

administered by professors and academicians. It is alive today and is ultimately connected with the past of Homer, of Pericles, of Alexander and of Byzantium."<sup>12</sup>

Seferis is not chauvinistic; he is Hellenocentric (and I use the word Hellenic with Seferis' meaning), anthropocentric. The diaspora of Hellenism had a significant meaning. Hellenism was worked upon, reformed and revitalized right down to the time of the Renaissance, and crystallized the European civilization. This civilization is basically an offspring of the values of Hellenism.<sup>13</sup>

Let Seferis be a guide for us and teach us about our culture and identity. Let us use Palamas' words, Seferis' predecessor, with whom the poet was in absolute accord. "Imitation is the great rule of societies and of literature. True national poetry is poetry without country and poetry in its highest intensity." Seferis writes that there is no parthenogenesis in art and literature; "once you are Greek, you are bound to produce a work which is Greek."<sup>14</sup> And for the poet to achieve the former, he has to get the strength from his roots and from his own tradition.<sup>15</sup>

Let us strive towards the recovery of our tradition and towards the revitalization of Hellenism. This particular Hellenism will manifest itself when the Greece of today has acquired its own real intellectual character and features.

Let us not be searching to rediscover the first seed so that the ancient drama could begin again. Let us not wake up again with this marble head in our hands and not knowing where to put it.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Warner, *Greek Style*, p. vii.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>14</sup>Seferis, *Dokimes*, 1, pp. 95-96.

<sup>15</sup>Nassos Vagenas, *Ο ποιητής και ο χορευτής* (Athens, 1980), p. 191.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

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## The Eye of the Other: Watching Death in Rural Greece

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C. NADIA SEREMETAKIS

BEGINNING WITH THE EARLY and seminal works of Levi-Strauss, structuralist models in anthropology with their emphasis on systemic elegance have overlooked the interpersonal complexities of the fieldwork situation. The ambiguous relationship of structuralist thought to the fieldwork process has its co-origins in the formalist bias of the former as well as in its unresolved status as either normative methodology or 'objective description' of reality. It is the confusion between these two poles of structuralist inquiry that characterizes the present book under review.

*The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* by Loring Danforth with photography by Alexander Tsiaras (Princeton University Press, 1982) is symptomatic of the imposition of the formalist symmetry of structuralist frameworks on the diffuse, contradictory, cross-cultural reality of fieldwork—as I shall show through an analysis of the methodologies upon which this book is based. Between 1975-76, Tsiaras, a photographer, while visiting relatives in a Thessalian village, 'documented' a series of mortuary and exhumation ceremonies. Upon his return to the States, he was advised to show his portfolio to Danforth who had previously conducted an anthropological study of the fire walkers of Agia Eleni. Motivated by Tsiaras' photographs, Danforth traveled separately to Potamia and conducted a brief ethnographic study of local mortuary rituals. Danforth's ethnography and Tsiaras' photos, separated by a three-year



gap as well as the anthropological perspective of the one and the anti-anthropological perspective of the other, form the basis of this book.

THE STUDY OF DEATH RITUALS, according to Danforth, has been over-exoticized in both anthropological and folkloric studies. The proper study of death as a cultural unit in one society should instead open into the analysis of death as a universal cultural theme. Danforth hopes that the readers of this book will recognize their own death in the death experience of rural Greeks. He believes that the cultural opposition between self and ethnographic other, which prevents this cross-cultural recognition, is based on a romanticized exoticism that is at odds with the aspirations of a "humanistic anthropology." In this case humanistic anthropology is identified with structuralism and its belief in the universal cognitive origins of diverse cultural codes.

For Danforth, this trans-cultural thematizing of death is best expressed as binary oppositions in which the dialectical relationship of death and life is parallel to the dialectical opposition of nature and culture. From the perspective of these universal binary oppositions all death rituals can be seen as

the core of a universal language or code. . . . The performance of death-related rituals is an attempt to mediate the opposition between life and death by asserting that death is an integral part of life. Death, in fact, provides an opportunity to affirm the continuity and meaning of life itself." (p. 6)

A structural homology lies hidden in Danforth's text between the binary oppositions of death/life, culture/nature, self/other, and anthropologist/informant. Within his schema of universal cognitive oppositions, life (as culture) cannot define itself without the dialectical inclusion of its opposite—death (as nature). This formula is derived from Levi-Strauss'

assertion that all cultures are concerned with the symbolic appropriation of nature which is perceived as an antithetical domain, as the Other of culture. Through the activity of culture, nature becomes thematized, an object of knowledge, and subjected to discursive representation. Danforth implicitly tells us that death as a cultural unit is homologous to nature which is also a cultural unit. Thus the anthropological study of death is the description of the appropriation of death as a natural event and as Other by culture. In this process, death is transformed from a natural event, alien and estranging, into a symbolic experience and a central ritual of social life. This process constitutes the internalization of death and nature—insofar as death is a natural phenomenon—by the cultural domain. The above dialectic informs Danforth's perception of the status of specific cultural Others encountered in the fieldwork process. In advocating the search for a common humanity beneath the variation of cultures, Danforth tacitly admits that the anthropologist requires an accessible cultural Other in order to define himself as anthropologist. The cultural Other cannot be completely Other, completely unapproachable, completely exoticized or particularized, for then there would be no mediation or point of contact between the anthropologist and this Other. Just as through symbolic-cultural structures death becomes mediated, thematized and an object of knowledge for the living, the cultural Other requires similar levels of connection, relationship and epistemological formation. For Danforth, the death of the cultural Other can be a privileged moment of connection through which "superficial" cultural divisions are overcome.

The paradigm of a "common humanity" here is concerned with the epistemological preconditions for knowing the Other and being able to say something about this cultural Other. These preconditions facilitate the transformation of the cultural Other into an object of theoretical inquiry and allow the anthropologist as an ethnographer to "narrativize" the other in texts. It is this "narrativization" of the village of Potamia through structuralist models and journalistic photographs that



is the pivotal issue of this book. Taken together, the texts and photos constitute a *representation* of the death rituals and wider culture of rural Greek villagers. Danforth admits that this representation of the death rituals of Potamia is normative and systematic:

The format (of the book) is designed to minimize the distance between the reader and the Greek villagers whose life and death are presented here: to enable the reader to come to see these rites not as something distant and exotic but rather in the words of Levi-Strauss as a 'distorted reflection of a familiar image . . . ' (p. 6)

Danforth hopes his book will "enable the reader to transcend, at least in part, the opposition of Self and Other, to see himself in the Others presented here, and to see his death in the deaths of the people of rural Greece." (page 7) The question however remains: Why is the cultural Other to be brought into greater proximity? And how is this to be accomplished? Why should the death rites of Greeks be transposed into a familiar yet distorted reflection or refraction? (The visual metaphor as paradigm is relevant here.) Danforth seems to be referring as much to Tsiaras' photos and to photography as a form of representation in general, as he is referring to the "narrativization" of alien cultures in anthropology.

Danforth hopes that through this book the reader will transcend the opposition between self and cultural otherness. But this book will certainly supply *no* transcendence to the villagers of Potamia. The absorption of the villagers of Potamia into common humanity and universal mortality contains *no* meaning in their society. The people of Potamia already possess their own strategies for transcending otherness—the mortuary rituals documented in this book. In peasant eyes, it is these very rituals in all their specificity that separate their rural community from the external world, their cultural other. The mortuary rituals of Potamia are rituals of identity and non-identity, oppositions

rooted not in transcultural cognitive pregivens, but in the localized webs of kinship and the symbolic narration of individual deaths through *moiroloia* or mourning songs. In the very place that Danforth assumes he has opened a passage between self and other, between urban American and Greek peasant, he has actually marked a site of closure between the two societies. The true relevance of this book lies in the absence of such rituals and social relations in our modern society where death has been de-ritualized, "commoditized" and rationalized. *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* mark a place of difference and separation between a culture that generates periodic transcendence of otherness through the articulation of symbolic systems and a culture in which only a representation of this transcendence of otherness can be obtained.

Instead of producing an identification between the reader's experience of death and the death experiences of Greek villagers, this book is an eloquent and ironic reminder of what is absent in our own culturally specific experience of death. This irony undermines any structuralist paradigm of a universal built-in mental structure organizing the opposition between life and death. The rationalization and "commoditization" of death in our society which ranges from the possibility of nuclear holocaust to the advanced technology of the modern mortuary, bears witness to a historically determined estrangement from those death-life dialectics that can be encountered in "traditional" societies. The ritualization and symbolization of death does not find its origins in an inner organization of the human mind as the structuralist argument asserts, but arises out of the historically determined conditions of human existence. Each society produces its own forms of death both materially and symbolically. The universalization of death is a historical process that is solely a product of our modernity and a symptom of the elevation of our culture into a world-wide value system at the expense of small societies and peripheral cultures.

FOR DANFORTH THE PRIMARY function of death rituals in



rural Greece is the mediation and resolution of the liminal status of both the deceased and relevant mourners. The ritualization of burial and bereavement is posited by Danforth as a symbolic passage from a marginal condition of mourning and burial seen by the Greek peasant as polluting, to a non-liminal condition in which the villagers, now purified, return to normal social life. At the same time, the deceased makes his final passage from the world of the living to the domain of the dead.

This interpretation of the death process in rural Greece is curiously congruent with Danforth's implicit assumption concerning the nature of fieldwork: since the Greek mourner exists within a liminal, marginalized state between an everyday world and a symbolic, cathartic dimension, the American investigators who by their very origins possess a pre-assigned liminality in relation to Greek village life, can slip into the culture and participate in a shared, communal marginality that facilitates the process of fieldwork. Hence the assumption that the universality of the death experience obliterates all customary distinctions between outsiders and insiders. Danforth claims for both Tsiaras and his photographs a penetration of the cathartic and symbolic domain of the mortuary ritual. Tsiaras' photos are supposedly addressing the viewer from an experiential and symbolic center shared by the villagers.

Though almost any photograph of human social interaction can serve as documentation of ethnographic information, visual ethnography self-consciously subordinates aesthetics to the pursuit of relevant data and the inner reality of another culture. Tsiaras reverses this paradigm in his photography by privileging his aesthetic perspective at the expense of documentation in order to impose his cultural point of view on these ceremonies. Tsiaras' photographs engage in a double cultural transgression—first against the customary formality with which the mortuary rituals are conducted by the villagers, and second against Danforth's assertions of the breakdown of exclusionary boundaries between the mourners and their American observers.

Immediately noticeable are the unusual and often grotesque angles and perspectives from which some of the photos were taken (see plates 6, 9, 11, 12, 17, 27). These angles may serve an aesthetic purpose but they are of questionable ethnographic value. Many of the positions of the photographer are alien to any logical position possibly held by mourners and other involved observers during the ceremonies. The photographer is obviously in search of a visual expressionism referring to, but certainly not congruent with, the ambience of the ceremony. The continuous use of the candid shot catching the mourners in mid-action and mid-expression (see plates 12, 16, 22, and 23) is unrelated to the extremely formalized and iconographic postures employed by the mourners as crucial components of the ritual. Tsiaras makes the usual erroneous assumption of the Westerner that cathartic experience necessarily implies the de-centering of posture, body movement, or physical gesture. To the contrary, the didactic effect of Greek mourning ceremonies lies in their eloquent alternation between a patterned series of formalized gestures and a flood of emotional outpouring that is constrained and channelled by these movements. Tsiaras' visual aesthetics and his focus on the grotesque and distorted are due to his inability to recognize pattern, order and meaning in social phenomena that do not belong to his own social world (see Tsiaras' own description of the ceremony quoted later on in this paper). The aesthetic angles employed by Tsiaras violate Danforth's paradigm against exoticizing such rituals. Tsiaras' photos *do* exoticize the ceremony and function as distinct semiotic boundaries between mourners and photographer. The use of such grotesque angles can be seen as an aesthetic device for establishing the 'documentary realism' of the photos. The aesthetic construction of such documentary realism is antithetical to the scientific requirements of ethnographic documentation and to the reconstruction of ritual. These aesthetic devices harbor the photographer's own unstated, culturally determined point of view. We look vainly for any discussion clarifying this aesthetic point of view in relation to the villagers' subjective experience.



*THE DEATH RITUALS OF RURAL GREECE* contains an aborted dialogue between anthropologist, photographer, and Greek peasant. It is the presence of these disparate and often antagonistic discourses that allows us to move beyond the abstract level of aesthetic analysis and methodological discussion towards a reconstruction of the fieldwork process from which this book emerged. It is remarkable the extent to which the discontinuity between texts and photographs remains unrecognized by the anthropologist who is supposed to be the alert reader of cultural discontinuity and difference.

The central issue here is Danforth's persistent claim that due to the liminality dominating the mortuary rituals, Tsiaras, on different occasions, was freely incorporated into the ritual process and cathartic process by the mourners. I have already noted to what extent Tsiaras' photographic style indicates both an ethnocentric interpretation of the catharsis occurring during the mourning ceremonies and an aesthetic distancing between photographer and his subjects. These discontinuities between photographer and subjects are eloquently commented on by the villagers themselves. In plate 14, the village priest has halted the burial proceedings in mid-ceremony just as the coffin had been lowered into the grave. Assuming a stiff pose of benediction (his hand is turned toward the dead while his face is turned toward the camera), he asks Tsiaras if he would like to take any more photographs. Danforth interprets the scene in the following way:

Until that moment the priest had never spoken to Tsiaras; until that day he had never seen him. Tsiaras, the outsider, has suddenly taken the place of the deceased as the center of attention. The line between participant and observer had been crossed. The frame of the ritual drama had been broken as the photographer stepped on stage and assumed a role himself" (plate 14).

We must first examine the ruptures within this astounding commentary before turning to an alternative interpretation of

what is occurring in the photograph and the significance of the priest's gestures and offer.

Danforth proposes a symbolic equivalence between the two seminal representatives of liminality, the "deceased" and Tsiaras, the "outsider." It is Danforth's implicit assumption that this co-liminality of photographer and the dead allows Tsiaras to step onto the stage and take on a role himself in the ritual.

1. There is the immediate contradiction in Danforth's statement between his assertion that the frame of the ritual drama has been broken and the assertion that the photographer has stepped on stage and taken on a role, no doubt a formalized ritualistic role. But what stage is present and for whom can a specific role be played if the drama has been broken? If a new drama has begun, it is obvious that the play of roles is solely between the priest and the photographer. But this interaction is far from being a ritual; it only involves the priest and the photographer, and does so in a manner that excludes the community of mourners. The stage is the creation of the priest who intentionally dominates it with the appropriate ecclesiastical gesture, a gesture that is all the more duplicitous since, though it is apparently directed toward the dead, it is actually directed toward the photographer.

2. Danforth asserts that Tsiaras has displaced the deceased as the center of attention. To some extent this is true. Tsiaras has become the center of attention for the priest, for like the deceased, his presence affords the priest an opportunity to dramatize ecclesiastical authority within the mortuary ritual. The priest is the one who is assuming stage center and Tsiaras is confirmed as outsider and audience in this very gesture. In the background the women mourners remain in catharsis ignoring the interaction between the photographer and the priest.

The priest has put on a show for Tsiaras precisely because he is an outsider. The priest's bid for a central role in the ritual at this moment signifies a crucial ethnographic fact ignored by Danforth. Throughout the greater part of mortuary ceremonies, it is the women who dominate the ritual and direct the intensity of the catharsis. The arrival of the priest at such



ceremonies signifies the intervention of established male dominated religious authority and for the period during which the priest officiates, the women are forcibly pushed from the center of the ritual process. There is another division within Greek mortuary rituals revealed by this photo but unmentioned on by Danforth. Besides the division between official church forms of burial ritual and the women's mourning style (i.e. cathartic cries, weeping, and the performance of mourning songs), there is also a strong gender division. Men for the most part play a peripheral sidelines role: they carry out the coffin, they dig the grave and bury the dead, *but* it is mainly the women who animate the actual mourning process. In this particular photo these central actors of the mourning ceremony do not show the faintest awareness or recognition of Tsiaras' presence. As the priest poses for the photographer, the women remain caught within a cathartic state; a liminality unattainable by either Tsiaras or the priest.

These comments on Danforth's idealization of Tsiaras' fieldwork experiences is exclusively based on the photographs and text contained in *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*. In a separately published article, Tsiaras, writing alone, has inadvertently provided us with material supporting this critique ("The Village Funeral," *Greek Accent*, March 1983). It seems that Tsiaras was able to attend this funeral through the aggressive intervention of his aunt who lived in a nearby village. Contrary to Danforth's commentary, Tsiaras *did* have an extensive conversation with the priest shown in the photo (plate 14) prior to the funeral and obtained the priest's permission to photograph the ceremony. During this conversation, the priest revealed the church's attitude towards the role of women in mortuary ceremonies; a view which expresses the symbolic kinship of women with the dead, and at the same time denies living men any intense access to the symbolic domain inhabited by the women and the dead. This inclusion of women in the death process and corresponding exclusion of men, calls further into question Danforth's thesis concerning Tsiaras' symbolic incorporation into the mourning ceremony; because the fact

that Tsiaras is a man, automatically limits the depth and intensity of his participation in the ritual.

I pointed to all the men and asked why they did not also remain in the room with the deceased. He (the priest) answered that it was not the custom, and then, as if quoting from the Bible, he said: "Men are born clean and women are born dirty, and the body of the deceased human being is also filthy, so a man should not stay in its presence for long or he too will be contaminated." (*Greek Accent*, p. 22)

When the ceremony ended, the priest requested copies of the photos from Tsiaras.

Tsiaras' account of the funeral reveals the experiential basis of the aesthetic estrangement that characterizes his photography. Against Danforth's claim for Tsiaras' incorporation into the ritual, we discover that the photographer was literally pinched and pushed into it by his aunt:

When I reached the doorway I hesitated at the wall of people. My aunt pinched my arm . . . she gave me a push and I struggled forward, but every motion forced someone out . . . (*Greek Accent*, p. 22)

From his first moment of contact with these rituals, Tsiaras became estranged from what he saw as a grotesque ceremony. This estrangement as evidenced in his photographs, remained with him in every subsequent encounter with Greek death rituals:

When I got to the center of the room I could smell the dead boy's odor mixed with a flowery cologne the women used to dissipate the scent of decomposition. This, together with their sweating bodies, produced a stench that was nauseating. I was dizzy by the smell and confused by the mourners singing dirges using words from the wedding ceremony. (*Greek Accent*, p. 22).



As Tsiaras began photographing the ceremony, the immediate reaction of the deceased's mother demonstrated that Tsiaras' presence and actions violated strict ritual boundaries:

I lifted my camera. As I prepared to photograph I noticed I now commanded more attention than the corpse, and with the release of the shutter I attracted everyone's stare. The mother pounced towards me, but was blocked behind her dead son, who had now become my protective wall. She screamed, "No photographs!" and waved her arms as if to scratch my eyes out. (*Greek Accent*, p. 24)

A few minutes later, after Tsiaras' aunt stepped in to calm the deceased mother, Tsiaras tells us:

. . . my aunt slapped my hand and yelled, "Photograph!" I had no time to think of death and *formalities* [my emphasis] so I began my work (*Greek Accent*, p. 24)

If indeed this is the same account that Tsiaras gave to Danforth, we fail to see how Danforth could depict the ceremony as a unified cathartic field which spontaneously internalized the foreigner in its midst. The priest has his personal concerns which did not converge with the catharsis of the mourners. While for Tsiaras, the cathartic domain of the mourners and the symbolism of the mourning ceremony were reduced to "formalities" that had to be ignored in order for him to pursue his photography.

Returning to Danforth's commentary in *The Death Rituals in Rural Greece*, in plate 30, we find another overt reaction from the villagers to the act of being photographed. The picture shows principal female mourners exhuming the bones of a relative. Danforth has previously identified the exhumation ceremonies as a ritualistic closure of the mortuary cycle, symbolic of the end of the contaminating state of death and the return to normal social life. It is indicative of the final passage of the dead person to the other world and the ending of the

liminal status of the relevant kin. Danforth describes the scene: "As Tsiaras photographed Matinio, she addressed him directly: 'We'll all look like this in the end. Some day you'll see the remains of your mother and father exhumed this way. Some day you'll be exhumed, then you'll look like this too.' " Danforth again interprets the chief mourner's discourse as an active symbolic incorporation of Tsiaras, the photographer, into the ritual space of the exhumers. But, as in the photograph of the officiating priest, the mourner's discourse and pose indicate exactly the opposite—an ironic acknowledgement of the cultural distance between the mourners and the photographer, hidden beneath the surface politeness of her offer to pose. The chief mourner stops the exhumation ceremony in order to pose for the photographer. The entire gesture is self-consciously iconographic; and, as a process of image making, indicates her awareness of the difference between the emotional reality of mourning and the photography as secondhand representation of reality. So, rather than incorporation, the action and discourse of the mourners indicates a recognition of the photographer's alienation and distancing. It is within the semantic context of the mourner's pose and momentary suspension of the exhumation ceremony that her discourse should be understood. For this discourse contains all the didactic and ironic double meanings that characterize the linguistic handling of social conflict by rural Greeks. She first reminds Tsiaras that we all will *look* like this (i.e. bones, skull) after we are buried. The reference to a visual appearance points indirectly to the photographer's own investment in visual realities. The visual investment in itself is highly threatening in these situations in Greek culture. It is not customary for an unrelated person to stare at such crucial ceremonies; particularly a male since these ceremonies are intrinsic to the women's symbolic practice.

She then proceeds to inform the photographer that his parents will also look like this pile of bones after their burial. The introduction of a kinship relation is crucial here since the entire cycle of death and mourning ceremonies concerns the temporary suspension of kinship stability and the reactivation



of kinship bonds. This is effected through rituals that enforce a communal solidarity by invoking the symbolic presence of the absent deceased whose death has broken the kinship chain. The reference to the potential exhumation of Tsias' parents contains within it multiple ironies: Obviously if his parents' bones were to be exhumed, he would not be able to maintain the same emotional distance indicative of his picture taking at the current ceremony. The introduction of the kinship theme and a chronology of hypothetical burials of Tsias' parents and Tsias himself, may refer to the generational schisms that haunt Greek rural life. Tsias, as a member of the younger generation, is perceived as separated from traditional communality through his lack of involvement in mourning and exhumation rituals; therefore, he is seen as someone who is not concerned with the reinforcement and reproduction of kinship solidarity. Matinio invokes a fictional chronology of burial for Tsias' family precisely because she suspects that he is estranged from these rituals.

The mourner's discourse is in partial concurrence with Danforth's model in its acknowledgement of a universal inclusiveness of death. But she then proceeds to draw sharp cultural boundaries by invoking the ritualistic mediation of death which in the eyes of the mourner is totally associated with specific trans-generational kinship obligations. The presence or absence of these reciprocities is the foundation for the definition of community/non-community, we/they, and self/other dichotomies.

In Tsias' separate account of another mortuary ceremony, we do find a moment in which there is an attempt to incorporate him into a cathartic domain. Significantly, this attempt is made by a relative and because of the kinship link between them. Tsias responds to this attempt of incorporation as follows:

I didn't know how to react. Too much was happening too quickly. I forced myself not to think about it, but put it aside in my mind until later. (*Greek Accent*, p. 46)

In his introduction to the book, Danforth expresses the hope that this project will facilitate a cross-cultural sharing of the universal experience of death. Throughout the book, this aspiration dominates the interpretive paradigms used by Danforth in commenting on Tsias' photos. But, contrary to the general thrust of the book, what is documented here is the confrontation of contrasting cultural realities and the aggressive assertion of the world view of the Greek peasant through boundaries of inclusion and exclusion based on kinship, residence, and ritualistic participation in symbolic systems.

Beyond these interpretive problems, the project raises more serious anthropological issues. The entire photographic aspect of the project from which *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* emerged, transgresses against two seminal preconditions of ethnographic inquiry: 1) the validity of the anthropologist/informant relationship; in this case, the relation between Danforth, the anthropologist, and Tsias, the informant. Danforth should have been clear on the cultural distance separating himself from Tsias but even more clear on the cultural distance separating Tsias from the villagers of Potamia. 2) the subjective experience of fieldwork. Danforth seems to have had a distinctly different experience in the field than Tsias. This correspondingly produced contradictory discourses, which Danforth ignores. Danforth was invited to participate in a variety of mortuary rituals and allowed to record the mourning songs of women of Potamia. Thus certain sections of the book contain a competent ethnography of death rituals, but the validity of Danforth's own ethnographic work is seriously undermined by his efforts, through structuralist theorizing, to integrate Tsias' photographs into his anthropological perspective. This point of view is doubly jeopardized because Tsias' photos not only blatantly contradict Danforth's interpretation of their contents, but they also present evidence that challenges the presuppositions of this structuralist model when applied to rural Greek realities. These discontinuities signify *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* as a book that is tragically at war with itself.