

Original Paper

Animalistic Attributes to Humans in the Greek Post-war Prose: From Realism to Modernism

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Abstract

This article analyzes the reasons, the means and the potential of using animalistic characteristics in the description of humans in Greek post-war prose (G.P-W.P.). It deploys several seminal works of the Greek writers Nikos Kasdaglis, Alexandros Kotzias and Spyros Plaskovitis using specific criteria for their selection. The analysis of the works reveals that the animalistic motif is used to show the dehumanization of humans, caused by the extreme social conditions during World War II and the post-war era, which marked this generation of writers, and its allegorical dimension.

Keywords

Greek post-war prose, humanbeast, animality, darwinianism

1. Introduction: Post-war Prose and Historic Reality

Undoubtedly, World War II initiated sweeping changes for human consciousness by establishing a new social and cultural equilibrium. The imprint of war as a traumatic occurrence questioned the structure of cultural systems and provided new scope to the concept of the natural world as literary material (Benoit-Dusausoy & Fontaine, 1999). As a consequence, Greek post-war prose (G.P-W.P.), especially of the first post-war generation, established a thematic and morphological turning point in Modern Greek literature. Influenced by the experience of German Occupation and the ensuing Civil War, authors pursued the renewal of prose-writing, considering their duty to depict -in aesthetic terms- the situations that had transformed post-war individuals, Argyriou (1997) postulates.

It is clear that, when we refer to post-war writers, there is a strict terminus post quem, namely the war of the 1940s, while the 1967 military coup defines the terminal year for the appearance of post-war authors. This observation is crucial for understanding the G.P-W.P., given that the term itself manifests

an immediate relation to historic reality. The literary mythology of post-war prose writers is built around the axis of the violence and brutality the war inflicted on average people (Karvelis, 1996).

Although the initial connective element was neither a common identity nor a common vision, but only an aesthetic opposition to the Mid-war generation, gradually, the way representatives of G.P-W.P. confronted historic events during the 1950s reveals the formation of a common literary consciousness (Hatzivasiliou, 1997). In more detail, according to Argyriou (1997), the G.P-W.P. is admittedly divided into two post-war generations: the first comprises all writers molded by experiencing the German Occupation, while in the second we classify writers who appear after the 1960s, detain weaker memories of the Occupation and the Civil War, and focus their interest in particular aspects of the Greek society. On the contrary, most writers of the first generation, having actively participated in the traumatic events, preserve an intense social interest in their work, imbued by both the deterministic conventions of earlier prose as well as the modernist narrative probes of their contemporary western fiction writers, as Milionis (1991) comments.

Needless to say, the transformation of historic reality to literary material becomes the thematic axis of post-war writing (Magliveras, 1996). Post-war prose writers meticulously studied the western and the Greek literature in relation to all manners of rendering social experience, and thus succeeded in modernizing the artistic tools of various trends. As a result, they formulated an intricate and extended range of narrative methods which would serve their personal objectives and their needs of expression. Some, like A. Kotzias (Α. Κοτζιάς) combined the photo-realistic depiction with the psychological narrative. Others, like N. Kasdaglis (Ν. Κάσδαγλης), connected multiple-focus narrative with a parallel attempt to objectify reality, or, in the case of S. Plaskovitis (Σ. Πλασκοβίτης), a mixture of realistic description with symbolic undertones, thus verging on expressionism and indirectly constructing the allegoric impression of a morbid social whole.

In this way, the effort to describe the gloominess of human nature and a fractured contemporaneity, led them to re-evaluate literary trends and writers who had previously dealt with relevant issues, Politou-Marmarinou notices. This explicit or subdued dialectics is based principally on the intention of G.P-W.P. to illustrate the reality of their time, and secondly on the fact that the naturalistic Darwinian view of life proved suitable to the trauma of Greek society at that period. Generally, this latent focus to a kind of literature reminiscent of the 19th century was observed throughout Europe. For example, the insistence on violence, is clearly a considerable heritage of the naturalism we find in literary works dating before and after World War II. The works of Maupassant, Flaubert and Zola had depicted the absurdity of human fate and the inevitable force of instincts, a view that had survived also in the works of the *decadence* and in the modernistic fiction (Martino, 2005).

2. Literature Review

As the article explores the impact of historical events and changing social conditions on European

post-war prose, focusing on the Greek paradigm, the narrative innovations of the G.P-W.P writers regarding reflect an interaction with literary generations from the past and -at the same time- a tendency of modernization of their standards.

With reference to the study of historical conditions, this study employs the historical evaluation of the era by Giannouloupoulos (1992), in his study *The post-war world, Greek and European history (1945-1963)*. The relation of these historical events with European literary production, are analyzed in Benoit-Dusausoys & Fontaine's (1999) publication, *European Letters. History of European Literature*, which still remains an important work and is used in this study.

Concerning the impact of historical events on Greek literary production, the research draws on the works of the Scientific Symposium (1997) *Historic Reality and Modern Greek Prose (1945-1995)* and particularly the articles of Argyriou & Chadzivasiliou. Other important works studied in order to collect data for the research objectives of the article are: a) the encyclopedia of Sokolis Editions, Vol. I (1996) on post-war prose, b) the studies of Paganos, *Modern Greek Prose: Theory and Practice* (2002) and *Quests in Contemporary Literature: Literary Studies* (1984), c) Sahinis's, *Mid-war and post-war prose writers* (1985) and d) Milionis', *With Ariadne's thread., Post-war prose text interpretation* (1991). The essays and reviews of the writers themselves, such as the book by Plaskovitis's (1986), *The prose of morality and other essays*, highlight the dialogue of Greek writers with European and Western literature in general.

In relation to the convergences and divergences of the post-war period from other literary periods (e.g., with the realism of the 19th century), regarding the depiction of violence, the article takes into consideration the conclusions of Mitterand's (1986) *Zola et le naturalism* and Michaels's (1987) *The golden standard and the logic of naturalism. American literature at the turn of the century*, compared to the views of Ziras, in "Violence: mother and midwife of everything" (2007).

Finally, the research is organized by drawing on examples from specific works of the three aforementioned prose writers that function as indicators: a) short stories and novels by Kasdaglis b) short stories and novels by Kotzias and c) short stories and novels by Plaskovitis.

3. Methodology

The research aims at the aesthetic and ideological function of animalistic descriptions of humans in post-war prose, in order to study the ways in which their allegorical rendering echoes historical experience and their post-war stances towards the renewal of literary form. For this purpose, the article studied the issues under consideration by formulating indicators of analysis of the specific literary pattern. The works of G.P-W.P. were selected under specific criteria, which are as follows: a) the works should belong to writers of the first post-war generation which fall in the category of Neorealism by the relevant literature, b) references to animals and animalistic traits should signify specific human behaviors and produce allegorical implications c) the way in which humans and animals are related

should combine elements of realism and modernism. Next, selected excerpts were analyzed in terms of qualitative research and a text-centered approach. The aim is not only to show the rendering of animalistic characteristics in these writers' prose, but also to highlight individual dimensions of the use of descriptions as a means of producing meaning in the literary texts. Finally, the ultimate goal is to reach conclusions or generalizations about the role of animalistic attributes by the writers of this period. Within this frame, the photographic and connotative description of animals and their instincts, as a tool of illustrating extreme experiences of the Greek society, will constitute a clear example of morphological and thematic synthesis between what is new and what is old in post-war writing. Consequently, the depiction of man's animalistic nature and the correlation of fictional personages with specific animals, formulate a wide network of semantic interpretation in the G.P-W.P. works, which alludes to a deterministic world- view, but also to the fragmentation of the subject, that we find in modernism.

4. Discussion-Analysis

4.1 Human Behavior and Animalistic Instincts in G.P-W.P.

Generally, the G.P-W.P. writers persist in the demonstration of moral decadence, a point which in the 50s developed into a major characteristic. Under this prism, writers created a new form of humanism, which Plaskovitis termed "The prose of morality" in his homonymous essay. Hence, the orientations in Greek post-war novels were primarily demonstrated by the foreign authors who had modernized naturalism, like Hemingway, Steinbeck and Faulkner, as they were the first to update the dilemma of nature versus society and explored new circumstances in which human beings might unleash their destructive instinct. In both classical realism and neorealism according to Martino (2005), the antihero becomes a semantic indicator of the relationship between society and the individuals in G.P-W.P., because in these works a thorough rupture between the characters on the one hand and their social surroundings on the other, takes place. Martino analyzes that writers had studied the ways through which social experience was represented in previous prose works and felt intensely familiar to the allegoric dimensions of rendering man's deterministic imaging in the European and domestic naturalistic worldview.

Indeed, as we bear in mind the distinctive semantics of symbolism and allegory introduced by De Man (1983), who defined symbol as a substitution of a single specific feature, while allegory is more widely open to function as a multifaceted metaphor, the G.P-W.P. writers, just like their French and American mentors, make use of both options. That is to say, modernism did not invent the symbolic and allegoric wanderings of individuals in a stagnated world, as this element had been bequeathed by the naturalistic focus on crudity and violence. For example, it would be enough to remember Maupassant's almost expressionistic descriptions of ill-treated animals and humans, in short stories like the "Wolf" or the "Madman", which insist on a realistic view of man's brutalization, thus forming a generalized metaphor

on human nature.

Accordingly, G.P-W.P. writers, far from imitating the notion of the humanbeast of the Zoladian writing, they assimilated it and combined it with the multiple fragmentation of the subject in modernist novels, thus emphasizing the function of allegory as a broader metaphorical connotation. In their works, Kalokyri (1999) observes the same method of organizing a plot that underlines the overwhelming power of instincts as a factor of shaping human destiny. Adhering to the patterns of literary Darwinism, in the works of this period, man constantly appears as a plaything or as an animal, whose fate is predestined either by instincts or by social influences (Georganta, 2002).

Generally, the antiheroes of G.P-W.P., like Menios in *Αντιποίηση αρχής* (*Counterfeit of Authority*) by Kotzias, are presented like pariahs, motivated solely by their instincts, without any sign of inhibition, Paganos (2002) comments in his seminal work *The Modern Hellenic Prose: Theory and practice*. To succeed in making this simulation of man to a beast, writers employ various techniques. Reference to animals provides a useful tool manifesting a gloomy reality and, simultaneously, it functions as a semantic indicator of the author's ideological intention and aesthetic expression. Following Hamon, it is possible that these works lure the reader to bestow a specific signification on a certain character, particularly because in our collective unconscious, serpents, lions or foxes have been identified with specific human qualities, implicitly recalled by the narrator, without betraying any intervention on his/her part. In this case, of course, we refer to a sense of substitution and a symbolic dimension. For example, a serpent denotes malicious motives, thus placing the adversary hero in the role of a victim, although the offender is not openly condemned, given that, in the social jungle, any kind of enforcement may be justified.

In this way, we divide characters into the submissive/weak ones who are likened to dogs, and the offenders, who remind us of wolves, foxes or hyenas. In particular, one may remember the obedience of the paramilitary group members to the violent Minas, like dogs to their master. Sexual appeal is also depicted in terms of animal correlation, as erotic desire is an urge of life that man has not been able to civilize. A sexually active male whom the female submits to, is usually likened to a predator, like Kostas in *Εγώ εμί Κύριος ο Θεός σου* (*I am thy Lord and Master*) by Kasdaglis. Respectively, an attractive, hypersexual woman looks like an animal, awaking in men the irresistible animalistic instincts of their nature, like Myrra -with her symbolic name meaning destiny in Greek- in *Τα δόντια της μολόπετρας* (*The grinders of the Millstone*).

These references may be neutral in meaning, symbolically obscure or almost metaphysical, leading the readers' understanding to a generalized allegoric designation of an inhuman reality. As a result, in G.P-W.P. the individual, far from being emotional and romantic, as in mid-war novels, is degraded to an animal. Victims are not necessarily moral and virtuous, but simply the weak links of the evolutionary chain that break under pressure (Galaios, 2011).

In other cases, the description of the relationship between man and animal is created obliquely through associations, as in the case of orphan children wandering in “Το αλύχτημα του σκύλου” (“The dog’s howl”) by Plaskovitis. Post-war writers place wild or domesticated animals in their works, so that the reader can identify the common instincts that man shares with them, while in some cases, as in Plaskovitis “Nature morte” the animals are maltreated by people, so that man will be regarded in an even sullier state of brutality. Simultaneously, the allegoric aspect is strengthened by exploiting the animal motif as a means of biologizing social life. Machines, the society or the sea are metaphorically presented as predators, thus picturing a demonized organic aspect of nature and society, that destroys people with ferocious indifference. Hence, the main organizing process is usually characterized by the following transitional procedure: a) a transfer from the real to the specific-symbolic and b) from the symbolic to a generalized metaphor/allegory of a savage reality.

As a result, the fragments from the work of the three authors being examined in this article –Kasdaglis, Kotzias and Plaskovitis—can serve as an indicative guide of the modes through which men and animals are correlated in post-war works, especially of the first generation. The aim is not only to categorize motifs according to themes, but also to comprehend the degree of debt, as well as the redefinition in the literary prosaic tradition by the G.P.P., via which these later authors shaped an idiosyncratic, aesthetic universe, more suited to the own pursuits and experiences.

4.2 Men and Animals in G.P.-W.P.: The Instinct of Violence and Social Determinism

Darwinian superiority in the literary version of G.P.-W.P. is connected with man’s struggle to survive in obnoxious circumstances and rise socially in extremely competitive surroundings, so as to satisfy appetites primarily related to the basic urge of living such as hunger, thirst and sexual urge (Mitterand, 1986).

In this sense, any kind of superiority is considered a merit, as far as we refer to individuals whose main target is the satisfaction of egoistic needs, while moral inhibition in such a materialistic world becomes the cause of misery. For this reason, the structure of first-generation writers’ works is often built on antitheses, like: *powerful vs. weak, young vs. old, rich vs. poor, woman vs. man, able to survive vs. unable to survive*. Power is distinguished in two forms, biological and social, which constitute two different fields of superiority often entangled and conflicting.

Post-war heroes are characterized by their need to dominate at all costs and are ready to exert any kind of violence in order to succeed. Animal references in the works of Kasdaglis, Kotzias and Plaskovitis assimilate behavioral elements of the heroes with the impetus and instinctive reaction of beasts, while similes or subterranean allegoric correlations of natural phenomena and social conditions to a particular animal attain the clarity that we find in the 1880 generation and in foreign originals. Muscular strength, sexual lust, hunger and the struggle for survival are expressed by connection to a certain animal or by the use of predicates such as “wild beast”, “beast”, “animal”.

For example, extreme manifestations of violence and struggle for survival of the heroes in Kasdaglis *Σπιλιάδες (Squalls)*, often resort to the adjunct of an animal in order to delineate the gloominess of instincts, which are reinforced by excruciating living conditions. The malicious Giangos is murdered by his ex-lover's husband, who "slays him like a goat" (61), when the latter is fatally wounded and creeping like a hurt animal. In another of his short stories, "Το θολάμι" ("The octopus's den"), the fugitive is hunted like an animal, commits murder and is finally killed. As the narrator delves into the hero's mind: "he thought that he looked like a wounded wild animal creeping to its den to die there" (218). Throughout the work, he appears both as a predator and a "chased rabbit" (205), ready to kill anyone who might hinder or threaten him.

The application of a similar technique can be traced in Kotzias, in whose texts violent heroes confronted with extreme conditions abound. During the 30-year war, about which Kotzias is writing, the Greek society has relinquished any sense of justice and has regressed to the moral code of the jungle. This is the point of reference in *Ο Γενναίος Τηλέμαχος (Brave Telemachus)*, when he alludes to the "world of the tiger". It is this image of an arena that the world of *Ιαγούαρος (Jaguar)* and Dēmētra's thoughts refer to. In his *Πολιορκία (Siege)* as well, we come across a pitiless dismembering of the parrot by the maid, seeking to revenge her boss. Here, the young girl is not simply killing an animal, but punishing its powerful owner, whom she could not defeat.

Both Kasdaglis and Kotzias exploit the connection between man and animal intergraded to the antithesis of *strength* vs. *weakness*. In *Πολιορκία (Siege)*, Mēnas pitilessly beats the captured partisan, labeling him as "thrush" and "small lizard" to accentuate his fragility in front of his own forcefulness. The description of the young man's beating exceeds the limits of warfare rivalry and verges on the struggle of a carnivore with its prey: "He's but a thrush, with a tiny little face like a lizard [...] Crossing his arms in front of him and biting his lips to stand the pain from the wound." (138-139). The paramilitary group members are characterized by a violent mob behavior and often predicated as beasts. Blind obedience to Mēnas is likened to the devotion and obedience of a dog to its master (ibid 314). In the text, the cruelty of the leader is accentuated: "he wastes people like goats" (ibid 193). His beastly aggression and physical robustness are the only causes that make the rest of the gang succumb to his command:

"[...] with an unbelievable force he scattered them all around. He snatched two of them by the neck and twisted their throats. [...] He brought their heads together and crushed them in a rage. Their cheeks and noses creased" (pp. 88-89).

In *Πολιορκία (Siege)*, as in *Τα δόντια της μολόπετρας (The grinders of the Millstone)*, by Kasdaglis, people are presented through the instinctive moves of an animal and not as conscious beings, thus reaching the border of bestiality. The gloom is magnified by the doctor's opinion: to save oneself, one should be perfectly bestial, that is, a victorious animal, free from any conscious implications. Paradoxically, in this madness, such a piece of advice would function as a cure for the leading character.

As long as he remained brutal, he stood out, but when he “fell ill” of guilt, he became fragile, unable to survive and got killed. Thus, we come across one more version of the deterministic impasse in G.P.-W.P. summed up in the phrase: “whoever lived in blood shall die in blood”, an echo of biblical punishment frequently repeated in the text.

In Kotzias’ *Απόπειρα* (*The venture*) it is similarly pointed out that men and beasts by nature live in herds and obey anyone who is able to prevail. This opinion is also shared by Menios in *Αντιποίηση Αρχής* (*Counterfeit of Authority*), as he considers the students unable to defeat the tough-trained military police. In the same way, the underworld and animal instincts triumph in *Τα παιδιά του Κρόνου* (*Children of Saturn*) tetralogy. All pivotal personages in the four works are simultaneously victimizers and victims of circumstances and of their fellow men. In *Ιαγούαρος* (*Jaguar*), Dēmētra is proved to be the predator of the title, she is an offender, using her left-wing ideology as an alibi, while in *Η Μηχανή* (*The machine*) the pariah Kostas admires his landlord who exploits tenants, calling him “a plucked bird of prey” (18).

In parallel, Plaskovitis, despite avoiding grotesque scenes, he exploits the use of animals in order to enrich the de-humanization of heroes with metaphorical connotations, like Maupassant. As the plot in many of his short stories unfolds in the province, he often places animals in his texts, to display common traits with people and also to illustrate the fierceness of war and poverty. Particularly in “Το γυμνό δέντρο” (“The naked tree”) we envisage the sea as a wild animal lashed by the wind. A respective symbolic dimension is given by alluding to the video player, in the short story of the same title – “Το βίντεο” (“The video player”)—as an animal is threatening to devour the woman and turn her lover to a serpent, a description involving some metaphysical perspective. A similar reference appears in “Nature morte”, where the deadly instincts of the hounds are compared to those of their master. Their eagerness for hunting is a hint at the murderous impulse lurking inside humans.

In addition, the motif of animal abuse, in a lot of his short stories, accounts for an allegoric treatment of human ferociousness. Animal torture by a German soldier in “Κληματόβεργα” (“Vine twig”) denounces human sadism: “He made fun by shooting right and left. Horses, mules and donkeys kicked the air rising on hind legs and stretched their ears, filling the subsided midday air with heart-renting whines” (pp. 24-25).

The climax of this theme is observed in “Ο άνθρωπος και το λιοντάρι” (“Man and the lion”), as the wrestle with the captive predator is both literal and metaphorical. To relieve his own violent oppression by his own tormentors, Billy, the tamer, is training the lion in a sadistic manner. By maltreating animals, he feels empowered, venting his hatred against the human kind which is battling for a precarious survival. In this manner, the author illustrates an allegoric aspect of the conflict between man and beast: “[...] Billy is filled with hatred—such an irrational and sudden hatred [...] Dam you lion! Dam you little men”, he groaned [...] I’ll be holding a burning rod [...] The whole world is a bloody hunger”. (pp. 176-178)

Indeed, the lion's ultimate act of resistance -after so much starvation and torture-but also its inevitable execution by the tamer, actually serves as a symbolism of the latter's helplessness to escape from his own past (172). On the other hand, the description of animal and human sickliness in Plaskovitis' "Κληματόβεργα" ("Vine twig") demonstrates the interaction between men and animals in the gloom of war. Similarly, in his "Αλόχτημα του σκύλου" ("Dog's howl") the children's group is vainly searching for food to avoid starvation, like dogs whining at night, Giannaris (2007) comments. The title itself and the opening scene mark the interrelation of homeless children with the hungry dogs. Unable to oppose the inhumane nature of those in power, who are the actual predators in occupied Athens, the starving children recall stray animals. The very similarity of sounds between human complaint and that of a stray animal, establishes a symbolic connection: "[...] lost at the distant emptiness, the whimper of the skinny dog echoed again. Same as a person lamenting for someone who is dead" (p. 146).

4.3 Sexual Urge as a Motive for Action

Erotic carnality comprizes a basic element in the post-war theme selection, inasmuch as the photographing of unrestrained sexual violence constitutes a means of criticizing moral decadence. For this reason, in post-war works we observe an exclusive fixation to carnal love, while sentimental dimension is absent. Reference to animals often serves as an indication of beastly sensuality within the general framework of a violent world. In these works, sexual need epitomizes the fundamental instinct of life, to which individuals submit, whether they like it or not, while the strongest ones stand better chances to satisfy it.

In G.P-W.P., women are sexually biological creatures witnessed through the eyes of men. The sexual needs of the characters follow the Darwinian model of the animal kingdom, since they portray aggressive males seeking conquest in carnal terms, and pathetic women, not necessarily less lustful. Sexual intercourse is violent, because the sexual instinct appears as a form of hunger, which under certain circumstances becomes an obsession. At the same time, sexually active women, apart from detesting the bond of marriage, also display a dislike for motherhood and are addicted to erotic compulsion, according to Horcajo (2002).

In *Τα δόντια της μωλόπετρας* (*The grinders of the millstone*) by Kasdaglis, the pariah Kosmas enlists to a paramilitary group so as to demand or impose his sexual desires, Paganos explains. Kosmas' love for Myrra is sensual and their intercourse is a tormenting struggle to prevail, much the same as that of Giannēlos and Tzina in his other novel, *Κεκαρμένοι* (*Shaven*). Sahinis and Ziras agree that in both works, the person who can socially or biologically prevail is free to do it with no inhibition. Readers will find a similar example in the "Κουντρασταδόροι" ("Contradictors"), relating the typical humanbeast sexual urge, in the scene of Annetta's rape: "His cranky eyes, big, and glassy, stared at her. She tried hard to turn him on [...] but when she did, he gripped her sharply and violently, like an animal. The girl wriggled [...]" (p. 18).

Additionally, beauty, fertility, youth, wealth or education, are signs of superiority in Kasdaglis' *H Δίψα* (*The thirst*). In this novel we find a long conversation about human and animal sensuality. Male cats are said to be carried away by sexual attraction, while they exhibit murderous tendencies towards their kittens, either to force sexual intercourse with the female or because they are hungry: "[...] keep him as a gift from me. He's a perfect tomcat. [...] There are no worse fathers than tomcats. [...] Men are different only in one thing. A tomcat seeks no justification, when strangling the kittens. He's only hungry" (p. 61, p. 64). Tereza even comments that cats are more innocent than people.

In the same novel Eleni likens herself to a "pregnant bitch", relating her sexual aversion to pregnancy, and to a "hot mare" (99), because of her intense sexual appetite. The persistent efforts of the heroine to have a miscarriage, along with the statement that lack of parental love in nature is a male trait, present Eleni as a woman of male libido, whose lust overcomes any maternal instinct (Michailidis, 2020). According to the obstetrician Giorgos, the comparison is not doing justice to animals, because humans are more beastly. He characteristically claims that: "An animal is more honest than ten unmarried mothers and many married ones. [...] A bitch may strive to feed all her puppies, even if the milk is not enough. [...] Perhaps corruption lies within human nature. I do not know of any corrupt animals" (p. 24).

In Kotzias novels, even though we observe a diminishment of sexual instinct, the same aim perseveres. In *Απόπειρα* (*The Venture*), sexual appetite is sickly and verging to perversion. Periclēs, sexually deprived, is indifferent to Frangiska's feelings, pursuing just a momentary relief of his suppressed passion. Yet, the most interesting case in the work of Kotzias is the beastly erotic obsession of Menios for Voula in *Αντιποίηση αρχής* (*Counterfeit of Authority*). Their destructive relationship is based on his passion for the younger lover, for whom he abandons his family and keeps on bleeding them white, in order to support her. For Voula, on the other hand, he is but an ultimate compromise for her survival, whenever she has no other choice.

The heroes of Plaskovitis, either phony and pariahs, or sensitive and victimized, share a common concern to find solace in erotic pleasure and thus feel alive. However, their strife goes against time, decay and social restrictions. In "Το γυμνό δέντρο" ("Naked tree"), feeble Lazaros cannot accept the rejection by his wife and murders her. The description of dead Fanē's body is aiming at a unification of the corpse with the unfamiliar environment of the sea, which is being likened to a "whipped animal" (p. 68) thus creating a stark impression of determinism, as Papakosta (2009) comments.

Plaskovitis presents animal copulation while connecting humans with animals, in order to emphasize the biological roots of sexual instincts in all organisms. Young Angelina in *Η πόλη* (*The city*) treats her husband as an animal who is tamed by sexual intercourse for which reason, we come across numerous scenes of their violent copulations. In Plaskovitis' works male impetuosity frequently ends up in men getting dependent on women, as in the case of the jeweler in *Το μοντέλο* (*The model*), who looks like "scared dog" (p. 12) in front of the beautiful young girl that he desires. Finally, in *Η κυρία της βιτρίνας*

(*The lady of the shop window*), middle-aged Dinos enjoys the beauty of the young mixed-race woman, who has become an object of desire for all men. In his eyes, she looks like a “beautiful, newly born animal” (111), a phrase that underlines the carnal aspect of their relationship.

5. Conclusions

Modern writing, according to Greek post-war prose writers, was the product of versatile dialectics and not an awkward, irresponsible rejection of the past. In other words, the concept of the humanbeast in French and other prose writings, which brought a transformation of the Darwinian Theory in literature in the shape of an aesthetic doctrine constituting a pessimist assessment of human nature, conformed with the pessimistic post-war world view and was utilized as a symbolism even more emphatic than that of Zola or Maupassant (Michailidis, 2016).

Post-war portraits share common traits with those of prior prose writers, exaggerating their focus on negative characteristics, in a manner that surpasses reality, typifies bestiality and also constructs an element of grotesque, allegoric obscurity and connotative catastrophe which functions in multiple levels of interpretation. At the same moment, these portraits lack no verisimilitude. Writers renewed the dynamics of objective representation mixing modern narrative options of constructing objectivity and proceeded to the psychological introspection of the heroes' thoughts, a fact which enforces the allegoric extent of morbidity.

In this sense, the symbolic manifestation of beastly dehumanized characters serves the narrative by relating them to animal qualities which evoke a specific form of reception by the reader, not only originating from a general observation of nature, but also from their literary signification in myths, proverbs and texts. Post-war prose writers, at a time of urbanization for the Greek society, transferred animalistic instincts, and in particular predatory, within the city and its social experience. The dog, lion, sheep, hyena and jaguar are incorporated as pivotal correlations of interpreting human's connection to animals. On the other hand, realistic and symbolic depictions serve an even deeper deconstruction of life. The presentation of negative characters reinforces the division between villains and victims and raises animalism to the primordial impulse in human nature, connected to egotism and self-interest, as Michaels proposes about American literary naturalism.

The concept of animality stands almost at the borderline of a metaphysical, allegoric entanglement with abhorrence. Human apparently regresses to a level of psychosomatic illness, caused by psychological trauma, that converts him to a sadist who only feels alive by oppressing his fellow men. In the works of G.P-W.P. we can also detect implicit moralizing intensions, implicit in the emphatically expressionist depiction of the humanbeast, yet this does not obliterate the aesthetic wholeness of the texts. The writers construct bleak tableaux of social morbidity and portraits of bestialized individuals whose mind is unable to control their actions or lead them to self-realization. Human appears to be the only one among animals that enjoys being sadistic, while the notion of command is not only a matter of

self-preservation, but also of a perversive annihilation of others.

Consequently, in their attempt to creatively render the murkiness of man bestialized by the war, writers generate a modernized societal novel -or still further- a neo-morality fiction, directly connected with the deterministic weltanschauung as Kotzia sees it. In any case, animals are not a decorative presence in their works, but a part of the semantic organization of textual reality. They are integrated into the urban landscapes with a realistic naturalness brought about by the dehumanization of subjects and impose an allegoric perspective, which renews the narrative tradition of Greek literature.

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