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## THE PROGRESS OF POESY: KALVOS, GRAY AND THE REVIVAL OF ANCIENT LITERARY LANGUAGE\*

Kalvos' poetry is, to an unusually high degree, based on what, as he saw it, "the age demanded".<sup>1</sup> His command of Greek, ancient or modern, was far from flawless, his sensitivity to language greater than his reading: we are not talking here of a Hellenist of the calibre of a Leopardi or a Hölderlin. Kalvos' decision to write his odes in Greek was undoubtedly a self-imposed handicap, gladly assumed in order to aid the national cause. If the Greeks of 1821 could show might in battle, so the feeling went, this was a *prima facie* indication that they were fit custodians of the Greek language; if they could show a command of the language of their ancestors, conversely, they would, *ex hypothesi*, be fit for the rigours of national independence. The inextricable connection between the poetic and the political is quite evident from the epigraph to *The Lyre* ('*Ἡ Λύρα*'), from Pindar's first Pythian. The words in their new context represent a sort of aegis brandished against the Turks, who, unloved of Zeus, will be scattered by Greek "poetry and power".<sup>2</sup> The Pindaric motto, then, is not just a declaration of a poetic affinity (as it might be with Collins or Gray) but a political statement. Greece is to be revived with and by a restoration of its literature, a literature to rival, nay excel, the Latin and the modern classics alike.

\*This paper was first presented at a seminar on literary language at the Institute of Classical Studies, University of London. I am most grateful to that audience, and especially to Professor Michael Silk, for comments, as also to audiences at Cornell and Princeton, where a revised version was given. A pervasive debt will be visible to a recent article of Peter Mackridge (Mackridge, 1994).

<sup>1</sup>The phrase comes from Ezra Pound (Pound, 1967: 173), "E.P. Ode pour l'élection de son sépulture".

<sup>2</sup>The Pindar epigraph as Kalvos (incorrectly) cites it is as follows: "ὄσσα δὲ μὴ πεφίληκε / Ζεύς, ἀτύζονται βοῶν / Πιερίδων ἀκούοντα, / Γᾶν τε καὶ πόντον κατ' ἀμαιμάκετον" (Kalvos, 1988a: 20). The phrase "poetry and power" comes from Robert Frost (1995: 435–7), "For John F. Kennedy His Inauguration".

A good question is, of course, *what* Greece is to be revived. The essentially modern notion that it is the “four centuries of Turkish occupation” since 1453 is not necessarily what Kalvos had in mind. We might suppose that the poet would have concurred with Stephanos P. Koumanoudis in holding that between 146 B.C. and the death of Rigas Pheraios in 1798, Greek history had simply not existed.<sup>3</sup> (And we should not forget that early nineteenth-century Greek men of letters, like Milton before them, looked on 338 B.C. as the end of Greek history, with the conquest of free Greece by the barbarian Macedonians.<sup>4</sup>) Yet Kalvos, as we shall see, elides the Roman and Ottoman conquests, not clearly distinguishing between the two.

Now the absoluteness of such revivalist views looks to the sceptical historian’s eye like the “invention of tradition”. But a student of literature will, I think, concede — or affirm — that a literary tradition *can* be invented by main force: witness the case of modern Hebrew. The sort of force involved was that whereby the Acropolis was stripped of its Roman, Frankish and Ottoman accretions; whereby the temple of Hephaestus popularly known as the Theseion was turned back into a temple after being a church for many centuries; whereby hundreds of Byzantine churches in Athens were razed in order to give the city a more Western appearance.

This wider project was carried out with some success, not (mercifully) obliterating the Byzantine past, but setting it to one side. Similarly, while Kalvos makes allusions to modern Greek folk songs in his odes, he largely translates them into a more learned idiom. And while his language is not an attempt at the out-and-out revival of classical Greek, it is an article of faith for him that it *is* Greek, not Romaic — not the pure vernacular but a culture-language shared with other Europeans.<sup>5</sup> The usual term for this belief is *archaism*, but this, even when not pejorative, is a less appropriate one than *revivalism*: the belief looks forward, not back. When Greeks called themselves

<sup>3</sup>For a summary of Koumanoudis’ career see Petrakos (1987: 264–76); his mind is best illuminated in his diary (Koumanoudis, 1990).

<sup>4</sup>Milton, “Sonnet to the Lady Margaret Ley”: “that dishonest victory / At *Chaeronéa*, fatal to liberty” (Milton, 1935: 32–3). On this perspective in early nineteenth-century Greek thought, see Politis, 1993: 43–7.

<sup>5</sup>On Kalvos’ linguistic views see Dimaras, 1982. For further bibliography (as, exhaustively, on Kalvos in general) see Andreiomenos, 1993.

Hellenes, they were looking forward not back. (Whereas if I use eighteenth-century pronunciations like “fánatic”, let alone “balcóny”, I am very definitely looking back.)

The expectations of Kalvos’ language are made quite visible by the short Glossary appended to *The Lyre*, which gives the words and forms on which a *foreign* reader of the *Odes* might stumble.<sup>6</sup> Kalvos is writing for Greeks, but equally for Philhellenes; and he assumes, rightly or wrongly, that the latter will be able to read his poetry and understand it, at least *grosso modo*, as an outgrowth of ancient Greek poetry. And it is noteworthy that Kalvos’ glossary contains only a few dozen words. (By contrast, Solomos’ poetry, while perhaps as far from “the language really used by men”, could not be understood by the foreign reader.<sup>7</sup>) Indeed, an early comment on Milton’s language might be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Kalvos: “Milton’s language is English, but ’tis Milton’s English [...] the ancient Idiom is seen in All he writes, so that a Learned Foreigner will think *Milton* the easiest to be understood of All the English Writers.”<sup>8</sup>

Whether or not Kalvos was right in assuming that foreigners would understand his poetry is a moot point. But the statement made by the Glossary is central to the understanding of his project. It is, for Kalvos — and it is hard to disagree — the *literary* language which links the Greeks and their fellow Europeans in a common classical heritage; it is the vernacular which tends to separate them. But the world is of course littered with interesting ideas which did not prove *poetically* successful. This paper, however, cannot hope to look at literary language in all its dimensions: in particular, I shall not dwell here on two key features of Kalvos’ revivalist project on which I have written elsewhere.

The first of these is his metre, which, while based on Italian neo-classical versification, is intended to give something of the atmosphere and expectations generated by alcaics.<sup>9</sup> Kalvos’ metre has many artistic

<sup>6</sup>Kalvos, 1988a: 161–7.

<sup>7</sup>The phrase comes from Wordsworth’s preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (Wordsworth, 1977: 569). For Solomos’ linguistic views see his *Dialogos* (Solomos, 1994: 505–51). On the paradox that Solomos, while thoroughly European, came to write in a language understood by very few Europeans, see Jenkins, 1940: 1.

<sup>8</sup>Jonathan Richardson, in Milton, 1981: 12.

<sup>9</sup>See Ricks, 1992: 172–8; for a more recent and authoritative discussion of

successes; and it has been successfully imitated only in the sincerest form of flattery, a twentieth-century parody by Karyotakis. What is of interest here, in terms of revivalism, is not just the metre's novelty in the Greek context but the fact that this is so openly stated by the poet. Rome, Dryden observed with reference to Horace, "With Grecian Spoils brought Grecian Numbers home": through the return of Grecian-looking numbers, Kalvos aims to aid and to celebrate the *reconquista* of Greece (Ricks, 1992). But he gives a particular gloss on the importance of his metre in an appendix to *The Lyre*. Distinguishing his metric from the rhymed tradition (and everything worth reading in Greek verse between about 1400 and 1821 was rhymed), Kalvos makes a claim with a distinct echo to it. He writes: "The harmony of the period is necessary not only as an operative element of poetry but also as a means to free us from the barbarity of rhyme."<sup>10</sup> It is impossible to understand this without reference to Milton's note to *Paradise Lost* and especially its concluding phrase: "an example set, the first in *English*, of ancient liberty recover'd to Heroic Poem from the troublesom and modern bondage of Rimeing" (Milton, 1935: 180).<sup>11</sup>

The second area at which I shall not look here in any detail is that of Kalvos' thematic borrowings as they reflect (and in many cases justify) his revivalist aspirations. Quite a lot of dutiful ink has been spilled with respect to Kalvos' allusions, not always with a clear sense of relevance.<sup>12</sup> But he can make subtle use of, say, Homeric motifs typically, though not invariably, clustered around distinctive lexical items (Ricks, 1989: 22–8). Kalvos is a notoriously uneven poet, and perhaps only two of his twenty odes succeed as wholes; yet the most jejune stanzas jostle with other stanzas dense with purposeful, ramifying allusion.

What the main part of this paper attempts, then, is to show two different, but closely related, points: first, that on the wider level the nature of Kalvos' aspirations to the revival of literary language need to

Kalvos' metre, see Garantoudis, 1995.

<sup>10</sup>Kalvos, 1988a: 172. All translations from Greek are mine.

<sup>11</sup>This passage is not referred to by Garantoudis: see Ricks, 1997.

<sup>12</sup>The indiscriminate, though not valueless, work of Saris, 1946 and 1972, is an example.

be seen with reference to a particular genre, namely the progress poem; and secondly, how a particular, readily identifiable manifestation of literary language, the use of ancient epithets, is central to Kalvos' project. The "Ode to the Muses", with its evident programmatic status, will form the basis of both these arguments, and I give here a translation for purposes of exposition:

[1] Let us change the strings, golden gift, great joy of the son of Leto; let us change the strings, Ionian lyre.

[2] Give new strings, zephyr-footed graces, and place on the lyre's pleasing wood a hyacinthine garland.

[3] The measure spreads its wings like the bird of Zeus, and rises to the heavenly garden of the Muses.

[4] Hail, daughters, hail, voices which enrich the banquets of the Olympians with gladness of dances and rhythmical song.

[5] When you strike the ethereal strings of the lyre, beasts and woods disappear from the face of the broad earth.

[6] Where the infinite lights of the night tremble, high up there the galaxy broadens out and pours drops of dew.

[7] The pure draught tends to the leaves and where the sun had left bare herbage it returns to find roses and sweet scent.

[8] In just the same way the Heliconian lyre trembles beneath your fingers, and the unwithering blossoms of virtue fill every heart.

[9] If the clear-voiced cave of high-peaked Parnassus were to fall silent, there would be no fathers, only tyrants; no parents and children, only timid, insensate flocks following the course of life;

[10] there would be no thunder-heavy hands, only backs suffering the lash.

[11] Divine maids, you have ever allotted justice; you have ever bestowed on man lofty spirit.

[12] The cups of injustice foam, lo! many thirsty dynasts seize them: they are full of drunkenness and murder.

[13] Now, yes now, lighten forth, o Muses, now seize the winged thunderbolt and hurl at the mark with accurate hand.

[14] Save hymns for the just; give only them peace and golden garlands.

[15] Once the nine Olympian voices were where the lamp-bearing daughters of day [sc. the sun's rays] dance.

[16] Only the spheres of heaven heard the harmonious, divinely inspired ode, and calm possessed the still air.

[17] But once the smile of the god of loves [sc. Bacchus] covered Cithaeron with thyme and grape-bearing vines

[18] then the lovely rhythm descended, the gaze of the earth-born dragons vanished, and there was no sleep till dawn.

[19] Holy head of the marvellous old man; happy voice which glorified famous Achaea's best sons,

[20] You, wonderful Homer, were host to the Muses; and Zeus' daughters set on your lips the first honey.

[21] In honour of the gods, you planted the laurel; many centuries saw the plant sturdy and flourishing.

[22] But o Aonian bees, why did you not keep the stores of honey in the divine trunk for ever? Why do you desert it?

[23] When the sound of Arabian horseshoes was heard in Greece from the distant Red Sea

[24] then, rightly, you left, Muses, for the baths where the Hours wash the manes of Phoebus' horses.

[25] But now at last you are ending your long exile. The year of joy has returned and now the steep of Delphi shines forth free.

[26] The silver stream of Hippocrene flows pure and Hellas summons, not foreign maidens, but her own daughters.

[27] You have arrived, o Muses, and I hear it, and my soul joyfully flies, flies; I hear the lyres striking up, I hear hymns.<sup>13</sup>

The poet aims, by means of abrupt transitions, to live up to what he thinks of as Pindaric style, and “the golden lyre” of st. 1, the eagle of st. 3, the Muses at the Olympian table of st. 4, are all Pindaric elements, centering round the first Pythian from which Kalvos' volume takes its motto.<sup>14</sup> But there are some points which need to be glossed if we are to understand, with reference to this most self-conscious of poems, what Kalvos thinks literary language consists of — and to what end.

(i) St. 5 is vexed, and illustrates what we might fairly think of as some of the perils of Kalvos' language. It has been seen as having a political point, with the Turks being the θηρία, or as a reference to Orpheus; but it is best understood (as we shall see) as the transition to

<sup>13</sup>Kalvos, “Εἰς Μοῦσας.” All quotations in this paper are from Kalvos' idiosyncratically spelt manuscript, as edited by Dallas (Kalvos, 1992: 80–99; it will be noted, however, that my transcription of a capital vowel with breathing differs).

<sup>14</sup>Pindar, *Pyth.* 1.1–12; also of possible relevance is the tribute to Hieron as having defeated the barbarians (72–8).

Night: the Muses, like the Hours, govern night and day; at their signal, darkness covers the face of the earth.<sup>15</sup>

(ii) A particular topical dimension lies in κεραινοφόροι (st. 10): the epithet is both an echo of Zeus' power and a reference to the Greek insurgents and their muskets. (The Corycian Cave, let it be noted, was used as a refuge during the War of Independence.) The “dynasts” of st. 12 are the Turks and whatever Western powers support them.

(iii) From st. 15 on the poem describes the Muses' changing relationship with Greece. At first the Muses inhabited only the heavens and governed the music of the spheres, but they later descended to earth with Dionysus, seen here in innocuous Bacchic guise as the god τῶν ἐρώτων (st. 17).<sup>16</sup> St. 18 is usually understood as a reference to Pytho, or else to the Titans (but why not say Τιτάνων if the latter?) but that takes us away, albeit only a little way, from Boeotia, and also makes the first and third clauses of the stanza hard to understand.<sup>17</sup> We should in fact continue the Theban connection with the story of Cadmus and his slaying of the dragon (and this story too has a Delphic connection). As Ovid's *Metamorphoses* relate (3.33), the dragon's eyes gleam with fire: “igne micant oculi”. With this reference, Kalvos' transition is clear: the rhythm of the Muses came to earth, to the home of civilisation, Cadmus having first rid the earth of dangers, and in the first innocent age of man the people danced all night long. The reference thus points forward to the Homeric and the historical times which are the subject of the last part of the ode; it also gives implicit acknowledgement to Cadmus as the originator of the alphabet and by extension the arts. And with the reference to dancing it contains a sense (à la Herder) that modern Greek folk customs instinctively preserve something of the ancient tradition.

(iv) St. 19 is a clear enough reference to Homer and the subsequent poetic tradition, but in st. 22 the Muses leave Greece. As presented initially, one might expect the departure to be with the Roman conquest (though this would not of course be the most tactful point to make to

<sup>15</sup>*Pace* Kalvos, n.d.: 80.

<sup>16</sup>This Westernised Bacchus is familiar from Athanasios Christopoulos' poetry (1970: 87–104). As Mackridge (1994: 68) points out, Kalvos has Christopoulos in mind as a largely negative model.

<sup>17</sup>*Pace* Kalvos, *ad loc.* and also Castillo Didier, 1988: 189.

Western Philhellenes!), but the following stanza makes it clear that the Ottomans are meant. Like stt. 5 and 18, st. 24 has been widely misinterpreted. Kalvos got into a tangle earlier by an obscure use of an ambiguous verb, *χάνω* (and, worse, a modern word which appears in the Glossary accordingly); his use, too, of the plural for the dragon is a poeticism greatly over-used by Palamas at a later period. In st. 24 the problem arises from a very florid way of saying: “the Muses left for the West”. We should not read the stanza, with some commentators, as meaning that the Muses returned to Heaven; and Kalvos’ transferral of the horses of the Hours has a structural and imagistic justification, contrasting as it does with the Ottoman horses of the preceding stanza.<sup>18</sup> (It may also be reasonable, in the light of Kalvos’ frequent Homeric allusions, to see his word *λουτρά* here as a reference to *Iliad* 18.489, with its description of the constellation of the Bear or the Wain: οἴη δ’ ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο, see Ricks, 1989: 22–8). Now, with the aid of the Philhellenes, Delphi has been liberated, literally as well as metaphorically, and a poet can once again aspire to Pindaric song, as in the ode’s closing stanza.<sup>19</sup>

The above glosses have drawn attention to some pitfalls for the modern reader. In particular, it is possible to set such store by Kalvos’ ancient borrowings that we run the danger of seeing them as outweighing any meaningful relation to modern poetry. The twenty-fourth stanza, taken literally on the basis of ancient Greek, is most likely to mean that the Muses ascended once again to heaven; taken in context, such a view is grossly implausible, especially as the Muses are described as being in exile. (The word *ξενιτιά* in Greek tradition, moreover, carries a frisson of deprivation, even horror [Sautier, 1990].) The revival of literary language, then, will carry ample possibilities for obscurity unless the reader is constantly attentive to the modern setting.

That setting is not only a political one but also a setting in a genre of modern poetry with a clear, though sometimes latent, political colouring; namely the progress poem. And I believe that Kalvos’ ode can only be understood with reference to perhaps the most celebrated

<sup>18</sup>*Pace* Kalvos, *ad loc.*; Mackridge (1994: 70) is clearly right. On *χάνω* as Italianism in Solomos, see Athanopoulou, 1996: 16.

<sup>19</sup>See Burton (1982: 110) on the echo effect.

example, Gray’s “The Progress of Poesy” (1757).<sup>20</sup> For while Foscolo’s “Grazie” has been much discussed in this connection, it is Gray’s celebrated poem which perhaps comes closest to our point.<sup>21</sup> Stanza II iii is worth quoting entire in order to illustrate the affinity:

Woods that wave o’er Delphi’s steep,  
Isles that crown th’ Aegean deep,  
Fields that cool Ilissus laves,  
Or where Maeander’s amber waves  
In lingering lab’rinth creep,  
How do your tuneful echoes languish,  
Mute but to the voice of anguish?  
Where each old poetic mountain  
Inspiration breathed around:  
Every shade and hallowed fountain  
Murmured deep a solemn sound:  
Till the sad Nine in Greece’s evil hour  
Left their Parnassus for the Latian plains.  
Alike they scorn the pomp of tyrant-power,  
And coward Vice that revels in her chains.  
When Latium had her lofty spirit lost,  
They sought, oh Albion! next thy sea-encircled coast.

(Gray, “Progress”, [Lonsdale, 1984: 360])

In the poems as wholes, moreover, some important similarities in individual elements but also in overall structure may be tabulated:

- Kalvos, stanza 1: proemium to the Ionian lyre (Gray I i)
- 2: the Graces (I iii)
- 3: metre like an eagle (cf. III iii, but also “impetuous” in I i)
- 4: dances (I iii)
- 5: darkness (inversion of II i)
- 6: night and the dew (inversion of II i)
- 7: the return of the sun (II i)

<sup>20</sup>I cite the poem, the full title of which is “The Progress of Poesy. A Pindaric Ode”, from Lonsdale, 1984: 358–61.

<sup>21</sup>Our fullest discussion of Kalvos’ ancient literary antecedents for this poem is that of Perysinakis, 1985. While acknowledging the likelihood that Kalvos takes elements from the ancient poets here (his uneven but in the end considerable assimilative powers are discussed below), it is my contention that the ode responds most directly to Gray’s often-reprinted poem. Curiously, Gray makes only one significant appearance in the critical literature on Kalvos, and in a very different spirit from this paper: see Sherrard, 1978: 26–30.

- 8: the Muse and valour (II ii)  
 9: tyranny (II iii)  
 10: the silence of Parnassus (II iii)  
 11: justice and pride (II iii; see also law in II i)  
 12: injustice (cf. II iii, I ii)  
 13: the power of the Muses (I iii)  
 14: golden crowns, cf. golden keys and Shakespeare (III i)  
 15–16: the Muses in heaven, and the music of the spheres, cf. the sky at the end of I ii  
 17: the Muses descend to earth, in the company of the Loves (I iii)  
 18: revelry (I iii)  
 19–21: Homer cf. Shakespeare (III i), Milton (III ii), Dryden (III ii–iii)  
 22: the disappearance of poetry (cf. III iii)  
 23: the ends of the earth (I ii)  
 24: the departure of the Muses to the West (I iii)  
 25: their return to Delphi (II iii)  
 26: Hippocrene, cf. Avon (III i)  
 27: the poet hears the return of the Muses and flies on, cf. III iii and Pindar, *Pythian* 1.4: προοιμίῳ ἀμβολάς.

Gray's poem outlines the departure of the Muses from Greece to Rome and then to England. But in the final stanza an "anxiety of influence" is voiced, with a "daring spirit" doubting his poetic powers. Kalvos' ode, by contrast, aims to return the Muses to Greece, thus representing a conscious progress on the progress poem. When he asks in the penultimate stanza for "not foreign maidens" (ὄχι τὰς ξένας) he means a Greek poem, as opposed to one by Gray, Chénier, Shelley or other Hellenists. In fact, Kalvos' train of thought in the debatable three stanzas (5, 16, 24) at which we looked earlier would be hard to follow without reference to Gray's use of the night picture (II i), the dance (I iii) and the departure of the Muses to the West (III iii — also, by the way, alluded to in the first ode of Kalvos' volume).

It seems, then, a reasonable supposition that Kalvos' ode, in aspiring to transport the Muses back to Greece, is consciously updating Gray's picture of the Muses as flourishing in Albion. But we can develop the connection a little further in order to shed further light on

one of Kalvos' most distinctive, prized and floridly revivalist features: his epithets.

To someone coming to it for the first time there can be no more prominent (or possibly obtrusive) feature of Gray's poem than its plethora of epithets; and in conjunction with the fact that these epithets almost invariably precede their nouns, the effect is highly distinctive. But to what end? The answer, or part of an answer, should, I think, be sought in — an epithet, "unborrowed" (line 120). Gray saturates his poem with epithets deriving from the inherited literary language he wishes to transcend. (And "unborrowed" itself comes from Dryden's translation of the *Eclogues*.) Gray's epithets come from his three predecessors explicitly referred to (Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden; often with the same accompanying noun), but also from a host of other influential poets: Spenser, Pope, Thomson, Young and others. Many of these epithets in turn translate Greek or Latin epithets, e.g. "blue-eyed" (line 30) from κυανῶπις. (I take an example which, unlike the above, is undocumented in Roger Lonsdale's magisterial edition [Lonsdale, 1980: 155–77].) If we are to take the poem seriously, the very density of inherited epithets in a self-conscious tradition will be central to the poem's purpose. The same is true of Kalvos' ode.

Kalvos in updating Gray takes over some of Gray's epithets, or else turns other parts of Gray's poem into epithets of his own. Something over half of Kalvos' epithets bear a relation to elements in Gray's ode. (As with Cavafy and Pope's Homer some seventy-five years later, a crucial element in the shaping of a modern Greek poem in relation to the ancient past can be the epithet taken from an English poem [Ricks, 1989: 93, 106–7].) It is no surprise to find "golden", "great", "heavenly", "ethereal", "divine", "Aonian"; slightly more interesting to find "Hyperion's glitt'ring shafts of war" becoming λαμπαδηφόροι (st. 15; an Aeschylean epithet), or "frisking light" becoming ζεφυρόποδες (st. 2). Such adaptations show Kalvos thinking carefully about how to re-Hellenise Gray's (often Hellenising) epithets. Of more consequence, however, we have Gray's "lofty spirit" helping us to divine the connotations of ὑψηλονόους (st. 11), and the "thirsty lance" of Mars (line 19) giving rise to διψασμένοι (st. 12).<sup>22</sup> And,

<sup>22</sup>It is true that Gray's language is somewhat clearer — true but

given that Homer is the only poet mentioned by name in Kalvos' ode, the Homeric origins or colouring of certain epithets are also important. Gray makes a point of using e.g. the Miltonic "mazy", "solemn-breathing", "unconquerable": Kalvos has from Homer μελίφρονον (st. 2 ; but the correct μελίφρον would help the metre too), ὑακίνθινον (st. 2), λιγύφθογον (st. 10). And sometimes a conjunction of epithet and noun has a Homeric colouring: τοῦ θεσπεσίου γέροντος / ἱερὰ κεφαλή (st. 19) might be an echo of ἱερὴ ἴς, and τῆς γῆς πλατείας (5) seems to recall εὐρεία χθών, just as in the first of the odes τὰ βουνὰ σκιώδη echoes οὐρεᾶ [...] σκίοεντα. In bringing Greek literary language back to Greece, it is important for Kalvos to display how much of it is still intact.

That the epithet is central to Kalvos' revival of Greek literary language is clear from even a glance at the prologue to *The Lyre*, where we have no fewer than 22 epithets in 21 lines. These cover a range from words of classical Greek poetry (πολύτεκνος) to prose words (σεβάσμιος) to late words (ἀμάραντος). A word like ἀμβροσιόδιμος, a *hapax legomenon* from the *Greek Anthology*, gives us a clue, though, that Kalvos is working some of the time from dictionaries rather than texts. (For, although the *Greek Anthology* is not the least likely book for him to have been reading in, the likelihood that he turned to a dictionary to find a variant on "ambrosial" is very much greater, particularly given his experience as a professional translator.<sup>23</sup>) All this use of epithets culminates in a verse consisting of them alone: ἀμάργαρος, ὀλόγυμος, ἀτάγγελτος. The first of these is apparently a coinage with the sense, "pearlless", i.e. unadorned; the second is a modern Greek compound comprehensible to the student of ancient Greek; the third seemingly an echo of ἀτάγγελος, "bringing one's own message" (in, e.g., Sophocles), but with the rather different sense, "speaking for oneself". It is characteristic of Kalvos that this heavy bunch of epithets is decked out to describe something which

unsurprising, when we consider that he is using his literary language at an advanced stage of development (or, in Wordsworth's view, over-development: "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" [Wordsworth, 1977: 875]).

<sup>23</sup>See his translations of the *Collects, Epistles and Gospels* (Kalvos, 1988b). This work, printed in 1820, gives an indication of Kalvos' conversancy with English some years before the writing of the *Odes*.

purportedly needs no description. But it is also a key part of the revivalist effect (and once again one may prefer the term to "archaistic") that he uses the ancient two-termination adjective rather than the modern Greek feminine endings — an instant but readily comprehensible way of evoking ancient literary language; so too uncontracted forms such as γηγενέων δρακόντων.

When we speak of ancient literary language in Kalvos, in fact — and the same goes for any other modern Greek poet still read — it is in an inevitably attenuated sense. (Though the poetic effect, of course, need not be attenuated at all, may indeed be dense with allusive power.) In the first place, because of the change from pitch to stress accent in pronunciation, Greek readers today tend to have little sense of ancient metres, so that the latter are poetically available only in the way that they are in, say, English. The dactylic hexameters of A.R. Rangavis or Gryparis possess no more and no less the possibilities of those of Longfellow or Clough (and ancient lyric metres have not to my knowledge been much used by modern Greek poets) — but modern Greek poetry cannot exploit a *distinctive* relation to the verse forms of the ancient past. Modern Greek poets do not absorb ancient poetry *as verse* (even Seferis makes metrical slips), and even Greek classical scholars such as Korais have excelled more in the criticism of prose texts. Furthermore, because modern Greek, though inflected surprisingly like the ancient language, has a different syntactical basis, the most elaborate sorts of syntactic effect such as hyperbaton are also unavailable, even in the highest registers of discursive prose. The masterpieces of modern Greek prose and verse possess an elaboration, but it is not of the same kind as that which we find in ancient verse and prose. As we shall see, however, highly localised appearances of ancient syntax can contribute economically to the sense of a heightened, hence literary, language.

What is, however, always available to the modern Greek revivalist poet is the resources of the ancient lexicon, and it is the lexical choices on which I shall dwell here, with reference to just one part of speech, the adjective, as earlier indicated. Here modern Greek poets have made subtle use of the *ipsissima verba* of their ancient models, their principal

gain being — were one to sum up the thing so crudely — compression.<sup>24</sup> Let me rehearse briefly an interesting example.

In “Ἀνεβαίνοντας τὸν Ὀλυμπο” (1915), Sikelianos describes himself in his (literal) ascent through the thick vegetation as *δαφνοτόμος, κισσοτόμος*. The epithets are not merely flowery: they are hieratic, with a possible recollection of an ancient festival at Phlius called *αἱ κισσοτόμοι ἡμέραι*.<sup>25</sup> If we contrast the case of an English poet with as much Greek as Sikelianos we will get an idea of the possibilities available to the Greek. Hopkins’ poem “Pied Beauty” is in essence a sustained gloss on the word *ποικίλος* in its various meanings, starting with the statement, “Glory be to God for dappled things” (Hopkins, 1978: 30–1). The fact that Hopkins is trying to bring over a Greek word into English seems to me important, but I doubt if the point is naturally absorbed by the reader in the way that a Greek reader divines that there is some sacral aspect to *δαφνοτόμος, κισσοτόμος*. Hopkins’ poem is trying to piece together the minutest observations of nature with his readings in Greek; and a more recent and violent echo of the aim may be seen in, especially, the later *Cantos* of Ezra Pound. When Pound in Canto LXXXIII, for example, actually uses the capitalised phrase *ΟΙ ΧΘΟΝΙΟΙ*, he is trying to appeal to the whole weight of a tradition, but only by dint of typographical desperation (Pound, 1954: 568). The Greek phrase becomes then a form of incantation, just like *ἀμάργαρος, ὀλόγυμνος, ἀντάγγελτος* — but Kalvos sees a brave new world of Greece in Europe ahead of him, rather than Pound’s “broken ant-hill” (LXXVI; 1954: 487).<sup>26</sup> And I would suggest indeed that it is distinctively through epithets that Kalvos, in Gray’s footsteps, attempts to convey this feeling.

A first reason for this being an appropriate way of affirming continuity in literary language and thus abetting literary revivalism is that the ease of formation of epithets is indeed common to ancient and

<sup>24</sup>Of course, at the margins, the same procedure can successfully be carried out by English poets: see Ricks, 1990: 53–6, or indeed the Pound poem cited in n. 1 above. More often, however, the effect is merely jocular or schoolmasterly: see e.g. Charles Sorley in Wilkinson, 1943: 22 or Brown, 1908: 68.

<sup>25</sup>See Ricks, 1991: 29–44, esp. 35.

<sup>26</sup>On this idea from a Greek perspective, see Lorenzatos, 1995: 455.

modern Greek. In translating the *Iliad* into modern Greek Kazantzakis and Kakridis were able to find or easily to coin equivalents for all those famous Homeric compounds like *βαθύζωνος* and *ἐλκεσίπελος* in a form of the modern language that was, however, sometimes harder for the contemporary reader than the ancient original.

Epithets, moreover — at least in modern Greek poetic registers — also make a more suitable vehicle of affirmed continuity than nouns or verbs, which figure — significantly — rather more prominently in Kalvos’ Glossary to *The Lyre*. This is partly because so many of the more basic modern Greek nouns and verbs are either of non-Greek origin, or no longer visibly of ancient Greek origin. But it is also because a reader’s failure to comprehend an epithet has less impact on the paraphrasable content. (So it is with the Homeric epithet: it’s enjoyable to debate what *ἀμύμων* means, but we all get the story in any case.) For these reasons, modern coinages of epithets on ancient models are both legion and current, while so many superficially ancient-based coinages such as *γεώμηλον* for the humble potato have fallen by the wayside.

Partly for these reasons, epithets (especially compound epithets) are probably that single feature of modern Greek poetic language which the common reader considers most poetic. Accordingly, the most radical technical innovators in this century’s poetry — Cavafy, Karyotakis, Seferis — have tended to base a large part of their programme (like Pound in his Imagist days) round the purging of epithets from poetic language. In the case of Kalvos in particular, his epithets — and this means, overwhelmingly, epithets of ancient origin or colouring — are considered his most valuable and influential contribution to the literature in technique and indeed emotional colouring, and are a central facet of his status as *σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον*.

An advocate of Kalvos like Tomadakis, on the one hand, proposes that the epithet is the key to his poetry and, sweepingly, to all Greek poetry since Homer.<sup>27</sup> Apostolakis, by contrast, the most severe of the poet’s critics, rightly taxes him for his tendency (and the point is also made in the more sober essay of Andriotis) to the over-use of certain weak adjectives such as *θαυμάσιος*. (Characteristically, Apostolakis

<sup>27</sup>N.B. Tomadakis, cited as lemma 944 in Andreiomenos, 1993.

pushed his point so far as to allege that to use epithets at all is a mark of an intrinsically prosaic temperament.<sup>28</sup>) More neutrally and helpfully, Dallas has stressed the prominence of Homeric epithets in the odes.<sup>29</sup> This is important because, before we accuse Kalvos of lacking the powers of coinage of, say, Palamas, we should consider the possibility that there is a conscious effort to contrast unusual epithets (so, from the *Greek Anthology* ἀμβροσίωδος, κυκλοδίωκτος) with staple, recurrent — in a loose sense, formulaic — ones. Similarly, at the end of the unequalled ode X, Kalvos bursts through to an adjective-free, verb-rich passage of action; something which only an earlier plethora of epithets could prepare for.

But it is in turning to the best of modern Greek critics that we will get the clearest insight into what Kalvos is trying to achieve with his epithets. Palamas wrote in 1889 that:

Kalvos, as a true poet, places great importance on the epithet [...] hardly any epithet is to be met with in his work which is vulgar, that is, pallid and trite. The archaism of Kalvos is revealed above all in his choice of epithets, which he borrows for the most part from the ancients.

Palamas goes on to point out how Kalvos characteristically uses a form of noun-epithet syntax not found in the spoken language, saying not τὸς νυμφικοὺς θαλάμους, nor τὸς θαλάμους τὸς νυμφικοὺς, but τὸς θαλάμους νυμφικοὺς (Palamas, n.d.: 50) This small mannerism alone imparts a good deal of Kalvos' learned flavour.

Not all of Palamas' analysis stands: Kalvos does have trite adjectives; his borrowings are in fact disproportionately from post-classical texts; and revivalism still seems a better label for what he is about than archaism, to which I shall return briefly at the end of this paper. But Palamas is right that the syntactical point, as much as the ancient origins of particular epithets, makes the *trompe-l'oeuil*, if you like, of ancient literary language in Kalvos' odes. (So, e.g., ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον μελίφρονον, τῆς γῆς πλατείας, etc.) It is true that the origins of Kalvos' syntax here are a matter of dispute: Vayenas plausibly sees it as deriving not directly from ancient Greek but from Italian neo-

<sup>28</sup>Apostolakis, 1934: 346 and 354; Andriotis, 1946: 164.

<sup>29</sup>Dallas, 1992: 214; also Dallas, 1990: 355.

classical poetry (rather like Milton's Italianisms: "sad task and hard").<sup>30</sup> I am not sure that things are quite as simple as bare alternatives: Kalvos' odes propose a progress to ancient Greek literature and liberty, but that progress will naturally be via Italy. Whatever the origins of the noun-epithet syntax in Kalvos, however, it is one of his most unmistakable and most revivalist features.

Kalvos' more unusual epithets are, it seems likely, plundered from a thesaurus rather than absorbed naturally from the deep classical reading of a Gray. His brief sample of Homeric translation, together with the large number of Homeric epithets, suggests a degree of familiarity with the Homeric poems, but words in his poems from Eustathius like σταφυλοφόρος or πολυβότανος surely come from dictionaries. But this is not at all to say that such compounds do not, in context, ramify with connotations, or that they do not contribute to the revivalist project. "Greek", as Dr Johnson observed, "is like lace; every man gets as much of it as he can" (Boswell, 1980: 1081).

Nor indeed has the heterogeneous character of Kalvos' literary language deprived it, any more than Milton's, of subsequent influence; indeed, Eliot's remarks on Milton's invention of a poetic language may be of help here (Eliot, 1979: 138–61). Yet, though Kalvos "writ no language", his contribution to the formation of modern Greek poetic language, as related to ancient Greek literary language, has been far-reaching.<sup>31</sup> It has not always been to the good, any more than has that of Hopkins: it has given birth to what, to some tastes, is an adjective fetish in Elytis. Nor has it always been fully understood: as Johnson mordantly observed of Gray's Odes, "Some hardy champions undertook to rescue them from neglect, and in a short time many were content to be shown beauties which they could not see" (Johnson, 1968: 2.385). But the revivalism of Kalvos will always be important: it helped to stimulate a variety of poetic relationships with the ancients, with epithets as key agents of such relationships.

Kalvos' revivalist project, however, cannot but be read in the light of larger, extra-literary considerations. If the revival failed, as a national, political and moral one, then we shall expect to find later

<sup>30</sup>Vayenas, 1972; Milton, 1981: 13.

<sup>31</sup>The formulation is by Ben Jonson in *Explorata*: see Jonson, 1975: 428. Kalvos' deepest influence has of course been on Elytis.

Greek writers tending to allude to ancient literary language ironically, as much to demonstrate their distance from an irretrievable heritage as their affinity with it.

Let me end with a glance at one delicate example of an ancient epithet's trailing clouds of association, in a novel this time. In Kosmas Politis' *Eroica* (1938), which traces the adolescence of a group of young people in what bears the hallmark of Smyrna before the Great War, a girl gives a bunch of cydonia to the maths master; a few lines later, the spring atmosphere is described with reference to a strong wind blowing the women's skirts (Politis, 1982: 84). Politis has made here a botanical allusion to the plant celebrated in Ibycus fragment 386, and to the related epithet: κυδώνια (Campbell, 1967: 65–6). His romanised epithet/noun "cydonia" (not an archaism because it is a botanical name) sets off a train of allusion probably deriving — and here is an extra twist — from Pound's imitation of the Ibycus poem; Pound's earlier poems are cited elsewhere in the novel.<sup>32</sup>

In a case such as this, a literary language hides itself behind a larger pattern, a foreign alphabet, a different proximate origin, and a wholly variant stance towards the revivalist project — not least because this novel looks back twenty-odd years to a setting before the Asia Minor Disaster and to a world now lost for ever.<sup>33</sup> Just as Kalvos' odes see a revolutionary Greece becoming sanctified through the return of poetry from the West, Kosmas Politis identifies in the lost Asia Minor a sort of evanescent poetry which only fleetingly survives its transfer to a contemporary Athenian novel. (A Regress of Poesy, we may call it.) What Kalvos has in common with Kosmas Politis — and here he broke new ground — is his showing that in modern Greek literature an allusive technique can economically be achieved by a train of thought clustered round an ancient epithet. And in this technique, and indeed in his wider assumptions, Kalvos drew consciously — but with some freedom — on the poetry of Gray.

David Ricks,  
King's College London

<sup>32</sup>Pound, "The Spring" (Pound, 1967: 95), with Ibycus' first line as the epigraph; discussion in Kenner, 1975: 138–42. Also cited in *Eroica*, more openly this time, is "Night Litany" (Politis, 1982: 70 = Pound, 1967: 52–3).

<sup>33</sup>See introduction by Peter Mackridge to Politis' *Eroica* (Politis, 1982), with additional remarks in Ricks, 1992a: 183–7.

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## FOLD/UNFOLD/TWOFOLD: Η ΨΥΧΗ ΚΑΙ Η ΠΤΥΧΗ (ΠΡΟΣΕΓΓΙΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΟ-ΑΥΣΤΡΑΛΙΑΝΗ ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΑ)

Mother was found to have  
a small shadow on the lung  
A. Kefala

Τι είναι μια λεπτή σχέση; Η ερώτηση αυτή δεν είναι άγνωστη σε κανέναν. Πρόκειται ίσως για το σημείο εκείνο αναφοράς στο οποίο γυρίζουμε συνεχώς σε ό,τι αφορά κάθε είδους σχέση με το περιβάλλον μας είτε ανθρώπινο είναι αυτό είτε φυσικό είτε μεταφυσικό. Εκείνο φυσικά που προσδιορίζει τη σχέση αυτή δεν είναι μόνον τα σημεία επαφής μεταξύ δυο διαφορετικών στοιχείων όσο και ο χώρος ανάμεσά τους, το κενό εκείνο διάστημα, που δίνει και το ανάλογο χρώμα στη σχέση αυτή και την κάνει πράγματι “λεπτή”, όσο λεπτή μπορεί να γίνει στο τέλος. Εκείνο ωστόσο που έχει ιδιαίτερη σημασία εδώ είναι το γεγονός ότι, αν και όλα είναι οριακά και σαν να παίζονται την τελευταία στιγμή, σχεδόν πάντα ξαφνικά, εντούτοις τίποτα δεν είναι δυνατό για μια λεπτή σχέση, αν δεν υπάρχει ήδη κάπου μέσα στο χρόνο, από πολύ πριν, η δυνατότητα να υπάρξει· αλλιώς ποτέ δεν μπορεί να είναι λεπτή, δηλαδή ποτέ δεν μπορεί να είναι όντως σχέση. Από το σημείο αυτό και μετά, στο επίπεδο αυτής της σχέσης, όλα είναι δυνατά και πιθανά ακόμα και τα αντίθετά τους, όλα παίζονται στο σημείο εκείνο της “διαφοράς”, φιλοσοφικής και γραμματολογικής έννοιας—παντίερα των τελευταίων είκοσι χρόνων. Στο θέμα π.χ., της λογοτεχνικής γραφής, ιδίως τις τελευταίες δεκαετίες, είναι αδιανόητο να συλλογιστεί κανείς την έννοια της γραφής χωρίς παράλληλα να αναλογιστεί την άσπρη λευκή σελίδα, όπως έλεγε και ο Σεφέρης σε ένα στίχο από τα “Τρία κρυφά ποιήματα”: “Τ’ άσπρο χαρτί μιλά με τη φωνή σου” (Σεφέρης, 1972: 300), ή ακόμα όπως το έθεσε πιο ριζοσπαστικά ο Μαλλαρμέ: “Sur le vide papier que la blancheur défend!” [στο άδειο χαρτί που το υπερασπίζεται η λευκότητα]<sup>1</sup> (Mallarmé, 1974: 38).

<sup>1</sup> Όλες οι μεταφράσεις των ξενόγλωσσων πηγών, συμπεριλαμβανο-