Cavafy and Cantacuzenus: allies or enemies?

Anthony Hirst
Queen's University Belfast

Clearly my title is a little odd. There is no obvious way in which a fourteenth-century Byzantine emperor turned monk and historian and a twentieth-century Greek-Egyptian civil servant and poet can be either allies or enemies, except in the imagination of the civil servant and poet, or in the imagination of his readers. The question, "Are Cavafy and Cantacuzenus allies or enemies?", can only address itself to our judgement, or, more interestingly, to judgements we can observe Cavafy making or infer that he made.

One of Cavafy's "unfinished" poems refers to Cantacuzenus as "that worthy person our race had at that time" (ὁ ἄξιος ἄνθρωπος ποῦ εἶχε ἡ φυλή μας τότε),[1] while a published poem on the coronation of Cantacuzenus comments parenthetically "great was the poverty of our wretched state" (τοῦ ταλαιπώρου κράτους μας ἦταν μεγάλ' ἡ πτώχεια).[2] This use of the first person – "*our* race", "*our* state" – may indicate Cavafy's sense of some diachronic unity to which both he himself and John VI Cantacuzenus belong; and Cavafy's use of κράτος may be compared to the use of ἔθνος in the title of Paparrigopoulos's major work of the 1870s, *Ἱστορία τοῦ ἑλληνικοῦ ἔθνους (A History of the Greek Nation)*, with which Cavafy was certainly familiar. Paparrigopoulos's account of the Greek "nation" begins in remote antiquity and ends in his own

[1] "The Patriarch" (Cavafy 1994: 207).
[2] "Of coloured glass" (Cavafy 1991: II, 50).

times,[3] and like Cavafy, Paparrigopoulos associates himself and his Greek readers with Byzantium, through such expressions as "*our* Medieval empire" and "*our* emperors".[4]

One form of our question, then, is this: in the long perspective of Greek history, does Cavafy see himself and Cantacuzenus as being in some sense on the same side? Does Cavafy consider that Cantacuzenus had the best interests of the Greek people at heart, that his actions were for the good of the Greek κράτος, ἔθνος or φυλή (state, nation or race)? Or does he agree with Gibbon and Paparrigopoulos that it was Cantacuzenus's vanity and personal ambition that guided his decisions, to the detriment of the empire? At first sight the poetry suggests that Cavafy takes Cantacuzenus's part against his detractors. But the obvious in Cavafy is often misleading, as I shall try to indicate in the case of his poems on Cantacuzenus.

The question (allies or enemies?) can also be posed in the context of contemporary politics – contemporary, that is, to Cavafy. It is very striking that all of Cavafy's sixteen extant Byzantine poems reached their final form (though not, in many cases, a definitive form) in the period 1914-1927, and that only two of them were first drafted before 1914. Obviously these statistics depend on my definition of a Byzantine poem; and for my purposes, a Byzantine poem is one which refers to historically attested persons or events within or related to the Byzantine Empire, in the period between the accession of Justinian in 527 and the fall of Trebizond in 1461.[5]

Cavafy wrote several Byzantine poems around 1890, but later destroyed almost all of them. What we can call his second Byzantine period (1914-27) is the period of the First World War, the National Schism, the Asia Minor Disaster, the

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[3] Publication of the first edition of this multi-volume history was completed in 1876.
[4] Kitromilides 1998: 29.
[5] For a list of the sixteen poems which meet these criteria see Hirst 1998: 110-11.

exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, the discrediting of the Greek monarchy, and the proclamation of a republic. In the earlier part of this period Byzantium was very much a part of Greek public discourse, for there was a real expectation of achieving what had become the central goal of the Great Idea: the re-establishment of a Greek capital in Constantinople. It is scarcely likely that Cavafy's renewed interest in Byzantium was entirely unconnected with the politics and the momentous events of the times; and, as I have suggested elsewhere, his Byzantine poems up to 1922 can be read as veiled warnings of the dangers of Greek irredentism, that is, the pursuit of the Great Idea.[6] The four Cantacuzenus poems come later, though. They are closely dated to 1924-25, with an addition to one of them in or after 1927. In other words, they come after the Disaster, and after the future (or lack of future) of the Greek monarchy had, for the time being, been decided.

I will return later to the specific role which I think the person of Cantacuzenus may have played in Cavafy's exploration of historical analogies. In the meantime, I will note a third way in which our question might be posed: Are Cantacuzenus and Cavafy allies – or perhaps it would be better here to say fellow spirits – as writers and as individuals deeply concerned for their own reputations? It would be nice to say this illuminates the other versions of the question; but, as we shall see, it clouds the issue.

In the four books of his *Histories*, Cantacuzenus is, as Gibbon puts it, "like Moses and Cæsar [...] the principal actor in the scenes which he describes".[7] By the time he composed his *Histories*, Cantacuzenus had abdicated and retired to a monastery. As a monk he had taken a new name, Ioasaph, and he was, in a sense which may have been real enough to him, no longer Ἰωάννης Καντακουζηνός who had been Grand Domestic and then Emperor, and about whom Ioasaph wrote exclusively

[6] Hirst 1998: 112-14.
[7] Gibbon 1994: III, 768.

in the third person (and even the monk Ioasaph was concealed behind the pen-name Christodoulos).

A man who had played a major role in the events of his time would not have served the interests of truth by writing with excessive modesty, and might, surely, have legitimately attempted a just estimate of his own motives and actions. But later historians have not, on the whole, felt that that it is what Cantacuzenus achieved. Having compared him to Moses and Caesar, Gibbon continues:

> But in this eloquent work, we should vainly seek the sincerity of a hero or a penitent. Retired in a cloyster from the vices and passions of the world, he presents not a confession, but an apology, of the life of an ambitious statesman. Instead of unfolding the true counsels and characters of men, he displays the smooth and specious surface of events, highly varnished with his own praises and those of his friends. Their motives are always pure; their ends always legitimate: they conspire and rebel without any views of interest; and the violence they inflict or suffer is celebrated as the spontaneous effect of reason and virtue.[8]

Gibbon's censure may be excessive, but there is no denying that the monk Ioasaph had a high opinion of his former self, and was unstinting in his praises of the statesman he had once been.

But what has this to do with Cavafy?

Cavafy spent most of his life in Egypt, in Alexandria, where he was part of an extensive Greek community based mainly on commerce, but with a well developed cultural and intellectual life and a wide range of newspapers and periodicals, among them *Γράμματα*, where a number of Cavafy's poems were first published. The proprietor of *Γράμματα*, Cavafy's friend Nikos Zelitas, also owned a publishing house and a bookshop of the same name; and one day "around 1930", Michael Peridis tells us, a representative of a French-language periodical was waiting for Cavafy in the Γράμματα bookshop. According

[8] Gibbon 1994: III, 768.

to Peridis the French-language periodical (which he does not name) had asked Cavafy to write a few words about his own work. Zelitas himself, it seems, was not present and it was his wife, the manager of the bookshop, Eftychia Zelita, who greeted Cavafy when he arrived. Cavafy promptly took a piece of paper from his pocket and began to dictate its contents to the so-called journalist. What he dictated was a short article in French. Mrs Zelita had the presence of mind to make her own copy from Cavafy's dictation, and thus, more than thirty years later, Peridis was able to include it in his edition of Cavafy's *Unpublished prose texts*.[9]

As we saw, Peridis dates the incident in the bookshop "around 1930". In fact, it must have taken place, at the latest, early in 1929. For, though Peridis failed to trace (or remember) it, the French text he reproduces had already been published, as Stratis Tsirkas was quick to point out.[10] It was, in effect, Cavafy's contribution to a special issue of the Cairo-based francophone Greek periodical *La semaine égyptienne*, dated 25 April 1929 and dedicated to Cavafy. There, however, the piece dictated in the bookshop appeared over the signature "A. Leondis". If Apostolos Leondis was the visitor to the Γράμματα bookshop who received Cavafy's dictation, it was hardly appropriate for Peridis (or Zelita) to describe him as the representative of a French-language periodical, since he was at the time the director of the Greek-language Alexandrian newspaper *Ταχυδρόμος*. We may well doubt whether the editor of *La semaine égyptienne* would have solicited an article from Cavafy himself for the special issue; if he did, Cavafy may have thought it politic to decline, but then write the article and have someone else sign it. A more likely explanation is that Leondis was one of the several dozen people invited to contribute to the special issue, and that he offered his friend Cavafy the opportunity to have his say.

[9] Cavafy 1963: 31-2.
[10] In a review first published in May 1964 (see Tsirkas 1971: 221-2).

In this article Cavafy, like Cantacuzenus, writes of himself in the third person and without a trace of modesty. He distinguishes himself, as author of the article, from those who, seeing that Cavafy's poetry is like no other and belongs to no recognized school, consider that it will remain an isolated phenomenon and be without influence. It already has its imitators, Cavafy tells us ("superficial it is true for the most part"), "and not only among Greek poets. Rare but striking signs of Cavafy's influence are found to some extent everywhere." This is, he says, a "natural consequence of all valuable and progressive work".

"Cavafy, in my opinion," Cavafy continues, "is an ultramodern poet, a poet of future generations." And this is his main point. He goes on to enumerate the particular virtues of Cavafy's poetry. These, he declares "are the elements which the generations of the future will appreciate even more". Cavafy has an optimistic view of these future generations who will be "spurred on" to a greater appreciation of his work by "the progress of discovery and the subtlety of their mental functions". And he speaks of a future world "which will *think* much more than today's", and where "rare poets like Cavafy will hold a predominant position".[11]

Vanity? Yes, of course it is; but not *mere* vanity. We do not have to agree with Stratis Tsirkas that this shows "a great poet in a moment of weakness". There were, in any case, many such moments. Cavafy was the author of a number of anonymous notices about his work in *Ἀλεξανδρινὴ Τέχνη*,[12] and, in all probability, of a lecture on his work delivered by Alekos Sengopoulos. We need not require "a great poet" to underestimate his own work. If he should overestimate it, though, he runs the risk of appearing foolish as well as vain. In Cavafy's case, however, his estimate of the value of his work to future generations has been borne out, while Cantacuzenus's estimate

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[11] Cavafy 1963: 82-4. All translations in this paper are my own unless otherwise stated.
[12] Savidis 1966: 209.

of *his* own virtues remains contentious. It is quite conceivable that in allowing himself to write about his own work in terms of glowing praise, Cavafy was, as the saying goes, taking a leaf out of Cantacuzenus's book. Clearly they *are* allies or fellow spirits, if only in the exercise of this particular form of literary vanity.

Cavafy took several leaves out of Cantacuzenus's book in another sense: he made use of it, probably in the three-volume Bonn edition, as a source for his poems. In one case Cantacuzenus as author is cited – though not as the principal source – within the text of the poem itself. "At Epiphany", Cavafy's poem on the humiliation and death in prison of Cantacuzenus's mother, ends as follows:

> The account of the Lady Cantacuzena's sorry end
> I took from Nicephorus Gregoras' *History*.
> In the historical work of the emperor
> John Cantacuzenus, somewhat differently
> it is described, but no less piteously.[13]

In all, Cavafy offers us four glimpses of Cantacuzenus, or of events surrounding him: two in the published poems, "John Cantacuzenus prevails" and "Of coloured glass", and two in the "unfinished" poems, "The Patriarch" and "At Epiphany". The subject matter of all four falls within the years 1341-47, the period of the first civil war between Cantacuzenus and the Palaeologan party and its immediate aftermath. The subject matter of the two "unfinished" poems belongs to the early part of this period, to 1341-42, while the two published poems refer to events of 1347.

In June 1341 Andronicus III died suddenly after a short illness, and Cantacuzenus, who had served him as Grand Domestic, assumed control of the state. Cantacuzenus had been Andronicus's lifelong friend and counsellor; and had probably had as much to do with the direction of the affairs of the empire as the emperor himself. On more than one occasion

[13] Cavafy 1994: 214.

Andronicus had invited him to become co-emperor, but Cantacuzenus had always refused. Nor did he attempt to seize the throne after Andronicus's death, but assumed the role of regent to protect the Empress, Anna of Savoy, and her son, now emperor, the eight-year-old John V Palaeologus. Anna had never liked Cantacuzenus; she had been jealous of her husband's affection for him. But she was not his most dangerous enemy; that was Alexius Apocaucus, the *parakoimomenos*, who, having failed to persuade Cantacuzenus to assume the purple, turned his energies against him. At the end of September 1341, while Cantacuzenus was encamped at Didymoteichon, preparing his army for a campaign in the Peloponnese, Apocaucus persuaded the empress that Cantacuzenus was plotting against her, and he encouraged the Patriarch John Calecas to assume the role and title of regent. Cantacuzenus was now stripped of his office and ordered to disband the army and return to Constantinople. He did not return; and with some reluctance he allowed himself to be proclaimed emperor in Didymoteichon on 26 October 1341. There followed almost five-and-a-half years of civil war, in which Bulgarians, Serbians and Turks aided one side or the other at various times, in pursuit of their own interests. Through skilful politicking and dogged persistence Cantacuzenus eventually reduced the Palaeologan enclave to the city of Constantinople, which he finally entered without bloodshed in February 1347. After negotiations with the empress it was agreed that John Palaeologus and John Cantacuzenus should reign as co-emperors, but that Cantacuzenus, though he yielded the precedence to the young emperor, should be senior in authority for the next ten years. John Cantacuzenus and his wife Eirene Asenina were crowned on 31 May 1347; a week later their daughter Helena was married to the young emperor John Palaeologus, and crowned as empress. The later history of Cantacuzenus's reign need not concern us here, since it is outside the range of Cavafy's poems.

Let us look first at the earlier of Cavafy's two published poems on Cantacuzenus, "Ὁ Ἰωάννης Καντακουζηνὸς ὑπερ-

ισχύει" ("John Cantacuzenus prevails"). The verb in the title has sometimes been translated as "triumphs" (by Rae Dalven, and Keeley and Sherrard) and sometimes as "prevails" (by Mavrogordato and Kolaitis). "Prevails" is, I think, more accurate, but either translation suggests that the title alludes to Gibbon, and is, in effect, itself a translation, from English to Greek. Having brought his narrative to Cantacuzenus's victory of 1347, Gibbon says "I hasten to conclude the personal history of John Cantacuzene. He *triumphed* and reigned [...]";[14] and of the later conflict which erupted in 1353 when John Palaeologus took up arms against Cantacuzenus, he says, "Cantacuzene *prevailed* in the third contest in which he had been involved".[15]

"John Cantacuzenus prevails" was first printed on 9 December 1924. We do not know when it was first drafted, but it had probably had a relatively short gestation period, since it does not figure in the surviving lists of work-in-progress associated with the "unfinished" poems – lists which include a number of published poems which passed through this work-in-progress stage.[16] It is, then, very likely that Cavafy conceived this poem in the aftermath of the expulsion of Greeks from the Smyrna region in 1922 and the enforced population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923, at a period, that is, when a vast number of Greeks, both rich and poor, had recently been forced to abandon their lands and houses and in many cases the greater part of their movable property.

The title apart, the poem does not indicate its Byzantine context until line 6; and it is not difficult to imagine where the first five lines of the poem might have taken the mind of a Greek reading them for the first time at the end of 1924 or early in 1925.

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[14] Gibbon 1994: III, 780.
[15] Gibbon 1994: III, 782.
[16] Cavafy 1994: 323-9.

> He sees the fields still in his charge
> with the wheat, with the animals, with the fruit
> trees. And further off the family house,
> full of valuable clothes and furniture, and silverware.
>
> They will take them from him – O Jesus Christ! – *now*
> they will take them from him.[17]

I do not know if any of Cavafy's original readers did make the connection between these lines and recent events, but I have a strong suspicion that Cavafy himself did. This is, I believe, Cavafy projecting himself not primarily into the mind of a Byzantine nobleman who had backed the losing side in the civil war, but rather into the minds of certain of his contemporaries, the better-off refugees from Asia Minor, the Pontus or Eastern Thrace, contemplating, before their flight, the lands, houses and possessions they would leave behind, to fall into the hands of new, Turkish owners. This suspicion is strengthened by the fact – a fact which Cavafy probably hoped his readers would recognize – that this poem does not quite fit the historical context he provides for it.

The speaker in the poem curses himself for ever having got involved with Anna's party, he curses the empress, he curses the δεσπότης who had persuaded him to side with the empress when his own first impulse had been to join Cantacuzenus. (It would be natural to take δεσπότης, which could be translated "prelate", as a reference to the Patriarch John Calecas.) Having backed the losers the nobleman now expects his property to be appropriated by the victor, Cantacuzenus. He thinks of throwing himself at the feet of Cantacuzenus or the empress Eirene. He has heard that Cantacuzenus is ἐπιεικής, λίαν ἐπιεικής ("clement, exceedingly clement"), but he is afraid of Cantacuzenus's followers, and of the army.

This Byzantine landowner is either singularly ill-informed about the situation he is involved in – ignorant of the full

[17] Cavafy 1991: II, 48.

extent of Cantacuzenus's clemency – or else he is experiencing his anguish in the very first days of Cantacuzenus's victory, before he knew what would happen. In the latter case, with the benefit of hindsight, *we* know that his fears are unfounded; in the former case, we, being better informed than the protagonist appears to be, know that there is something not quite right about this poem. Let us return to Gibbon's account of Cantacuzenus's triumph:

> He triumphed and reigned; but his reign and triumph were clouded by the discontent of his own and the adverse faction. His followers might style the general amnesty, an act of pardon for his enemies, and of oblivion for his friends; in his cause, their estates had been forfeited and plundered; and as they wandered naked and hungry through the streets, they cursed the selfish generosity of a leader; who, on the throne of the empire, might relinquish without merit his private inheritance. The adherents of the empress blushed to hold their lives and fortunes by the precarious favour of an usurper.[18]

Note that in Gibbon it was his friends' and not his enemies' estates which "had been forfeited and plundered". All authorities agree with Gibbon that Cantacuzenus's friends fared rather worse than his enemies in the new dispensation. Their estates were not restored to them, while his former enemies were allowed to hold on to their own lands, and even to retain land which they had appropriated during the conflicts. The anonymous Byzantine landowner of the poem had nothing to fear, unlike his modern counterparts who fled or were expelled from Turkey, to whom the events he dreads really did happen.

From the history of Byzantium in the fourteenth century and the history of the Greeks in the 1920s, let us turn to a different kind of history, the history of Cavafy's poetic production. As I already noted, Cavafy printed "John Cantacuzenus prevails" on 9 December 1924. The next poem to be printed, exactly six weeks later, on 20 January 1925, was "Temethus,

[18] Gibbon 1994: III, 780-1.

an Antiochean, AD 400"; and then after a further five weeks and three days, on 27 February, "Of coloured glass", the poem dealing with Cantacuzenus's coronation. By this time Cavafy had begun two more poems on Cantacuzenus, for the manuscript of "The Patriarch" is dated February 1925, and the manuscript of "At Epiphany" was first dated "Dec 1924", though the date was then altered to May 1925.[19] And while we are talking about Cavafy's poems of 1925, let us note that "On an Italian shore", printed on 30 June of that year, concerns, like "John Cantacuzenus prevails", the seizure of Greek property, in this case by the Romans. The poem's young Greek protagonist of the second century BC is watching, with distress, the unloading of the spoils from the sack of Corinth.[20]

But it is "Temethus" which may provide the key to the double meaning of the other poems, and indirectly, perhaps, to Cavafy's very strong interest in Cantacuzenus at this period.

"Temethus, an Antiochean, AD 400" is a poem about the double meaning of a poem:

> Lines of young Temethus consumed by passion.
> With the title "Emonides" – Antiochus Epiphanes'
> favourite companion, a very beautiful
> young man from Samosata. But if these lines emerge
> ardent and moving it is because Emonides
> (from that ancient time: the one hundred and thirty
> seventh year of the Greek Kingdom! –
> perhaps even a little earlier) was put into the poem
> merely as a name; suitable nonetheless.
> It is a love of Temethus himself the poem expresses
> a fine love and worthy of him. We, the initiates,
> his friends, his close friends – we, the initiates,
> we know for whom the lines were written.
> The ignorant Antiocheans read "Emonides".[21]

[19] Cavafy 1994: 195, 209.
[20] Cavafy 1991: 52.
[21] Cavafy 1991: 49.

Emonides is a fiction. No such favourite of Antiochus IV of Syria is attested, as far as I know. Cavafy invented him for Temethus to put into his poem. And Cavafy invented Temethus too. Antiochus and the poem's two dates are the only historical anchors. Emonides, Cavafy tells us, was put into Temethus's poem merely as a name. Was Temethus in his turn put into Cavafy's poem merely as a name? The ignorant Antiocheans – or Alexandrians, Athenians, Londoners, or citizens of Cambridge or Belfast – read "Temethus". Should we, aspiring to be Cavafy's friends in spirit, to be initiates of his poetry – should we read, not "Temethus", but "Cavafy"? Does this poem, in other words, give us an insight into Cavafy's own techniques, at least at this stage of his career?

If the idea that a name of a historical or historically placed character in a poem may conceal another name seems a bit extreme, the more general idea that there may be two ways of reading a poem, the ignorant or innocent way and the informed way of the initiate, can hardly fail to commend itself. The critic must always strive to be an informed reader (the idea of being an initiate may suggest something too demanding).

I have been able to show from Cavafy's lists of work in progress that "Temethus" was first drafted before November 1923,[22] but, presumably, it only reached its final form shortly before its publication, that is, at the end of 1924 or the beginning of 1925, just after "John Cantacuzenus prevails" and just before "Of coloured glass"; and Cavafy may well have been working on all three poems simultaneously. Cavafy gives

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22 Lavagnini published the pages of the longer of the two lists (Πίνακας F21) in a plausible but incorrect order (Cavafy 1991: 325-8). My proof of this, which is long and complex and remains unpublished, demonstrates a series of real-time first entries corresponding to the dates on the manuscripts of all but the earliest eleven of the thirty "unfinished" poems. From the correctly sequenced pages of F21 it is possible to determine a *terminus ante quem* for the first drafting of some fifteen poems included in the list which were first published after 1924 but for which no information about their dates of composition is otherwise available, "Temethus" among them.

Emonides a very precise date and then makes it less precise by adding "perhaps even a little earlier" (ἴσως καὶ λίγο πρίν). The precise date Cavafy gives is the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of the Seleucid Greek kingdom of Syria, that is to say, 176/175 BC,[23] the very beginning, or just before the beginning, of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164). How far back will the "little earlier" take us? One year? Two years? If we allow two years, and take 178 BC as a permissible date for Emonides, then we can say that 577 years stood between Emonides and Temethus's unnamed lover of AD 400; and if we subtract 577 from 1924 (the year in which "John Cantacuzenus prevails" reached, and "Temethus, an Antiochean" almost reached, its final form, we arrive at 1347, the year in which Cantacuzenus prevailed and was crowned with bits of coloured glass.

The exact correspondence is of course a bit of a fudge, because of the slight imprecision in the date Cavafy gives for Emonides. But however you compute it, the fact remains that between two poems on Cantacuzenus dealing with events of the year 1347, Cavafy published a poem about a poem about Emonides, which is not really about Emonides, by an imaginary poet Temethus, and that the distance in time between Emonides and Temethus is almost exactly the same as the distance between 1347 and the date at which Cavafy was completing the three poems in question.[24]

Cavafy could have located Emonides at almost any time significantly earlier than AD 400 (and that date itself is somewhat arbitrary, though a favourite of Cavafy's), but he chooses a date around 176 BC. And why does he trouble to be so precise about it? Was it really to create a numerical correspondence

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[23] Conventionally the first year of the Seleucid dynasty begins in 312 BC.

[24] If Cavafy did make this calculation, he may have miscalculated (as I did at first), simply adding the BC and AD dates together, forgetting that there was no "year nought" between 1 BC and AD 1. The miscalculation allows "a little earlier" to be computed as one year, putting Emonides back only to 177 BC.

with his own distance in time from the victory and coronation of Cantacuzenus?[25] The correspondence may be pure coincidence; but even without it, the fact that Cavafy brought the three poems to completion at almost the same time, itself suggests that we might look for connections between them. Especially when we remember that to the end of his life Cavafy circulated his post-1918 poems in strict chronological sequence by date of first publication, so that for Cavafy's initial readers "Temethus" always stood between "John Cantacuzenus prevails" and "Of coloured glass".[26]

In these two poems, and in "The Patriarch" and "At Epiphany", is "John Cantacuzenus" put there, like "Emonides", "merely as a name"? Merely? No, for Cavafy has paid careful attention to his sources, and the poems are, in all essentials historically sound (though in the case of "John Cantacuzenus prevails" we have seen that recourse to the sources reveals that there is something odd about the poem). Nonetheless, it is still possible that, like "Emonides", "John Cantacuzenus" does, in some sense, conceal another name; and if it does, that undeclared name is, I propose, that of Eleftherios Venizelos, the prime minister of Greece during much of the period in which Cavafy was preoccupied with Byzantium. The more I consider the careers of Venizelos and Cantacuzenus, the more it seems to me they have in common. At this stage of my investigations I cannot prove, or even argue persuasively, that Cavafy saw this too. It is a hunch I am pursuing. The testimony to Cavafy's political opinions is confusing, in part because of his

[25] We should not be tempted to take it as a hint that Emonides is to be identified the unnamed "young Antiochean" on whom Antiochus had lavished gifts in Cavafy's earlier poem, "To Antiochus Epiphanes" (Cavafy 1991: II, 38), for the one-sided conversation of that poem is clearly taking place during the Third Macedonian War (171-168 BC). Besides, Emonides is not an Antiochean, but from Samosata.

[26] This was not the case for the wider readership of the first commercial editions of Cavafy's poetry (Rika Sengopoulou's 1935 edition, and the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ikaros editions of 1948, 1952 and 1958). The proper sequence was not restored until Savidis's edition of 1963.

political "tact", for he appears to have given people of quite disparate political persuasions the impression that he shared their views. Let me just note here that Atanasio Catraro attests to Cavafy's interest in Venizelos.[27]

On any reckoning, Cantacuzenus and Venizelos were the outstanding personalities in the Greek politics of their respective times. Cantacuzenus, by his own account at least, was never ambitious for the purple; his aim was always to uphold the rule of the Palaeologi, but eventually he allowed himself to be proclaimed emperor and established a rival regime, precipitating a civil war. Venizelos was, and always remained, a constitutional monarchist at heart, but because of his prolonged feud with King Constantine (most importantly over Greece's entry into the First World War), he came to be associated with the Republican movement and the eventual removal of the Greek monarchy. Though matters stopped short of a civil war, Venizelos did at one time set up a rival government, and the events of 1915-17 bear some striking resemblances to those of 1341. In 1341 Cantacuzenus, who as Grand Domestic had long held the principal office in the state after that of emperor, was dismissed from that office by the empress; it was this that resulted in his somewhat reluctant assumption of the purple. In October 1915 the King dismissed his prime minister, Venizelos. Venizelos remained in Athens for more than a year, before he decided that it was impossible for his party to co-operate further with the royal government, and then, in September 1916, he left for Crete where he proclaimed a revolutionary movement. From Crete he went to Salonica and set up a provisional government.

But Cavafy's interest in Cantacuzenus only begins, as far as we know, in 1924. By then the Asia Minor Campaign of 1919-22 had reached its disastrous conclusion. It was Venizelos who had initiated the campaign in Asia Minor, but he was not in office at the time of the catastrophic defeat, though he was

[27] Catraro 1970: 42.

representing Greece at the peace conferences. By 1924, it was the former and by then deceased King Constantine, rather than Venizelos, who was held primarily responsible for the Disaster.

In December 1923 Venizelos's Liberal Party won a two-thirds majority in parliament. The young King George II was asked to leave the country, Venizelos was recalled to form a government and the revolutionary committee which had controlled Greece since the Disaster now dissolved itself. The most pressing issue facing the new government was the constitutional question. Venizelos proposed a plebiscite on the future of the monarchy. The Republican party and republicans within Venizelos's party pressed for an immediate declaration of a republic, to be ratified later by a plebiscite. Venizelos resigned and the Republicans got their way. The Republic was proclaimed on 25 March 1924. In the plebiscite that followed more than two thirds of the votes were cast in favour of the Republic.

In the popular perceptions of the day, in which personalities loomed large, this looked like the final triumph of Venizelos in his long-running conflict with the crown. And towards the end of that year Cavafy published "John Cantacuzenus prevails". Cantacuzenus had prevailed over the established Palaeologan dynasty, but his triumph was tainted (at least in the judgements of the historians Cavafy read) by actions and alliances which had seriously weakened and impoverished the empire. In 1924 Greece was desperately impoverished and demoralized after more than ten years of almost continual war, a humiliating defeat and the influx of some one-and-a-quarter-million refugees whom the country scarcely had the means to support. The mournful cry from Cavafy's poem on the coronation of Cantacuzenus "great was the poverty of our wretched state" applies as much to Greece in 1924 as to Byzantium in 1347. And for the condition of Greece Venizelos could be held to bear some of the responsibility.

I am not looking primarily for specific and detailed correspondences between Cavafy's poems on Cantacuzenus and

contemporary events surrounding Venizelos. I don't think that is how it worked. My supposition is that Cavafy was perplexed by the complex character and volatile political career of Venizelos, and saw in Cantacuzenus a broadly similar personality placed in a broadly analogous situation. He could have written poems about contemporary politics, poems referring to Venizelos, as a number of Greek poets did. In fact, Cavafy wrote only one explicitly topical poem concerned with public events. It is called "27 June 1906, 2 p.m." and concerns the execution by hanging of a seventeen-year-old Egyptian boy by the British military authorities.[28] The boy was one of four Egyptians executed following a disturbance in the village of Denshawi which led to the death from heat exposure of one wounded British officer.[29] The poem was not an immediate response, written in a fit of moral indignation, since, according to Cavafy's own records, it was composed eighteen months after the event, in January 1908.[30] The poem is compromised by the speaker's implicit erotic interest in the victim, and wisely Cavafy never published it. The explicit linking of a poem to a specific recent event was an experiment he never repeated. As his confidence in his poetry grew, and with it his ambitions, he may have realized that being topical is not a good strategy when you are writing for posterity, not a good strategy for a "poet of future generations". This does not mean that his poetry ignores the political world in which he lived, but that, when it responds to it, it does so obliquely; and I am suggesting that Cavafy wrote about Cantacuzenus in part as a substitute for writing about Venizelos.

Such anecdotal evidence as there is suggests to me that while Cavafy recognized certain qualities in Venizelos, his attitude towards him was not, to say the least, one of uncritical approval. Problematically, for my hunch that Cantacuzenus in some sense stands for Venizelos, the poetry appears to imply

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[28] Cavafy 1968: 149.
[29] Tsirkas 1971: 72-5.
[30] Savidis 1985-87: II, 57, 81.

that Cavafy was rather strongly in favour of Cantacuzenus; and I propose now to look at the "unfinished" poem, "The Patriarch", precisely because it presents the greatest challenge to my persistent conviction that Cavafy was, on balance, more an enemy than an ally of Cantacuzenus.

"The Patriarch" is a complex and convoluted poem, which requires considerable glossing, and I am not going to offer an interpretation of the poem as a whole. Instead I want to concentrate on the way it describes Cantacuzenus.[31] The poem concerns one of the acts of provocation that induced Cantacuzenus to assume the purple in Didymoteichon in 1341. The patriarch's challenge to Cantacuzenus's right to be regent was based on an old and obsolete letter in which Andronicus had appointed him, the patriarch, regent for a limited period when Andronicus was going to be away from Constantinople on a military campaign, and at a time when Cantacuzenus was also engaged elsewhere. Producing this letter, perhaps at the prompting of Apocaucus, Patriarch John Calecas now assumed the role and title of regent.

From Lavagnini's transcription of the manuscripts and her analysis of them, it is clear that Cavafy originally began the poem like this:

> Ὁ αὐθάδης κι ὁ ἀχάριστος Ἰωάννης
> ποῦ ἂν ἦταν πατριάρχης τὸ χρωστοῦσε
> στὸν μεγαλόψυχο Ἰωάννην Καντακουζηνὸ
> (τὸν πιὸ μεγάλον ἄνθρωπο ποῦ εἶχε ἡ φυλή μας τότε)
>
> The insolent and ungrateful John,
> who if he was patriarch owed it
> to the great-hearted John Cantacuzenus
> (the greatest person our race had at that time)

Lines 6 and 7 contained a string of adjectives and phrases enumerating the virtues of Cantacuzenus:

[31] For the full text see Cavafy 1994: 207.

> (σοφόν, ἐπιεική, φιλόπατριν, ἀνδρεῖον,
> ἄνδρα πολιτικὸν ἄξιον ἄκρως)
>
> (wise, clement, patriotic, courageous,
> an extremely worthy statesman)

if "statesman" be allowed as a reasonable translation of ἄνδρα πολιτικόν (literally "political man").

Line 4 as it originally stood ("The greatest person our race had at that time") seems to echo Gibbon's description of Cantacuzenus as "the first and most deserving of the Greeks". Gibbon describes Cantacuzenus in this way in the context of his regency and his guardianship of John V Palaeologus – the same context as that of Cavafy's poem. This is what Gibbon says:

> The empress Anne of Savoy survived her husband: their son, John Palæologus, was left an orphan and an emperor, in the ninth year of his age; and his weakness was protected by the first and most deserving of the Greeks. The long and cordial friendship of his father for John Cantacuzene is alike honourable to the prince and the subject.[32]

Cavafy's phrase, "the greatest person" reflects Gibbon's superlatives, "the first and most deserving", while Cavafy's relative clause, "which our race had at that time", reflects, with an important change of perspective, Gibbon's bald phrase "of the Greeks".

Gibbon is not the only author in the background of this poem. There are at least three others we need to consider: two Byzantine historians and another modern one. The poem was, I believe, meant to conclude with a verbatim quotation from Nicephorus Gregoras extending over almost eight lines of verse with brief interruptions by the speaker of the poem.[33]

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[32] Gibbon 1994: III, 774.

[33] These lines do not form part of Lavagnini's "final text", but are included among "variants of uncertain position" (Cavafy 1994: 208). My argument for seeing them as an integral part of the poem may be summarized as follows: the "final text" ends with line 19 from ms 2β;

Cantacuzenus's own *Histories* also need to be taken into consideration; and so does Paparrigopoulos's *History of the Greek Nation*, as becomes evident when we consider another of the poem's deleted lines. When Cavafy deleted the line, "an extremely worthy statesman", he replaced it by a very different one, which was in its turn deleted:

> (ποῦ ἴσως μᾶς ἔσωζε μὰ δὲν τὸν ἄφισαν)
>
> (who would perhaps have saved us but they did not let him)

or, more literally, "who was perhaps going to save us", since the verb ἔσωζε is imperfect, but without the particle θά which would make it conditional. The same verb, in exactly the same form, occurs in a passage where Paparrigopoulos says of Cantacuzenus that,

> having become a monk, he was occupied for some thirty years in the writing of a history in order to instruct later generations that he and he alone was worthy of power, forgetting that the better demonstration of this would have been if, holding on to power, he had saved the state (ἂν διατηρήσας [τὴν αρχὴν] ἔσωζε τὸ κράτος).[34]

Just as, through a change of perspective, Cavafy may have transformed Gibbon's "first and most deserving of the Greeks" into "the greatest person our race had at that time", here it appears he has transformed, with the same change of perspective, Paparrigopoulos's ἔσωζε τὸ κράτος ("saved the state), into μᾶς ἔσωζε ("saved *us*"). And we should note, too, that Paparrigopoulos's expression "that he and he alone was worthy of power" (ὅτι αὐτὸς καὶ μόνος ἦτο ἄξιος τῆς ἀρχῆς) seems closely related to Cavafy's deleted line, "an extremely worthy statesman", as well as to the line, "the worthy person our race

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ms 4β contains a variant of 2β.19, the second half of which is taken up in 6.1; 6.1 leads smoothly to 6.3; 5β.1 is a variant of 6.3 and introduces the quotation from Gregoras which continues to 5β.8 (see ibid. 202-3).

[34] Paparrigopoulos 1925: V, 194.

had at that time"; and even to the original form of that line, "the *greatest* person our race had at that time". Thus the phrase "the greatest person", which appears to reflect Gibbon's "first and most deserving", might also reflect Cantacuzenus's high opinion of himself, as characterized by Paparrigopoulos, namely that "he and he alone was worthy of power", with its implicit superlative. In Paparrigopoulos the words ἄξιος ("worthy") and ἔσωζε (here "had saved") occur in a highly critical assessment of Cantacuzenus, and this is a first hint that the excessive praises of Cantacuzenus in Cavafy's poem "The Patriarch" are not perhaps what they appear to be.

While Paparrigopoulos blames Cantacuzenus himself for his failure to "save the state", Cavafy's deleted line seems to put the blame on others, since it reads, "who was perhaps going to save us but they did not let him". And here Cavafy may be reflecting Cantacuzenus's own expressed view of the matter. Cantacuzenus tells us that after his victory and coronation in 1347, he surveyed the parlous condition of the empire, impoverished by civil war, and sought to raise money for the treasury by a direct appeal for contributions. The appeal took the form of a public address which he records at some length. In it he declares that it was never his intention to seek imperial power and lays the blame on those who opposed him and fomented trouble at the beginning of his regency. "Surely," he reports himself as saying,

> if, when I planned to do everything for the common good of the Romans [...], the others had followed enthusiastically or if, at least, they had not hindered me, then we would not now be discussing what we must do to be saved (σώζεσθαι) [...].[35]

This is very close to Cavafy's line "who would perhaps have saved us but they did not let him". The connection is even closer than it appears when we see that Cavafy originally wrote ποῦ ἴσως μᾶς ἔσωζε ἄν ("who was perhaps going to save us if").

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[35] Cantacuzenus 4.5 (CSHB, vol. III, p. 36).

He then crossed out "if", replaced it by "but", and concluded the line "but they didn't let him". He had, perhaps originally intended to end the line with "if they had let him", or something even closer to Cantacuzenus, such as "if they had not hindered him". In any case, Cavafy's use of the imperfect (ἔσωζε) and the deleted "if" suggests that he originally had in mind a counterfactual conditional such as we find in the passages from both Cantacuzenus and Paparrigopoulos where the same verb occurs.

There is also a potentially relevant counterfactual conditional in Gibbon's remarks on the regency of Cantacuzenus: "Had the regent found a suitable return of obedience and gratitude, perhaps he would have acted with pure and zealous fidelity in the service of his pupil" (that is the young emperor John V). Gibbon then proceeds to outline the acts of defiance and ingratitude which prevented Cantacuzenus from fulfilling his role as regent. We need not follow all the details. Gibbon's marginal headings alone answer the question which Cavafy's line raises: Who were the "they" who did not let Cantacuzenus "save us"? A series of four marginal headings form a single sense unit, which reads, "His regency attacked, A.D. 1341, / by Apocaucus; / by the empress Anne of Savoy; / by the patriarch."[36] This is what Gibbon has to say about the part played by the patriarch (and here we have the essential substance of Cavafy's poem):

> The patriarch John of Apri [=John Calecas], was a proud and feeble old man, encompassed by a numerous and hungry kindred. He produced an obsolete epistle of Andronicus, which bequeathed the prince and people to his pious care: the fate of his predecessor Arsenius prompted him to prevent, rather than punish, the crimes of an usurper [...].[37]

Cavafy's poem, in its very first lines, introduces the patriarch with two defamatory epithets: not Gibbon's "proud and feeble",

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[36] Gibbon 1994: III, 775-6.
[37] Gibbon 1994: III, 776.

but "insolent and ungrateful" which neatly mirror, and invert, the "obedience and gratitude" whose lack Gibbon connects with Cantacuzenus's breach of faith with the young emperor. It seems likely that Gibbon was the initial inspiration for the poem, but that Cavafy quickly sought out the relevant passages in Paparrigopoulos and Cantacuzenus and only much later that passage in Gregoras.[38]

Renata Lavagnini has this to say about Cavafy's attitude to Cantacuzenus in "The Patriarch":

> Cavafy contrasts the two protagonists, the emperor and the patriarch, and, setting aside, we must assume deliberately, the reservations of Paparrigopoulos, praises Cantacuzenus with an abundance of epithets, while conversely belittling and making fun of the person of the patriarch. In this it seems that he is in sympathy with Gibbon, who speaks at length about the virtues of Cantacuzenus.[39]

This may be contested as regards both Gibbon and Cavafy. All historians, Byzantine and modern alike, are agreed as to Cantacuzenus's superiority over his principal opponents in Constantinople, including the Patriarch John Calecas and Alexius Apocaucus. Few would deny that in his time, or at least up to 1341, Cantacuzenus was, in Gibbon's phrase, "the best and most deserving of the Greeks". As Grand Domestic in the service of Andronicus III, or as Regent in the first months of the reign of John V, Gibbon does indeed respect and praise Cantacuzenus; but as "an usurper" as he calls him, and as the author of an "apology" for his own part in the affairs of state, Gibbon has little but contempt for him. Gibbon censures Cantacuzenus heavily for his seizure of power, for marrying his daughter to a Turk, and for allowing the passage of the Turks into Europe, which he calls "the last and fatal stroke in the fall

[38] The piece of paper on which he wrote down the quotation from Gregoras bears a printer's colophon with the date 1927 (Cavafy 1994: 195).
[39] Lavagnini in Cavafy 1994: 295-6.

of the Roman Empire".[40] Lavagnini has not registered the complexity of Gibbon's attitude to Cantacuzenus; and, more importantly, she has, I think, misconstrued Cavafy's poem in choosing to accept its statements at face value.

We should not be so sure that Cavafy did set aside the reservations of Paparrigopoulos. And we should note that some of the epithets Cavafy uses of the emperor are also found in Paparrigopoulos, as Lavagnini herself points out.[41] Paparrigopoulos acknowledges that Cantacuzenus "was not lacking in certain virtues", but he sees his employment of those virtues as misdirected. "The man," he says, referring to Cantacuzenus as author of the *Histories*, "frequently demonstrates that he was personally courageous (ἀνδρεῖος) and that he had a practical mind" – qualities which, according to Paparrigopoulos, he should have deployed in reorganizing his forces to combat the empire's external enemies, instead of constantly struggling to maintain disastrous intrigues and alliances. "He frequently demonstrates," Paparrigopoulos continues, "that he loved power, but through his excessive clemency (ἐπιείκεια) he came to see even his own son putting obstacles in his way."[42] Two of the many positive adjectives which Cavafy uses of Cantacuzenus – ἀνδρεῖος and ἐπιεικής – are thus already somewhat tainted by the qualifications of Paparrigopoulos. And surely we should be suspicious of the very number of these laudatory adjectives in Cavafy's poem. It is highly uncharacteristic of Cavafy to be so effusive in the praise of one of his historical characters. And lines such as line 6, "wise, clement, patriotic, brave, and able", or line 14, " honourable, loyal, unself-seeking", are reminiscent of lines from "Caesarion", a poem in which Cavafy's contempt for the royal panegyrics he finds in a book of Ptolemaic inscriptions is evident:

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[40] Gibbon 1994: III, 768, 777-8, 781, 814-5.

[41] In Cavafy 1994: 205.

[42] Paparrigopoulos 1925: V, 194.

> The extravagant praise and flattery
> the same for all. All are illustrious,
> glorious, mighty and benevolent;
> every enterprise of theirs most wise.[43]

It is clear that the poet was bored (he "would have put the book aside had not a reference, / brief and insignificant, to King Caesarion / just then caught [his] attention"). The tone of "Caesarion" should warn us not to take Cavafy too seriously when he himself appears to indulge in the excessive praise and flattery of a Byzantine emperor. But perhaps the strongest reason of all for suspecting an element of irony in the "abundance of epithets" in praise of Cantacuzenus is that most of those epithets, or close synonyms of them, or their cognate nouns, are used by Cantacuzenus in praise of himself, or in the praise of him by others which he immodestly reports.

In 1347, Cantacuzenus, having already entered Constantinople and taken control of most of the city, received ambassadors from the Empress Anna, who was still secure inside the palace at Blachernai. He received the ambassadors civilly and impressed them by his words and his manner, or as he puts it, "they rejoiced at the emperor's clemency (ἐπιείκεια) and marvelled at his greatness of heart (μεγαλοψυχία)".[44] Compare Cavafy's adjectives ἐπιεικής and μεγαλόψυχος. Shortly afterwards the same two qualities are again attributed to Cantacuzenus in the context of another embassy, but this time are added σύνεσις ("intelligence") and εὐγνωμοσύνη ("kindness"),[45] which may be compared to Cavafy's adjective σοφός ("wise") and his noun καλοσύνη ("kindness"), which occurs in the final form of the opening of the of the poem, where "John, / if he was patriarch owed it / to the kindness which he [Cantacuzenus] had shown to him".

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[43] Cavafy 1991: I, 73.
[44] Cantacuzenus 3.100 (CSHB, vol. II, p. 611).
[45] Cantacuzenus 3.100 (CSHB, vol. II, p. 613).

Particularly suggestive of the style of Cavafy's apparent eulogy of Cantacuzenus is the opening paragraph of a letter from the Sultan of Egypt to Cantacuzenus which the imperial historian is pleased to reproduce:

> In the name of God, the merciful and compassionate, may the most high God always lengthen the days of the reign of this great emperor, a benefactor, a sage, a lion, a courageous man, eager in war, against whom no one can stand in opposition, most wise in his belief, most just in his country and city.[46]

The adjectives applied here to the emperor are: μεγάλος, φρόνιμος, ἀνδρεῖος, σοφός and δίκαιος (the last two in the superlative). This gives us three exact matches with Cavafy's poem (μεγάλος, ἀνδρεῖος, and σοφός: "great", "courageous" and "wise"), and they come from a sample of the conventional and flamboyant flattery exchanged between rulers, a pretty close equivalent to the Ptolemaic inscriptions which so bored Cavafy.

Examples could be multiplied, but these are, I think, sufficient to indicate that there is a case to be answered. The case is that Cavafy's excessive praise of Cantacuzenus was a conscious and deliberate reflection of the emperor's direct and indirect self-praise and is not, therefore, to be taken at its face value. That is to say, that it does not necessarily express Cavafy's personal assessment of Cantacuzenus. But it is here that Cavafy's own indulgence in self-praise, when he wrote of himself in the third person, concealed behind the cloak of anonymity or the signature of a friend, clouds the issue. How critical would he have been of the same practice in another?

The innocent (or "Antiochean") reader of "The Patriarch" will come away with a strong impression of Cavafy's admiration for Cantacuzenus. The informed reader, the reader who has gone to the sources, and thus gained an insight – been initiated, we might say – into Cavafy's methods of compos-

[46] Cantacuzenus 4.37 (CSHB, vol. III, p. 93), tr. Miller 1975: 227.

ition, will perceive an intertextual irony which subverts the apparent meaning of the poem. And the initiate will not make the mistake that the innocent reader often makes and assume that the voice in the poem is that of C. P. Cavafy. The poem simply presents a voice speaking in praise of Cantacuzenus. The line "the worthy person our race had at that time" tells us that the speaker is Greek and belongs to a later, but not necessarily much later time than the events related; the excess of praise suggests a propagandist rather than a person of balanced judgement; but that is almost as far as we can go. The irony that subverts the poem is not within the text of the poem, but in its relations to other texts: to the self-justifying vanity of Cantacuzenus above all, but also to the mixed praise and censure of Paparripopoulos and Gibbon. Having defined what was *almost* as far as we can go in attempting to identify the voice in the poem, I will now go one tentative step further. The poem could be read as an addendum by Cavafy to the *Histories* of Cantacuzenus. Or to put it another way, Cavafy could be parodying (with malicious intent) the voice of the monk-historian and former emperor.[47] In the poem the emperor is much too good, the patriarch much too bad, to reflect the reality of politics. The heaped up adjectives of praise for Cantacuzenus (many derived from Cantacuzenus own self-praise) are matched by the equally numerous, but better distributed, condemnatory adjectives directed at the patriarch; to this mix are added some very strained syntactical suspensions and some highly colloquial modern Greek idioms, set off against the untempered Byzantine Greek of Nicephorus Gregoras with which the poem was probably intended to conclude. Though not quite finished, still in need of a little polishing, "The Patriarch" is on the way to being a linguistic tour de force – or should we say a tour de *farce*, unmasking the farce of

[47] Compare the interpretations of "Manuel Comnenus" and "Anna Dalassena" in Hirst 2000.

Cantacuzenus's own style and of his attitudes towards his former self.

I should add that the careful checking against their sources of two of Cavafy's other poems on Cantacuzenus, "Of coloured glass" and "At Epiphany", also uncovers extremely complex intertextual relationships, and reveals ambiguities and subtle ironies which are not apparent when the poems are read in isolation. But it is "The Patriarch" which, despite its apparent praise of Cantacuzenus, provides, on closer examination, the clearest evidence for an underlying hostility towards the fourteenth-century emperor, and leads me to conclude that, though the poet and emperor may have indulged in the same literary vanity, Cavafy saw Cantacuzenus not as an ally, but as an enemy, and as a target for his bitter though devious irony. But why is the irony so devious that it requires extensive familiarity with other texts to uncover it? The "poet of future generations" certainly left those generations a lot of work to do if they were indeed going to appreciate his poems better than his contemporaries did.

Cavafy's Byzantine poems have sometimes been regarded as the most patriotic of his historical poems. And perhaps they are, though not for the reasons usually advanced. If they are patriotic, it is not because they sing the praises of Byzantine rulers, but because they are founded on a broad sympathy for the Greek people, who, in the 1920s, as in the 1340s, found themselves the unfortunate victims of the misguided ambitions of their flawed rulers.

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