The return of the Muses: some aspects of revivalism in Greek literature, 1760-1840

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A recurrent image in Greek writing of the early nineteenth century is that of the Muses, who, having been banished to Europe by the barbarian Turkish occupier, were now returning to their liberated homeland and were thus bringing about a new flourishing of the arts and sciences, which had for centuries been absent from Greece. This image is typical of the literary fashion for Classical Greek allusion among Greek intellectuals of the time, and it acted as a convenient metaphor for the rebirth of high culture in Greece to which they earnestly looked forward. The re-establishment of the arts and sciences, especially literature, among the Greeks was felt by the Greek intellectual leaders both before and after the establishment of the Greek state to be a precondition for modern Greece's recognition by the West as a nation worthy of respect and sympathy.

The aim of this paper is to use literary evidence in order to examine the changing attitudes of the Greeks and other Orthodox Christians of the Balkans to the relationship between themselves and the Greek past during the period leading up to the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and its immediate aftermath. Despite the existence of a number of conflicting social, economic, and cultural interests and orientations within the Greek-speaking world at the time, we can easily observe the progressively increasing intensity of a fashion for intellectuals to appeal to ancient Hellas in order to legitimate their activities in the eyes of both their compatriots and the Europeans. This fashion was of course encouraged by Neo-classical and Romantic Hellenism in Europe.

For the Balkans the eighteenth century was the period of what the historian Paschalis Kitromilides has called the *"pax*

ottomanica".[1] At this time the external borders of the Ottoman Empire became stabilized, while the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople was consolidating its control over the Balkans by appointing a large number of Greek bishops even in areas where Greek was not normally spoken; indeed, in the late eighteenth century the Patriarch's jurisdiction covered a larger number of people than during the Byzantine period, the *Millet-i Rum* comprising not only Greek-speakers but persons who had Albanian, Vlach, Romanian, and various Slavonic dialects as their native tongue. But the fact that the liturgy was in Greek meant that those who entered the Church as priests or monks needed to learn Greek, while many bishops and other churchmen attempted to persuade the non-Greek-speaking Orthodox populations in their areas to adopt Greek as their spoken language.[2] At the same time the Ottoman Empire had been obliged under pressure from Russia to allow the two provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia (which more or less make up present-day Romania) to be governed on behalf of the Empire by Christian princes. Most of these were drawn from a small number of Constantinopolitan Greek families who regularly filled high positions in the Patriarchate, although there were some princes of native Romanian families too. The hospodars of Wallachia and Moldavia conducted their administration in Greek, and education in the principalities was similarly carried out in Greek. Thus in the late eighteenth century the use of the Greek language became more widespread and prestigious than at any time since the height of the Byzantine Empire; the Balkans had become politically and

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[1] P.M. Kitromilides, "Orthodox culture and collective identity in the Ottoman Balkans during the eighteenth century", in: C. Heywood and K. Fleet (eds.), *The Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century*, Cambridge (forthcoming [1994]).

[2] For instance Kosmas the Aetolian (d. 1779), who discouraged the speaking of Albanian (Kosmas o Aitolos, *Διδαχές*, Athens n.d., p. 207); the Vlach Daniel of Moschopolis, who urged Albanians, Vlachs and Bulgarians to take up Greek (*Εισαγωγική διδασκαλία*, n.p. [Constantinople?] 1802, preface); and Neophytos Doukas (see P.M. Kitromilides, "'Imagined communities' and the origins of the national question in the Balkans", *European Historical Quarterly* 19 (1989) 156-7).

ecclesiastically united, with a marked absence of national divisions and ethnic conflicts.[3]

It is no accident that, as far as I know, the first appearance of the image of the returning Muses coincides chronologically with the beginning of the so-called Greek Enlightenment, a movement, influenced by the Enlightenment in Europe, whose aim was to educate the Greek nation in modern western learning and whose ultimate consequence (though many of its exponents were not fully aware of this at the time) was the establishment of an independent Greek state at the expense of both the Ottoman Empire and the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The background of the first writer to use this image of the Muses, Iosipos Moisiodax, is indicative that the Greek Enlightenment was a pan-Balkan affair. His very surname was an explicit statement of his non-Greek origin, for by calling himself Moisiodax (a Moesian Dacian) he tells us that he was a Vlach from Bulgaria.

In 1761 Moisiodax published at Venice a Greek translation of Muratori's *Moral Philosophy*. In the preface to this volume he wrote that "When Greece lived in freedom and was governed with autonomy," the arts and sciences flourished. "But finally, whether because of the multitudinous sins of the people, or on account of the sluggish rule of the Emperors of Constantinople, the barbarian nations flooded in" and the Muses were forced to seek refuge at Constantinople; but when this too was overrun, the Muses were replaced by "ignorance, boorishness, wretchedness". But now, in his own time, Moisiodax goes on, all this had changed:

> Politeness, decency, and love of learning seem again to have revived... In truth, schools multiply, general education flourishes, philosophy is taught, mathematics is heard, teachers increase in number. The whole of Greece should respect those who are striving to recall the Muses to their native Helicon.[4]

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[3] P.M. Kitromilides, "'Balkan mentality': history, legend, imagination", Communication to the Seventh International Congress of South-East European Studies, Thessaloniki, 28 August-4 September 1994.

[4] Iosipos Moisiodax (tr.), *Ηθική φιλοσοφία* (Venice 1761). The preface is reprinted in P.M. Kitromilides, *I. Μοισιόδαξ*, Athens 1985, pp. 323ff.

There are several points here that deserve comment. As a monk, Moisiodax was obliged to consider the possibility that the benighted period during which the Muses were exiled from Greece was sent by God as a punishment for the sins of the Greeks. It should be noted, though, that even as an Orthodox Christian he looks back with nostalgia to the time when "Greece lived in freedom and was governed with autonomy", by which he can only be referring to the Golden Age of ancient Greece; moreover, he has no hesitation in considering the possibility of another cause for the Greeks' misery, namely the "sluggish rule" of the Orthodox Christian Emperors of Constantinople. He does not number the Vlachs among the "barbarian nations" that overran the Balkans; indeed, despite the fact that Vlach was his mother tongue, he considered himself to be as Greek as any other Orthodox Christian who partook of Greek *paideia*. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Moisiodax was actually looking forward to a future of political independence for Greece.

The return of the Muses, whether expressed as a pious hope or as a deliberate aim, continued to be a recurrent metaphor in Greek writings during the following decades, gathering momentum especially during the 1810s, at a time when the prospect of an independent Greece was beginning to be viewed by a number of intellectuals as a practical possibility. The use of the metaphor tends to be accompanied by other references to the revival, or at least the imitation or emulation, of ancient Greek culture. It also typically forms part of an orientation towards modern western Europe, where many of the Greek intellectuals had been educated in the Classics. A frequently formulated scenario, symbolizing this process, was that the Muses, having been exiled from Greece, had sought refuge in western Europe, which had nurtured them during the centuries of Greek captivity and which was now ready to hand them back; some writers before 1821 stated that the Muses were already on their way home and were staying temporarily in the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia until such time as Greece herself was ready to take them back.

See also R. Clogg, "Elite and popular culture in Greece under Turkish rule", *Indiana Social Studies Quarterly* 32 (1979) 72.

I want now, however, to turn my attention to literature itself and to concentrate on the cases of a number of individuals and trends that will help to chart the changing function of literature during the period. "Literature" is a difficult concept to define, especially for the early part of the period under discussion when the various genres had not yet been distinguished and defined; but we can at least classify any work in *verse* as literary because of the artistry required of the versifier.

Few Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire in 1761 would have shared the views of Moisiodax that I have quoted. One writer who presents attitudes more typical of the time is Kaisarios Dapondes, probably the most prolific Greek writer of the eighteenth century, who was born in 1714 on the Aegean island of Skopelos. Like many bright young men of his time, he went off to Constantinople to find his fortune and soon obtained a position as secretary to members of the Phanariot aristocracy, for whom he worked for some years both in the imperial capital and in the Danubian principalities. He appears to have met with considerable success and to have amassed a certain wealth, but his life was changed by a series of personal misfortunes. He was briefly imprisoned in Constantinople; shortly after his release he got married, but his wife died in childbirth together with their first child. Struck by remorse, he decided to atone for his sins by becoming a monk, and eventually went to take up residence at the Xeropotamou Monastery on Mount Athos. No sooner had he arrived there, however, than the other monks decided to take advantage of the presence in their brotherhood of a much-travelled man of the world by despatching him on an eight-year peregrination of the Greek Orthodox world, accompanied by a fragment of the True Cross, with the aim of collecting alms for the monastery. After his return he set about writing a number of works on history and geography as well as books of moral edification. But his most interesting work is his long account of his peregrination with the holy relic entitled *The Garden of Graces* and containing a wealth of autobiographical information and long digressions which reveal his outlook on the world.[5]

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[5] Kaisarios Dapondes, "Κήπος χαρίτων" (written 1768), in E. Legrand, *Bibliothèque grecque vulgaire*, vol. 3, Paris 1881, pp. 1-232.

The Garden of Graces presents a clear image of the Greek Orthodox world-view before the formation of a new Greek consciousness under the influence of the Greek Enlightenment with its orientation towards modern Europe and ancient Greece. As Paschalis Kitromilides points out, Dapondes's conceptual world possessed two cores which gave him his sense of identity: an outer core represented his consciousness of living in the Ottoman Empire, while an inner core represented his consciousness of being an Orthodox Christian.[6] Each of these cores was orientated towards Constantinople, which continued to be the seat of secular and religious authority, as it had been during the Byzantine Empire; indeed, the Ottoman Empire, as a theocratic state, recognized no distinction between religious and secular authority. Dapondes's writings show no sense either of a national homeland or of ethnic conflict between Greek and non-Greek Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman Empire.[7] Although his writings include a geography of Europe (which for the most part concerns places he had never visited), his own experience *excludes* western Europe. When he wishes to place his experiences in a historical context, he does so by specifying who occupied the thrones of the Ottoman Empire, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the Danubian Principalities. The idea of the divine right of rulers and of the hereditary nature of authority (though not of course in the case of *celibate* Patriarchs!) is deeply engrained in Dapondes's world-view, as no doubt was the belief, repeatedly expressed by representatives and supporters of the Church from the Ottoman conquest to the eve of the Greek War of Independence, that the Turks had been sent by God to protect the Orthodox from the schismatics of the Church of Rome.

It is indicative that *The Garden of Graces*, written in 1768 in Dapondes's habitual fifteen-syllable rhymed couplets, is dedicated and ostensibly addressed to the fourteen-year-old son of Dapondes's late patron, a Phanariot hospodar of Moldavia; the son too was later to become ruler of the same province. Much of the Greek literary activity from the middle of the eighteenth century to 1821 had some connection with the Danubian

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[6] Kitromilides, "Balkan mentality" (see note 3 above).
[7] ibid.

principalities, whether because the author had studied there, or because he had been employed there as a teacher, a secretary, or an official, or because one of the princes was the dedicatee and/or financier of the publication. The principalities, situated within the Orthodox world but on the margins of the Ottoman Empire, and governed by Orthodox princes of Greek culture who were crowned at Constantinople according to rituals reminiscent of Byzantine ceremonial, were the meeting point of political and cultural currents flowing from the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, Russia, the Hapsburg Empire, and western Europe. But, beyond his dedicatee, the young Alexandros Mavrokordatos, Dapontes is addressing any Greek-speaking Orthodox Christian who cares to read him. *The Garden of Graces* is a compendium of instruction in the ways of God and the world (in particular the life of the Orthodox Christians in various parts of the Empire), a book of moral edification, but also a work of entertainment, and its style is chatty, the addressee being constantly present in the poet's discourse.

In *The Garden of Graces* Dapondes's attitude to the Ottomans is ambivalent, a combination of regret with resigned acceptance of Ottoman rule. At one point he talks of a dream in which he saw Sultan Ahmet, father "του βασιλέως μας του πολυχρονεμένου" ["of our king – long may he reign"], who had ruled his Empire well with the assistance of Ibrahim, "the famed vizir" and friend of the Christians.[8] In Dapondes's dream Sultan Ahmet had foretold that the peace, law, and order which had prevailed till his time would disappear at his death; and Dapondes comments that indeed he has seen the state of the world grow worse since the days of his youth. Elsewhere, however, when describing his tour of the Aegean islands, he laments that they are "under the slavish yoke of a slave-woman, Hagar the Egyptian",[9] referring to the legend that the Moslems are descended from Abraham's concubine Hagar rather than from his lawful wife Sarah.

If the state of his homeland under *Moslem* rule is unsatisfactory, how does he view the time of the Christian emperors of

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[8] Dapondes, op. cit., ch. XII, ll. 132-6.
[9] ibid., ch. XI, ll. 379-80.

Constantinople and the pagan Hellenes who preceded them? In chapter XI he describes an ancient fortress on Samos, whose every tower and wall is "ανδρείας της ελληνικής καθρέφτης" ["mirror of Hellenic courage"], and goes on to extol "our old forefathers", in comparison with whom his contemporaries are "ανθρωπάρια, πίθηκες, μασκαράδες" ["mannikins, apes, and buffoons"].[10] He justifies this invidious comparison by pointing to the enduring nature of ancient buildings in contrast with modern ones which so readily collapse: ancient builders were divine heroes, "true men, unbelievers but yet pious in soul and manners".[11] In particular, Pythagoras, Democritus and Heraclitus are said to have been more saintly than any man alive today.[12] Then Dapondes goes on to the wonders built by the Byzantine emperors, which he calls "relics of our own erstwhile authority" and "ornaments of our sacred imperial throne".[13] He also has a vision of "our Byzantium in its golden age and in our dreams".[14] Elsewhere in his poem Dapondes can't resist telling stories of metamorphosis based on Ovid and having a good laugh with his addressee at the sexual exploits of the ancient gods, whom he depicts with irreverent familiarity and racy language: Zeus, for instance, is described as "γαμνιάς διαβολεμμένος" [a "devilish bonker"] and Hermes as his "ρουφιάνος" ["pimp"].[15] He concludes that, while we can thank God we have escaped from the "abominable religion" of the ancient Greeks, we can still learn from their stories.[16] In the same way, in another work, Dapondes feels free to retell the stories of Nasreddin Hodja, which were so popular throughout the Balkans and the Middle East. The religion practised by the inventor of a tale was clearly no obstacle when it came to drawing a lesson of moral conduct from it. But such a flippant treatment of the ancient Greek heritage would become unfashionable fifty years later, in the run-up to the War of

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[10] ibid., ll. 40-3. This and the quotations that follow indicate Dapondes's ambivalent attitude to his "Hellenic" (i.e. pagan) forefathers.
[11] ibid., ll. 84-5.
[12] ibid., ll. 263-306.
[13] ibid., ll. 111-13.
[14] ibid., ll. 31-2.
[15] ibid., ch. XV, ll. 263-4.
[16] ibid., ch. XV, ll. 395-410.

Independence, when any reference to ancient Greek culture was likely to be made in tones of portentous reverence.

Perhaps the most popular form of literature written and read by members of the Greek-speaking Orthodox communities that enjoyed the privilege of relative freedom at the princely courts of Bucharest and Jassy between about 1770 and 1821 were the usually anonymous verses that found their way into manuscript anthologies known as *mismayés* (from the Arabic and Turkish word *mecmua* meaning collection or miscellany).[17] Apart from their wide circulation in manuscript, many of these poems, which were generally composed in order to be sung to Ottoman melodies, were also published in a number of books which appeared in two batches of two each, the first in the early 1790s and the second in the late 1810s;[18] this kind of poem continued to enjoy an afterlife in anthologies published even after the establishment of the Greek state.

These verses, which seem to combine Ottoman with French influences, had two chief themes: love and the vicissitudes of fate. The love-poems are usually addressed by a male lover to an unwilling mistress, and one can imagine that they were frequently employed by young men-about-town in Constantinople, Bucharest and Jassy in their efforts to woo their sweethearts. The poems on the vicissitudes of fate contain two conflicting messages: the more cynical view that you should neither nurture false hopes nor trust good fortune, since you can rely on nothing and trust no one; and the more hopeful view that as long as you show patience and endurance, happiness will be your reward. The cynical message – that one has to make one's own fate – seems especially suitable for those who were part of the Phanariot administration, while the hopeful one is perhaps a consolation

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[17] A collection of poems from these anthologies has been published in a new edition by Andia Frantzi, *Μισμαγιά: ανθολόγιο φαναριώτικης ποίησης κατά την έκδοση Δαούτη (1818)*, Athens 1993.

[18] Rigas Velestinlis (tr.), *Σχολείον των ντελικάτων εραστών*, Vienna 1790 (new ed. by P.S. Pistas, Athens 1971); *Έρωτος αποτελέσματα ήτοι ιστορία ηθικοερωτική με πολιτικά τραγούδια*, Vienna 1792 (new ed. by Mario Vitti, Athens 1989, omitting some of the songs); Zisis Daoutis (ed.), *Διάφορα ηθικά, και αστεία στιχουργήματα*, Vienna 1818; Dionysios Fotinos, *Νέος Ερωτόκριτος*, Vienna 1818.

for those who had to suffer under it; but both have presumably emerged from the experience of a community that was ultimately subject to a capricious sultan who might raise someone to a princely throne one day, then the next day have him beheaded for some imagined misdemeanour.

Phanariot poetry is often characterized by its formalism and playfulness: it is an art of insincerity. The most accomplished poet to have emerged from this tradition was Athanasios Christopoulos, who was born in Macedonia in 1772 and settled in Bucharest, where he became an official at the princely court. His collection *Lyrika* was published in 1811,[19] but there are indications that the poems were written even before the turn of the century. The collection is chiefly divided into sections entitled "Erotika", which includes playful love-poems containing recurrent references to Aphrodite and her blind son, and "Vacchika", which are poems in praise of drinking. The collection ends with a longer and more ambitious poem in fifteen-syllable rhymed couplets, entitled "The Apology of Eros", in which Eros claims to be sole master of the world. These poems, written in imitation of the "Anacreontic" poems that were in vogue in the West in the Renaissance and then again in the eighteenth century, display a complete absence of an Orthodox Christian outlook without however taking their Classical references seriously either. The *Lyrika* is also an important sampler of what can be done by a skilful versifier who uses an urbane spoken modern Greek and tries his hand at a wide variety of metrical and rhyming schemes. As we shall see later, Christopoulos was to become the target of contemptuous criticism from the poets who set out to glorify the exploits of the Greek warriors in the War of Independence, namely Kalvos and Solomos. Yet an indication of the popularity and prestige that these poems continued to enjoy is that the first book ever to be printed in Athens was an edition of Christopoulos's *Lyrika*; this was in 1825, when the Turks were still occupying the Acropolis and were beginning their year-long siege of Missolonghi.

Yet even Christopoulos, after the composition of his *Lyrika* but before their first edition, published a neoclassical "heroic

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[19] Athanasios Christopoulos, *Λυρικά*, n.p. [Vienna] 1811.

drama", variously titled *Achilles* and *The Death of Patroclus*, in 1805.[20] For metamorphoses in Greek literary and ideological fashions had already been happening for some time. It is interesting to observe such metamorphoses taking place within individual writers. Such a metamorphosis took place very early in Rigas, a writer of Vlach origin born in the village of Velestino in Thessaly around 1757. He too made his way to the Danubian principalities, where he apparently amassed a substantial fortune through commerce. His first book, entitled *The School of Delicate Lovers* and published at Vienna in 1790, consisted of translations of selected short stories from the book *Les Contemporaines* by the French writer Rétif de la Bretonne. These stories, with which he took occasional liberties in order to render their settings and situations more familiar to his Phanariot readers, are also interspersed with Phanariot love-poems such as are to be found in the *mismayés*. Rigas's book was followed two years later, in 1792, by an anonymous collection of short stories entitled *The Consequences of Love*. This book consists of what appear to be original stories set in Constantinople and other areas familiar to the Phanariots, and it too includes a number of Phanariot love-songs; it is thus both the first collection of modern Greek short stories ever to be published and the first printed anthology of modern Greek verse by various hands for almost a century.[21] *The Consequences of Love* is an indication of the popularity of the trend that Rigas had begun.

Rigas was printing his sentimental stories for sensitive lovers the year after the French Revolution. But once the revolutionary message reached him, he must have undergone a profound ideological change, for seven years later, in 1797, he published a revolutionary manifesto consisting of patriotic proclamations and war-songs, a declaration of the rights of man, and a provisional constitution for a republic which would cover the whole of the

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[20] Athanasios Christopoulos, *Δράμα ηρωικόν εις την αιολοδωρικήν διάλεκτον*, n.p., n.d. [Vienna 1805]. Christopoulos's drama (together with the collection of comedies by Georgios Soutzos, *Πονήματά τινα δραματικά*, which appeared in Venice in the same year) was apparently the first new original play in Greek to have been published since *Βασιλεύς ο Ροδολίνος* by the Cretan Ioannis-Andreas Troilos in 1647.

[21] That is, since *Άνθη ευλαβείας*, Venice 1708.

Balkans and Asia Minor and have Greek as its language of administration. He also published a military manual for distribution among Greek fighting-men and a map of Greece indicating the ancient and modern names of each location, sites of battles against the barbarians, reproductions of ancient coins, lists of Byzantine emperors, and a plan of Constantinople. It was while he was in the process of despatching these documents to his contacts in the Ottoman Empire that he was arrested by the Austrian police and handed over to the Ottoman authorities, who executed him in 1798 for incitement to sedition.

Rigas's metamorphosis into a Greek patriot was perhaps the earliest and most violent that we can find in this period. A more gradual – and more peaceful – instance is that of Iakovakis Rizos Neroulos, born at Constantinople in 1778. Attaching himself to a succession of Phanariot princes, he rose to become Grand Postelnic or chief minister of the principality of Wallachia about 1814 (such appointments, grand as they may have been in name, were made for one year only). In 1818 he was appointed secretary and translator in the interpreting service of the Sublime Porte and in the following year became Grand Postelnic of Moldavia. Neroulos was the dedicatee of the first edition of Christopoulos's *Lyrika*. In 1816 he published a mock-heroic poem entitled *The theft of the turkey* (there is no pun in the Greek original!) which provides a charming, humorous, but affectionate portrait of a frivolous young Phanariot aristocrat who loses the prize turkey-hen that he has been fattening up for a feast.[22]

Rizos Neroulos is perhaps most famous for the *Korakistika*, or "language of the ravens" (published in 1813), a light-hearted satire, in dramatic form, directed against the language reforms proposed by Adamandios Korais, in which a deranged pedant who insists on speaking "corrected" Greek even to his children and servants, almost chokes to death during a meal while trying to pronounce an eighteen-syllable word (ελαδιοξιδιοαλατολαχανοκαρύκευμα) which he has concocted out of ancient Greek roots in order to avoid pronouncing the barbaric "λαχανοσαλάτα", until his children persuade him to utter the everyday word and

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22 Iakovakis Rizos Neroulos, *Κούρκας αρπαγή, ποίημα ηρωικοκωμικόν*, Vienna 1816.

he is cured.[23] Neroulos's attack on pedantry and linguistic archaism was not however intended to defend the spoken language of the common people, but rather to promote the "ennobled" language cultivated by the Phanariot aristocracy over the generations at the expense of the new-fangled reforms proposed by Korais, who was an inveterate opponent of what he viewed as the inherited but undeserved privileges and ill-gotten wealth of a clique that prospered by collaborating with Oriental despots in keeping the greater part of the Greek population in ignorance and moral degradation.

But Neroulos too was affected by the neoclassical fashion that was gathering momentum, and he produced a pair of tragedies on ancient Greek themes to suit the mood of the times, *Aspasia* and *Polyxena* (published in 1813 and 1814 respectively).[24] Both these works are sentimental rather than patriotic. The first concentrates on Aspasia's grief at the death of Pericles, while the second is a family drama revolving rather incongruously around the rivalry between Polyxena and Cassandra for the hand of Achilles. Neroulos's tragic turn is symptomatic of a literature that was turning away from wit and charm in order to espouse an earnest but bloodless and humourless spirit of neoclassical virtue.

Later, after the expulsion of the Phanariots from the Danubian principalities with the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence in 1821, Neroulos found himself in Geneva, where in 1826 he took it upon himself to deliver and publish a *Cours de littérature grecque moderne* – the first work to provide a substantial survey of Greek writing (not confined to what we would now call "literary") since 1700 and to attempt to define the

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[23] Iakovos Rizos, *Κορακιστικά, ή διόρθωσις της ρωμαίκης γλώσσας. Κωμωδία εις τρεις Πράξαις διαιρεμένη*, n.p. [Vienna] 1813 (new ed. with French translation by P.A. Lascaris: Rizos Néroulos, *Les Korakistiques*, Paris 1928). The title, as well as a pun on Korais's name, is a reference to the conspiratorial jargon used by adults so as not to be understood by children, and vice versa. Birds – and eating – appear to have held a special fascination for Neroulos!

[24] Iakovos Rizos, *Ασπασία, τραγωδία*, Vienna 1813; Iakovakis Rizos Neroulos, *Πολυξένη, τραγωδία εις πέντε πράξεις διηρημένη*, Vienna 1814.

concept "modern Greek literature" – in which he claims, among other things, that his *Aspasia* was the first tragedy in Modern Greek to observe the rule of the three unities. A few years later, in 1833, in 1834 and again in 1841, Neroulos was to serve briefly – as briefly as he had been Grand Postelnic of Wallachia and Moldavia – as Minister of Cults and Public Instruction in the Kingdom of Greece.

I like to imagine Neroulos, like many other Greeks of his time and from a similar background, changing his political views and his language as readily as he changed his clothes: in 1821, abandoning the elaborate Oriental costume of a Phanariot courtier, he would have donned a frock coat to give his course of lectures in Geneva, and presumably retained it when he arrived in Greece.[25] At the same time he exchanged his urbane and reactionary outlook and his colloquial language for the noble ideals of a Greek patriot expressing himself in the staid "corrected" Greek of Korais. Geographically speaking, Neroulos's life came full circle, for he died in 1850 while serving as Greek ambassador at Constantinople. I don't know what clothes he wore in that capacity.

The taste for drama was in fact one of the chief ways in which the fashion for Classical themes and references manifested itself, and in the few years preceding the outbreak of the War of Independence the theatre provided an important forum for the dissemination of patriotic sentiments. Amateur productions of tragedies were staged not only at Bucharest but at Odessa, which was more or less a Greek city, and at Corfu. Among the first plays to be performed in Modern Greek outside Venetian-occupied Crete and the Ionian Islands was an anonymous

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[25] Coincidentally Alexis Politis (*Ρομαντικά χρόνια*, Athens 1993, pp. 119-23), writes about dress as a sign of "mentality" (I would rather say ideology) among the Greeks in the early nineteenth century. Especially germane is what he writes about one of the leaders of the Greek revolution, Alexandros Mavrokordatos, the dedicatee of Shelley's "Hellas" – not to be confused with his namesake, the dedicatee of Dapondes's *Garden of Graces* – who wore oriental dress in Pisa but went to Greece in 1821 wearing European dress as a sign of his European liberal views.

translation of Metastasio's *Themistocles* at Odessa in 1814.[26] Although the play was written by the court poet to the Austrian emperor, its suitably Classical setting and noble patriotic sentiments – Themistocles refuses to collaborate with the Persians while he is in exile – were suited to the mood of the times, and this drama was frequently revived. One of its performances in Odessa in 1816 was followed by the staging of an anonymous playlet accompanied by music and dancing whose title, "The Souliots at Yannina", indicates that it could only have been of an overtly patriotic nature, given that the Souliots had successfully resisted incorporation into the Ottoman state for longer than any other section of the Greek people.[27] A performance of a modern Greek prose adaptation of Sophocles's *Philoctetes* by the Hellenized Bulgarian Vlach Nikolaos Pikkolos at Odessa in February 1818[28] – the first performance of an ancient Greek tragedy in the modern Greek theatre – inspired a poem, recited after the performance, that is indicative of the way such events were received: the poem is placed in the mouth of the Patris, who welcomes the return of the gods and the old Greek heroes to life and calls upon the young "lovers of Melpomene" to ensure that she too is brought back in her turn.[29]

The first full-length openly patriotic drama to be performed in Greek seems to have been the tragedy *The Death of Demosthenes* by Pikkolos, performed at Odessa in September 1818. The long notice of this play in the journal *Ermes o Logios* makes it clear that the play was allegorical, and that the Macedonians whom Demosthenes resisted were intended to represent the Turks; before taking poison Demosthenes urges the

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[26] See Anna Tambaki, "Το ελληνικό θέατρο στην Οδησσό (1814-1818): αθησαύριστα αρχεία", *Ερανιστής* 16 (1980) 229-38.

[27] For the intriguingly scant information available on this play see Angeliki Fenerli-Panayotopoulou, "Το θεατρικό έργο 'Σουλιώτες'", *Ερανιστής* 3 (1965) 157-69.

[28] On Pikkolos's *Φιλοκτήτης*, including the text of the play, see Dimitris Spathis, *Ο Διαφωτισμός και το ελληνικό θέατρο*, Thessaloniki 1986, pp. 145-98. Pikkolos appears to have been the author of an earlier play *Ο Λεωνίδας εν Θερμοπύλαις*, published anonymously in 1816: see Spathis, op. cit., pp. 152-4.

[29] The poem was published in *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* 1818, 195-6.

Athenians to choose between "freedom or death", which was the watch-word of the secret Friendly Society that was preparing the Revolution and was to become the battle-cry of the War of Independence; Demosthenes goes on to state that he has no wish to live except as the citizen of a free homeland.[30] This performance was also followed by a performance of the "Souliots" ballet. So that there might be no misunderstanding, when *The Death of Demosthenes* was revived in 1819, it was preceded by a brief one-act play by Georgios Lassanis entitled "Greece and the Foreigner".[31]

In addition to the translation and performance of stern neoclassical tragedies by Metastasio, Voltaire, and Alfieri, and the production of original dramas of a similar type, as well as adaptations (though not performances) of comedies by Molière to local settings, there was much critical discussion about the importance of drama for the improvement of morals and the resurgence of Greece in the decade preceding the War of Independence. The theatre was repeatedly talked about as being, together with the church and the school, an institution where the Greeks would learn to mend their morals by learning to love virtue, honour, and courage and to shun vice.

In the 1810s there was a great deal of discussion not only of drama but of literature in general and its contribution to the improvement of morals and the development of patriotic sentiments. In 1811 there appeared the first Greek literary and scholarly journal *Ermes o Logios*, which lasted until the outbreak of the War of Independence and whose initial publishing history indicates the way in which Greeks from widely separated geographical areas and from varying ideological backgrounds were able to collaborate in a common patriotic cause. It was founded in Vienna by an archimandrite from the village of Milies on Mount Pelion, Anthimos Gazis, with the encouragement of Korais, who had been born in Smyrna but whose family was from Chios and who had been living for many years in Paris, and with financial help from two Phanariot princes and a merchant (Ioannis Varvakis) from the island of Psara, who was making a

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[30] *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* 1818, 576-82.

[31] *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* 1819, 360; see also Spathis, op. cit., pp. 44-5.

vast fortune as an exporter of caviar, first in Astrakhan on the Volga near the Caspian Sea, then from 1815 at Taganrog on the Sea of Azov. It is significant that in its first year *Ermes o Logios* contained an article by Korais's friend Alexandros Vasiliou, a merchant from Argyrokastro in Northern Epirus settled in Trieste, where he served as Ottoman consul, concerning the name that the modern Greeks should use for themselves; it is indicative that, rejecting the normal term *Romaioi/Romioi* he does not adopt *Hellenes* (which still tended to refer to the ancient pagans) but *Graikoi*.[32] *Ermes o Logios* remained the chief mouthpiece of Korais's ideas on language, education, and culture, yet maintained good relations with some at least of the Phanariot establishment in the Danubian principalities. Other journals were soon being published in Vienna and Paris, each of them taking either a broadly pro-Korais or a broadly anti-Korais stand. These journals circulated among the Greek diaspora, if not in large numbers then at least across a vast area from Paris to Moscow, from Pisa to Taganrog, and from Budapest to Alexandria.

The literary debates that were conducted in the columns of these journals were ultimately aimed at the formation of a Greek national literature such as Neroulos was able to define in his *Cours* of 1826. It was widely felt that if the Greeks were to enter the chorus of modern nations, they had to be able to present, both to themselves and to outsiders, a body of literature that would ensure their self-respect and the respect of others. This is shown in a statement by the editors of *Ermes o Logios* in 1819 that their journal had established the modern Greeks as a "φιλολογικόν γένος" ["literary nation"] in the eyes of the world.[33] Throughout this project of reviving Greek culture the image that the Greek intellectuals wished to present to the West was always of the greatest importance.

Clearly the debate on the language was central to this discussion. The chief issue of course was the radical disagreement between those who wished to espouse the spoken language as the basis of literature, and those who felt they should make

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[32] *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* 1818, 143.
[33] *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* 1819, 401.

some use of ancient Greek grammar and vocabulary, the extent of this borrowing from ancient Greek being a matter for further debate. Whatever their differences of principle and practice, however, most Greek intellectuals were of the opinion that spoken Greek was not a modern language as such, but either a simplified continuation of ancient Greek or even a dialect of it; several scholars even attempted to prove that many of the deviations from ancient Attic that can be observed in modern demotic are to be found in the ancient Aeolic and Doric dialects, while it is only by accident that other modern forms are not attested in the ancient sources.

On a smaller scale there were frequent debates about the relative importance of verse and prose and about the technicalities of metre and rhyme. It was a frequently expressed eighteenth-century view in Europe that prose was a more developed and sophisticated medium than verse. Winkelmann had argued that poetry plays a less significant role in advanced societies than in primitive ones, while Vico had written that literatures begin with poetry and go on to prose because sentiment precedes reason. Whereas at the beginning of the Enlightenment period Evgenios Voulgaris had translated Voltaire's prose-tale *Memnon* – not one of Voltaire's more radical works – into Greek *verse* in 1766,[34] presenting it in such a way that a man-about-town in the Ottoman and Phanariot world could imagine it taking place close to home, after the turn of the century it came to be frequently said, for instance by Korais, that Greeks should now be writing in *prose* to show the progress they had made in the acquisition of culture.

Others however argued that *verse* was the best way to correct the modern language, since people would be more able to learn by heart passages of good writing if they were put into metrical form.[35] In addition, in preparation for what was expected to be a flowering of sublime poetry, Greek intellectuals attempted to lay down principles of poetics; the fullest example of this effort is the book published in 1819 by Charisios Megdanis under the fashionable title *The Homecoming of Calliope, or On Poetic*

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[34] First published in Momars senior, *Βοσπορομαχία*, Leipzig 1766; the text is reprinted in Frantzi, *Μισμαγιά*, pp. 51-73.

[35] *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* 1811, 307-10.

Method.[36] Most of what was written about poetry and poetics tended to concern versification rather than broader issues such as the purpose and function of poetry; it was assumed that it should be either didactic or decorative and entertaining – or all of these at the same time. There were those who would have liked to revive or imitate ancient Greek metres, but the exclusive use of accentual rather than quantitative metres in modern Greek poetry precluded such a project unless the Greeks were to change their pronunciation by reintroducing the distinction between short and long vowels – something which the grammarian and rhetorician Konstantinos Oikonomos hoped would eventually happen, although there was little prospect of it occurring at present.[37] Nevertheless, some writers managed to discover trochaic lines in Aeschylus which, when read in the modern pronunciation, could be scanned as being identical to the iambic fifteen-syllable verse,[38] which was the most commonly found line in Greek poetry from the twelfth century onwards.

At a time when intellectuals were attempting to legitimate as many aspects of contemporary Greek culture as possible by tracing them back to ancient Greek, it was important to try to find what appeared, at least, to be Classical precedents for modern literary phenomena. (I can't resist quoting as evidence of the Greeks' sense of their own belatedness the fashion for seeking modern counterparts for ancient literary figures: thus Rigas was often referred to as "the new Tyrtaeus", Christopoulos as "the new Anacreon", and Kalvos as "the new Pindar". No one, as far as I know, was dubbed a new Aeschylus, Sophocles or Euripides, which perhaps indicates the Greeks' sense of proportion; Oikonomos called Neroulos "our new Agathon",[39] which was safe enough since none of Agathon's tragedies is available for comparison.)

In 1818 Ioannis Zambelios published a patriotic tragedy against tyranny, entitled *Timoleon* and inspired by Alfieri's

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[36] Charisios Megdanis, *Καλλιόπη παλιννοστούσα ή περί ποιητικής μεθόδου*, Vienna 1819.
[37] Konstantinos Oikonomos, *Γραμματικών ή εγκυκλίων παιδευμάτων βιβλία Δ΄*, vol. 1, Vienna 1817, p. 149.
[38] Ibid., p. 148.
[39] Ibid., p. 443.

tragedy of the same name.[40] Zambelios's play was composed in unrhymed hendecasyllables, and he defended his choice of verse-form by arguing that this was the nearest that one could get in modern Greek to the metre of ancient tragedy. The prevalence of rhyme in contemporary poetry presented another problem, since it was not employed in ancient poetry and was clearly a foreign import. Many writers of the period, including Korais, counselled the avoidance of rhyme as a decadent feature ill-befitting the descendants of the ancient Greeks.[41]

The importance of modern Greek folk poetry was less frequently discussed, even though it could have offered useful ammunition for those who argued for the unsuitability of rhyme, since most modern Greek folk poetry was composed in *unrhymed* fifteen-syllable lines. But although a contributor to *Ermes o Logios* in 1816 followed Herder in proposing that a nation's folk poetry revealed the characteristics of the national mentality,[42] the fact that most of the Greek intellectuals were living outside the Greek-speaking heartlands and were therefore out of touch with the oral tradition of the Greek rural population meant that they would have found difficulty in studying it, especially since no collection of Greek folk poetry was published until after 1821. If the rich tradition of oral poetry had been more widely known among the alienated intellectuals of the diaspora, more of them might perhaps have found the confidence to employ the spoken language as the basis of the language of literature.

In the meantime even those Orthodox Christians who opposed the spread of modern secular ideas emanating from the West and who supported the leading role of the Church in the Ottoman Empire were not impervious to the fashion for Classical allusion. The Patriarchate of Constantinople saw itself as an integral part of the Ottoman Empire and therefore felt that any attempt to subvert the status quo would result not only in a diminution of its own authority but in the mortal danger of Ottoman reprisals against the Church leaders in Constantinople; this fear proved to be justified when Patriarch Gregory V was executed in 1821 for having failed to ensure the loyalty of his

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[40] Ioannis Zambelios, *Τιμολέων, τραγωδία*, Vienna 1818.
[41] See, e.g., *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* 1812, 633-44.
[42] *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* 1816, 401.

Christian flock to the Sublime Porte. Patriarch Gregory may have been behind the *Didaskalia patriki*, which was published under the name of Patriarch Anthimos of Jerusalem in 1798 and which expressed the view, frequently reiterated by Greek prelates since the fall of Constantinople, that God had sent the Ottomans as a means of salvation for the Orthodox, protecting them from the Latin heresy and its offshoots, among which the author included ideas of freedom and democracy.[43] This document was intended to turn the Orthodox faithful away from the secular orientation of the French Enlightenment, which had inevitably led to the French Revolution. But in 1819, over twenty years later, when Patriarch Gregory published another document against the espousal and dissemination of modern western secular ideas, he himself had taken on board much of the fashionable rhetoric of Classical allusion.[44] By now even the Patriarch was welcoming the return of the Muses to Greece and counselling the study of ancient Greek for its own sake. Thus he appeared to be aligning himself with the Classical Enlighteners; yet he probably believed that a thorough study of ancient Greek *grammar* would divert students' minds from the desire for modern secular learning.

In the following year, 1820, the Patriarchate expanded the activities of its own printing press in Constantinople, renaming it the Public Printing Press of the Nation in the hope that its own publications would check the spread of revolutionary ideas. In a florid proclamation announcing the expansion of the Patriarchal Press, its director, the monk Ilarion of Sinai, after a page-long encomium of Sultan Mahmud II, who has deigned to permit the Greeks to have a printing press, invokes the Muses and the Graces (not, it should be noted, Divine Grace!) and claims that the

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[43] Anthimos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, *Διδασκαλία πατρική*, Constantinople 1798. For an English translation see R. Clogg, *The Movement for Greek Independence, 1770-1821*, London 1976, pp. 56-64. For a summary of the various views on the authorship of the *Διδασκαλία πατρική*, see N.E. Skiadas, *Χρονικό της ελληνικής τυπογραφίας*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Athens 1982, pp. 185-9.

[44] The text was published in the journal *Μέλισσα* (Paris) 1820, 219-29 (now in K.T. Dimaras, *Ο Κοραής και η εποχή του*, Athens 1953, pp. 299-304). For an abridged English translation see Clogg, op. cit., pp. 86-8.

present epoch of the Hellenes rivals the ancestral splendour.[45] This last-ditch attempt to hijack the Greek Enlightenment and forestall the movement for independence by adopting the fashion for invoking the ancients failed to fool the Greek secularists around Korais in Paris, who were quick to condemn what they called the "Persian eloquence" of Ilarion's "Byzantine pamphlet" and the "ασιατικά ανδράποδα" ["servile Asiatic wretches"] and "sluggish Asiatics" who were responsible for its production – meaning the Sultan, the Patriarchate, and the Phanariots, whom they likened to Philip and his Macedonians.[46]

But this debate was overtaken by events, and after 1821 a new Greek literature emerged, inspired by the outbreak of the War of Independence. Both Dionysios Solomos, in his *Hymn to Liberty* written in 1823, and Andreas Kalvos, in his two sets of Odes published in 1824 and 1826, implicitly attack the frivolous Anacreontic verse of Christopoulos, with its praise of wine, women, and song, as being a type of poetry unworthy of a noble nation struggling for liberty against an Asiatic tyrant; instead they align themselves with Pindar in their encomium of Greek heroism and their celebration of the national liberation struggle. In the introduction to his second book of Odes, which appeared in a seemingly incongruous bilingual edition in Greek and French together with Christopoulos's *Lyrika*, Kalvos – or his French translator – castigates the "poésie légère" of Christopoulos, who "vivait à la table des riches, et des grands"; now, given the sufferings that Greece is going through, it is time for "chants moins frivoles".[47] G.P. Savidis has recently pointed out that Kalvos published his poems together with those of Christopoulos so as to point to the contrast between their two kinds of poetry.[48]

Kalvos and Solomos were from a different part of the Greek world, namely the Ionian Islands, which had not been subject to a long Ottoman occupation. These two poets had no connection with

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[45] The text is published in *Μέλισσα* 1821, 250-62.

[46] Ibid., 263-73.

[47] *Odes nouvelles de Kalvos de Zante suivies d'un choix de poésies de Chrestopoulo*, Paris 1826, pp. v-vii.

[48] G.P. Savvidis, "Κάλβος και Χριστόπουλος (μια παράδοξη εκδοτική συνοικεσία)", *Περίπλους*, vol. 9, no. 34-35 (1993) 126-37.

the Danubian principalities, the northern mainland of Greece, and the cultural and publishing centre of Vienna, which between them had dominated Greek literary culture during the previous decades. Their orientation was totally western (if I may be forgiven the oxymoron), and chiefly Italian. Moreover, the Greece they generally looked to was the southern part of the mainland and the islands, which were the first areas to be liberated from the Turks.

Yet Kalvos still adhered to the pre-1821 fashion for Classical allusion, and his Odes are full of references to ancient Greek mythology. While the Romantic side of his poetic nature was attracted by the Greek folk songs, his neoclassical side could not resist the temptation to write an ode "To the Muses",[49] which makes extended use of the image of the Muses returning to Greece and thus sums up the attitude of many Greek writers of the time to the rebirth of Greece.

Kalvos followed Korais and others in expressing his distaste both for rhyme and for so-called vulgarity in language. In this he followed the example of his mentor Ugo Foscolo, whose poem *Le Grazie* seems to have been one of Kalvos's models for his ode "To the Muses". While Foscolo "follows the Graces in their journey through Greece and then their migration to Renaissance Italy after the Turkish invasion of their homeland",[50] Kalvos too presents a potted history of the Muses, but is able to end his story by bringing them back to their birthplace. Having invoked the Muses and called upon them to strike down tyrants with their thunderous war-songs, Kalvos goes on to summarize their career. They existed even when "the circles of the heavens heard only the harmonious divinely inspired song, and calmness held the air in immobility." Then Homer gave shelter to the Muses, and "the daughters of Zeus first placed honey on his lips."[51] But later the "eternal bees" abandoned their hives in the divine trunk of the laurel –

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[49] A. Kalvos Ioannidis, *Η λύρα*, Geneva 1824.

[50] Glauco Cambon, *Ugo Foscolo, poet of exile*, Princeton 1980, p. 200.

[51] In Foscolo's poem bees are "narratively allegorized as the material carriers of poetry's honey from the Ionian to the Tyrrhenian shores" (Cambon, op. cit., p. 201).

> when the din of the Arabian hooves came from the ends of the earth to wretched Greece. Then to the baths where the Hours wash the coats of Phoebus's horses [i.e. the West!] you justly fled, o Pierides. But now you are bringing your long exile to a close. A time of joy has returned, and the Delphic mountain now shines free. Hippocrene's silver flows limpidly; today Greece is summoning you back, not as strangers but as daughters.

Here we notice, first, the idea that Greece is taking back what the Europeans have been holding in trust for her against the day when she should become free, and, secondly, the gaping chronological hiatus between ancient Greece and the arrival of the "Arabian hooves", which can be taken to allude to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. This convenient neglect of the whole Byzantine period is typical of the neoclassical outlook of many Greeks of this period.

Finally, we come to Solomos. His early *Hymn to Liberty* depicts Liberty as "emerging from the sacred bones of the Hellenes" – by which the poet means the ancient Greeks – and contains references to Leonidas and the "last of the Greeks", Philopoemen. In his more mature works, however, Solomos avoided almost any reference to ancient Greece at all. For him, the heroic struggles of the Greek freedom-fighters during the War of Independence, and especially the sacrifice of the people of Missolonghi at the end of the siege of 1825-6, seemed to be the manifestation of such absolute dedication to an ideal combining Christian faith and fortitude with devotion to the protection of their native soil that to compare these heroes with anyone else – even with the timeless exemplars of ancient Greek history and mythology – would have demeaned them. For Solomos the actions of the Greeks in the War of Independence had demonstrated their worthiness to be free, irrespective of whether they were descended – racially or culturally – from the ancient Greeks. In his Greek poetry he deliberately avoided the rich rhymes and technical games that he had employed in his earlier Italian verse, perhaps because he wanted to distance himself also from the deliberately frivolous verse of the Phanariots. He adopted the spoken language of the Greek people and gradually and painfully developed his own poetics based on the Greek folk song. In his mature poetry he made exclusive use of the fifteen-

syllable folk-song line, which he transformed for his own purposes, although he did not abandon rhyme altogether till his last Greek poems.

It is significant that at the beginning of his third and last attempt to write his great unfinished poem inspired by the fall of Missolonghi, "The Free Besieged", Solomos should have invoked a Muse to come to his aid in his desperate attempt to make contact with the spirit that drove the besieged heroes of Missolonghi and to embody it in language. Yet she is not explicitly called a Muse, nor does she bear any resemblance to the Pierian sisters who dance through the verses of so many of Solomos's contemporaries. The divine female figure whom Solomos beseeches to inspire him is the "Great Mother", an amalgam of the Virgin Mary, Liberty, and Greece. She is the protectress and inspirer of the people of Missolonghi, and he implores her to reveal herself to him so that he can write his poem, which will in turn inspire the Greeks to continue the struggle for spiritual freedom. Even though Solomos failed to complete the "The Free Besieged", he realized that in order to write sublime poetry it was not enough to invoke or depict the ancient Muses, nor to dress one's poetry in the merely decorative linguistic, historical, and mythological trappings of Classical allusion. Previous Greek poets had hardly gone beyond elegant but superficial versifying; Solomos had to reject all recent Greek poetry and make a new start.

But the time was not right. In the new political centre of Athens, chosen as the capital of the Greek state because of its Classical associations rather than any contemporary importance, a period of entropy set in, during which writers of largely Phanariot background produced poetry and prose in a language that imitated the form, but not the spirit, of ancient Greek. Greek poetry had to wait till the end of the nineteenth century before it could find a more viable and fruitful relationship with the ancients in the work of Kostis Palamas, which paved the way for later poets such as C.P. Cavafy, George Seferis, Yannis Ritsos, and others. But that is another story.

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