

Murder and War. Cultural components and narrative representations in modern Greek fiction.

Stelios Xefloudas, *Ανθρωποι του μύθου (Men of Myth)*.

Thanasis Valtinos, *Ορθοκωστά (Orthokosta)*.

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Abstract

The article investigates the representation of murder during defensive actions and civil war in two modern Greek novels of modernism and postmodernism. The targeting of modernism in the highlighting of suffering consciousness from the experience of even a defensive war considered as "just" is pointed out while postmodernism, embracing the views of textuality, the narration of History as well as applicable multiple historical truth, through the murderous representation of civil war aims at criticizing historical events and alerting the reader's critical mind concerning so-called official historical truth.

Keywords

War, murder, defensive, civil, modernism, historical fiction, postmodernism, stream of consciousness, parody, truth, history, bare life.

Introduction

Violence, through the various forms in which it appears, can infiltrate, and control all the manifestations of human relations and behaviors. Among the preeminent manifestations of violence is *murder*. Murder as a dominant deviation, as an act that goes beyond and ultimately transcends humanity, is the pre-eminent human sin with its roots in the primacy of human societies. It is given the qualities of *radical evil* and *otherness*, qualities that contribute to the elimination of the *other* and his *identity*.

War corresponds to an experience of horror whose sole aim is to kill the other. It places a man under the dominion of another, annihilates him, leads him to a loss of free will, and in general constitutes a permanent and violent disruption of the *human project*¹ whose basic aim is the completion and perfection of man within a perpetual process of cultural production.

In this article I will attempt to investigate two things: on the one hand, the way in which lethal violence that occurs during war operations affects the human soul of those participating in the war, especially when it comes to the case of a so-called *defensive war*, and on the other hand, whether the murderous violence of *civil war* subjugates the individual. I will also attempt to demonstrate the way in which the narrative techniques of literature represent the violence of war in a way dictated by each cultural condition, and also the way that different cultural conditions dictate different representations. To this end, I will give examples of the theoretical elements that will be cited from two completely different novels of modern Greek literature: the *modern* text of Stelios Xefloudas, *Άνθρωποι του μύθου, Τετράδια από τον πόλεμο στην Αλβανία* (*People of Myth. Notebooks from the war in Albania*) and the *postmodern* text of Thanasis Valtinos, *Ορθοκωστά* (*Orthocosta*).² It should be noted that the content of both texts is drawn from historical events, but the two texts were written almost half a century apart.

2. Moral issues: origin of evil – “legitimation” of war.

War is considered a "*legitimate*" form of violence since it is basically the choice of state power. Therefore, the official power that satisfies its interests³ through war uses many methods to convince the people of the "rightness" of choosing war, as it takes advantage of, according to Sigmund Freud, the *instinct of aggression*, or, according to Jacques Derrida, *brutality* inherent in man and defined as man's desire to torture, to kill in order to derive pleasure from evil for evil's sake.⁴ In the case of civil war, power takes on a dual status as it is claimed by two warring sides

¹ ALTEZ Fleurdeliz (2007), "Banal and Implied Forms of Violence in Levinas's Phenomenological Ethics", *Kritike* 1(1) 52-70 : 52-55.

² XEFLOUDAS Stelios (1946), *Άνθρωποι του μύθου. Τετράδια από τον πόλεμο της Αλβανίας*, Saliveros, Athens. From here on the text will be briefly referred: *Άνθρωποι του μύθου, (Men of Myth)*. Thanasis VALTINOS (2009), *Ορθοκωστά*, 6th ed., Bibliopoleion tis "ESTIAS", Athens.

³ FREUD Sigmund– EINSTEIN Albert (1932), *Γιατί πόλεμος; Ανοιχτή αλληλογραφία*, trans. Yiannis Saidis, Politeia, Athens.

⁴ DERRIDA Jacques (2006), *Ψυχικές καταστάσεις της ψυχανάλυσης*, trans. Vaggelis Bitsoris, Patakis, Athens: 27-28. The concept of brutality, the desire to kill for the sake of killing, Fleurdeliz Altez discerns in the Nazis, see ALTEZ (2007): 62-63. The term Nazism after all, refers not only to racism conceptualized as the basic state mechanism that aims to kill others as it considers them inferior, but also to genocide and even the Holocaust as methods of committing absolute murder and annihilating thousands of people.

where one seeks dominance over the other. In this case radical evil is personified, as brother murders brother in cold blood while the resulting *hatred* drives the actions and ends in brutality.

The "legalization" of the deadly violence of war has created questions regarding its moral significance, a fact that has been a part of philosophical thought. Freud points out that only with civilization can we hope that wars will disappear,⁵ while on the contrary, Colin Wilson argues that wars increase alongside civilization. He invokes Erich Fromm's view that man is not at all related to the animal because the killer is Human.⁶ According to Walter Benjamin the use of lethal force in war is considered as the use of power to validate victory followed by the establishment of peace through the formation of a new "right".⁷

Roger Caillois argues that peace must be a preparation for war. He even believes that war represents a *paroxysm* in social life because it interferes and destroys in a terrible way the routine of peace and the cycle of freedom. Furthermore he argues that the feeling of ecstasy dominates war and because this feeling is a kind of relaxation of social norms, it can be compared in its effect to the *relaxation* of the population of archaic people during their carnival festivals and rituals: in fact, these events not only constituted a break from the compulsions and routine of everyday life, but also a ritual "reunification" of the celebrants with *Chaos*. Chaos prevailed before *primal murder*, before the establishment of distinctions and the differentiating axis of *dualisms*. In essence, however, it was a tactic of an authoritarian system, as through a relaxation break, the hierarchical structure of the current order could be more easily recovered with society united and without a revolutionary disposition. Thus, war functions like these aforementioned festival events: it is the moment of *sacrifice*⁸ and the breaking of every rule, but through the barbarity of war, the members of society are united in a collective movement that ends one era and opens another that leads to a renaissance of culture. With reference to the taking of life, Caillois considers that the killing of the enemy in war is respected as all morally forbidden acts are respected and accepted in him.⁹

In fact, if we want to delve deeper into philosophical reflection, we see that it has tried to penetrate the recesses of human history and the soul in order to be able to interpret the origin of this radical evil. In particular, if we accept that the desire to kill is considered inherent in human nature, we are led to the conclusion that killing involves *historicity*. Thus, murder is considered (as) the ultimate expression of evil that takes root in the soul as the initial historical truth and as the driving force of human history. Freud borrows the origin myth and concept of the *primordial horde* and its "leader-father" from Darwin; the latter believed that the father of the horde had the exclusive privilege of sexual intercourse with women which was forbidden to his subordinate sons; this prohibition, as well as the submission itself, provoked a struggle for dominance within the horde that resulted in the expulsion of the sons by the father. Freud, completing this theory,

⁵ FREUD – EINSTEIN (1932), *ibid.*

⁶ WILSON Colin (1984), *Criminal History of Mankind*, Granada Publishing, London : 29.

⁷ BENJAMIN Walter (1977), *Για μια κριτική της βίας*, trans. Leonidas Marsianos, Eleftheriaki coultoura, Athens :10.

⁸ The sacrificial ritual was chosen by the community whenever the community was torn apart by some sacrificial crisis, that is, by a violent disruption of taboos (murder, incest, and parricide) and differentiating axes. This disruption was seen as an extreme loss of social order that was accompanied by a loss of norms and distinctions that certified cultural divisions, see René GIRARD (1986), *The Scapegoat*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, U.S.A: 12, 30-31, René GIRARD (1977), *Violence and the Sacred*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, U.S.A.: 93. The aim of sacrifice, then, was the purification of the community, the re-establishment of distinctions and the differentiating mechanism, the propitiation of the divine element.

⁹ CAILLOIS Roger (1959), *Man and the Sacred*, The Free Press, U.S.A. : 165-177.

claims that one "day" the sons joined forces, attacked, killed, and ate the father. Through cannibalism each of them received some important quality of the father, so that the sons were in effect identified with the deceased.¹⁰ The sons kill the father fulfilling their murderous desires,¹¹ but from that moment on they impose the absolute prohibition of murder, inaugurating social organization, justice and ultimately civilization.¹² From then on, societies, each based on its own *normative standards*¹³ form on the one hand a principle of deterrence of evil as a delimiting mechanism to determine *good* and *evil*¹⁴ known as the *axis of binary oppositions*,¹⁵ and on the other hand a punitive framework to avoid the perpetration of evil.¹⁶

Sigmund Freud used the entire above-mentioned origin myth to further demonstrate that the *unconscious* contains and holds the above-mentioned desire to kill. So, based on our *impulses*, *primaries*, and *secondaries*¹⁷ he claims that the primaries are unrepresentable impulses that have always resided in the psychic space of the unconscious, that have never crossed the threshold of the conscious to be repelled from it, and that they are those associated with primal murder. These offshoots of primal murder are that archaic legacy that progress, and civilization have been swept aside.¹⁸ Freud refers to this with the term "*phylogenetic inheritance*" implying that the unconscious preserves *traces* of all generations, traces of each individual history from generation to generation.

Returning to the topic of war, which is "legalized" and integrated by state power in the pursuit of the *nation-state*, especially *imperialist* ones, constituted in the past and perhaps still constitutes a basic social system.¹⁹ This was aided by the fact that after World War II, *modernity* imposed a change in the theoretical approach-interpretation of the phenomenon of the *nation*, from *genetic* to *construction*.²⁰ The new structure aimed to give individuals a sense of "belonging" to a specific group with common orientations and aims so that cohesion and solidarity could be achieved between members of society. For example, in war there is often the absolute brotherhood of combatants who believe that collective and patriotic death will bring about the immortality of the memory of the fallen.²¹ For *postmodernism*, the nation was considered an *imaginary community* as a cultural product, that is, as an identity produced by a specific social

¹⁰ FREUD Sigmund (1919), *Totem and taboo*, George Routledge and Sons Limited, London: 200-240.

¹¹ ZALTZMAN Natalie (2018), *Το Πνεύμα του Κακού*, trans. Eudokia Eleftheriou, Nisides, Athens: 35, 59.

¹² KALAS Nikola (1997), *Εστίες πυρκαγιάς*, trans. Gianna Savvidou, Gutenberg To mistiko kai to paradeigma, Athens: 138-144.

¹³ FOUCAULT Michel (1991), *Η μικροφυσική της εξουσίας*, trans. Lila Troulinou, ypsilon, Athens:85-100. See, also, Frederic GROS (Φρεντερίκ ΓΚΡΟ) (2007), *Michel Foucault*, trans. Anda Klampatsea, nisos, Athens: 86.

¹⁴ BATAILLE Georges (1979), *Η Λογοτεχνία και το Κακό*, trans. Eleni Varika, Plethron, Athens: 24, Alain BADIOU (1998), *Η Ηθική. Δοκίμιο για τη συνείδηση του Κακού*, trans. Vlassis Skolidis and Kostas Mpompas, < www.24grammata.gr, Athens:18.

¹⁵ DERRIDA Jacques (1990), *Περί Γραμματολογίας*, trans. Costis Papagiorgis, Gnosi, Athens: 29-40. See, also, Jonathan CULLER (2003), *Αποδόμηση. Θεωρία και κριτική μετά το δομισμό*, trans. Apostolos Lampropoulos, ed. Anna Tzouma, Metaixmio, Athens:132-134.

¹⁶FOUCAULT Michel (2011), *Επιτήρηση και τιμωρία. Η γέννηση της φυλακής*, trans.Tasos Mpetzelos, Plethron, Athens: 35.

¹⁷ FREUD Sigmund (2014), *Πέρα από την αρχή της ευχαρίστησης*, trans. Vasileios Patsogiannis, preface Jean Laplanche, Plethron, Athens:59.

¹⁸ ZALTZMAN Nathalie (2018): 79-81.

¹⁹ ARENDT Hannah (2000), *Περί βίας*, trans. Vana Nikolaidou-Kirianidou, Alexandria, Athens: 72.

²⁰ TZOUMA Anna (2007), *Εκατό χρόνια νοσταλγίας. Το αυτοβιογραφικό αφήγημα έθνους*, Metaixmio, Athens: 19-57.

²¹ ARENDT Hannah (2000): 128.

classification system. As, after all, Anna Tzouma points out, the construction of *national identity* is a process that is shaped based on political exigencies, since the nation is an ideological tool of state policy.²²

3. History and Literature: their relationship

Coming to the subject of fiction, through textual discourse it represents reality either external or internal-psychic, or even what the narrative voice considers as reality, regardless of whether it is an illusion for some. War and its murderous violence have been a central theme in many novels and its representation has been carried out with narrative techniques of all literary currents, such as *romanticism, realism, modernism and postmodernism*.

To exemplify the theoretical elements listed, two novels have been chosen for analysis; *Άνθρωποι του μύθου (Men of myth)* by Stelios Xefloudas, which belongs to modernism, and *Ορθοκωστά (Orthokosta)*, by Thanasis Valtinos, which belongs to postmodernism.²³ The first text is the inner speech of a Greek soldier who is enlisted to contribute to the defense of Greece against the Italians and Germans during World War II. The text *Ορθοκωστά (Orthokosta)* includes historical events of the Civil War that took place in a specific place in the Peloponnese (Orthokosta monastery).

The basis of the two novels is common as it relates to historical events, therefore the issue that is primarily raised here is that of the relationship between Literature and History. The main commonalities between the two scientific fields concern the use of narrative conventions, referentiality, the use of intertextuality and, of course, the fact that both are connected through *language*.²⁴ The historical and social reality is related to the literary text only when it is treated as a linguistic situation. That is, it must be preceded by its deduction from the field of events and then followed by its transfer to the field of literary notation.²⁵ Antonis Liakos points out that the narration of history results from infinite acts of reading where representation communicates with the image, through *interpretations* contained in the transmitted text, as a result of which History becomes a communicative process and at the same time is a social function. He invokes and supports the position of Hayden White who points out that the representation of reality or the sense of representation of a reality arises from complex linguistic protocols.²⁶ White himself views that "history is a mixture of science and art" and points out that, although the scientific character has been attributed to the subject of History, little discussion has been concerning its rhetorical and narrative components. He emphasizes that by revealing the linguistic terrain on which a given idea of history was constructed, he can try to "establish the inevitably poetic nature of the historical work".²⁷

The biggest problem deduced from the aforementioned analysis concerns the truth of the historical facts cited and the way both the facts and their truth are used by the currents of modernism and postmodernism. If we accept that historical events contain absolute and objective

²² TZOUMA Anna (2007): 19-57.

²³ XEFLLOUDAS Stelios (1946), Thanasis VALTINOS (2004), *ibid*.

²⁴ HUTCHEON Linda (1988), *A poetics of postmodernism: history, theory, fiction*, Routledge, New York:105.

²⁵ TZOUMA Anna, «Ιστορία και Λογοτεχνία», *Mnimon* 19 (1997) 109-128: 113-115.

²⁶ LIAKOS Antonis (2007), *Πώς το παρελθόν γίνεται ιστορία*, Polis, Athens: 115-180.

²⁷ WHITE Hayden (1973), *Metahistory; the historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London: Preface xi.

truth, then their use in so-called *historiographical novels* aims to form a specific perception of History as a formative force, while the presence of historical figures in fiction aims to make the otherwise fictional world authoritative. Modernism appears to move closer to this direction, although, at least from the *avant garde*, systemically produced truth is often questioned.²⁸ On the other hand, postmodernism considers that History is a human construction, a system of discourses that give meaning, a *discourse* about events that questions the absolute truth and objectivity that historical knowledge wants to advocate.²⁹

Postmodernism invests in a history related to multiplicity, with different perspectives and value systems, with knowledge produced by the *contexts* that arise when trying to bridge the past through its rewriting. The main goal is to realize that the past is only known through texts, so this is mediated by texts which produce what is considered true.³⁰ The relationship between literature and history based on the above refers to what has been called *historiographical metafiction* where postmodern texts that make historical references are included. Historiographical metafiction refutes natural or logical methods of distinguishing between fact and fiction, denies History's presupposition of a claim to truth, and elevates personal experience to public consciousness.³¹

Regarding the relationship between historiographical fiction and historiographical metafiction, both have the same basic problem, namely, can we consider documents as sources: objectively and neutrally, or does their interpretation inevitably invade the narrative?³²

4. The cultural context of the selected texts

In the modernist text, *Άνθρωποι του μύθου*, (*Men of Myth*), thematically, the prevailing view is that people are forced to take up arms to defend their national freedom and are encouraged by the fact that war, in their view, is just. The others are the attacking enemies, and the term "enemy" defines the country whose army is trying to take over "ours". Thus, killing ceases to be a sin and becomes a duty.³³

In Greek fiction, contrary to what happened in the West, the individual self was slow to develop as an autonomous being, because the ego was perceived as part of a whole: family, social group, nation, a fact that contributed to the idealization of both aforementioned wholes as well as their subordination to them. Therefore, the process of literary representation was based on the collective since it was related to historical events, to lost homelands and to popular cultural origins. Despite the fact that the period 1930-1950 has an eminently historical dimension, in the decade 1940-1950 individuality begins to expand with a parallel expansion of interiority with the style becoming more personal and the spirit of "critical realism" prevailing which is contrary to the past climate of idealization.³⁴ This is precisely what is evident in the text we are examining which, while it belongs to historiographic texts, the hero-narrator is represented in his

²⁸ HUTCHEON Linda (1988): 113-115.

²⁹ TZOUMA Anna (1991), *Η διπλή ανάγνωση του κειμένου*, Epikairota, Athens: 154.

³⁰ HUTCHEON Linda (1988): 5-10, 118-143.

³¹ Ibid: 94.

³² Ibid: 115.

³³ TODOROV Tzvetan (2010), *The Fear of Barbarians*, The University of Chicago Press, U.S.A.: 99.

³⁴ TZIOVAS Dimitris (2007), *Ο άλλος εαυτός. Ταυτότητα και κοινωνία στη Νεοελληνική πεζογραφία*, Polis, Athens: 44-92.

individuality and in his inner psyche which reveals a consciousness suffering from existential dilemmas about a *just defensive war*.

This feeling of a just war is expressed by the narrator and is the main motif, for example: [...] *it is the people who make this war, and this war is just*.

Also: *I had to go to war. Is this war just? We will fight for fascism to disappear from the face of the earth, for another world to be born, [...]*.

And: *They kill and are killed without wanting to. War is a crime that is committed in official clothes and with all the decorations on the chest. [...]. But this war is just.*³⁵

Even if some people expect their freedom through war, it never acts as a liberator. Bertrand Russell concerning this fact says that the stated view that "I am going to die for my country" is an attempt to justify choosing and participating in the war, when the truth would be better expressed by admitting "I am going to kill for my country". The reality is that "war kills" while any other view of ideological freedom or territorial sovereignty or even political legitimacy, is an attempt to rationalize the death that war brings to combatants.³⁶

Emmanuel Levinas is also diametrically opposed to any legitimation of war. A central theme of Levinas's ethical philosophy is the concept of *face*. The face presents³⁷ itself to the *ego* and establishes a relation of inequality with it, since the face is the infinite, otherness, transcendence, it has significance and meaning in itself: it is not the alter ego of the ego, it is not related to an image, it does not enter into a social relationship, it breaks with the world of experience and absolutely resists the self's attempt to grasp it. And while the face is a force that imposes itself, at the same time it appears naked and helpless, which combined with the ego's inability to grasp it and the impossibility of exercising power over it, incites the ego to murder, as Levinas considers the desire to kill to be primal: after all, murder is a force that exercises power over that which escapes power. At this very moment of danger for the face, it addresses the ego and imposes the commandment "don't kill", inviting an inversion of human nature (*an inside out*).³⁸ The commandment "do not kill" that reverses nature is the reason (*λόγος*) why it is "heard" at those times when the humanitarian concern for the other is expressed and surpasses the corresponding concern for the self. Levinas himself has also referred to the case of the so-called defensive war and points out that self-preservation is not a sufficient justification for committing murder, therefore murder is not justified.³⁹ Example from the text:

But when you fight, when you kill another person, you have no face, you cannot see the face of God.

Also: *War is horrible not only because it forces people to kill each other, but also because it makes us to conform to its norms, transforms us into war, does not bring us closer to God, nor to people, [...]. Those who fight have no face, but only hands.*

³⁵ XEFLOUDAS Stelios (1946): 6, 33, 59.

³⁶ SCARRY Elaine (1985), *The Body in Pain*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford: 68, 81, 122, 140.

³⁷ The exact meaning in Greek of *appear* or *represent* is the verb, *επιφαίνομαι*.

³⁸ LEVINAS Emmanuel (1991), *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, The Netherlands: 181-204. See, also, Mirto RIGOU (1995), "Το πρόσωπο στη φιλοσοφία του E. Levinas. Η ηθική ως ηθική του άλλου" DEFKALION 14/1 (107-113).

³⁹ BUTLER Judith (2009), *Ενάλωτη ζωή. Οι δυνάμεις του πένθους*, trans. Michalis Laliotis, Kostas Athanasiou, nisos, Athens: 203-230.

On the other hand, Judith Butler, considers that the condition of *vulnerability* that exists in every human being is responsible for the desire to kill as it turns into a murderous temptation. We are all born with vulnerability and in that way, we exist for each other as our bodies bear one another's traces. Vulnerability is a condition of humanness as, if one recognizes and accepts this idiosyncratic human coupling, one refuses to harm another. Violence, however, can nullify vulnerability, enforce brutality, and harm fellow human beings by threatening to eliminate them, just as it does in war.⁴⁰ For example:

*We hate more than we love. We don't understand each other's speech, we don't look at each other's face as if it were our own. That is why there is no unity in the world, since our hands are ready to kill.*⁴¹

Both the imperative "do not kill" and the condition of vulnerability and precariousness of life inaugurate what is understood as a *moral relationship* with fellow human beings; they establish the idea of the moral imperative to protect the other, which is carried out through speech in the form of *teaching*.⁴² The text embodies this concern as the hero's consciousness suffers from these dilemmas, for example:

But why should I kill the other person and then leave him as if nothing happened and move on. Who am I then?

And again: *Only the frozen breath of death touches me. [...]. What scares me is that by killing the other person, I kill the person inside me.*⁴³

In the novel *Ορθοκωστά (Orthocosta)*, the moral imperative does not even exist as an implicit dilemma, since the murderous brutality practiced by both sides aims not only at the complete elimination of the material body but also at reducing it to *waste* and publicly exposing it as such. Julia Kristeva calls the concept of waste, *abjection*. This means some kind of contaminated object, a *miasma*, a kind of degenerate otherness which must be banished, expelled to establish a safe and whole self, in accordance with the cultural system and social normality. This is the meaning that emerges from the processing of the concept in its metaphoricity, as literally Kristeva with the concept of abjection, identifies that experience in which the exit from the maternal body is experienced as the maximum trauma and as the absolute rupture of the unity enjoyed by the subject with the mother body. This unification constitutes the dominant *desire* for the subject, a desire of the incestuous type, thus a *taboo* desire, forbidden and punishable.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ BUTLER Judith (2008), «Βία, πένθος, πολιτική» in Dimitra Makrinioti (ed.), *Περί Θανάτου. Η πολιτική διαχείριση της θνητότητας* (2008), trans. Kostas Athanasiou, nisos, Athens:535-572.

⁴¹ XEFLOUDAS Stelios (1946):34, 60-61, 56 for all three quotations.

⁴² LEVINAS Emmanuel and Richard KEARNEY (1986), "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas" in Richard A. COHEN (ed.), *Face to Face with Levinas*, State University of New York Press, U.S.A.:20-25. See, also, ALTEZ (2007), Richard KEARNEY (2004), «Facing God» *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture* 1 17-26, Richard KEARNEY (1999), «The Crisis of the Image: Levinas's Ethical Response» in Gary B. MADISON and Marty FAIRBAIRN (eds.), *The Ethics of Postmodernity*, Northwestern University Press, U.S.A.: 12-23.

⁴³ XEFLOUDAS Stelios (1946): 28, 32.

⁴⁴ KRISTEVA Julia (1980), *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia University Press, New York: 12-15. She exemplifies: *Abjection, on the other hand, is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you.* See, also, Julia KRISTEVA (2006), «Από τη ρυπαρότητα στο μίσημα», trans. Pelagia Marketou in Athina Athanasiou (ed.) (2006), *Φεμινιστική θεωρία και πολιτισμική κριτική*, trans. Pelagia Marketou, nisos, Athens: 361-378.

Returning to the novel *Ορθοκωστά* (*Orthocosta*), it is observed that brutality dominates, and the ostensible justification of the actions as "just" disappears, as does the guilt that could restrain the crime. For example:

— *Did they kill them at night?*

— *Yes, night. They had water drawn from the well. Panagiotis played the clarinet previously. [...] And then they killed them. [...] We put him in sacks and brought him. [...]*

— *Why in sacks?*

— *His head had been cut off. His legs had been cut off; his hands had been cut off. The body apart. Now how to get him? We put him in two sacks. [...].*⁴⁵

War, through the killings it imposes, highlights the status and concept of *naked* or *bare life*, a concept inherited from Roman law where it is referred to as *homo sacer*. It is about that human figure that in Roman times appears as the one condemned by society for a crime, which, however, is forbidden to sacrifice but can be killed by anyone without punishment and condemnation.⁴⁶ So, war as a producer of naked life meets again *homo sacer* at the point where people's lives are devalued, and their deaths are not worthy of lamentation and mourning.

In the text, *Άνθρωποι του μύθου*, (*People of Myth*), there are phrases-thoughts that could refer indiscriminately to all naked lives around the world and in historical era, for example:

*The dead will lie open-mouthed, stinking of hunger [...] Around them they will curl up [...].*⁴⁷

In the text *Ορθοκωστά* (*Orthocosta*), naked life is all those people who were demoted by the rulers of the two factions to a material body-miasma which "belongs" to the *sovereign* and is therefore receptive to any act of repulsion and annihilation. And because both sides of the Civil War in the text claim sovereignty, naked life is used by both as a means to bend and hurt the opponent. Victims are therefore forced to take one side or the other as neutrality is forbidden as an option. It is even pointed out that the desire of many victims not to join the ranks worked so that their lives were considered indisputably murderous, and their bodies were reduced to *res* and disappeared. For example:

—*I was caught in Eleocharis. [...]. The camp pre-existed. The camp to which seven Elaiohorites were sent, the first. People unrelated to every movement. Simple people, that is, unfortunate people. [...]. They probably took them to make an example of them. [...]. A kind of hostage. Because they had nothing to do with resistance or anti-communist activity or Germans.*⁴⁸

⁴⁵ VALTINOS Thanasis (2009) : 327.

⁴⁶ AGAMBEN Giorgio (2005), *Homo sacer. Κυρίαρχη εξουσία και γυμνή ζωή*, trans. Panagiotis Tsiamouras, Scripta, Athens: 27. In Greek: *ατιμωρητί φονεύσιμη και άθνητη*.

⁴⁷ XEFLOUDAS Stelios (1946): 106.

⁴⁸ VALTINOS Thanasis (2009): 136.

5. The representation of the cultural condition

All the theoretical elements of the Cultural theory used are underpinned by narrative techniques which represent the construction of the murder. These techniques differentiate the modernism from postmodernism not only from the theoretical side but also from the constructional-narrative side, as will be demonstrated in the texts examined.

The elements that we find in the text *Άνθρωποι του μύθου*, (*People of myth*) and that concern the philosophical reflection on the law and the ethics of war, are supported by narrative techniques of modernism. The dilemmas, the doubts, the resulting guilt, the effort to encourage oneself and overcome any human cowardice, are represented with the basic narrative technique of modernism, the *stream of consciousness*, that is the narrative that aims to illuminate the inner life and the soul. This necessity is realized on the one hand by the use of *repetition* and the overemphasis of the dream and associations, and on the other hand by the removal of the mnemonic function and the temporal sequence so as to create new represented realities.⁴⁹

Constant repetition as a narrative technique demonstrates both the soldier's anxiety to respond to the "patriotic" call ("for the country") and his fear of death. For example:

I had to go to war I did my duty to man. [...] But I'm afraid to die. People must spit on me. [...]. Am I no longer human and my soul is buried in the coffin of my body?

At the same time, however, it creates in the reader the suspicion that with constant repetition the soldier is trying to convince himself of the necessity of wars as something "legitimized" by the central authority, a fact that hides some doubt about theories of heroism. For example:

*There is no such thing as a war epic. Only a great imagination can remotely create such an epic. Those who fight see the decay of war. But around me, everyone remains invincible in these great mountains of Albania, people of legend, faces of tragedy.*⁵⁰

Speech becomes emotional, confessional, the represented entity is somewhere between life and death, while dreams and visions become indistinguishable from reality. For example:

You don't even understand where you are, you can't step on the ground, because there is no ground in front of your steps. You don't know if you're dreaming.

Also, the horror of war becomes noticeable in the soldier's nightmares:

And then I have a strange dream. Between some mutilated trees, death treads lightly on the snow, and with it is a multitude of slain ghosts. [...] Then a ghost speaks: "My eyes are no longer drowning in blood [...]"

Another ghost: Silence we are dead. [...]

Death

*You will be better with me than with people [...]*⁵¹

The represented subject is often conscious of its unity, but even more often feels its *disintegration* and gives in to it. For example:

⁴⁹ KALAS Nikola (1997): 15-16. He argues that by removing all objective form, we are led to complete dissonance between ego and objective reality.

⁵⁰ XEFLOUDAS Stelios (1946) : 90-91, 99.

⁵¹ Ibid.: 73, 78.

In the darkness my other self, the one who did not come to the war [...] seems to me to have fixed his eyes on my frozen face and my hands are dying from their agony deep in my pockets. [...].

All this contradiction of the experience experienced by the subject contributes to sometimes being conscious of the individual self, sometimes feeling like a member of the same group fighting for common ideals and sometimes, having lost his individuality to address some intangible, imaginary listener, or even to himself, confirming his loneliness.⁵² For example:

We sleepwalk and dream of a home [...]. On the white horse, my eyes are closed, and I remember, I see the same scene in front of me, a man, and a woman parting. [...]. She said to him: "Don't go away, [...]. War is God's curse.[...]"

The subject's existential anguish is represented both through the absence of punctuation and through multiple punctuation. For example:

I exist or I don't exist! [...]. I rode on a white horse to my own death or another's death! I'm a dead man that didn't die. What is death! Where does life begin and where does death end!⁵³

The *loss of time* in the modern novel is a key factor in the instability and fluidity of meaning, which highlights the suffering soul and its stream of consciousness more intensely. The narrator, breaking with reality, seems to dominate time. He does not follow the linear narration, he combines the events as he wishes, achrony prevails, flashbacks, projections into the future, anachronisms, and the modes of mnemonic function in general. The result is to create a subjective, individual time that fragments coherence, disrupts perception⁵⁴ and highlights the confusion presented by the characters' actions and thoughts. Thus, the time scales alternate as the narrator from the present tense of the narrative present concerning the war, suddenly transports us to the future of the German occupation, for example:

I see them in a large empty square stopping, getting out of their cars, and standing in the sun. Hitler's ironclad men traverse the earth like a curse from God.

In conclusion, the fluidity of time and the loss of "measurable" time that is achieved, reduces the suffering of war to a timeless and universal event. For example:

Wherever the people with iron fences stepped, the grass dried up and the place became blacker than hell.⁵⁵

The postmodern novel *Ορθοκωστά (Orthocosta)*, categorized as historiographical metafiction, conveys the historical events of the massacres and violence between Greeks recruited by the Nazis and Greek communist insurgents during the Civil War. The narration of the events is done by ordinary people, civilians or combatants of both sides who experienced them. The *multiple*

⁵² COHN Dorrit (2001), *Διαφανή πρόσωπα*, trans. Dimitra Mpexlikoudi, Papazisi, Athens: 235-237. For Linda Hutcheon, the splitting of the *Ego* into "I" and "you" is due to an attempt to open a dialogue with the self, see Linda HUTCHEON (1980), *Narcissistic Narrative. The Metafictional paradox*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Canada: 2,6.

⁵³ XEFLOUDAS Stelios (1946): 69-71, 9, 116, for three quotations.

⁵⁴ Dimitris Platanitis writes about it that it seems as if the narrative unfolds in a continuous present in which the story that belongs to the past has been transformed, see Dimitris PLATANITIS(1997), *Το μοντέρνο μυθιστόρημα*, Metaixmio, Athens: 187.

⁵⁵ XEFLOUDAS Stelios (1946): 106.

focus prevails as everyone presents their own point of view, with the result of emphasizing that everyone involved considers their own passions-experiences as more important, and, finally, it seems that the personal point of view corresponds to the personal-subjective truth. This precisely highlights the role of everyone involved in History, which, if we extend it and deepen it, has been proven by experience to directly affect how descendants view historical events.

Historiographical metafictional texts rewrite history using the techniques of *parody* and *irony* to critically test conventions and boundaries. They want to hand over the historical past to the reader for his or her own critical review, or to lend to it another aspect or even to reveal another strong or hidden aspect of it.

Parody works through the *use and abuse* technique, that is, through the integration of past elements and then their deconstruction.⁵⁶ This technique, as has been mentioned, contributes to the reflection and sharpening of the reader's critical thinking regarding the truth and the complexity of the historical truth as it is mediated by the textual discourse, the perspectives, the testimonies.

On the other hand, the *polyphony* as well as the multiple focus used here, leads to the opinion that the text is a special product of fiction that stands out from similar texts and makes it quite difficult for the reader to construct meanings. In particular, the persons are recycled in a continuous repetition of their action and their truth as one contradicts the other regarding their testimonies. The result is a chaotic ambiguity regarding the persons and their names, as the names are used simply to identify the actions of the persons; this choice contributes on the one hand to the lack of interest in highlighting the person-individual as a suffering consciousness and as an element of plot, so as to remain a name empty of content, and on the other hand to lead the reader to recognize that the lack of interest in the person contributes to the concept of universality and timelessness· this means that analogous historical situations can prevail in human universal and historical events. The historical figures in these kinds of texts are characters of the text, only as *indications of reality*.⁵⁷

Related examples of difficulty in structuring the plot due to the recycling of faces-names and multiple focus are: Savvas Papavasileiou narrates in the 6th chapter his arrest and his interrogation by Kostas Dronias (recruited by the Nazis: “Tagamatsaflitis”) who is the narrator in the 4th chapter. His brother, Giannis Dronias, is the narrator of the 9th and 19th chapters. Christina Mavrou, narrator of chapter 11 is the sister of Eleni, narrator of chapters 1 and 7.⁵⁸

6. Epilogue

The interest in the fiction of war in modern Greek novels today is roughly the same for both modernism and postmodernism, which shows that war, due to its historicity, is of similar concern

⁵⁶ Parody is also a way to highlight the eccentric element, which is marginalized by the dominant ideology, see Linda HUTCHEON (1988): 35. Patricia Waugh considers that parody introduces the use of metaphor which replaces the metonymic literary tradition. This displacement rearranges how the texts can be received, i.e., the rearrangement of the original text can also rearrange the way it is received today, see Patricia WAUGH (1984), *Metafiction*, Routledge, London, and New York: 68,69 .

⁵⁷ HUTCHEON Linda (1988):151.

⁵⁸ VALTINOS Thanasis (2009): 11, 22, 48, 58, 73, 88, 130.

to literary currents and eras. Modernism, as demonstrated by the novel, *Άνθρωποι του μύθου* (*Men of Myth*), dares to question the delegitimization of even defensive killings in war as it penetrates the psyche of the heroes and "transmits" inner fears, anxieties, dilemmas, doubts and questionings, even possible occasional cowardice. Through the techniques of modernism, the suffering consciousness that emerges contributes to the result that the hero-narrator loses the clarity of the image of war events per se and focuses on the murder and its consequences on the human being. Essentially, the truth of the represented historical events of the Greek-Italian war in Albania is not judged or disputed but focuses on the effects of murder on the people involved.

Postmodernism is particularly concerned with the historical past, but with the aim of exposing it critically to the reading public using mainly the form of parody. This technique, due to its critical nature, removes verisimilitude and casts doubt on the truth of the historical facts, at least according to the official historical version. With reference to the Greek Civil War, as we saw through the text *Ορθοκωστά* (*Orthocosta*), it continues to preoccupy modern fiction, but the authors, using postmodern techniques aim to re-investigate all the elements that led to the Civil War and to alert the reader's mind to similar issues. The literary style in which the murders are carried out is completely realistic, there is no mention of emotion, only a dry description of the events. This prevents the reader from identifying with the heroes, so also with murder, and directs him to adopt a critical attitude towards the events. However, the relativity and subjectivity with which the events are presented carries with it the fact of the murder itself. In particular, the credibility of crime respected by modernism is obscured and bypassed by postmodernism, while the cumulative presentation in a realistic manner of the multiple murders has the effect of running the risk of the reader becoming accustomed to references to brutality even in real life, especially since the phenomena of crime in our time appear with geometric progression.

From the point of view of the cultural condition, it is observed that murderous warfare even in the form of defensive war, much less in a civil war, dehumanizes man; the instinct of aggression inherent in every human being contributes to the increase of brutality and perpetration of evil. It is exactly this brutality, phylogenetic as Freud characterizes it, that is exploited and upon which the respective power builds its propaganda, in all its forms and claims, in order to fanaticize man and lead him to war. It is precisely this power that "legitimizes" murderous violence and uses in practice all the concepts related to the violation of humanitarian ideals· moreover, the concepts of brutality, the precariousness of vulnerability and naked life that were used here, highlight the concept of murderous violence. In a time of war, propaganda it exerts systematic pressure on the people to consider otherness as the foreign and hostile, so as to make these interpretations function as an alibi, so that the "enemy" can be fought, pursued, and subdued.

In today's societies, *biopolitics*,⁵⁹ which is the established way of exercising power, works so that man gradually falls from the position of citizen to the position of bare life, as he distances himself from civil society and from his right to express critical speech. The result is to lead the public political life of modern democracies to decline.⁶⁰ Moreover, today, as we are all totally exposed to violence, naked life does not concern a particular category of individuals but lives in the biological body of every living being, which means we are all potentially bare lives.

⁵⁹ FOUCAULT Michel (2012), *Η γέννηση της βιοπολιτικής*, trans. Vasilis Patsogiannis, Plethron, Athens: 37.

⁶⁰ AGAMBEN Giorgio (2005): 184-222. See, also, Hannah ARENDT (1958) *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 26. Of interest, also, are Judith Butler's positions on the murderous life and its implementation in the Islamic world, see Judith BUTLER (2009):45-66.

In conclusion, the instinct of aggression is curbed through the educational process aimed at civilizing man, a process which has been carried out continuously since the appearance of man on earth, and to this are due the great works of civilization and the humanization of man. The achievement of democracy could not but be an important factor for humanization, for it creates the citizen with all the obligations to his fellow man and the whole, but also with non-negotiable individual and political rights· in addition and, perhaps most basic of all, it is the instillation and assimilation of the concept of the citizen, which is personified in the person who has a public voice, who claims it, who struggles if he loses it, and who resists the massification of the age where he finds suitable ground for the concept of bare life to intrude.

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