en Asie centrale), tend à équilibrer les rapports de forces dans la région. Mais qu'en est-il de l'Europe à cet égard? La Guerre froide se poursuit en raison de la perpétuation des luttes d'influence entre Washington et Moscou, qui écartent l'UE et donc Paris de l'échiquier géopolitique régional, ce que l'Union méditerranéenne se propose de remédier à la faveur d'une stratégie équilibrante concrète. Il est vrai que la France ne s'est pas impliquée dans le projet de «Grand Moyen-Orient» et n'a rallié que tardivement la stratégie qui distingue le Pont-Euxin. En cela, la vision française de rapprocher l'Union européenne des pays riverains de la Méditerranée ouvre des perspectives nouvelles de liens tangibles avec le Maghreb et le Proche-Orient, tout en assurant au gouvernement français un rôle dynamique et central.

Or, le scepticisme et les inquiétudes des États européens au lendemain du discours de Tanger de Nicolas Sarkozy mettent l'accent sur un projet jugé somme toute flou et mal défini, qui consacre les insuffisances et les limites du Processus de Barcelone, et marginalise de surcroît les institutions européennes. Les entraves sont multiples: d'une part, ce partenariat mis en œuvre par le président de la République française n'associe guère les pays non riverains de la Méditerranée ou encore les États membres de l'UE qui ne sont pas limitrophes de la région, à l'exception du Portugal, de la Jordanie et de la Mauritanie ; d'autre part, il est mené sans aucune concertation avec les États issus de l'Union européenne ; et enfin, il tend à privilégier le Sud au détriment de l'Est, qui comprend les pays d'Europe centrale et orientale, ainsi qu'une partie des Balkans.

Modérément soutenu par la Grèce, l'Espagne et l'Italie, le projet d'Union méditerranéenne fait de plus l'objet de nombreuses réticences de la part de la chancelière allemande Angela Merkel, dans la mesure où il conforte une dynamique méridionale qui rivalise avec la politique méditerranéenne actuelle de l'UE *via* le Processus de Barcelone. Lors du sommet européen des 13 et 14 mars 2008, Nicolas Sarkozy choisit néanmoins de défendre son projet auprès

du Conseil des chefs d'État et de gouvernement de l'Union européenne. Bien qu'il présente l'initiative comme le pendant méridional du Conseil des États de la Baltique, dans lequel seuls les pays riverains sont intégrés (les autres participants ayant le statut d'observateurs), l'importance des tensions entre la France et l'Allemagne sur le sujet implique une révision partielle des perspectives françaises afin d'inscrire le projet dans une logique communautaire. La chancelière allemande exige ainsi que tous les États de l'UE soient des pays membres à part entière de l'Union méditerranéenne et surtout, que la Commission européenne soit au centre du dispositif: l'objectif étant de relancer le Processus de Barcelone et non de l'écarter. En outre, les champs d'intervention du projet sont limités et les budgets réduits, de manière à établir ou à renforcer, selon les cas, les échanges dans des domaines consensuels, tels que l'environnement, l'énergie, l'eau, les transports, la protection civile, l'enseignement, la formation et la culture. Enfin, seuls les fonds attribués dans le cadre du Processus de Barcelone pourront être alloués à ce partenariat révisé. La réalisation de projets concrets d'intérêt commun sur une base paritaire n'est pas remise en cause, mais la dénomination initiale d'«Union méditerranéenne» évolue de manière significative pour devenir officiellement: «le Processus de Barcelone: une Union pour la Méditerranée», et marquer l'adoption d'une approche nouvelle.

3. Le rôle et les perspectives d'évolution de l'UPM

Les pays participants à l'Union pour la Méditerranée sont au nombre de 43, ce qui comprend les 27 États membres de l'Union européenne; les 10 partenaires du Processus de Barcelone: l'Algérie, l'Autorité Palestinienne, l'Égypte, Israël, la Jordanie, le Liban, le Maroc, la Syrie, la Tunisie et la Turquie ; ainsi que la Croatie (pays participant à des négociations d'adhésion avec l'UE), l'Albanie, la Bosnie-Herzégovine et le Monténégro (candidat potentiel à l'Union européenne), et enfin, la Mauritanie et Monaco (la Libye, qui a décliné l'invitation, a le statut d'observateur). L'UPM s'appuie sur les acquis du Processus de Barcelone, dont elle doit renforcer les réalisations et les éléments fructueux. En ce sens, les objectifs et les domaines de coopération de la Déclaration de Barcelone s'inscrivent dans le cadre des champs d'intervention de l'Union pour la Méditerranée. Le dialogue humain, politique, social et culturel, ainsi que la coopération économique et le libre-échange, sont de ce fait au centre des relations euro-méditerranéennes. Il s'agit d'un projet fondé sur une logique de coopération ou d'ouverture et non sur des principes d'intégration. Par ailleurs, l'Union pour la Méditerranée n'a pas

vocation à se substituer aux procédures de dialogue et de coopération réunissant déjà les pays riverains du bassin méditerranéen, mais à les compléter, à accroître leur visibilité et à renforcer l'action politique liée aux diverses formes de rapprochement autour de la Méditerranée. Cette approche à la fois nouvelle et ambitieuse met en avant un certain nombre de projets devant créer une dynamique complémentaire aux processus existants. Chaque perspective d'action a pour condition de développer des partenariats égalitaires, ce qui exige la collaboration conjointe et volontaire des pays des rives septentrionale et méridionale de la Méditerranée. Afin d'assurer la continuité des institutions européennes, l'APEM[4] doit constituer l'expression parlementaire de l'organisation. Le fonctionnement général de l'Union pour la Méditerranée doit reposer sur un sommet biennal qui se tiendra dans un pays à chaque fois différent, ainsi que sur un secrétariat permanent et une coprésidence qui associe un État européen riverain de la Méditerranée et un pays extérieur à l'UE, de façon à permettre une égalité entre le Nord et Sud. À cet égard, des oppositions et des objections demeurent, tant pour déterminer le siège de l'Union pour la Méditerranée que pour désigner ses dirigeants. En effet, la Commission européenne a fait savoir au préalable qu'elle n'envisageait pas que Nicolas Sarkozy assure la première présidence de l'UPM et de préciser que la participation éventuelle de la Turquie dans ce partenariat n'exclura en rien Ankara du processus d'adhésion à l'UE. D'autres questions restent également en suspens, en particulier au sujet du financement du projet, de la stratégie envisagée, des moyens engagés et des relations israélo-arabes au sein de cette union composite.

4. La situation actuelle: incertitudes et critiques

L'élan politique que suscite l'UPM conforte un certain optimisme, dans la mesure où les partenaires s'inscrivent dans un cadre commun qui privilégie la coopération autour de la Méditerranée et conforte la mobilisation de nombreux acteurs, tels que les collectivités locales, les entreprises, les associations, les Organisations non gouvernementales, ainsi que les sociétés civiles. Dans le même temps, les critiques sont importantes et récurrentes à l'égard de ce rapprochement, qui réunit les pays arabes et Israël et dont le fonctionnement demeure nébuleux. En effet, comment coopérer sans parvenir à la normalisation des relations de tous les acteurs étatiques en présence? Quelle stratégie adopter en la matière? Pour beaucoup, le conflit israélo-palestinien constitue l'obstacle majeur de ce partenariat. La situation est particulièrement critique et divise autant qu'elle rallie. Les pays de la rive Sud

de la Méditerranée sont à ce propos assez sceptiques. Quel est l'enjeu de cette entente: permettre un rapprochement entre les uns et les autres ou renforcer le rayonnement de la diplomatie française dans une région où l'influence américaine est grandissante? Les entraves sont significatives et le projet demeure, selon toute vraisemblance, très ambitieux. Nous ne pouvons cependant pas nier que la perspective de rapprocher les peuples de la Méditerranée, unis par l'histoire et la géographie, est particulièrement belle et nécessite en cela tolérance, compromis et patience. N'est-ce pas le moment ou le prétexte opportun de s'engager dans une voie de partage et de paix sans discourir ni craindre les oppositions des uns et des autres? Le défi est lancé, mais les tentatives pour le relever restent peu probantes. Les difficultés actuelles n'améliorent pas la situation. L'intervention des forces israéliennes dans la bande de Gaza en décembre 2008 et les répercussions de la crise financière en Europe ont mis, il est vrai, à mal les perspectives d'évolution de l'UPM. Malgré tout, les quarante-trois États membres de l'Union pour la Méditerranée se sont réunis au mois d'avril 2009 à Bruxelles pour tenter de relancer le processus diplomatique. En effet, depuis la recrudescence du conflit israélo-palestinien, aucune réunion n'avait eu lieu dans le cadre de l'organisation. Pour autant, la situation semble encourageante: l'objectif de cette rencontre étant de donner un nouvel élan au partenariat euro-méditerranéen, qui peine à se concrétiser depuis son instauration et plus généralement, depuis la Conférence de Barcelone en 1995. Dès la fin du mois de mars 2009, la France, l'Espagne et l'Égypte se sont déclarés favorables à une relance rapide du projet. Or, l'UPM n'a pour le moment avancé aucune mesure tangible et ne dispose ni de secrétariat ni de financements concrets. Elle est en ce sens inexistante; tandis que le refus des pays arabes de dialoguer avec le gouvernement israélien, dont il condamne l'offensive militaire à Gaza, limite considérablement les perspectives de coopération au sein de ce groupe. Il convient à cet égard de rappeler que la pérennité et la virulence du conflit israélo-palestinien, ainsi que le manque de représentants des pays arabes, ont été les principales causes de l'échec du Processus de Barcelone. En outre, la France et l'Égypte, qui sont à l'origine de l'Union pour la Méditerranée, sont accusées par les gouvernements arabes les plus radicaux de soutenir Israël dans ce conflit recrudescent. Instaurer un pôle géostratégique méditerranéen implique de considérer l'instabilité du Proche-Orient dans son ensemble (aggravation de la crise libanaise, menace nucléaire de l'Iran…), dans la mesure où les dissensions existantes et latentes sont susceptibles de mettre à mal la légitimité de ce rapprochement Nord-Sud. En tout état de cause, la situation est aujourd'hui inquiétante et peu encourageante. L'UPM semble en effet dans l'impasse, si l'on en juge d'après les

déclarations pessimistes du ministre français des Affaires étrangères lors d'une audition[5] auprès de l'Assemblée nationale en mai 2009. Monsieur Bernard Kouchner y a évoqué l'enlisement progressif du projet, en raison de l'exacerbation du conflit israélo-palestinien au cours de ces derniers mois. Selon lui, ce contentieux constitue la principale entrave à l'évolution de l'organisation, étant donné qu'il écarte toute possibilité de rencontre ministérielle entre l'ensemble des participants. La gravité de la situation corrobore ainsi le peu d'avancées sur le plan pratique, organisationnel et structurel. Inscrite dans le cadre de l'Union pour la Méditerranée, la question israélo-arabe tend aujourd'hui à fragiliser son processus de relance de manière significative et constitue de ce fait, une problématique centrale à ne surtout pas minorer.

Le maintien et l'action de l'Union pour la Méditerranée dépendent également pour beaucoup de son financement, au sujet duquel les approximations et les incohérences sont nombreuses. Pour le moment, la situation à ce sujet est fragile et semble confirmer l'immatérialité du projet. Il est aujourd'hui question de restructurer les mécanismes financiers de l'ancien Processus de Barcelone (plus de dix milliards d'euros), du soutien de nombreux fonds privés, dont la liste n'est ni consultable ni exhaustive, de la participation de la Banque européenne de développement, de la contribution de la Banque mondiale, ainsi que de la Ligue arabe. Quelques précisions sont toutefois apportées quant aux budgets des programmes scientifiques et culturels de l'organisation, qui devraient être indépendants.

En tout état de cause, le président français Nicolas Sarkozy coprésidence aujourd'hui avec le dirigeant égyptien Hosni Moubarak l'UPM et réaffirme son ambition de poursuivre ce partenariat. Pour l'instant, les pays membres de l'organisation ont privilégié la mise en œuvre de six projets concrets à géométrie variable: l'implication de tous les États partenaires n'étant pas obligatoire. Ces plans d'action concernent plus particulièrement la dépollution de la mer Méditerranée, les autoroutes maritimes et terrestres, l'énergie solaire, la protection civile dans le cas de catastrophes naturelles ou la lutte contre les aléas climatiques, un programme pour le développement des petites et moyennes entreprises, ainsi que la création d'une université euro-méditerranéenne. La priorité est en effet donnée au domaine environnemental et scientifique ; l'autre grand volet étant consacré à l'éducation et aux échanges culturels. Au cours de sa première conférence ministérielle, tenue les 3 et 4 novembre 2008 à Marseille, l'organisation est finalement rebaptisée «Union pour la Méditerranée[6]»: cela permet de simplifier l'appellation antérieure, qui met l'accent sur le Processus de Barcelone comme cadre global du projet. Le

siège du secrétariat de l'UPM est alors fixé à Barcelone, un poste de secrétaire général adjoint est confié à Israël et la participation le la Ligue arabe acquise.

La récurrence et la virulence des oppositions, qui marquent la mise en œuvre de cette organisation, semblent ne pas annihiler les espoirs de ceux qui croient en la Méditerranée comme lieu d'échanges propice à la coopération interétatique. À la fois zone de contacts et de frictions où les écarts entre le Nord et le Sud sont prégnants, les enjeux multiples, tant sur le plan politique, économique, militaire, culturel, écologique que démographique, et les équilibres géostratégiques soumis à l'immixtion des puissances étrangères (notamment des États-Unis), l'espace méditerranéen constitue aujourd'hui une région stratégique charnière que l'Union européenne ne doit nullement négliger pour maintenir et renforcer son influence extérieure. La pérennité de l'UPM suppose de dépasser les clivages et les représentations géopolitiques subjectives des acteurs étatiques en présence; elle implique également de mettre en œuvre un processus de développement progressif, ainsi qu'un dispositif de concertation dynamique pour améliorer le dialogue Nord-Sud à l'échelle de la Méditerranée et tenter de rééquilibrer la situation tout en assurant paix et sécurité en son sein. Rapprocher les uns et les autres pour éviter de les opposer: là est l'avenir de l'Union pour la Méditerranée.

5. Chronologie - du processus de Barcelone a l'UPM

27-28 novembre 1995

Conférence de Barcelone. Les ministres des Affaires étrangères des quinze États membres de l'Union européenne et ceux de douze pays méditerranéens (les gouvernements du Machrek et du Maghreb, ainsi que l'Autorité palestinienne, Israël, la Turquie, Malte et Chypre) se réunissent à Barcelone et lancent le partenariat euro-méditerranéen ou Processus de Barcelone.

20 novembre 1995

Signature de l'accord d'association de l'Union européenne avec Israël, qui entre en vigueur en juin 2000.

20 février 1996

Signature de l'accord d'association de l'Union européenne avec le Maroc. Il entre en vigueur le 1er mars 2000.

**24 février 1997*

Signature de l'accord intérimaire d'association de l'UE avec l'Autorité palestinienne, qui entre en vigueur le 1er juillet 1997.

**15-16 avril 1997*

Deuxième conférence euro-méditerranéenne des ministres des Affaires étrangères à Malte. De nouvelles orientations sont proposées pour l'avenir.

**24 novembre 1997*

Signature de l'accord d'association de l'Union européenne avec la Jordanie. Il entre en vigueur le 1er mai 2002.

**15-16 avril 1999*

Troisième conférence euro-méditerranéenne des ministres des Affaires étrangères à Stuttgart.

**Juin 2000*

Conseil européen de Santa Maria da Feira. Adoption de la «Stratégie commune de l'Union européenne pour la Méditerranée», qui vise à promouvoir la paix, la stabilité et la prospérité dans la région.

**15-16 novembre 2000*

Quatrième conférence euro-méditerranéenne à Marseille, qui réunit les ministres des Affaires étrangères de l'UE, ainsi que leurs partenaires, à l'exception du Liban et de la Syrie refusant d'y participer. La réunion de délégués arabes et israéliens donne un nouvel élan au Processus de Barcelone.

**25 juin 2001*

Signature de l'accord d'association de l'Union européenne avec l'Égypte, qui entre en vigueur le 1er juin 2004.

**22 avril 2002*

Signature de l'accord d'association de l'UE avec l'Algérie. Il en vigueur en septembre 2005.

**22-23 avril 2002*

Cinquième conférence euro-méditerranéenne à Valence. Le Liban et la Syrie refusent d'y participer, en raison de la présence de représentants israéliens. Un plan d'action, adopté à l'unanimité, réaffirme la création d'une zone de libre-échange d'ici 2010, propose la création d'une banque euro-méditerranéenne, prévoit une collaboration en matière de lutte contre le terrorisme et recommande le renforcement de la dimension parlementaire du partenariat avec la mise en place d'une assemblée euro-méditerranéenne.

**17 juin 2002*

Signature de l'accord intérimaire d'association de l'UE avec le Liban, qui entre en vigueur le 1er mars 2003.

**11 mars 2003*

Lancement de la politique européenne de voisinage par le président de la Commission européenne, Romano Prodi. La PEV propose un nouveau cadre pour les relations de l'UE avec les pays voisins de l'Est et du Sud de l'Europe, qui n'ont pas vocation à intégrer l'Union européenne.

**2-3 décembre 2003*

Sixième conférence euro-méditerranéenne des ministres des Affaires étrangères à Naples. La transformation du forum euro-méditerranéen en une assemblée parlementaire est approuvée.

**22-23 mars 2004*

Séance inaugurale de l'Assemblée parlementaire euro-méditerranéenne (APEM) à Athènes. D'après le règlement adopté par les participants, cette assemblée se réunira au moins une fois par an pour délibérer de l'évolution et des objectifs politiques du processus de Barcelone.

**1er mai 2004*

Élargissement de l'Union européenne à dix nouveaux États membres, dont Chypre et Malte qui étaient associés au partenariat euro-méditerranéen.

**14 juin 2004*

Le Conseil de l'Union européenne propose un Partenariat stratégique avec la Méditerranée et le Moyen-Orient, cadre global s'adressant aux pays de la

Méditerranée (y compris la Libye), aux pays du Conseil de coopération du Golfe, à l'Iran, au Yémen et à l'Iran, en réponse à l'initiative américaine qui concerne le «Grand Moyen-Orient».

11 octobre 2004

Levée de l'embargo européen sur les armes et des sanctions économiques imposées à la Libye, ouvrant la voie à l'entrée du pays dans le partenariat.

19 octobre 2004

Fin des négociations sur l'accord d'association entre l'Union européenne et la Syrie, lancées en 1998.

12-15 mars 2005

Première réunion formelle de l'Assemblée parlementaire euro-méditerranéenne ou APEM au Caire.

20 avril 2005

Inauguration de la Fondation euro-méditerranéenne Anna Lindh à Alexandrie pour le dialogue entre les cultures. Elle a pour objectif de rapprocher les États des rives septentrionale et méridionale de la Méditerranée, ainsi que constituer des réseaux euro-méditerranéens favorisant la mise en œuvre de programmes de coopération dans différents domaines.

30-31 mai 2005

Septième conférence euro-méditerranéenne des ministres des Affaires étrangères à Luxembourg. Elle prend acte des progrès réalisés sur le plan institutionnel, en dépit d'un bilan global jugé mitigé.

27-29 novembre 2005

Sommet extraordinaire des chefs d'État et de gouvernement à Barcelone à l'occasion du dixième anniversaire du partenariat euro-méditerranéen. Marqué par l'absence de la quasi-totalité des dirigeants arabes, le sommet s'achève sans déclaration finale, en raison de tensions entre les participants sur la question du Proche-Orient.

27-28 novembre 2006

Huitième conférence euro-méditerranéenne des ministres des Affaires

étrangères en Finlande. La déclaration commune, signée par tous les pays membres de l'Union européenne et leurs dix partenaires méditerranéens, réaffirme leur engagement sur la Feuille de route pour le Proche-Orient, qui prévoit la création d'un État palestinien indépendant. Ce n'est que la deuxième fois depuis la création d'Euromed en 1995 que les participants parviennent à se mettre d'accord sur une déclaration commune.

**14-15 mars 2008*

Lors du Conseil européen de Bruxelles, les vingt-sept chefs d'État et de gouvernement de l'UE donnent leur accord de principe au projet d'«Union pour la Méditerranée». Après avoir fait l'objet d'un compromis franco-allemand, cette initiative du président Nicolas Sarkozy, renommée «le Processus de Barcelone: une Union pour la Méditerranée», intègre finalement le processus de Barcelone et de surcroît, associe tous les États membres de l'UE aux pays riverains de la Méditerranée.

**13 juillet 2008*

Le «Processus de Barcelone: Union pour la Méditerranée» est officiellement créé lors du sommet de Paris. Ce partenariat euro-méditerranéen renforcé reprend les acquis du Processus de Barcelone, initié en 1995 et resté dans l'impasse en raison des conflits régionaux.

**3-4 novembre 2008*

L'organisation devient «Union pour la Méditerranée» lors de la première réunion ministérielle de l'organisation à Marseille.

NOTES

1. Lancé en 1995, le Partenariat euro-méditerranéen rassemblait les quinze pays membres de l'Union européenne, c'est-à-dire l'Allemagne, la Belgique, la France, l'Italie, le Luxembourg, les Pays-Bas, le Danemark, l'Irlande, le Royaume-Uni, la Grèce, l'Espagne, le Portugal, l'Autriche, la Finlande et la Suède ; ainsi que douze États issus de la région Méditerranée, en particulier: l'Algérie, l'Autorité palestinienne, Chypre, l'Égypte, Israël, la Jordanie, le Liban, Malte, le Maroc, la Syrie, la Tunisie et la Turquie. Rappelons que Chypre et Malte ont intégré l'UE le 1er mai 2004.
2. Ce projet concerne seize pays, dont six à l'Est de l'Union européenne: l'Arménie, l'Azerbaïdjan, la Biélorussie, la Géorgie, la Moldavie et l'Ukraine; ainsi que

l'Algérie, l'Autorité palestinienne, l'Égypte, Israël, la Jordanie, le Liban, le Maroc, la Syrie, la Tunisie et la Lybie au Sud.

3. Créée par décret en 1963, la DATAR ou Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale est un organisme français qui exerce un pouvoir d'orientation décisif.
4. L'acronyme APEM désigne l'Assemblée parlementaire euro-méditerranéenne (se référer à la chronologie à la fin de l'article).
5. Prenant acte du blocage de l'Union pour la Méditerranée qui met en avant la crise au Proche-Orient, Bernard Kouchner est intervenu devant la Commission des Affaires étrangères de l'Assemblée nationale française le 20 mai 2009.
6. Il convient de préciser que l'UPM est dotée d'un drapeau bicolore, constitué de deux larges bandes horizontales: l'une blanche pour représenter l'espoir (partie supérieure), l'autre bleue pour symboliser la mer Méditerranée (partie inférieure).

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ATHOS 2009

Alain Vivien*

Ayant eu maintes fois depuis 1987, l'occasion de me rendre au Mont Athos et de visiter la plupart des monastères et des skites importantes, il m'a paru qu'il ne serait peut-être pas inutile de rendre publiques quelques observations sur l'évolution récente de la Sainte Montagne. Avec le privilège d'un compagnonnage précieux dans ces espaces hellènophones, celui de M. Jean Catsiapis, maître de conférences à l'université de Nanterre.

Ce regard, je l'ai souhaité libre de toute hagiographie comme de tout parti pris, mais curieux et empathique, venant d'un Européen de l'ouest, c'est à dire d'une autre culture et connaissant un peu, par métier d'historien, les pesantes divergences pour ne pas dire les cruels démêlés qui ont partagé jusqu'à ce jour la Chrétienté et entretiennent encore ce que les croyants ressentiront toujours comme un scandale.

Ce point de vue laïque sur un monde exclusivement religieux peut-il apporter quelque chose aux lectrices et aux lecteurs du XXI° siècle? La réponse à cette question induirait probablement de longs développements, ici impossibles. On pardonnera, nous l'espérons, la brièveté des notations et le classement nécessairement arbitraire des paragraphes qui les regroupent. Pour le public francophone qui s'intéresserait à l'évolution de l'Aghion Oros, il est désormais possible de prendre connaissance de plusieurs rapports rédigés en leurs temps par les consuls français de Thessalonique et qui sont désormais accessibles aux archives du Quai d'Orsay, notamment ceux de Paul Lorion (1949) et de Guy de Girard (1962).

Le nombre des moines établis sur la Sainte Montagne

Tombé à quelques centaines en 1950, le nombre des moines a sensiblement augmenté depuis pour se situer à environ 2000 aujourd'hui. Cette évaluation, nécessairement approximative, regroupe aussi bien des mégaloskhimos (moines ayant prononcé la totalité de leurs vœux) que des religieux en cours d'engagement dans la vie conventuelle (mikroskhimos) et un nombre assez difficile à déterminer d'ascètes vivant isolés dans des kalyves et les rigoureux

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ermitages des Karoulia. Mais aussi des frères convers exerçant une activité au service des monastères ou survivant dans une semi-autarcie assez misérable.

Le personnel monastique a beaucoup évolué depuis une vingtaine d'années. Il s'est nettement rajeuni. Les activités physiques pour accomplir les tâches matérielles sont en régression tandis qu'on observe un incontestable renouveau des pratiques religieuses. La règle semble plus rigoureusement appliquée depuis la disparition totale de l'idiorythmie[1]. Le faste traditionnel des liturgies est soutenu par des chants dans l'ensemble mieux interprétés.

La sévérité de la vie «neptique» est aussi perceptible lors des repas. Les œufs et le poisson semblent encore moins consommés que par le passé, même en dehors du carême et des jeûnes particuliers à chaque monastère. Petite notation qui va dans le même sens, le raki traditionnellement offert avec une tasse de café et un loukoum aux pèlerins de passage semble être désormais en voie d'abandon.

Si le terme n'était pas emprunté à l'histoire des protestantismes, on pourrait parler d'un «revival» athonite assez évident.

En ce qui concerne la gestion économique des monastères, il semble que la pratique observable confère plus d'autorité à la compétence. Au détriment parfois de la prudence, comme l'a montré récemment l'affaire de Vatopédiou. Nous y avions été reçus un soir, après l'office de complies, par un jeune higoumène (abbé), d'origine chypriote qui avait momentanément troqué sa robe pour un jean et engagé avec nous une conversation très ouverte sur l'état du monde.

Les moines français sont rares (quatre, à notre connaissance, dont le plus communicatif est probablement le père Macaire de Simonos Petra). Les moines francophones sont un peu plus nombreux mais souvent âgés, comme le père Jacques d'Iviron ou certains moines roumains du Prodromos.

La question russe

Il faut la poser avec netteté, au risque d'une certaine brutalité. Depuis la victoire des «acquéreurs» sur les « ermites d'Outre-Volga» au concile de 1503 sous le tsar Ivan III, les liens entre le pouvoir politique et l'autorité religieuse orthodoxe sont une constante dans l'histoire de la Russie. Ce phénomène va bien au delà de la tradition byzantine.

Il y a trente ans, quelques années avant les évènements de 1989, le portrait du dernier tsar ornait toujours les cellules mises à disposition des pèlerins de

passage à Pantéléimonos. Pourtant, des moines russes en provenance de Zagorsk vivant au "Roussikon", leur présence ne pouvait pas ne pas avoir été autorisée par le pouvoir soviétique. Mais les contributions financières traditionnellement fournies par la Russie et par les grandes familles nobiliaires attachées à l'orthodoxie avaient cessé. De nombreux bâtiments étaient dans un état pitoyable[2], même à Pantéléimonos. Désormais, tout cela est changé. Une masse considérable d'argent afflue de la Russie post-soviétique, avec la bénédiction du Kremlin. Les moines russes accueillent de nombreux visiteurs russophones dans des bâtiments splendidement restaurés. Ce «retour» des Russes ne laisse pas d'inquiéter les autres monastères. D'autant plus que deux autres couvents connaissent en quelque sorte une proximité culturelle, les monastères serbe de Chilandariou et bulgare de Constamonitou.

Dans la Russie de Vladimir Poutine, lui-même sans aucune conviction religieuse, l'orthodoxie semble servir de nouvelle idéologie, en substitution d 'un marxisme-léninisme définitivement récusé. Il est difficile de prévoir ce qui résultera à terme de cette connivence politico-religieuse. En attendant, on ne peut que noter l'accueil aussi majestueux que déférent réservé au président russe lors de sa première visite à Pantéléimonos. Quant à son présent successeur au Kremlin, Medvedev, celui-ci affiche une forte fidélité à l'orthodoxie dont les prélats sont systématiquement associés aux cérémonies publiques.

Les salariés des monastères

Les frères lais, attachés aux monastères comme jadis les serfs à la glèbe, ont pratiquement disparu bien qu'il en subsiste çà et là encore quelques exemples. C'est que l'entretien et la restauration des monastères, d'une part, l'exploitation des terres, des vignobles et des forêts, d'autre part, requièrent désormais des qualifications que ne pouvaient avoir les simples brassiers des décennies précédentes. Les monastères ont donc recruté de nombreux travailleurs en Europe orientale et en Albanie (mais non au Kosovo, «Etat» non reconnu par la Grèce). Ces salariés ont les compétences de leurs pays d'origine: excellents maçons et menuisiers par exemple, médiocres installateurs d'équipements sanitaires. Leurs maigres salaires étant supérieurs à ce qu'ils gagneraient dans leur Albanie, Roumanie, Bulgarie ou Serbie natales, ils acceptent des missions, de plusieurs années parfois, et vivent sur place les difficultés de tout expatrié pauvre, sans famille, ni distraction autre que leurs portables, la radio et leurs cantines parfois indépendantes des "trapeza" monastiques.

Les pèlerins et visiteurs

La notoriété d'Athos, les reportages effectués sur place par de nombreux médias, l'étrangeté d'une presqu'île interdite aux femmes ont suscité un mouvement de curiosité qui ne cesse de se renforcer depuis trente ans.

A ces occasions de voyage s'ajoutent, comme par le passé, le flux des pèlerins venus majoritairement de Grèce et d'Europe orientale pour honorer des vœux personnels ou dans le souci d'une retraite purificatrice. Ces pèlerins semblent issus de toutes les classes sociales mais plus peut-être des milieux modestes, si l'on en juge par leurs vêtements et leurs manières à table. Plusieurs d'entre eux sont accompagnés par leurs jeunes fils, en contradiction avec le typikon de 1045[3]. Leur dévotion est grande. Ils ne manquent pas, comme tout bon orthodoxe, d'embrasser pieusement les icônes et montrent une dévotion, excessive à nos yeux, pour les reliques aussi nombreuses qu'improbables dont les monastères regorgent.

Dans les échanges avec eux, une question revient en permanence. Quelles sont donc les différences qui séparent les orthodoxes des catholiques? Il est difficile d'établir aujourd'hui des «landmark» consensuelles. Car pour ce qui est de l'histoire, les Occidentaux ne peuvent qu'être mal à l'aise: IVe croisade détournée de ses objectifs et aboutissant, à la fin du XIIe siècle, à la mise à sac de l'Empire byzantin; abandon de ce dernier rempart de la chrétienté quand l'Empire de Constantinople avait sous la gorge le couteau ottoman; union forcée avec Rome sous l'empereur Michel VIII[4]; pillage éhonté des monastères entre 1305 et 1307 par des mercenaires catalans recrutés sans être payés par Andronic Paléologue etc. L'image religieuse de l'Occident catholique reste globalement désastreuse et les tentatives de rapprochement souhaitées au sommet par les derniers Patriarches œcuméniques sont fragiles. Quand elles ne déclenchent pas de violentes réactions comme chez les fondamentalistes d'Esphigménou: voilà qu'aujourd'hui l'Occident exporte ses sectes chez nous! Sur une affichette apposée en 1997 dans ce dernier monastère, on conseille rudement aux Témoins de Jéhovah «de passer leur chemin». C'est donc que l'infiltration a atteint, ne serait-ce qu'une fois, ce sanctuaire de la rigueur et de l'antimodernisme. Sur la façade du monastère, une immense banderole proclamait «L'orthodoxie ou la mort». Tous les efforts tentés à ce jour par les autres monastères pour atténuer ce fondamentalisme ont échoué. Esphigménou, Barroux de l'orthodoxie...

L'hésychasme

Les moines qui renoncent à la vie profane cherchent par l'ascèse à dégager leurs esprits des pensées divaguantes et à concentrer leur prière par des procédés qui tendent, avec la grâce divine, à prendre congé du monde profane avant même de mourir. Pour y parvenir, l'hésychasme recommandé par de nombreux Pères de l'Eglise orientale, s'est profondément répandu depuis plus d'un millénaire, quelles qu'aient pu être au fil du temps les réserves émises par certains théologiens à l'encontre d'une méthode qui associe très étroitement discipline corporelle et tension spirituelle. Parmi les moines et les anachorètes, ceux qui acceptent de parler d'hésychasme affirment que la concentration physique sur le cœur (censé être le lieu privilégié de la grâce), la maîtrise de la respiration rythmée et l'évacuation des pensées profanes par la récitation ininterrompue d'un mantra chrétien (*Seigneur Jésus, fils de Dieu, ayez pitié de moi*)[5] constituent une voie royale pour approcher – et parfois ressentir – la lumière incréée du Thabor[6].

Un observateur extérieur pourrait prétendre qu'il y a bien de l'orgueil pour un croyant à penser que peut être atteinte la vérité sublime de l'Univers par un effort conditionné et que cette tension délibérée n'aboutit probablement qu'à un ressenti illusoire. Cependant les textes anciens foisonnent d'exhortations à entrer dans ce chemin ardu au terme duquel la foi se trouve récompensée. Il n'est donc pas aisé pour le visiteur, qui ne séjourne à l'Aghion Oros que le temps très bref autorisé par son *diamonitirion*[7], d'entrer plus avant dans la confiance d'un moine hésychaste et d'obtenir de lui des réponses pertinentes à ses interrogations. Le religieux sollicité se dérobe la plupart du temps, parfois avec une ironie quelque peu insolente à l'égard de son interlocuteur. Il en a été donné un exemple, en 2004, à l'un de nos compagnons qui pressait un moine (francophone) de répondre à sa curiosité. Il s'attira la réponse foudroyante que voici: *Monsieur, quand vous faites l'amour à votre femme, vous n'allez pas le crier sur les toits.* Le visiteur ou le pèlerin ne soupçonnent même pas, en engageant la conversation avec un moine, que celui-ci répond des lèvres à ses questions tout en poursuivant *in petto* cette prière du cœur ineffable.

Il est difficile d'affirmer que l'hésychasme continue à inspirer autant que par le passé la trajectoire spirituelle d'un nombre important de moines. Mais on peut raisonnablement le supposer.

Athos et l'écologie

La restauration des bâtiments monastiques, leur fréquente extension, l'équipement de cuisines modernes, l'amélioration de l'hygiène, entrainent la modernisation des installations. Cela ne va pas sans de lourdes conséquences.

Les besoins croissants en eau ont amené les monastères à capter la plupart des sources. Outre les déficits d'écoulement qui en résultent et qui compromettent le maintien d'une végétation naturelle préservée jusqu'à ce jour, le captage par de simples tuyaux de plastique, en aérien, constitue une fâcheuse atteinte à l'esthétique, d'autant plus que lorsque des travaux d'entretien doivent être engagés, les déchets restent sur place.

Ailleurs le déboisement excessif de certaines pentes par surexploitation de la forêt facilitent les glissements de terre lors des violents orages méditerranéens, avec parfois mort d'homme comme à Simonos Petra en 2004.

Les travaux d'assainissement à l'intérieur des monastères ne s'accompagnent pas de la réalisation de stations d'épuration. Tout va à la mer, les déjections et les détergents. Grigoriou dont les bâtiments ont été heureusement restaurés en offre un exemple regrettable.

Entre les monastères, des chemins parés ont été réalisés au cours des siècles. Constitués, sur un à deux mètres de large, par des pierres placées sur chant pour faciliter le pas des mulets, scandés de renforts obliques pour l'évacuation de l'eau de pluie, ils forment un réseau aujourd'hui à l'abandon (quand des barrières de barbelés n'en interdisent pas – théoriquement – l'accès comme ceux allant de Zografou à Constamonitou). La disparition progressive des mulets (il en reste encore quelques dizaines) et la paresse de la plupart des pèlerins qui se font transporter en bus ou en voiture, font disparaître peu à peu cet admirable réseau tandis que les ponceaux s'effondrent au milieu d'un fouillis végétal devenu presque impénétrable. Il serait temps que le gouvernement monastique, la Sainte Epistasie, se penche sur cette question autant qu'elle s'intéresse au nouveau réseau des voies ouvertes au bulldozer qui strient désormais les montagnes et nécessitent des investissements lourds lorsqu'on doit macadamiser des accès nouveaux trop pentus comme à l'entrée de Stavronikita.

Dernier élément qui pourrait être pris en considération: le nettoyage des plages, sur la côte nord, en particulier, où s'échouent les immondices jetés à la mer par les bateaux de passage. Certains sites sont aujourd'hui de véritables poubelles.

Splendeur des monastères et skites restaurés

A l'inverse d'autres pays qui au cours de leur histoire, ont su rétablir au bénéfice de la communauté nationale toute entière l'équilibre des possessions foncières tombées de siècle en siècle aux mains du clergé, la Grèce a laissé l'Eglise orthodoxe accaparer une part très considérable des terres et des forêts, au delà même des frontières helléniques depuis que l'effondrement du système soviétique a rendu aux anciens possesseurs les domaines nationalisés après la première puis la seconde guerre mondiale.

Par ailleurs, du fait de la Déclaration commune de 1979 entre Athos et la Grèce, déclaration annexée au Traité d'adhésion de cet Etat à l'Union Européenne, l'Aghion Oros se trouve inclus dans le périmètre communautaire mais avec des privilèges, fiscaux notamment, si nettement dérogatoires qu'ils suscitent de fréquentes critiques. En outre, l'entrée dans l'Union de la Sainte Montagne lui a ouvert d'importantes lignes de crédits bruxellois pour la restauration de son patrimoine et la sauvegarde muséologique des trésors qu'elle contient. Le montant de ces concours est extrêmement difficile à déterminer, répartis qu'ils sont parmi les subventions attribuées à la Grèce. Aucune étude ne semble avoir été diligentée par l'Union et le gouvernement grec, pour des raisons électorales autant qu'historiques, répugne à mettre lui-même un peu d'ordre dans ces affaires couvertes du manteau de Noé.

Il n'en reste pas moins que le temps fait son oeuvre à Athos comme ailleurs. La consommation de crédits européens fera nécessairement ouvrir un jour les livres de comptes, même si les gouvernements grecs, de droite mais aussi de gauche, considèrent que la question athonite est électoralement délicate et, en tout état de cause, non prioritaire.

Quoiqu'il en soit, l'attribution de crédits considérables joints à la compétence des institutions helléniques et étrangères spécialisées dans la restauration ont abouti à un redressement spectaculaire du patrimoine bâti. En trente ans, les toits des innombrables édifices dont beaucoup s'écroulaient, ont été relevés, coiffés de lauzes élégantes. Les murs, les aqueducs anciens ont été remis en état. Sans les églises et les réfectoires, de très nombreuses fresques font l'objet de restauration de qualité qui contrastent avec les repeints contestables des siècles derniers. Aujourd'hui presque entièrement inventoriées, les richesses des monastères et de leurs skites, sont mises en sécurité. Dans les salles d'exposition équipées de dispositifs muséologiques dernier cri ainsi que de moyens de prévention et d'alerte contre les incendies, des richesses inouïes sont maintenant accessibles aux pèlerins, aux visiteurs comme aux archéologues.

De ce point de vue, les monastères de l'Aghion Oros apparaissent comme des éléments d'une originalité et d'une qualité uniques parmi les chefs d'œuvre de l'humanité.

Les relations extérieures de l'Aghion Oros

Elles ne sont pas simples.

Avec les pèlerins et les visiteurs, l'afflux des passages qui incluent logement et nourriture, contraint à une réglementation qui a évacué peu ou prou le charme de l'aventure et de l'incertitude, telles qu'on pouvait les connaître il y a trente ans. Désormais, l'accueil dans les monastères doit être programmé avant même que soient attribués à Ouranopoli les *diamonitirions* indispensables à l'hébergement. On peut craindre que l'augmentation constante du nombre de visiteurs rende de moins en moins facile l'accès à la Sainte Montagne.

Avec l'Etat grec, l'Aghion Oros a des relations originales. Le ministère grec des Affaires étrangères (et non celui de l'Intérieur) entretient à Karyès une présence permanente constituée par un gouverneur et quelques employés administratifs auxquels il faut ajouter une poignée de policiers, peu visibles mais efficaces lorsqu'une intrusion, parfois le passage un peu trop proche d'un simple bateau de croisière, menace l'intégrité de la Sainte Montagne. Les relations se tendent de temps à autre comme lors de la triste affaire de spéculation immobilière organisée par un monastère avec la complicité d'au moins un ministre du dernier gouvernement Costas Caramanlis (Nouvelle Démocratie, droite et centre-droit), en 2009. Deux moines dont l'higoumène viennent d'être condamnés en première instance à 15 mois de prison avec sursis par le tribunal de Komotini.

La tutelle du gouvernement d'Athènes n'est pas toujours aisée à mettre en oeuvre. En 1992, le secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires étrangères du gouvernement Mitsotakis (Nouvelle Démocratie) s'étant trouvé être une femme, cette dernière, Mme Virginia Tsouderou, nous félicita avec un certain humour de l'avoir informée de ce qui se passait à Athos lors d'une précédente visite car «pour elle, il ne lui était pas possible de se rendre dans cette région soumise portant à son autorité», en vertu d'un typikon de 1406!

Religieusement, Athos relève de l'autorité, territorialement fort restreinte, du Patriarche œcuménique résidant au Phanar d'Istambul et sujet turc par obligation. Ce dernier se rend annuellement sur la Sainte Montagne. Il y est

accueilli avec une extrême déférence mais son prestige ne pèse guère sur les monastères. On prie pour lui au cours de la messe mais on cite rarement ses déclarations. Sauf peut-être lorsque ses initiatives œcuméniques semblent trop entrainer l'orthodoxie du côté de Rome. Le Patriarche se trouve donc conduit à une politique de petits pas, par des chemins culturels, comme à l'occasion de l'exposition, inaugurée au Petit Palais à Paris en 2009, d'objets liturgiques et de documents, prêtés – non sans hésitation – par quelques monastères athonites plus ouverts que la majorité d'entre eux au monde occidental. Cette exposition a suscité, du reste, une certaine polémique en raison du fait qu'elle n'avait pas été autorisée par une décision collective des vingt monastères.

L'économie monastique

Elle a toujours reposé sur le double signe de la sobriété et de l'autarcie. La visite des caves souterraines d'Iviron, toujours en activité viticole, porte le témoignage d'une multiplicité de métiers exercés naguère sur place pour éviter des importations qui devaient se solder en numéraire[8].

Aujourd'hui les activités agricoles sont traitées, avec minutie, plus sur le mode d'un maraîchage de proximité que celui de cultures intensives, moins aisées à développer en raison du relief tourmenté de l'Aghion Oros et du nombre restreint de vraies plaines.

La vigne, coutumière en terre chrétienne, était à l'origine destinée à pourvoir d'abord au vin de messe et à la consommation des moines. Elle tend à une exploitation plus rationnelle, visant à l'exportation de bouteilles portant des étiquettes athonites prestigieuses vers la Grèce et même l'étranger. La qualité du produit, à quelques exceptions près, reste cependant encore insuffisante pour accéder durablement au marché international. Il serait souhaitable, par ailleurs, que la typicité des vins de consommation courante dans les monastères soit préservée en raison de leur sapidité authentique et de leur diversité.

Athos exporte également du bois, essentiellement sous forme de baliveaux de coudriers. Les forêts semblent plus intensément mises à contribution que par le passé en raison des travaux engagés dans les monastères.

Il n'existe sur place aucune activité manufacturière. Seul un petit artisanat monastique fabrique des objets de piété, d'une qualité au demeurant assez médiocre.

En revanche, il existe des ateliers de peintres d'icônes réputés, notamment à Karyès. Depuis quelques années, la production de poncifs semble moins

générale. Il est possible d'acquérir, si l'on est assez riche et patient, des œuvres plus originales où transfuse la sensibilité contemporaine sans toutefois que la personnalité du peintre soit mise en exergue comme dans la peinture profane. Reverra-t-on un jour des œuvres dignes de celles, si personnelles, de Manuel Pansélimos (XIVe siècle) qui peignit les fresques du Protaton et du Katholikon de Chilandariou, ou encore celles de Théophane le Crétois et de son fils Syméon qui réalisèrent au XVI° siècle les fresques du Katholikon de la Grande Laure et du monastère de Stavronikita? Sans oublier les oeuvres admirables de Zorzis ou de Frango Katelanos visibles respectivement à Dyonisiou et dans la chapelle Saint Nicolas de la Grande Laure.

Les icônes sont, comme chacun le sait, un des pôles essentiels de la religiosité orthodoxe, indispensables à la liturgie depuis la défaite, au IX° siècle, des iconoclastes dont la foi ne se démarquait pas des interdictions vétéro-testamentaires et qui, peut-être, ne souhaitaient pas laisser à un Islam nouveau venu le monopole d'un Dieu si sublime qu'il ne pouvait être représenté.

Les activités commerciales, jadis restreintes aux boutiques modestes de la petite capitale de la péninsule, se sont généralisées. Tous les grands monastères ont des salles spécialisées – ouvertes souvent fort tard – où le pèlerin de passage peut trouver cierges, encens aux parfums variés, images pieuses, cartes postales et timbres, objets monastiques,etc., le tout à des prix très compétitifs.

Novation relativement récente, le développement des transports publics. Karyès est aujourd'hui une plaque tournante d'où l'on peut accéder par bus à tous les monastères. Ce réseau est entre les mains des moines dont certains exercent, en outre, les fonctions de transporteurs privés par taxis et mini-bus, concurrençant les quelques résidents laïcs qui vivent de cette activité. Leurs tarifs restent peu élevés, comme ceux que l'on pratique communément en Grèce.

L'hôtellerie civile, enfin, n'est guère représentée qu'à Karyès où existe essentiellement un petit hôtel-restaurant récemment rénové et à Dafni, port minuscule qui reste encore aujourd'hui le principal point d'embarquement et le seul poste douanier de la Sainte Montagne.

Les “arsanas” des monastères, petits ports équipés d'un quai et de hangars, importent essentiellement des matériaux de construction, poutres de bois, ciment ainsi qu'une infinité de produits d'usage courant qui étaient quasi ignorés il y a trente ans: carburants, matériel de cuisine, appareils de production électrique, petits équipements techniques, détergents ainsi que certaines denrées alimentaires impossibles à produire sur place comme le fromage de féta ou les œufs.

La Sainte Montagne dispose aujourd'hui, grâce à la République hellénique, d'un équipement de protection civile dont l'efficacité reste néanmoins limitée par les contraintes du relief. En novembre 2009, un départ de feu à Xenophontos a été stoppé en une heure alors qu'en 2003, le monastère serbe de Chilandariou, difficile d'accès, a subi un incendie désastreux qui ne put être maîtrisé qu'au bout de plusieurs jours.

Une orthodoxie prosélyte?

Des chrétiens d'Occident, peut-être déçus par des conflits déstabilisants pour l'Eglise catholique, s'intéressent à l'orthodoxie qui, jusqu'à une date récente, était surtout pour eux une religion de l'exil. Dans les nations de l'ouest il existe désormais, rattachées à divers patriarcats ou exarchats, des communautés dont les membres ne sont plus majoritairement issus de familles russes, serbes, roumaines ou bulgares. Dans ce contexte nouveau, certains monastères de l'Aghion Oros sont tentés d'essaimer hors du site de l'Athos. C'est le cas de Simonos Petra, en plein renouveau spirituel depuis la dernière décennie du XX° grâce à l'installation en décembre 1973, sous la conduite de l'Archimandrite Aimilianos, d'une petite communauté issue du monastère hellénique du Grand-Météor.

Depuis cette date, le monastère de Simonos Petra s'est fait connaître par une forte activité intéllectuelle dont témoigne, entre autres, la communication faite par son higoumène au 7ème Congrès théologique panhellénique (1990) sous le titre révélateur de "Spiritualité orthodoxe et révolution technologique", et publiée à Athènes l'année suivante sous le titre non moins contemporain «L'Orthodoxie dans l'Europe unie». Le monastère est à l'origine d'un établissement de moniales installé en Chalcidique à Ormylia et, plus récemment, de deux couvents nouveaux, en France cette fois, dans le Vercors pour les moines et dans le Gard pour les moniales (ces deux monastères pratiquent la liturgie en français et demeurent sous l'obédience spirituelle de Simonos Petra).

La diffusion de la pensée orthodoxe reviviscente s'opère actuellement en langue grecque mais aussi dans la plupart des langues européennes, avec le concours financier d'institutions, aux raisons sociales très matérialistes, comme la Banque grecque de développement industriel (ETBA) ou la compagnie d'assurances Interamerican.

L'expansion paroissiale de l'orthodoxie se poursuit en France avec discrétion, souvent en relation de compréhension avec les églises catholique locales. A titre

d'exemple, il existe dans le Val-de-Marne et en Seine-et-Marne deux paroisses relevant du Patriarcat roumain desservies par un prêtre ancien chartreux, marié et père de famille, secondé par un autre ecclésiastique issu lui-même du catholicisme.

Rupture et continuité? indissociables

Rien ne symbolise mieux la continuité spirituelle sur l'Aghion Oros que le tympan du réfectoire de la Grande Laure fondée en 973, probablement le plus ancien établissement monastique d'Athos avec le monastère d'Iviron.

La fresque montre à gauche, peinte avec une grande élégance, la déesse Athéna quittant apparemment sans drame les terres de la Sainte Montagne tandis qu'à droite, la Vierge prend à son tour possession de la péninsule.

Le culte, les hymnes, les chants liturgiques psalmodiés semblent très proches de ceux de l'église chrétienne primitive tels que certains musicologues ont pu les reconstituer[9]. Ses chants donnent une idée de la beauté d'une liturgie qu'exalte encore, lorsqu'on a la chance de la suivre sur place, la richesse esthétique des fresques et des icônes, le parfum envoûtant et tenace de l'encens répandu à profusion et la pénombre des choeurs propice à la méditation et aux rêves.

Le visiteur occidental s'étonne parfois du va-et-vient des moines pendant les offices alors que dans les églises d'occident règne un rituel étroitement discipliné.

Les pratiques monastiques semblent parfois figées, stéréotypées comme si la foi orthodoxe était ici et là tétanisée par son passé de gloire et le poids de deux millénaires. Mais depuis trente ans, les choses semblent évoluer. Il n'est pas impossible qu'Athos, conservatoire historique de l'orthodoxie, soit en train de muer et de redevenir le foyer cardinal d'un christianisme des profondeurs, sans solution de continuité et débarrassé, de par le faible poids des patriarcats à travers le monde, de la pesante bureaucratie et des gérontes du Sacré-Collège qui obèrent l'Eglise romaine.

L'exclusion des femmes

Trois typika impériaux interdisent l'accès à la Sainte Montagne aux imberbes et aux eunuques, celui de Jean I Tzimiskès promulgué en 972 lorsque s'organisèrent les premières laures[10] et celui de Constantin IX

Monomaque en 1045. A ces interdictions, un typikon de Manuel Paléologue ajouta en 1406 l'exclusion de toutes «femelles» censées troubler la quiétude indispensable aux moines.

Si les eunuques ont heureusement disparu depuis longtemps, il semble que l'interdiction faite aux imberbes soit aujourd'hui assouplie. Les jeunes garçons qui accompagnent leurs pèlerins de pères ne sont pas rares. En revanche, la règle demeure inflexible à l'égard des femmes.

Non que plusieurs tentatives d'entrée volontaire n'aient pas été parfois signalées. Mais les contrôles sévères à l'entrée par la voie maritime les bloquent aisément. Quant à la voie terrestre, en raison des difficultés de passage, elle se révèle impraticable. Au demeurant, comment subsister, même quelques jours, sans possibilité de s'approvisionner ni de se loger? Il arrive pourtant que des incidents imprévisibles entrainent une présence féminine insolite. Ce fut le cas en mai 2008 lorsque quatre émigrées clandestines d'origine moldave furent débarquées par des passeurs ukrainiens indélicats qui les avaient prises en charge dans le port turc de Canakkale pour la modique somme de 4000€ par personne. Vite repérées, ces malheureuses ont été aussitôt transférées hors d'Athos.

La question, non anecdotique cette fois, du droit de circulation sans discrimination au sein de l'Union Européenne a amené des parlementaires à s'étonner des exclusions subsistant dans un territoire du périmètre de l'Union. Dès 1974, la grande actrice Mélina Mercouri, par ailleurs députée du PASOK (parti socialiste), avait déposé une proposition de loi tendant à libéraliser l'accès des femmes à la Sainte Montagne. Trente ans après, le 15 janvier 2003, le parlement de Strasbourg votait par 274 voix contre 269 une résolution demandant à la Grèce d'abolir cette restriction médiévale. Le lendemain même, le gouvernement d'Athènes, alors dirigé par Costas Simitis (PASOK), s'empressait de rejeter l'injonction européenne réputée «sans contenu» en raison des actes de 1979. Le 4 septembre de la même année, le Parlement européen réitérait sa résolution restée sans effet. Juridiquement, ces deux résolutions semblent cependant devoir bien s'imposer tant à la Grèce qu'à la Sainte Epistasie. En effet, elles se réfèrent à des principes fondateurs de l'Union, intangibles et supérieurs aux dispositions diplomatiques tant en ce qui regarde la non-discrimination entre les sexes que la libre circulation des citoyens à l'intérieur de l'Union. Or les moines eux-mêmes, qu'ils soient grecs ou d'origine étrangère, jouissent depuis 1912 de la nationalité hellénique. Ils ne sauraient juridiquement se soustraire aux principes communautaires.

La bataille pour l'accessibilité des femmes en pèlerinage ou comme visiteuses, sera-t-elle engagée dans les années à venir? Rien n'est moins sûr car les parlementaires grecs siégeant à Strasbourg ont voté à l'unanimité – à l'exception d'une seule députée du PASOK – contre la résolution de janvier 2003. L'accession en 2009 de la gauche à l'assemblée nationale grecque où elle dispose de la majorité absolue, fera-t-elle avancer ce dossier embarrassant? Pour qu'il prospère, il faudrait une sensible évolution de l'opinion publique que la lente laïcisation de la Grèce rend dans l'immédiat peu probable.

Il existe une littérature accessible en langue française sur la Sainte Montagne, surabondante mais d'inspiration et de qualité très inégales.

Les ouvrages vont du médiocre roman[11] aux publications monastiques les plus variées, tantôt d'une simplesse décevante[12], tantôt de la plus haute spiritualité[13], en passant par des livres fort beaux rédigés par des profanes mais en authentique connivence avec l'esprit monastique. Ces livres associent descriptions et commentaires pertinents; ils sont tous accompagnés d'une riche iconographie[14]. Par ailleurs, des livres d'art méritent de retenir l'attention de tout lecteur cultivé, qu'il s'agisse d'inventaires des richesses de l'Aghion Oros[15] ou de reproductions de documents iconographiques anciens[16]. Enfin, certains ouvrages relèvent d'interprétations esthétisantes[17]. Leur originalité ne les rend pas moins dignes d'intérêt.

NOTES

1. Règle qui privilégie l'activité autonome des moines et la vie solitaire. Abandonnée au XX° siècle pour le cénobitisme, elle continue à être suivie dans certaines kalyves et ermitages.
2. L'immense et superbe skite de St André, près de Karyès, à l'abandon, fut plus tard récupérée par les moines grecs.
3. Edicté par Constantin IX Monomaque.
4. Qui se fit représenter en 1274 au Concile de Lyon.
5. Voir la *Petite philocalie de la prière du coeur*, Le Seuil, 1979.
6. Cette "technique" spirituelle n'est pas l'apanage de l'orthodoxie. Elle est pratiquée en Orient par d'autres confessions qui en sont peut-être la source, et bien connue des milieux soufis (voir le *Tanwir al Kouloub* du cheikh Amin al Kurdi, fin du XIX°, début du XX° siècle).

7. Sorte de passeport monastique.
8. Le moine chargé de la conservation de ce dépôt, surprenant par son ampleur, signalait en novembre 2009 que le monastère envisageait de réaliser sur place un musée des outils et techniques traditionnelles, de l'Antiquité tardive jusqu'aux années 1950.
9. On pourra se référer utilement à deux enregistrements de chants liturgiques athonites, *Pâques au Mont-Athos*, Polydor, 1979, et *Hymnes byzantins du Mont-Athos*, Virgin, 1997, ainsi qu'aux *Chants de l'Eglise de Rome dans la période byzantine des VIIÆ et VIII^e siècle*, Ensemble Organum, Harmonia Mundi, 1986.
10. Autre nom pour monastère.
11. François Augieras, *Un voyage au Mont-Athos*, Flammarion, 1970; Christophe Ono-dit-Biot, *Interdit à toute femme et à toute femelle*, Plon, 2002.
12. Père Païssios, *Le Vénérable Georges, moine du Mont-Athos*, éd. Saint Jean le Théologien, Thessalonique, 1996.
13. Archimandrite Aimilianos, *Catéchèses et Discours*, Ormylia, 1998 (2 tomes).
14. André Paléologue (byzantiniste), *Athos, merveille du christianisme byzantin*, Découvertes Gallimard, 1997; Sotiris Kadas (archéologue), *Mont-Athos, Athènes (nombreuses rééditions et mises à jour depuis 1979)* ou encore Massimo Capuani et Maurizio Paparozzi, *Le Mont-Athos,* DDB, 1997.
15. Ministère grec de la Culture, *Treasures of Mount Athos*, Thessalonique, 1997.
16. Musée Albert Kahn, *Autochromes du Mont-Athos,1913 et 1918,* Athènes, 1997.
17. Marc Lafontaine et alii, *Mont-Athos. Le désir de la Vierge,* Yellow Now, Crisnée (Belgique), 1999.

Chronologies

Chypre: 16 octobre 2009 - 31 mars 2010

19-20 octobre: Visite à Chypre du nouveau Premier ministre de Grèce, Georges Papandréou.

27 octobre: la Cour des droits de l'homme de Strasbourg sur requête des époux Kallis déclare que leur fils, un soldat chypriote, a été tué le 3 juillet 1996 par l'armée turque dans la zone tampon de Chypre en violation de l'article 2 - sur le droit à la vie - de la Convention européenne des droits de l'homme.

7 novembre: inauguration en présence de Pierre Lellouche, secrétaire d'Etat français aux Affaires européennes du nouvel aéroport de Larnaca construit par l'entreprise Bouygues.

8 décembre: L'Union européenne a déploré le refus de la Turquie de reconnaître la République de Chypre et d'accepter l'accès de ses ports et aéroports aux bateaux et avions de cet Etat sans prendre pour autant de nouvelles actions contre Ankara.

11 décembre: Le corps de l'ancien président de la République Tassos Papadopoulos a été dérobé au cimetière de Nicosie où il se trouvait. Le 8 mars 2010 ce corps a été retrouvé dans un autre cimetière de la capitale chypriote. Le mystère sur ce vol n'a pas été élucidé par la police.

14 décembre: le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU exhorte les Chypriotes grecs et turcs à intensifier leurs efforts en vue de la réunification de l'île et prolonge le mandat de la force de paix des Nations Unies jusqu'au 15 juin 2010.

19 janvier: La Cour d'appel de Londres a rejeté le recours des époux Orams, un couple de Britanniques condamnés par la justice chypriote à détruire leur maison construite en zone occupée sur un terrain appartenant à des Chypriotes grecs. On estime que 14 000 étrangers ont acheté des maisons et des terrains en zone occupée, appartenant pour la plupart d'entre eux à des Chypriotes grecs, dépouillés de façon illégale de leurs biens.

31 janvier – 2 février: Visite à Chypre du Secrétaire général de l'ONU, Ban Ki-Moon, dont la réception par Mohamed Ali Talat, le chef de la communauté chypriote turque dans son «palais présidentiel» a entraîné la réprobation de plusieurs partis chypriotes grecs.

15 janvier: le président Christofias a indiqué au Conseil national – organe consultatif composé des représentants des partis politiques chypriotes – la teneur de ses négociations en tête avec Mehmet Ali Talat, le chef de la communauté chypriote turque des 11, 12 et 13 janvier.

8 février: Le Comité central du parti socialiste *EDEK* décide de se retirer du gouvernement pour protester contre la gestion de la question chypriote par le président Christofias.

11 février: Selon Eurostat l'économie chypriote a connu une récession de 0,3% au cours du 4ème trimestre 2009.

23 février: le parti démocratique *DIKO* décide de rester dans la coalition gouvernementale.

2 mars: Prestation de serment de deux nouveaux ministres nommés en remplacement des deux ministres du parti socialiste *EDEK* démissionnaires:

Mme Erato Kozakou Marcoullis remplace Nicos Nicolaïdes au ministère des Communications et des Travaux publics et Dimitris Eliadés succède à Michalis Polynikis au ministère de l'Agriculture.

5 mars: La Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) a déclaré irrecevable la plainte d'une famille chypriote-grecque privée de ses biens dans le Nord de Chypre depuis 1974; une décision qui va s' appliquer à 1.475 affaires analogues.

Dans leur décision, les juges européens rejettent la plainte en estimant que tous les recours internes n'ont pas été épuisés.

Ils rappellent qu'il existe depuis 2005, à la demande de la CEDH, une commission d'indemnisation instituée après l'adoption par "la République turque de Chypre du Nord (KKTC)" d'une loi sur l'indemnisation des biens immobiliers à l'intérieur des frontières.

22 mars: Visite de l'Archevêque de Chypre, Chrysostomos II, en zone occupée - première visite depuis 1974 - au monastère du Saint Apôtre André, qu'il souhaite pouvoir restaurer et au monastère du Saint Apôtre Barnabé.

30 mars: Les dirigeants chypriotes, grec et turc, se sont dits convaincus qu'ils arriveront un jour à un règlement global permettant de réunifier l'île de Chypre divisée depuis plus de 30 ans, dans un communiqué conjoint publié après une rencontre sous l'égide du conseiller spécial du secrétaire général de l'ONU sur Chypre, Alexander Downer.

Grèce: 16 octobre 2009 - 31 mars 2010

16 octobre: Le gouvernement obtient un vote de confiance à la Chambre des députés par 160 voix *(Pasok)* contre 140 *(Nouvelle démocratie, Syriza, Laos, KKE).*

27 octobre: Huit immigrants clandestins se noient au large de l'île de Lesbos.

11 novembre: La Commission européenne a estimé qu'aucune mesure efficace n'a été prise par Athènes pour faire dévier la détérioration accrue de sa situation budgétaire en 2009 (12,7 pour cent, selon les prévisions d'automne, se substituant aux 6,7 pour cent indiqués par le gouvernement précédent). La Commission a recommandé au Conseil de conclure que la Grèce n'a pas pris de mesures efficaces, conformément à l'article 104 du traité de l'Union européenne.

29 novembre: Antonis Samaras est élu par un collège électoral de 700 000 personnes président de la *Nouvelle Démocratie* en remplacement de Costas Caramanlis démissionnaire. A. Samaras, ministre de la Culture dans le gouvernement sortant obtient 50.18 % des voix contre 38,76% à Dora Bakoyannis et 10,06% à Panayiotis Psomiadis.

24 décembre: La Chambre des députés adopte le budget 2010 par 160 voix *(Pasok)* contre 140.

26 décembre: Incendie du cargo grec «Aegean Wind» au large du Venezuela. 9 membres d'équipage sont disparus.

12 janvier: Un bateau de la police portuaire turque a heurté mercredi un patrouilleur grec en mer Egée au large de l'îlot inhabité de Imia.

14 janvier: Le Conseil des ministres adopte le Programme de stabilité de croissance qui prévoit de ramener en 2010 le déficit budgétaire de la Grèce de 12,7% à 8,7% du PIB. Ce déficit sera réduit à 5,6% en 2011 et à 2,8% en 2012.

25 janvier: Le Premier ministre grec, Georges Papandréou, a appelé son homologue turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, à une relance des efforts de rapprochement bilatéral, dans sa réponse à une lettre que lui avait envoyée en novembre le dirigeant turc. Dans son courrier il invite M. Erdogan, à effectuer une visite officielle en Grèce.

3 février: Le président de la République Carolos Papoulias a été réélu pour un second mandat de 5 ans par la Chambre des députés en obtenant 266 voix sur 300. Le *Pasok*, la *Nouvelle démocratie* et le parti de la droite nationaliste *Laos* ont voté en faveur de cette réélection, les partis de gauche s'abstenant de voter.

16 février: Le Premier ministre grec rencontre à Moscou le Président Dmitri Medvedev et le Premier ministre russe Vladimir Poutine.

3 mars: Le gouvernement grec complète le dispositif d'accroissement des recettes de l'Etat prévu dans le budget de l'Etat de cette année et qui comprenait un impôt sur les grandes fortunes par des augmentations d'impôts (une hausse de la TVA de 19 à 21%, des taxes plus lourdes sur le tabac, l'alcool et l'essence) et une forte réduction des traitements des fonctionnaires. Au total ces mesures devraient apporter à l' Etat 4,8 milliards d'euros.

7 mars: Rencontre à Paris du Premier ministre grec avec le président Nicolas Sarkozy, qui affiche la solidarité de la France avec la Grèce.

8-9 mars: Visite du Premier ministre grec à Washington. où il est reçu par le Président Obama, qui décide la suppression des visas pour les Grecs se rendant aux Etats Unis.

25 mars: Les chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement des 16 Etats de la zone euro se sont accordés sur un plan d'aide à la Grèce, qui comprend des prêts bilatéraux de ces Etats à Athènes de l'ordre de 20 à 22 milliards d'euros. Doit s'y ajouter un complément de prêts du FMI. La Grèce s'est déclarée satisfaite de ce plan d'aide auquel elle fera appel seulement en cas de besoin.

28 mars: Un jeune Afghan a été tué à Athènes par l'explosion d'une bombe à l' extérieur d'un bâtiment de la Société grecque d'administration des entreprises (EEDE). Cet attentat a été attribué à l'organisation terroriste anarchiste *Conspiration des cellules de feu*, qui a toutefois nié l'avoir commis.

NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

La révision de l'histoire de la Résistance et de la Guerre civile grecque, est un phénomène relativement récent et apparaît après la chute de l'Union Soviétique. Parallèlement à cet effort de révision de l'histoire de cette période un certain révisionnisme a fait aussi son apparition dans l'espace littéraire. Cependant le révisionnisme littéraire, précede dans certains cas le révisionnisme de l'histoire, comme on le constate avec le roman Orthokosta de Thanasis Valtinos qui a servi d'ailleurs de source d'inspiration pour les historiens du révisionnisme.

Le révisionnisme historique n'est certes pas un phénomène grec. Il est aussi observé dans le reste du monde, mais sous des conditions différentes. Le néolibéralisme et la mondialisation contribuent sans doute de façon décisive à cette évolution. Parallèlement le post-modernisme, qui met en cause le rationalisme des Lumieres et relativise tout, est la plate-forme théorique de ce révisionnisme.

La revue *Études helléniques-Hellenic Studies* est ouvert à ce type de discussion. C' est dans cette optique qu'elle présente ce volume spécial. Avec plaisir nous accueillerons aussi une opinion contraire si elle se manifeste. *Études helléniques-Hellenic Studies* est un forum libre de circulation et d'échange d' idées.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The revision of the history of the Greek Resistance and Civil War is a relatively recent phenomenon and generally presented after the fall of the Soviet Union. The effort put into revising the history of this period co-exists with a corresponding effort in literature, which may have begun earlier in some instances. Indeed, this was the case of Thanassis Valtinos' novel Orthokosta which proved useful as a source of inspiration for the revisionist historians.

Revisionism in both history and literature is certainly not a uniquely Greek phenomenon and may be observed elsewhere in the world, although under different conditions. Without a doubt, neoliberalism and globalisation have contributed decisively in this respect. At the same time, postmodernism which attacks and discredits the rationalism of the Enlightenment and relativises everything, serves as the theoretical platform of this revisionism.

Études helléniques-Hellenic Studies, in the form of an open discussion, presents this special edition. As *Études helléniques-Hellenic Studies* is a forum for the exchange of ideas, we will gladly receive and present any differing opinions sent to us.

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Les manuscrits doivent être originaux et ne pas avoir été proposés à d'autres revues. La longueur recommandée est d'environ 7000 mots. Les auteurs doivent envoyer (par courrier postal ou électronique) trois copies dactylographiées en double interligne de leurs articles. La présentation doit être en anglais ou en français, mais les citations ainsi que les références dans d'autres langues (en particulier le grec) sont encouragées, en particulier si celles-ci favorisent l'argumentation de l'auteur. Dans de tels cas, leur traduction anglaise ou française doit les accompagner. Les manuscrits doivent également inclure un résumé de 150 mots et de notes; publiés ou non ceux-ci ne sont pas restitués.

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