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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——. «Το μωσαϊκό της εθνικής μας περιπέτειας.» *Τα Νέα,* 14 June 2003b, 31.

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