

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

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Language of action [is] the single and radical principle of all language.

Étienne Bonnot de Condillac
(through the mouth of Jacques Derrida)

RÉSUMÉ

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

ABSTRACT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Friend or foe, don't announce it anywhere.

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

This reformulation of Simonides' epigram¹⁹ for Leonidas and his 300 who died in Thermopylae obeying the laws of their fellow Spartans, sums up the author's philosophy. As his Antigone, Alexandrou opts for imprisonment (a kind of suicide); in marked contrast to Leonidas, moreover, he refuses to obey any but the "inner" laws/words. This inscription is indeed addressed to a third party (friend or foe, presumably the *xenos*) who is asked not to transmit the message to anyone. And yet what does this wish to keep silent, exiled, secluded imply if not the wish to be heard precisely by the friend/foe? This, I believe, is the performative gesture, the speech act that is being made in *Mission Box*, albeit with certain twists.

Let us then turn to the novel²⁰ and try, for a moment, to read it through the lens of Austin's speech-act theory, that is read the narrator's (henceforth Writer's) discourse as some kind of performative.

First, in order for the speech act to be happy, there needs to be an "accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect."²¹ In our case it would be almost impossible to identify which conventional procedure Writer's act would be invoking a) because his "speech act" falls somewhere in between a response to an interrogation, an apology, a deposition and a testimony,²² b) because it is not certain by whom this procedure is accepted or sanctioned, under which law it falls: is he apologizing to a communist interrogator²³ (and if so does this interrogator belong to the same - Leninist, anti-dogmatic - faction) or to an Emergency Military Tribunal?²⁴ and c) because the procedure itself changes along the way.²⁵ This uncertainty, however, renders Austin's

second condition, namely that “the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure involved”²⁶ absurd.²⁷ The absurdity grows as the intended addressee remains silent –which is not to say, however that he is absent. It will be shown that his implied presence is what makes Writer’s speech act meaningful. Similarly, it is useless to study Austin’s third and fourth conditions, that the procedure should be carried out correctly and completely²⁸– although we must, in due time, return to the issue of completion.

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

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

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

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

The play is organized in two acts that are variations on the same themes: betrayal and the burying of the dead. The Brechtian interlude that separates them announces the issue at stake, which is no other than that of rehearsing/acting. The first story takes place during the Resistance and the second during the Civil War. The main male characters and communist guerillas, Andronikos and Nikodemos³¹ take turns as executioner and victim, while Antigone plays her standard role of burying the corpses and upholding the laws of kinship. While the play deserves a closer study, I will limit myself to some of the elements that elucidate our discussion.

First, the main characters (Antigone, Andronikos) wear masks –bearing the same characteristics with the faces nonetheless– a stratagem which creates a second stage upon the stage. The masks are there to prove the characters' attempt to suppress their individuality (Antigone's fear, Andronikos' selfishness) not because they are outlaws,³² but in order to serve the party interests best.³³ Similarly, Nikodemos confesses that his name and identity no longer belong to him, but to the people who have idolized him and swear victory on his name.³⁴ Such loss of individuality, which can only be achieved through a mechanism of (self-) oppression, is justified in the name of the common goal or final vision. The masks themselves are not only there to cover up; their geometry seeks to contain, to shape or mold. As the ward confesses, the guerillas have a "squared mind" –or rather, as he corrects himself, Nikodemos is the one who has it³⁵ on behalf of all. In such a social organization, all the comrades think and act in one voice, or else become interchangeable. Nobody is irreplaceable. This is proven by the way traitors are treated: their executioner is to be determined through lottery. All comrades are implicated in (or, in Althusserian terms, interpellated through) the process of self-criticism as well as that of "liquidation," which are necessary for the reaffirmation of their faith and the survival of the party. We are here getting close to the logic of autarchy, which will come up again in *Mission Box*.

In both the first and the second act Nikodemos is ordered (by the Major and Andronikos respectively) to take part in what might be called a "suicide mission." Despite the predicted failure of this mission³⁶ it is deemed necessary first in order to raise the morale of the soldiers and secondly in order for the Major (and Andronikos) to extricate themselves from all responsibility for the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It goes without saying that Writer in *Mission Box* shares much more with Nikodemos and Andronikos –indeed with Kreon⁴⁹– than he does with Antigone. For one thing, he has adopted and voluntarily accepted all of the party mechanisms of mind control. He brags about his spirit of alertness at times to a point of self-ridicule– as for example when he describes the frisking of the milkman which he undertook on his own initiative (136-138/130-132) or when he confesses to having actually visited his friend Alekos’ house as a conscientious party inspector for the Occupation mess, even though he knew that the family had been selling the last emblems of its fortune to buy twelve cans of corn beef (203/193). His discourse is not simply neutralized,⁵⁰ it is the blind echo of an autarchic discourse.⁵¹

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

In the same vein, Writer has inherited the “squared logic” of Klearchos⁵² (an expression that could signify a number of things, including perfect, conventional, practical, commonsensical or conservative –all of which are extremely relevant).⁵³ In the study of syllogisms, the logical relations among categorical propositions are represented graphically through the so-called “square of oppositions.” A close examination of Writer’s linking phrases can show that he uses all possible relations in his reasoning:⁵⁴ contraries (propositions that can be both true and both false but not true at the same

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In an arithmetic sequence, each new number v (n_1, n_2, n_3 , etc.) is equal to the previous one plus the common difference, whereas in a geometric progression it is multiplied by a common ratio. Alexandrou is probably referring to a geometric progression (even though the variable n is more common in arithmetic sequences) and he is looking for the product of the geometric progression in which n represents each successive second of his life (n_1, n_2, n_3 , etc.) and r (the common ratio) the sum of all the seconds. Staying away from mathematical types (as some of us did not even try the polytechnic exam), I would simply note that the characteristic of sequences and progressions is that they extend to infinity as opposed to geometrical shapes that are finite since their circumference is fixed. It is significant that Writer moves to the logic of sequences just as he abandons his initial suggestion (that he would need a lifetime *squared*) and that he ends this interjection with a rejection of all mathematical types and a plea to be left alone.⁶⁶

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

The way language is affected in times of civil war is first described by Thucydides, who is writing his account of the Peloponnesian War from the perspective of both the defeated and the exiled.⁶⁸ In Book III and while narrating the first civil strife (*stasis*) that breaks out in Corfu, soon to trigger similar events in other cities and stir, “so to speak, the entire Greek world”,⁶⁹ Thucydides comments that among the first side-effects of civil war is the distortion of language: the “comrades”⁷⁰ change the usual meaning/value of words according to whim/righteousness⁷¹ so that “inconsiderate boldness was counted true-hearted manliness; provident deliberation, a handsome fear; modesty, the cloak of cowardice; to be wise in everything, to be lazy in everything.” (*Thuc.III.82*)⁷² It is this simple yet profound observation that explains Writer's obsession with correct (not quite literal) meanings, in short his entire rhetoric,⁷³ which could be summed up by the seemingly innocent filling *outōs eipein* (the Thucydidean *hōs eipein*). Consider the following extracts:⁷⁴

which both is and is not precise: it is an inaccuracy, but a legitimate [themitē] one, so to speak (84)

imagine having a mission leader whose authority would be under challenge [airesin], so to speak (95)

or whether I should conform to the spirit [pneuma], so to speak, of the command (100).

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

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

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

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

In his own *Apology*, Socrates acknowledges as his greatest challenge the fighting of the prejudice that is rooted in the minds of his fellow-citizens as a result of his opponents’ slandering. His only weapon, he confesses, is the truth. Not only this, but he opposes truth to rhetoric –a gesture which is quite common to all Socratic dialogues– claiming that the truth needs no deliberation, no ornament in speech⁷⁶ Socrates thus tries to answer his opponents’ arguments by (cross)-examining them or engaging in the unprecedented process wherein the accused is actually questioning his prosecutors! Through his usual method of *elenchus* he is thus, in a sense, *acting out* his guilt while at the same time proclaiming his innocence (and vice versa). Yet the most important part of his performance is his parting speech. Faced with capital punishment, Socrates in fact places his faith on the law (yet another speech act), accepts or rather endorses the verdict, claiming it to be the

best outcome for him. Like a soldier in battle⁷⁷ –his simile is a deliberate one– he proclaims his determination to fight to the end, scorning the alternative of desertion. In short, he opts for suicide as the only means of fulfilling his mission. This is crucial: his original speech act of confession, turns into an act of accusation and ends up as an act of suicide.

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

Silence⁸⁰ is one such form of gesture as already suggested through Alekos' play⁸¹ that foreshadows Writer's final act. Suicide is yet another.⁸² It is the only means of bringing into effect, into completion, that barred performative (the intention to be heard), turning the confession into an accusation and the language of action into the principle of all language.

NOTES

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

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

17. From Paul Éluard's "Mes heures" (*Le livre ouvert II*, 1942). Alexandrou uses it as a motto in his collection *Αγνος γραμμή*.
18. Translation mine. In the Greek: "Υποσημείωση": *Φίλε ή αντίπαλε μην τ' αναγγείλεις πουθενά. / Δεσμώτης τήδε ίσταμαι τοις ένδον ρήμασι πειθόμενος."*
See Alexandrou's interview by Dimitris Raftopoulos, included in the volume of his essays, *Έξω από τα δόντια*: "Δεν ανήκω σε κανένα κόμμα και σε καμιά πολιτική οργάνωση. Δεν είμαι μέλος καμιάς θρησκείας. Όπως το 'χω ξαναπεί, *Δεσμώτης τήδε ίσταμαι τοις ένδον ρήμασι πειθόμενος*. Έχοντας περάσει από τα ξερονήσια και τις φυλακές, νιώθω πως είμαι συγκρατούμενος όχι μόνο με όσους υποφέρουν στα φασιστικά στρατόπεδα, μα και με όσους βασανίζονται στο Αρχιπέλαγος Γκούλαγκ." (Alexandrou 1982: 181) The reference is to his poem "Footnote" ("Υποσημείωση") from his collection *Ευθύτης Οδών*.
19. Cf. Herodotus, *His*. 7.228: *Ω ξείν αγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις / ότι τήδε κείμεθα τοις κείνων ρήμασι πειθόμενοι*.
20. In all subsequent citations from the novel I am giving the page references to the Greek edition, followed by those of the English edition. Unless otherwise noted, I am using the translation of Robert Crist.
21. Austin 1975: 14.
22. See, for example, the very beginning of the novel where Writer "agrees with the chosen procedure", differentiating between an interrogation and a written deposition and then experiments with the verbs to "set down", "to speak for myself", "to testify in my own behalf", "to speak out", "to make myself heard" (Alexandrou, 9-10 in both). He soon realizes that he is dealing with an interrogation (41/40) but that his interrogators do not act their part correctly, challenging his statements and posing new questions (178/169), so that he is "playing a game without a visible opponent" (*παίζω εν ου παικτοίς*, 313/296).
23. Although one could not speak of a historical antecedent to *Mission Box*, the following incident is worth noting. In August 1948 and while the DSE forces in the Peloponnese were being rapidly wiped out, a small boat carrying ammunition from Albania was blown up before reaching its destination. A member of the crew (Vaitsis) whose logbook was discovered by the Royal Navy patrol was subsequently sentenced to death by a partisan tribunal (Vogiatzis 2009: 330-337).
24. Following the 1946 3rd Decree (Γ' Ψήφισμα) which proclaimed all political parties of the Left illegal, the parliament instituted Emergency Military Tribunals in the borderline areas as well as special tribunals in the rest of the country (Margaritis 2002a: 156-157).
25. That is to say, Writer himself, who is making up the rules of the procedure by conjecture, changes it. Thus, the writing material given to him after the

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

26. Austin 1975: 15.

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

28. Austin 1975: 15.

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

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

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

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

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

- traitor, but his real crime is that he is an individualist (Alexandrou 1982: 34).
34. Alexandrou 1982: 63.
 35. “Σκοπός: Έχουμε τετράγωνο μυαλό. Ο Νικόδημος πα να πει το’χει ολομόναχος” (Alexandrou 1982: 24)
 36. This would be the equivalent of the ancient oracle in *Oedipus Rex* or Oedipus’ curse in *Oedipus in Colonus* which is fulfilled in *Antigone*. For a discussion of its function see Butler (2000).
 37. A condensed version of the (empty) box and Writer’s calling card in *The Mission Box*.
 38. “Ένα κουφάρι είναι το μόνο σίγουρο. Δε βλέπεις; Ταμπούρι πρώτης.” (Alexandrou 1982: 72)
 39. Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 80-81. In J.O.Burt’s translation (1962): “I will not hold life dearer than freedom nor will I abandon my leaders whether they are alive or dead. I will bury all allies killed in the battle. If I conquer the barbarians in war I will not destroy any of the cities which have fought for Greece but I will consecrate a tenth of all those which sided with the barbarian. I will not rebuild a single one of the shrines which the barbarians have burnt and razed but will allow them to remain for future generations as a memorial of the barbarians’ impiety.” Note that the oath is alluded to by Socrates in his apology (*Ap.*28d6-29a1), a text which is discussed here in its relation to *Mission Box*.
 40. A gesture which recalls Seferis’ line, “για ένα αδειανό πουκάμισο, για μιαν Ελένη” in “Helen” (*Logbook III*).
 41. “I admit that I admired him at that moment, since even in this situation he conformed to the regulations which he had established.” (164/156-157)
 42. As opposed to Grigoris to whom they render double honors (157/150). Both Mazower and Calyvas stress the negative reactions of the local population to the practices of mass graves and unburied corpses attributed mostly to “reactionary elements” of ELAS (see, for example, Mazower 2000: 27). The same practices, however were shared by EDES and a number of anti-communist gangs or paramilitaries (see, for example, Mihioties 2007: 11-162).
 43. Alexandrou’s choice of words “δεδομένου ότι δεν μας είχαν δώσει ούτε δεύτερο σάβρακο” (159) is somehow lost in translation: “they hadn’t provided us with a single change of clothing” (151)
 44. This becomes even more obvious if one considers the ancient burial rituals in which the dead were adorned with and surrounded by their personal belongings.
 45. See Tsimokou’s discussion of the last cigarette routine in “The Last Cigarette” (1995) which echoes the English translation of Svevo’s third chapter in *The Confessions of Zeno*. Of particular interest would also be Richard Klein’s

- discussion of a cigarette as a poem, a clock, the sublime, an 'I' (or a 'not-I'), a non-act, a soldier's friend, and so on. According to the author, "the last cigarette smoked before an execution [...] creates the illusion that the death of all our dreams is willed, is chosen –that the execution is really a suicide that one will master till the end (Klein 1993: 141).
46. The word for "comrade" in Greek is "σύντροφος", he/she who has been brought up together with; Antigone addresses Ismene as "κοινόν αὐτάδελφον", stressing mostly the element of brood.
47. *Ant.* 905-912.
48. This is the argument used by Writer to convince Rena that her brother Haris, arrested by the Germans during the Occupation is a "lost case", which causes his temporary rupture with Alekos.
49. See, for example, his statement that "he suspects the whole city" (182, my translation).
50. For a discussion of how Writer's style is neutralized see Tsirimokou (1995:39).
51. Cf. Vardoulakis (2009: 414). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, it would be worthwhile to examine the affinities between *The Mission Box* and Orwell's *1984*. To name just a few: the order that is pronounced by a voice in the dark while the members of the mission are gathered in the bus lot, "Back to your place, soldier!" (38/36) recalls the voice of the Big Brother in Orwell (1983: 220-221); in the same scene, Writer comments that "since [he] had turned [his] watch over to Capt. Paraskevas, [he] didn't know the precise hour" (48/47), a situation in which Winston also finds himself in during his imprisonment (211, 224); the dazzling light coming from the jeep's headlights (40/39) echo the dazzling lights that blind Winston during his interrogation (227), etc.
52. See Writer's claim: "σας απέδειξα με την πιο τετράγωνη λογική" (341). Cf. Ritsos' poem "Peripou tetragono" ("Almost a square"): "He had no arguments and yet he always insisted on the same position. / He sketched with chalk a square on the floor [...]" (Ritsos 1982: 134, translation mine).
53. In the English translation: faultless logic (323).
54. I am here applying the terms to any kind of statement, although they are meant to refer to categorical propositions only (e.g. "All men are clever"). I believe that the catachresis is justified insofar as the entire narrative-apology itself (or most of it) hides behind logical propositions. What interests me mostly in this analogy is the relationship between ideology and logic.
55. For example, when Writer guesses the movements of Velissarios: "he had entered the adjacent storage room, or he was observing me from the dark recess". (16/15-16)

56. See, for example, his reasoning behind suggesting the lottery for the members of the execution squad. If his lot is chosen (six), it could be read as both six and nine; however, if nine has already been chosen then it would necessarily come out as a six.
57. As, for instance, the headquarters' message "+a+o Horio" which could be either Kato Horio or Pano Horio. (177/167)
58. The Greek equivalent (επιδιόρθωσης) uses the formula "ή μάλλον".
59. See *Ad Herenium* 36, where [Cicero] explains that the figure is meant to produce an impression upon the listener by rendering the content of the amendment more striking.
60. See, for example, "I would still have been preoccupied –or rather, tormented" (15 in both); "Supreme Headquarters had selected us [...] for a big, or rather a decisively significant mission" (49/48); "the operation would be terribly difficult, or rather, terribly dangerous" (50/49), etc.
61. The trope is more pronounced in the Greek: "δεν χρειαζόταν μεγάλη νοημοσύνη για να υποπτευτεί κανείς πως ο μικρός εκείνος φάκελος δεν περιείχε στρατιωτικές διαταγές, αλλά ένα μήνυμα κομματικό, ή μάλλον, για να λέμε τα πράγματα με το όνομά τους, αντιφραξιονιστικό".
62. See, for example, Raftopoulos (1996: 287-289).
63. See the passage on Christophoros' three circles-ellipses (324-5/306-307).
64. In this respect, Ritsos comment to Alexandrou is particularly interesting: "Θαρρώ πως με το χέρι σου (κι όχι με το διαβήτη) έσυρες τους τρεις πιο ακριβείς κύκλους-ελλείψεις σε αιώνια κίνηση." Ritsos is right, of course, to speak of "eternal movement", yet it is perhaps symptomatic of his reading that he refuses to see the difference between a circle and an ellipse.
65. Cf. Orwell's notion of doublethink: "To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them; to use logic against logic [...]" (Orwell 1983: 32).
66. In the Greek: "αφήστε με ήσυχο επιτέλους" (356).
67. One could consider Writer's initial insistence of his writing being the best substitute, or rather equivalent to an oral confession in statements such as "οι λέξεις μπαίνανε από μόνες τους στη θέση τους" (11). The choice of where to begin his confession is referred to as a "καθαρώς τεχνικής φύσεως πρόβλημα" (10) and his account of the events as more reliable than that of the log since he is able to provide the necessary context (75). His privileging of the oral, his attempt to intend behind every word, however, naturally collapses partly as a result of his

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

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

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

69. *Thuc.* III.82: *παν ὡς εἰπεῖν το Ἑλληνικόν.*

70. Thucydides uses the word “φιλέταιρος”.

71. *Thuc.* III.82: *καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξιώσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τὴν δικαιοῦσαι.*

72. The same idea is presented by Sotiriou in the depositions of a doctor to the foreign delegation: “Συναχτήκατε ἐδῶ καὶ ρωτᾶτε πῶς ἀρχισε τὸ μακελειό. Δὲν ξέροῦμε τὴ γλώσσα σας νὰ σας ἀποκριθούμε. Καὶ στὴ δική μας γλώσσα ἀναποδογύρισαν οἱ λέξεις καὶ οἱ ἔννοιες. Ξαφνικά μας εἶπαν πῶς προδότης εἶναι κείνος πὺν ἔδωσε τὸ αἷμα τῆς ψυχῆς του γιὰ τὴν Πατρίδα πολεμώντας τὸν ξένο κατακτητή!” (Sotiriou 1985: 71-2) For a discussion of how words lost their literal meaning in the Civil War, especially with reference to reconciliation vs. compromise as well as the different variations of the term civil war and the ideological mechanisms behind them, see Kotaridis and Sideris (Nikolakopoulos, Rigas and Psallidas 2002: 117-119).

73. Alexandrou’s rhetoric would deserve a study of its own. Let me just note the recurrence of the phrase “let us not play with words” (για νὰ μὴν παίζουμε με τὶς λέξεις) pronounced by the Major and adopted by Writer (41, 55, 79, 188, 310), the expression “ἔξω ἀπὸ τὰ δόντια” (91, 179) originally translated as “speaking out” and then as “to speak straight from the shoulder”, also the title of the collection of Alexandrou’s essays. In the same vein, Alexandrou’s brilliant metaphors tend to erase the boundaries between the literal and the figurative: “Ποντᾶριζα σε σίγουρο χαρτί” (30, esp. if one takes into account his calling card), “δὲν ξέρωμε ἀκόμα τι καπνὸ φουμάρει ὁ καθένας μας (μεταφορικῶς βεβαίως, γιὰτὶ εἶχαμε ἀρχίσει «να πλουτίζουμε τὸν Παπαστράτο» (221), “ἐκθέτοντας τὸ «ἐπισκεπτήριό» μου στὸν κίνδυνο νὰ γίνει καπνός” (234, since the calling card is a cigarette paper), etc.

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

- 201, 206, 208, as well as variations: *που λέει ο λόγος* (155), *γενικώς ειπείν* (140), *θέλω να πω* (161), *σχήμα λόγου* (309).
75. This is Socrates' claim in his apology (*Ap.* 18d.6-7: *ἀλλ' ἀνάγκη ἀτέχνως ὥσπερ σκιαμαχεῖν ἀπολογούμενον τε καὶ ἐλέγχειν μηδενὸς ἀποκρινομένον*).
76. *Ap.* 17b.9: *κεκαλλιεπημένους λόγους*.
77. *Ap.* 38e.5-39: *οὔτε γὰρ ἐν δίκῃ οὐτ' ἐν πολέμῳ οὐτ' ἐμὲ οὐτ' ἄλλον οὐδένα δεῖ τοῦτο μηχανάσθαι, ὅπως ἀποφεύξεται παν ποιῶν θάνατον*.
78. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the discourse of madness, it is worth noticing Writer's direct and indirect references to the story of Vellerephontis.
79. Blanchot 1992: 45. Cf. Alexandrou's poem, "Advice to an AWOL": "There are ways to evade your prosecution / especially if you have something akin to melancholy / and if –bingo!– you write absurd verse e.g. / "That's why soldiers have eyes, in order to see" / or "Mister-Sergeant I suffer from daltonism: In every target I see I recognize my heart" (translation mine).
80. As Liana Theodoratou points out, silence is a dominant motif in post-war Greek poetry that echoes the Civil War trauma, especially in the works of Manolis Anagnostakis, Takis Sinopoulos, Titos Patrikios and Aris Alexandrou (Nikolakopoulos, Rigos and Psallidas 2002: 287-300).
81. See Vardoulakis' analysis of the play *Silence* and the criticism it receives in the context of "autarchic utopia" (2009: 415-6).
82. Suicide could also be viewed as a form of martyrdom, namely that of the Christian saints. This discourse of martyrdom appears often in accounts of communists who give their lives for their ideology. See, for example, the statement of the Archbishop of Athens, Spyridon Vlachos: "Ἐχω συγκλονισθεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ ηθικοῦ μεγαλείου τοῦ Μπελογιάννη. Το θεωρῶ ἀνώτερο καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων Χριστιανῶν, γιατί ο Μπελογιάννης δεν πιστεύει ὅτι ὑπάρχει μέλλουσα ζωή..." (quoted in Vournas 2007: 565) which echoes Beloyannis' own speech in court as presented by Sotiriou (1985: 257).

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