Constructing Meaning in Apostolidis' *Pyramid 67*

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RÉSUMÉ

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

ABSTRACT

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kotzias, moreover, points to psychological reasons:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusions

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

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

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

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

NOTES

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

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

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

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

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

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

33. LeSage: 1962, 16-17.

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

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

36. Kinney: 1978, 18.

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

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

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

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

41. Tomkins: 1980, xiv.

42. Rigney: 2001, 84.

43. Hutcheon: 1989, 32.

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