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**Ο Νόμος του Αίματος και η ανεξιθρησκία / μισαλλοδοξία  
στα επιλεγμένα έργα της Ελληνικής και  
της Γεωργιανής λογοτεχνίας**

**(Νίκος Καζαντζάκης – Βάζα-Πσαβέλα,  
τυπολογικοί παραλληλισμοί)**

Ο Νίκος Καζαντζάκης και ο Βάζα Πσαβέλα δείχνουν μέσω λογοτεχνικών έργων ότι η έννοια της τιμής μπορεί να αντιτίθεται στον εαυτό της – π.χ. ο νόμος του αίματος που απαιτεί εκδίκηση αντιτίθεται στην ορκωτή αδελφότητα μεταξύ Χριστιανών και Μουσουλμάνων εχθρών σε μία περίπτωση ή στο έθιμο της φιλοξενίας που υποχρεώνει τον οικοδεσπότη να υπερασπιστεί τον φιλοξενούμενο άλλης θρησκευτικής ταυτότητας στην άλλη περίπτωση.

Οι ερευνητικές μέθοδοι συνίστανται στην ερμηνεία και τη σύγκριση λογοτεχνικών πηγών. Διερευνώ το πολιτισμικό πλαίσιο των λογοτεχνικών έργων υπό εξέταση και ιδιαίτερα τον ιδεολογικό σκοπό κάθε συγγραφέα ή την επίδραση στον αναγνώστη, όταν συμπεριλαμβάνονται νόμος του αίματος και αναπαραστάσεις της θρησκευτικής ανεκτικότητας ή μισαλλοδοξίας στο λογοτεχνικό έργο.

Υποστηρίζω ότι εφόσον και στην ελληνική και τη γεωργιανή κοινωνία η θρησκεία συχνά ταυτίζεται με την εθνότητα, ο ρόλος των συγγραφέων που προάγουν την ελευθερία και ανοχή μπορεί να είναι εξαιρετικά πολύτιμος και σημαντικός για το σχηματισμό ανεκτικών κοινωνιών.

*Key words: Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, Βάζα-Πσαβέλα, Νόμος του αίματος /βεντέτα στην λογοτεχνία*

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## Blood feud and religious (in)tolerance in selected works of Modern Greek and Georgian Literature

(Nikos Kazantzakis – Vazha Pshavela, typological parallels)

A social phenomenon of Vendetta, also known as blood feud or blood vengeance, persisted from antiquity right up until the modern era in some communities. Vendetta was still practiced on the Island of Crete and in the Caucasian highlands in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This paper examines the ways in which the Greek writer from the island of Crete – Nikos Kazantzakis and the Georgian writer from the Caucasian highlands – Vazha-Pshavela have woven theme, motif and the details of vendetta into the fabric of their literary works<sup>1</sup>.

Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *Freedom or Death* (in the original Greek: *Ο Καπετάν Μιχάλης*, UK title: *Freedom and Death*, 1950) and Vazha-Pshavela's epic poem *Host and Guest* (In the original Georgian: *სტუმარ-მასპინძელი*, 1893) provide a challenging case for the exploration of the ideological and aesthetic manipulation of blood feud in modern literary discourse.

Deep structures that had channeled most Cretan and Caucasian social and political disputes into the cultural realm of the vendetta are represented in the literary works under consideration. The literary examples that are discussed in the paper raise the following questions: is vengeance really a healing process? Can justice be achieved by new violent acts? How precise is the information about vendetta as described in Nikos Kazantzakis' and Vazha-Pshavela's works, and what are the implications the blood feud episodes convey? What is the impact of cultural and temporal environments on the tradition? Blood feud is a

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<sup>1</sup> The theme of vendetta was favoured in literature generally and particularly in classical literature – with the most characteristic example *the Oresteia* of Aeschylus. The theme is also relatively popular in modern literature (Gabriel García Márquez – *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Jorge Luis Borges – *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*, Ismail Kadare, *The Castle or The Siege*, etc.). Works of Cretan Literature where vendetta is described or mentioned are: *Erotokritos*, *Erofilis*, *King Rodolinos*, *mandinades* and other folk songs. The works of Modern Greek writers – Nikos Kazantzakis, Pandelis Prevelakis and more contemporary – Ioanna Karystiani (*Koystoumi sto xoma*) and Rea Galanaki (*O aionas ton Labyrinthon*) also reflect the theme of the blood feud.

part of an unofficial set of strict rules, but the unwritten "codes of honour" are themselves subject to change depending on the cultural / individual characteristics of the persons involved or the circumstances.

The research methods consist of interpreting and comparing literary sources. I investigate the synchronic cultural context of the literary works I deal with, particularly each author's ideological purpose and/or the effect on the reader by including descriptions of blood feud in his fictional work.

Vazha-Pshavela (the pen name of Luka Razikashvili, 1861-1915) was a prominent Georgian thinker, poet and writer born in the small village of Chargali in the province of Pshavi located in the Caucasus Mountains. The national epic works of Georgian poetry during the end of the nineteenth century and the revival of poetic epos are connected with his name. Heroism, tragedy and humanity define the literary works of Vazha-Pshavela. In his best epic compositions, Vazha-Pshavela uncovered the problems of interaction between an individual and a society, man and nature, love and duty, rites and personal beliefs. The writer's preferences are for strong-willed people, their dignity and passion for freedom. Vazha-Pshavela's creative work is the center of gravity on which 20th-century Georgian literary processes are based.<sup>2</sup>

Nikos Kazantzakis (Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, 1883-1957) a Greek writer and philosopher was born in Heraklion, on the island of Crete. He is considered today to be the greatest Mediterranean novelist. During the first two-thirds of his career Kazantzakis concentrated on poetry and the theatre – not to mention his philosophical studies, numerous travel books, etc. The novels – the writings of his third period composed from 1941 onward – won him world-wide fame.<sup>3</sup> Peter Bien argues that "Kazantzakis' anti-rationalism was attractive to his readers in post Second World War period because it assured them that a vision of life that included irrationalism could still be positive."<sup>4</sup> Although Kazantzakis left Crete as a young man, he returned to his homeland constantly in his writings.

Vazha-Pshavela dedicated his epic works *Aluda Ketelauroi*, 1888 and *The Host and the Guest*, 1893<sup>5</sup> to the story of a Kist-Khevsur conflict which occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries. Based on religious and cultural difference, both

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<sup>2</sup> კიკნაძე 1989, Ratiani 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Beaton 1996, 161-62.

<sup>4</sup> Bien 1989, 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> ვაჟა-ფშაველა 1960, 353-69 and 454-84.

Caucasian nations – Muslim Kists<sup>6</sup> or Chechens (Northern Caucasian ethnicity) and Christian Khevsurs (Georgian ethnicity) were engaged in fighting. Vazha-Pshavela celebrates and values the heroism of both nations.

Vazha-Pshavela's epic poem *The Host and the Guest*, narrates how a Muslim hero – Joqola, a member of the Kist tribe, offers occasional hospitality to a hunter – a Georgian from the province of Khevsureti. He does not know that his guest is a dreadful enemy of his tribe, however the invitee turns out to be the murderer of his own brother. Even after learning the truth about the identity of his guest, Joqola remains committed to his duties as a host and defend his guest – Zviadauri. While Joqola wished for his death ("he wanted revenge for his brother") his attitude towards Zviadauri remains the same ("he felt sorry when he knew who his guest was"). Joqola opposes the common sense of the society because of his position to protect his guest who, at the same time, is the enemy of his tribe. The society is unwilling to treat an enemy like a guest and blames Joqola for breaking the traditions. Rather than surrender the man who slew so many of his kinsmen – including his own brother – Joqola defends him with drawn dagger and says: "*Today, you see, he is my guest, / Though seas of blood be on his hand, / I am unable to betray him, / I, God's creature, swear by God*"<sup>7</sup>

Joqola stands against his fellow-man, stating that the holy tradition of hospitality is superior to vengeance. He invokes the ancient customary law, shared by Muslim Kists and Christian Georgians alike, according to which a guest is inviolable in the home of the host, who assumes absolute responsibility for the guest's safety.<sup>8</sup>

Two different points of view, two different customs oppose each other. Defended by Joqola but overpowered by the other Muslims, Zviadauri is sacrificed on the grave of his victim in order to serve him in the other world. But he is not sacrificed "properly" – as Zviadauri does not bend his knee and does not recognize the superiority of the victim for whom he is sacrificed. This fact enrages the village folk, but his heroism, which doesn't abandon him even with knife at his throat, wins him respect in the eyes of the reader.

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<sup>6</sup> Named "Kists" in Georgian, they are closely related culturally, linguistically and ethnically to other Nakh-speaking peoples, but their customs and traditions share many similarities also with the eastern Georgian mountaineers. The Kists of Georgia are descendants of Chechens and Ingush (who call themselves collectively "Vainakhs") (Sanikidze 2007, 265. See also Anchabadze 2001, ხანგაშვილი 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Vazha-Pshavela 1981, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Tuite 2008, მოწერელია 1987.

Jqola is expelled from the community. Zviadauri is killed. Soon, Khevsurs hear about their hero's death and come to take his corpse home. Jqola alone fights the approaching Georgians and is killed while fighting with them, defending his homeland and the community that have expelled him. Vazha-Pshavela himself comments at the epilogue of the poem:

*The blood feud, killing in return for the committed murder is custom for all highlanders [of Caucasus – A.Ch.], but killing above one's grave and thus "sacrificing" is a custom of the Muslim Highlanders.... When someone is immolated upon one's grave – if he does not bend, he will not be considered to be sacrificed for the deceased.<sup>9</sup>*

The act of putting Zviadauri to death on the grave of a slain tribesman is intended to compel the dead Georgian's soul to serve the soul of the revenged Kist in the afterlife, but the captive's refusal to show fear as the knife was brought to his throat rendered the sacrifice ineffective. Sacrifice for the deceased is known in the ancient world as well (i.e. Achilles sacrificed horses, dogs and humans on the day of Patroklos's burial). As Rusudan Tsanova cogently remarks, human or animal sacrifice on the grave in Vazha-Pshavela's works must have the same ritual function<sup>10</sup>.

The necessity to fulfil established religious or communal rites is opposed by the main hero of the epic poem. Moral conflicts and ethical problems connected with the tolerance (or intolerance) are put forward – the hero starts to doubt the moral of his fellow villagers and community. But the members of the community who dare to think differently are outcast, cut off by the community which sacrifices them. It must also be emphasized that the main hero of the poem who stands against the rite of vendetta and defends his guest is Muslim, a group considered to be a foe by the writer's contemporary Georgian society. Vazha-Pshavela is not concerned with the identity of the person who takes the right step – be it Georgian, Christian Aluda, or Muslim Jqola, of the tribe of Kisti. The major point that he stresses concerns the way a human must behave. These heroes are left in solitude without the support and understanding of their countrymen, but the readers do favour them – which speaks for the writer's victory.<sup>11</sup>

Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *Freedom or Death* was based on the Cretan revolts against Turkish rule. As a child, Kazantzakis himself had lived through the unsuccessful rebellion of 1889. Initially published with the title: *O Kapetan*

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<sup>9</sup> ვაჟა-ფშაველა 1960, 484.

<sup>10</sup> ცანავა 2005, 365.

<sup>11</sup> ცანავა 2005, 366.

*Michales*, the second edition to the novel published in Greek in 1955 in Athens added the subtitle – *Freedom or Death*. This was the preferred English title and represents a translation of the national motto of Greece: *Ελευθερία ή θάνατος* (*Eleutheria ē thanatos*) – leitmotif of the whole novel.

Roderick Beaton elaborates that the main idea promoted by *Kapetan Michales* is not predominantly the rebellion fights by Cretans, where the hero gives his life at the end, but mostly the absolute devotion to any ideal that inspires heroism and self-sacrifice beyond the human measures.<sup>12</sup>

In Nikos Kazantzakis' literary works one comes across murders committed for the purpose of revenge. In the case of Crete, the main characteristics of feud can be summarised as follows: In the commission of a crime, the local acceptance is of a collective rather than a personal responsibility which stems from a commonly adopted ideology that people having the same surname 'share the same blood' (έχουν το ίδιο αίμα).<sup>13</sup>

Among the episodes of blood feud described in the novel *Freedom or Death* is the cycle of murders as a result of vendetta between two well-known families. One is the Christian Family of Captain Sifakas (Σήφακας), father of the protagonist of the novel. The other is the Muslim family of Bey Hani Ali (Χανιάλη), father of Nuri. The perception of honor and inevitability of revenge is vivid for Christians as well as for Muslims.

Nuri Bey, as first son of the killed Hani Ali, is obliged to revenge his father in order to wash out the shame of the family. Despite the fact that the guilty person from the feuding family – Kostaros (Κωσταρός) had died in the battle, the rite of vendetta requires another member of his family to be condemned to death. According to the unwritten rite of vendetta, Nuri Bey had to take revenge on a close relative of the offender. Such were the son of the deceased offender – Kosmas and the offender's brothers Michales and Manousakas. According to the unwritten rules, revenge could not be taken on Kosmas because he was underage. Furthermore, Captain Michales was the childhood friend of Nuri Bey. As small children they had played together in their village and one afternoon, when they were already grown men and met, both of them on horseback, conflicting feelings overwhelm them both. Captain Michales is not certain in his feelings toward Nuri:

*...Captain Michales would look at the clear, lovable face of Nuri Bey and his heart would rejoice, and he did not know what to think. Should he kill him or*

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<sup>12</sup> Beaton 1996, 314-15.

<sup>13</sup> Tsantiropoulos 2008.

*no— ought he to embrace him as an old friend, well-met? ...Did he hate this Turkish fellow here beside him, or was he fond of him? Was he disgusted by him? He had often asked himself the question, and could come to no conclusion.*<sup>14</sup>

At the same time Nuri Bey is thinking about his father's blood that cries out for revenge. Nevertheless:

*Nuri Bey's... glance had rested on the Greek at his side, and his eyes were filled with that heroic figure. "What a man!" he thought, "what pride and what courage! He never says a superfluous word, he never boasts. He doesn't quarrel with those beneath him. He knows no fraud. He has no respect even for death. Happy the man who has such an enemy."*<sup>15</sup>

After a torturing inner struggle, Nuri Bey at first offers Michales to kill each other, but shortly after proposes to become sworn brothers. This fact shows acknowledgement of the esteem from the enemy. Kazantzakis refers to the feelings that overwhelm Captain Michales at the thought of becoming blood brothers with Nuri Bey:

*A strange agitation had taken possession of him. Perhaps it was pleasure, at the thought of mingling blood with this young Bey, brought up amid the scent of musk, of no longer being obliged to kill him... The man was splendid, even if he was a Turk. The pride of Megalokastro, and nothing false about him. He was kindly, generous, noble, a man through and through. Curse him!*<sup>16</sup>

Captain Michales chooses the last option and they became blood brothers thus putting forward a rite of brotherhood in order to contradict the other one – revenge.

Strained relationships between Greeks and Turks become worse. Greeks are rebelling and the bravest dare to insult Turks in public. Among them –

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<sup>14</sup> English translation from: Kazantzakis 1966, 26. In original: ...Ο καπετάν Μιχάλης έβλεπε το αφράτο πρόσχαρο πρόσωπο του Νουρήμπεη, η καρδιά του αναφούμαζε και δεν κάτεχε – να τον σκοτώσει, για μπάς και ήθελε ν'αγκαλιαστούν σα δυό παλιοί φίλοι που σμίγουν; ... Μισούσε, αγαπούσε, σιχαίνονταν τον Τουρκαλά ετούτον δίπλα του; Πολλές φορές το αναρωτήθηκε, δεν μπορούσε να βγάλει κρίση (Καζαντζάκης 1953, 30).

<sup>15</sup> English translation from: Kazantzakis 1966, 27. In the original: Ο Νουρήμπεης... γυρισμένος όπως ήταν, κοίταζε πλάι του το Ρωμιό και τα μάτια του γέμισαν παλικάρι. "Τι άντρας, συλλογιζόταν, τι περιφάνια, τι λεβεντιά! Δε λέει ποτέ λόγο περίσσιο, δεν είναι μπαμπέσης. Δεν προσκυνάει μήτε το Χάρο... Χαρά στον άνθρωπο που 'χει τέτοιο οχτρό." (Καζαντζάκης 1953, 31).

<sup>16</sup> English translation from: Kazantzakis 1966, 27. In the original: ...Παράξενη ταραχή τον είχε κυριέψει, μπορεί και χαρά, να σμίξει με το μοσκαναθρεμμένο τούτο μπεγλόπουλο το αίμα του, να μην μπορεί πια να τον σκοτώσει... Ένα καμάρι ήταν κι ο άντρας αυτός, κι ας ήταν Τούρκος, ένα καμάρι ήταν του Μεγάλου Κάστρου, ψεγάδι δεν τού βρισκε – ντόμπρος ήταν, χουβαρντάς, όμορφος, καλόκαρδος, άντρας με τα όλα του, ανάθεμά τον! » (Καζαντζάκης 1953, 31).

Manousakas and Michales. The unpaid blood debt tortures Nuri Bey – who, not being able to take vengeance on his blood brother, chooses Michales' brother Manousakas for revenge. Defeating his rival in single combat, Nuri Bey is nearly killed himself without hope to return to his normal health. The inevitability of the blood feud is stressed in the episode of Manusakas' burial, where Captain Michales tells the soul of the deceased not to appear to him in the dreams calling for vengeance as he [Michales] knows his duty:

*Farewell, brother Manúsakas... Listen to what I am saying to you. Don't come into my sleep to accuse me and make me wild. I know my duty. Have no anxiety.*<sup>17</sup>

The notion of vengeance and its importance is introduced in Kazantzakis's novel via the inner dialogues and dreams, mainly of Nuri Bey, whose deceased father appears to him in his dreams demanding the blood to be paid so that his soul could rest in peace. Manousakas also appears in the dreams to his son Thodores (Θοδωρής) complaining for the unpaid revenge.

According to the generally accepted codes of honour in the feuding society – the underaged are excluded from the vengeance cycle. Correspondingly, it is clear from the novel that the underaged are not subject to the blood feud: Michales tells his nephew to "stay in his nest", but Thodores is not willing to wait and takes revenge on Nuri's nephew – Hussein, a young Turkish palikare – whom he considered his match.<sup>18</sup>

In an episode loaded with emotion, Michales visits his blood brother to see him and to decide whether to take revenge or not. Kazantzakis shows understanding of the tragedy of the feuding society in the character of Nuri bey who commits suicide after Captain Michales, seeing Nuris Bey's misfortune, chooses not to take vengeance on him.

The literary works of the two abovementioned Greek and Georgian writers are rich in interesting findings and interpretations, which serve as a retrospective presentation on the codes of honour.

### **The historical and cultural context – some parallels**

Being written at a time distance of almost 60 years, both literary works reflect the society of the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century in the native province of each

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<sup>17</sup> English translation from: Kazantzakis 1966, 213. In the original: *Αιντε στο καλό αδερφέ Μανούσακα... κι άκου αυτό που θα σου πω: μην έρχεσαι στον ύπνο μου να μου παραπονιέσαι και να μου αγριεύεις, κατέχω εγώ το χρέος μου, κι έγνια σου.* (Καζαντζάκης 1953, 220).

<sup>18</sup> Καζαντζάκης 1953, 220.



author. Nikos Kazantzakis' novel is set in his native island, Crete, during the Turkish occupation. The plot is mainly set in the village Megalokastro and its neighbouring villages and mountains. While Vazha-Pshavela's epic poem is set in the Caucasian highlands, the main plot is not set in his native Christain village, but instead in the rival Muslim village of Kisti (or Chechen people).

In Kazantzakis' novel the feuding Christians and Muslims, Greeks and Turks live in the same village.<sup>19</sup> While in Vazha-Pshavela's epic the feuding Christians and Muslims, who are Georgians and Kists, live in different villages.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the fact that at the end of the nineteenth century Georgia was under Russian rule, Russian troops had never conquered the Georgian highlands.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the main foes for Georgian highlanders of Pshav-Khevsureti in this period, historically as well as in the literary work under discussion, are Muslim Kists living in the Caucasian highlands.

In the highlands of the Caucasus described by Vazha-Pshavela, each valley-side or gorge (kheoba) existed as a community (temi) and was virtually independent of the feudal state in the lower valleys of Georgia. It was governed by an assembly of adult males who choose a "Khevisberi", an elder of the gorge to be their colonel/ captain/chieftain, their chief and their priest. The autonomy of the Pshavi and Khevsureti was waived only in national crises when they would descend to fight Georgia's foes.<sup>22</sup>

The main historical difference is Crete being under Ottoman Rule and fighting for the independence in one case and Georgian highlanders fighting on a day-to day basis with the neighboring Muslim tribes/villages of the North Caucasus in the other.

Despite the fact, that religious tolerance or intolerance is not straightforwardly mentioned in either of the literary works under consideration, the

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<sup>19</sup> But more generally, Turks control mainly the towns, while the Christians control countryside, especially the mountainous regions (see Bien 1989, 50).

<sup>20</sup> Tuite (1996, 9-10) notes remarkably: "In general, the more one studies the historical and ethnographic literature concerning the peoples of the Caucasus, the more evident it becomes that these people were not nearly as isolated from and hostile toward each other as one might suppose in a region of rugged terrain and continual warfare. All Caucasian ethnic groups practiced some form or forms of artificial kinship – sworn brother – and sisterhood, milk siblinghood, fictive adoption – which served to forge ties across clan and ethnic boundaries that were every bit as solid as blood relationship."

<sup>21</sup> for Details see: სჭანდუგ 2005, Lang 1962, Suny 2005. Georgian dissatisfaction with Tsarist autocracy led to the development of a national movement (Jones 2005, 8), and revolts but those are not the subject of Vazha-Pshavela's particular work.

<sup>22</sup> See Rayfield, in Vazha-Pshavela 1981, 12.

opposing parties in both literary works are Muslims and Christians hating each other on several different reasons. The reader witnesses the harsh hatred of the opposing religion and its believers by the main heroes, as well as by the whole society of both religions. On the other hand, the respect toward the distinguished heroic person of the opposing religion, allows and permits the protagonist to feel not only acceptance and tolerance but also admiration toward the person of the other religion. Nevertheless, the objective and permissive attitude toward those whose beliefs and ethnic origin differ from their own lasts only for a while, while the rite of blood feud makes its own way forth. It has to be mentioned, that religious tolerance cannot be considered in any way as a characteristic feature of the societies described in the literary works and is represented only through rare cases of individual forbearance. In the case of Greek author, the occupation of the island of Crete by Muslim Turks and Greeks' fights for freedom play crucial role in the formation of attitude toward the "other".

The main idea of Kazantzakis' novel is the revolt, debt or commitments before the family and the nation in order to free Crete from Turks, while the conflict between the individual and the society is put forward as the main idea by the Georgian writer.

Parallels between the two authors' lives and the language they use in their writings show similarities as well as differences: for example, both studied law. Vazha-Pshavela had to abandon his studies in St. Petersburg and to return to Georgia because of material difficulties, while Kazantzakis had the opportunity to pursue graduate studies. Kazantzakis spent many years in public service, by contrast Vazha-Pshavela had to work as a peasant in order to make his living.

Kazantzakis wrote in colloquial Demotic Greek, with traces of Cretan dialect. The writer uses explicit Cretan Greek words and the Cretan idiom in a way that preserves it untouched. Vazha-Pshavela also wrote in an idiom of Georgian language spoken in his native province Pshavi. Creating masterpieces in the dialect of the native island/highlands made the writings of both authors controversial in conservative literary circles at home.<sup>23</sup> Both had travelled to remote villages in order to collect folk heritage, words and expressions afraid that they might be lost unless they had preserved and placed them in the literary works. Nature, in both writers' literary heritage, is always alive and the language transfers animate powers to

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<sup>23</sup> For more detailed information about Vazha-Pshavela's and Nikos Kazantzakis' language see: Τσοπανάκης 1977, 65-72, Bien 1989, 89-94, Γραμματέας 1992, 73, კიკნაძე 122-147, ქუროშვაძე 2011.

inanimate nature.<sup>24</sup> Kazantzakis was accused of making up words and / or favouring expressions taken from the illiterate speech of peasants, Vazha-Pshavela was also criticized for the pshavian idioms in his writings.

**Conclusion:** Nikos Kazantzakis and Vazha-Pshavela show, through the literary works under consideration, that the notion of honour may contradict itself. The blood feud that requires revenge is opposed to: 1) the sworn brotherhood between enemies; 2) the fact that the victim to be has been injured and is suffering from physical disability; 3) the custom of hospitality that obliges to defend the guest.

The analysis of the vendetta described in Nikos Kazantzakis' and Vazha-Pshavela's works brings forth the following question; does the centuries old rite leave an author the opportunity for artistic self-expression? This is exactly what testifies to the remarkable skilfulness of a writer: the literary work conveys the author's message in a highly artistic manner and through several informational strata (whether implicit or explicit), while the vendetta custom is (in one way or other) questioned by the reader.

The position regarding vendetta in the case of the Greek novel is not as harshly stated as it is in the Georgian work. The compulsory nature of vendetta is expressed in the Greek work mostly through inner dialogues and dreams of the heroes who delay revenging their family's blood. In contrast, in the work of the Georgian author the community actively demands the blood to be revenged and even doom to death their kinsmen for contradicting the custom.

Although Kazantzakis' novel refers to the tradition of blood feud in Crete and Vazha-Pshavela presents a common traditional custom in the Caucasian highlands, alongside with the individual resistance to the rite, both works reflect the universal pattern of the vendetta custom and include parallel elements: Society in both literary works imply a steady and unchanging attitude to the rite – it is compulsory for all. There are no neutral or ambiguous assessments among the society.

Shared values and equivalent conceptions of heroism, hospitality/blood brotherhood and courage are elaborated in both literary works. Scorn of death as equally applicable to the heroes. The religious freedom constrained by the society is achieved with the contribution of individual protagonist and thus on the paradigm of individual protagonists' writers promote tolerance and freedom. As in Greek and Georgian Societies religion is often identified with ethnicity,

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<sup>24</sup> Bien 1989, 90-93, 303-309 122-147.

the role of writers who promote religious freedom and tolerance may be extremely valuable and significant for the formation of tolerant societies.

Why does a writer choose vendetta? Because it is the means which facilitates expression as well as understanding of the author's message – vendetta casts a wide net that gathered in most of the tensions of the society. The literary works show that although vengeance is a part of social obligations, it is not necessarily a part of human nature and the vengeance does not imply a healing process. Justice can never be achieved by new acts of violence, on the contrary every new violent act provokes new fighting and acts of violence.

The writers revived the rite of blood feud in their works and the comparative approaches of this study of literary works bring out all that is tragic and reprehensible in its nature. In both cases the main hero finds his way out and continues his life leaving the blood debt uncollected... in order to meet his death freed from the chains of vendetta but ready to die for the homeland.

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