Variations on a theme: Cavafy rewrites his own poems

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The more one reads Cavafy's poetry, the more one recognizes the same motifs recurring at different stages of his œuvre. In this paper I am concerned not with the gradual metamorphosis of successive unpublished drafts of the same poem into its final version, but chiefly with those *published* poems that rework ideas and motifs from other already published poems – in other words, the genetic relationship between poems that Cavafy himself considered to be complete.

This phenomenon is particularly clearly observable when one reads the early poems through the prism of the late ones and vice versa. We can do this if we divide Cavafy's œuvre into two chief stages, "early" and "late", adopting his own view that 1911 marks the chief watershed in his poetic output but recognising that there are other less significant watersheds and that his poetic development was continuous.[1] It is perhaps particularly when we read the poems *backwards* (from late to early) rather than in their chronological order that we observe him transmuting certain material from an older poem when writing a newer one. There remains the problem of accurately establishing the date of each poem's original conception (particularly as long as the Cavafy Archive in Athens remains closed), since, while Cavafy always provided us with the date of first publication, we know that his poems usually matured over a long period, often a period of many years; however, in his 1991 edition, Savidis does provide us with relatively reliable dates of composition (Cavafy 1991). Besides, in most cases I shall

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[1] Pieris (1992: 102-7) sees two important breaks before 1911, the first in 1891, when Cavafy moves from a Romantic to a Symbolist and Parnassian orientation, and the second in 1899-1901, when he abandons Symbolism and Parnassianism for the sake of realism. Pieris sees this latter break as more significant than 1911.

be comparing poems whose dates of publication are distant enough for us to be certain that they were conceived and written at a significant chronological remove from each other. I should make it clear that I am concentrating on Cavafy's 154-poem "canon"; in other words, of each pair of poems that I am comparing, each member was authorised by Cavafy for publication in his poetic works. Nevertheless, by reading the poems neither in the chronological order of their composition nor in the order in which Cavafy intended them to be published, I am defamiliarising each poem by detaching it from its immediate chronological and/or thematic context and pairing it with another poem that dates from at least ten (and in most cases at least twenty) years before or after.

Other critics have pointed to features that distinguish Cavafy's early poems from the late ones. Pieris (1992) has made a significant contribution to our understanding of these distinctive features. He states that what he calls Cavafy's "poetic character [...] is distinguished by persistent but creative repetition and by the renewed recurrence of the same things and the same themes" (1992: 227). Nevertheless, while he makes a few references to instances where Cavafy returns in a later published poem to a theme that has appeared in some earlier unpublished or rejected poem, Pieris has practically nothing to say specifically about the handling of the same themes in pairs of published poems separated by a long chronological gap.[2]

I have based the table below partly on what Pieris tells us about the differences between Cavafy's "early" and "late" period. In fact Pieris does not specifically set out to compile a list of the distinctive features as I have done in the table, and his references to these distinctions are scattered in various parts of his book. Moreover, he is not always concerned to present these features in terms of antithetical pairs, as I have tried to do in

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[2] Pieris (1992) makes the following links between early and late poems: "Πριάμου νυκτοπορία" (unpublished) with "Άγε, ω βασιλεύ των Λακεδαιμονίων" (95), "Εν φθινοπωρινής νυκτός ευδία" ("rejected") with "Εν εσπέρα" (239n.), "Καλός και κακός καιρός" ("rejected") with "Ζωγραφισμένα" (304), "Λόγος και σιωπή" ("rejected") with "Ηγεμών εκ Δυτικής Λιβύης" (321-4), and "Όποιος απέτυχε" (unpublished) with "Ρωτούσε για την ποιότητα" (335-7).

the table. Most of the terms above the horizontal line are Pieris's (I have added page references to Pieris 1992 where appropriate); the pairs below the line are my own additions.

Table: *Some distinctive characteristics of Cavafy's early and late poetry*

Early	Late
vague (Symbolist αοριστία: 85)	specific
lack of location	βιωμένος χώρος (213)
Romantic	realistic (268)
metaphorical or allegorical	literal
presence of similes (218)	absence of similes
abstract	concrete (lived experience: 76)
static	dynamic
antithesis (318)	dialectic (323)
αδιαλλαξία (73), μονολιθικότητα (322)	αντιφατικότητα, ψυχολογική αστασία, ηθική αστάθεια (120)
over-personal	objective, depersonalised
over-general	contextualised
explicit irony	implicit irony
direct expression	oblique, indirect presentation
categorical expression	fictional or dramatic presentation
didactic	ambivalent
earnestness	humour
direct involvement (of poet in poem)	aesthetic distance (of poet from poem) and independence (of poem from poet)
men controlled by gods	men's fate controlled by a variety of forces, including Art, Eros, society, politics and the economy
pessimism and nihilism	aesthetic optimism (belief in the positive power of Art and Eros)

David Ricks adds that the titles of early poems tend to precede the poem (i.e. they are already *given* before we read the poem), while those of later poems are often *extracted* from them (i.e. they follow from the already given poem: Ricks 1993: 95). To give an instance of extreme polarity, the title "Η πόλις" sets

out the central allegorical symbol of the poem (and the poem becomes a set-piece, an exercise in antithesis), while "Ας φρόντιζαν" presents us with a title that is totally incomprehensible until we have read the poem. Ricks also talks of "the sententious, time-free poems of Cavafy's early career" as against "the historically rooted monologues which are perhaps his greatest achievement".

I shall now offer some brief comments on some of the features listed in the table. Similes such as the following are frequently found in Cavafy's early poetry: "Σαν σώματα ωραία νεκρών [...] / έτσ' η επιθυμίες μοιάζουν..." ("Επιθυμίες"), "Του μέλλοντος η μέρες στέκοντ' εμπροστά μας / σα μια σειρά κεράκια αναμένα –" ("Κεριά"), "είν' η προσπάθειές μας σαν των Τρώων" ("Τρώες"). Similes are more or less absent from his later poetry.

Some of Cavafy's poetry is structured on antithesis, the most obvious example being "Che fece .... il gran rifiuto", in which the exclusive Ναι/'Οχι (either/or) opposition is striking. By contrast, the later poetry displays a dialectic in which the opposition between thesis and antithesis leads either to the *Aufhebung* ("removal/raising") of oppositions or to the ironic coexistence of opposite views.

From the little information available about Cavafy's manuscript revisions, we can observe a process of depersonalisation in the genesis of certain poems, or in the revisiting of an earlier theme in a later poem. Thus the earlier title "Μια νύχτα μου" became simply "Μια νύχτα" by the time the poem was published.[3] We can also observe the unpublished poem "Τεχνητά άνθη" (1903) being metamorphosed into "Του μαγαζιού" (1913), where a direct statement of personal preference in the earlier poem ("Δεν θέλω τους αληθινούς νάρκισσους [...] Δόστε με άνθη τεχνητά") develops into an objectivised expression of the taste of a particular character in the later one.

Gods are frequently mentioned in the early poems: "Το έργον των θεών διακόπτομεν εμείς" ("Διακοπή"), "Οι άνθρωποι γνωρίζουν τα γινόμενα. / Τα μέλλοντα γνωρίζουν οι θεοί" ("Σοφοί δε προσιόντων"). The Iliadic poems such as "Απιστία" and "Τα άλογα του Αχιλλέως" present fate in the guise of gods who are

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[3] I am grateful to Sarah Ekdawi for pointing this out to me. For details about the Cavafy Archive see Ekdawi and Hirst (1996: 3).

indifferent to human suffering. In "Απιστία" the poet himself points out (albeit from Thetis's point of view) that Apollo was responsible for Achilles's death, thus going counter to his own prophecy. In the later poems gods are mentioned as wielding power over men ("Ας φρόντιζαν οι κραταιοί θεοί", as the speaker in "Ας φρόντιζαν" puts it, or "όπως αν ο δαίμων διδώ", as Cratisiclia says in "Άγε, ω βασιλεύ Λακεδαιμονίων"), but such expressions are always placed in the mouths of historical or fictional characters and are not presented as being the poet's own words; besides, in "Ας φρόντιζαν" irony is implicit in the fact that the character who speaks in the poem lays the blame for his predicament on gods in whom the poet and his readers do not believe.

As far as his rewritings are concerned, it is as though Cavafy first deals with a topic generally and theoretically in an early poem, then goes on later to depict a specific instance of a similar situation. His abandonment of the generalising and universal-ising thrust that characterises many of his early poems is indicated by the fact that, of his own three categories of poems ("philosophical", "historical" and "sensual"), the "philo-sophical" type, which forms a significant proportion of his early poems, more or less ceases to appear after 1915 (Hirst 1995). This tendency to generalize and universalise is also shown in certain titles. In "Che fece .... il gran rifiuto", Dante's "the one who made the great refusal" (referring to a particular historical personage, Pope Celestine V) significantly comes to imply "whoever has made the great refusal". Such a tendency is also apparent in the first lines of some of the poems: "Σε μερικούς ανθρώπους έρχεται μια μέρα..." ("Che fece..."), "Τιμή σ' εκείνους όπου στη ζωή των / ώρισαν και φυλάγουν Θερμοπύλες" ("Honour to all those who in their lives [...] guard some Thermopylae or other"): Thermopylaes, like the plural Ithacas in "Ιθάκη", are overt, allegorical symbols, and a generalized moral is drawn. The same generalising and universalising tendency can be seen in the poems referred to earlier in connection with similes and gods, especially those that use the first person plural; we can also compare the poems that use the second person singular ("Μάρτιαι ειδοί", with its indefinite and non-specific "κανένας Αρτεμίδωρος" ["some Artemidorus or other"], "Απολείπειν ο θεός Αντώνιον", and "Ιθάκη", all published in 1911, plus "Ο Θεόδοτος"

[1915]), which are dominated by imperatives and other modes of command. The over-direct statements *in propria persona* that we find in the early poems are replaced in the later ones by the *embodiment* of similar attitudes in objectively presented situations. The later poems that use the imperative usually address not a character but a sensation or some aspect of the speaker's own person: in "Επέστρεφε" this is the "αγαπημένη αίσθησις", in "Θυμήσου, σώμα..." the speaker's own body, and, in "Γκρίζα" and "Τεχνουργός κρατήρων", memory; only in "Όταν διεγείρονται" is a non-specific "poet" addressed.[4]

Just as it is possible to group some of the distinctive features of the early and late poems into contrastive pairs, so we can make pairs out of some of the poems themselves, early and late, where the same motif recurs in both but its mode of presentation is different in each. Nevertheless, I am not trying to argue either that all of Cavafy's poems can be sorted into pairs (one early and one late), nor that the two poems that make up each pair that I am about to analyse are the only ones that treat the relevant themes. In what follows, I have chosen to present just a few illustrative examples.

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One of the most effective ways of monitoring the development of both Cavafy's poetics and his philosophical outlook is to look at the changing ways in which he presents fate.

"Τείχη" (1896/1897) and "Εκόμισα εις την Τέχνη" (1921)[5]
Both of these poems, published a quarter of a century apart, are enunciated in the first person singular, and they are of a similar length (eight and seven lines respectively). More importantly, they contain some of the same vocabulary in strikingly different

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[4] In "Μάρτιαι ειδοί" the speaker ostensibly addresses his "ψυχή", enjoining it to behave in a certain way in the future; this is strikingly different from the later exhortations to memory, body and sensation to bring back the past.
[5] A single date in brackets after a title indicates the date of the poem's first publication; two dates separated by slashes indicate the date of composition followed by the date of first publication.

contexts, and this similarity clearly points up the contrasts between the two radically different situations depicted in the two poems. The phrase "κάθομαι και απελπίζομαι" in the first poem is replaced in the second by the opening words, "Κάθομαι και ρεμβάζω". In the first poem the speaker laments his fate ("τύχη" being significantly homophonous with "τείχη"): the unspecified "they" have built walls around him, cutting him off from the outside world. By contrast, in the second, the poet is content to daydream in the confidence that Art will produce the ideal "Form of Beauty" by combining the fragmentary desires and sensations that he has offered up to Her. Art (in cooperation with Eros), is seen as a benevolent aesthetic destiny, shaping men's ends, guiding their actions in the way *She* wants, but collaborating with men in such a way that *they* gain too. It is not insignificant that the word "Τέχνη" is close in sound and orthography to "Τείχη", and that the same adverb ("ανεπαισθήτως") is used in both poems to characterise the way in which the walls have been built and the way in which Art goes about Her mysterious business.

Reading the two poems together, then, we may conclude that, whereas in the first poem the speaker seems to be lamenting his fate, the second poem shows that it is precisely this "imperceptible" shutting off from the outside world that has enabled him to become an artist: the second poem expresses the poet's "νόησις"[6] of the situation depicted in "Τείχη", of which he was unaware at the time when he wrote the first poem. The speaker, then, has overcome his earlier negative attitude to his solitude and confinement by giving himself up to the benevolent goddess Τέχνη rather than to the vagaries of the goddess Τύχη; in general, the guileful gods of the early poems are superseded by Art, who is the poet's perfect protectress. The second poem does not cancel out the first; rather, the two poems collaborate to produce a richer meaning than either one of them could have

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[6] The poem "Νόησις" expresses the poet's later satisfaction at his realisation of the role of Art in events where he had been unaware of it at the time.

done on its own.[7] It is also significant in this regard that in a poem Cavafy wrote three years after the second poem, "Πριν τους αλλάξει ο Χρόνος", the narrator, having told the story of a couple who are forced to part by economic circumstances, wonders whether Τύχη has shown Herself to be a "καλλιτέχνις" by separating them at the height of their beauty and their love, so that each will remain forever for the other "the beautiful boy of twenty-four". Here – unusually for his late poems, where "τύχη" is hardly mentioned – Cavafy underlines the possible connection between "Τύχη" and "Τέχνη", whereas the random character of Τύχη (like that of Φύσις in "Του μαγαζιού") might be expected, in pre-Surrealist times, to be seen as the antithesis of Τέχνη.[8]

It is interesting to monitor the fate of the word μοίρα itself in Cavafy's poetry. It appears three times in his canon, each time in some way personified. In "Τα άλογα του Αχιλλέως" (1897) Zeus tells the divine horses that men are "παίγνια της μοίρας". In "Εν εσπέρα" (1917), where the word is capitalized, it is said to have put a hasty end to a beautiful relationship. It is also given particular prominence by being one of a set of five richly rhyming words (πείρα, Μοίρα, μύρα, πύρα, ξαναπήρα) in this otherwise unrhymed poem. Finally, in "Κίμων Λεάρχου..." (1928), Μοίρα (again capitalised) is said to be a προδότις, leading people to desert their lovers for the sake of new ones – but this generalization is uttered by a fictitious poet who is unaware of the actual details of the specific situation he is writing about; in other words, the generalisation is itself contextualised and therefore relativised.

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[7] Pieris, taking a different view from mine of the genesis of Cavafy's poetry, claims that the "rejected" poem "Αοιδός" was "rewritten" as "Τείχη", then as "Όσο μπορείς" (1992: 78-9, 81-2).

[8] Interestingly, Elytis professes his faith in the importance of the Surrealist *hasard objectif* in the title of one of his essays, "Τέχνη-Τύχη-Τόλμη" (Elytis 1982), in which he replaces the elements of the name of Greece's posts and telecommunications organisation (Ταχυδρομεία, Τηλέγραφοι, Τηλέφωνα, known as "τα τρία ταυ") with three words that are central to Cavafy's poetry (artistic daring is referred to in "Του μαγαζιού" [1913], sensual daring in "Απ' τες εννιά" [1918]).

"Η πόλις" (1894/1910) and "Ας φρόντιζαν" (1930)
In the first of these poems we find the use of two first persons;
even in this early poem the situation is presented in the form of a
dialogue. In the second, published twenty years later, we again
find the first person singular, but this time there is only one
character. In "Η πόλις" the gap between the "false" attitude of
the "you" (i.e. the quoted speaker) and the "true" situation
presented by the "I" (the first speaker) is unsubtly presented.
The "I"'s tone is omniscient, authoritative, categorical, judge-
mental and corrective. The dilemma of the character in the
symbolic City, which is directly presented to the reader and
directly commented upon by the "I" in "Η πόλις", is placed at an
ironic distance from poet and reader alike in "Ας φρόντιζαν",
which the fictional speaker claims to have been ruined in or by a
specific city (Antioch, which he describes as "μοιραία πόλις", as
though it were a *femme fatale*). The first character wishes to
leave the city, the second merely to change his career. In the
later poem Cavafy makes no attempt to impose a single view,
thus implying that he is opposed to the imposition of *any* view.
Interestingly, Cavafy becomes not only less didactic as he grows
older, but less pessimistic. In "Ας φρόντιζαν", as is usual in his
later poems, Cavafy, instead of telling us what to believe,
simply presents a situation and leaves us to judge for ourselves –
or not to judge at all, if we wish. I should add that the only other
instance of μοιραίος in the whole of Cavafy's canon is in "Ομνύει"
(1915): "στην ίδια / μοιραία χαρά, χαμένος, ξαναπιαίνει." Here
the poet is speaking directly and lamenting the situation.

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"Περιμένοντας τους βαρβάρους" (1904) and "Εν μεγάλη ελληνική
αποικία, 200 π.Χ." (1928)
In each of these poems, published a quarter of a century apart,
we again find the use of the first person singular, each speaker
now speaking not only for himself but on behalf his community.
Even in the first poem ("Barbarians") the situation is presented
dramatically, in the form of a dialogue between two speakers
who with their questions and answers convey the action to the
reader, while the second poem ("Colony") is presented as a

monologue by a character who is torn between calling in a "political reformer" (a management consultant in modern terms) to rationalise the running of the colony, and continuing to muddle through as before.

In both cases we are dealing with entire communities that are going through difficult times, and in both cases the speakers are hoping (or fearing) that a solution will be provided to the community's problems by outsiders ("Οι βάρβαροι σαν έλθουν θα νομοθετήσουν" in "Barbarians", "ευθύς στον νου τους ριζικές μεταρρυθμίσεις βάζουν, / με την απαίτησι να εκτελεσθούν άνευ αναβολής" in "Colony"). In each poem Cavafy depicts characters unable to govern themselves. While in the first poem the (unnamed) Romans are expectantly awaiting the Barbarians (who eventually fail to turn up), in the second the Greeks eventually decide not to invite the reformer who might have provided a solution to their problems, unaware that within a few years the (barbarian) Romans will come and take away the very freedom of choice that for the moment allows them the luxury of the dilemma whether to invite the reformer or not; the Romans will carry out political reforms on a scale the speaker could not even dream of (we can compare the Romans solving the Delphic priests' dilemma in "Πρέσβεις απ' την Αλεξάνδρεια").

The two poems are complementary, being linked by similarities in the form of inversions: the speakers in "Barbarians" actually *want* the barbarians to come, but they don't show up, while the speaker in "Colony" is unaware that the barbarians are going to arrive. Once again, similarities serve to point up the differences in Cavafy's approach: in the first poem we have a fictitious state that bears some similarities to the historical Roman Empire, and fictitious barbarians who turn out not to exist (clearly a symbolic and allegorical situation), while in the second we have a nationality (Greek) and a date (200 BC), which enable the reader to place the situation within a specific *historical* context, even though the precise *geographical* setting is not specified. Furthermore, the responses of the second speaker in "Barbarians" to the insistent questions of the first are categorical and authoritative (like the response of the "I" in "H

πόλις"), while the mental deliberations of the speaker in "Colony" are tentative and self-contradictory.[9]

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"Che fece .... il gran rifiuto" (1899/1901) and "Μέρες του 1896" (1925/1927)

In "Che fece ...." the poet imposes a view with resounding portentousness: "εκείνο τ' όχι το σωστό" brooks no ambivalence. Even though he expresses a view in favour of non-conformity which will lead to social condemnation and exclusion – he omits the phrase "per viltate" with which Dante condemns Celestine for refusing the offer of the papacy – Cavafy adopts an alternative but still "correct" attitude. By contrast, in "Μέρες του 1896", published twenty-six years later, Cavafy presents the portrait of a particular character, "που άνω απ' την τιμή, / και την υπόληψί του έθεσε ανεξετάστως / της καθαρής σαρκός του την καθαρή ηδονή". It is true that in "Μέρες του 1896", Cavafy adopts a more categorical tone than in most of his late poems; but I think this is a deliberate tactic to make us see this poem as presenting a specific instance of the general truth stated in the earlier poem. At the same time, the second poem helps us to see more clearly what kinds of choice are implied in the first. The two poems are also linked by the presentation of characters who are brought down by their refusal to conform, as well as the use of "σωστό" ("Δεν θάτανε σωστό") in both poems. (We can compare the less categorical phrase "ως είναι (για την τέχνη μας) σωστό" in "Πέρασμα" [1917].) Perhaps the increasing openness of his society and his greater confidence in his own poetic expression accounts for the existence of the two poems, each one commenting on the other, but each standing as the historic record of the way in which Cavafy felt himself capable of speaking at the particular time. In another rewriting or revisiting of the theme of "Che fece ....", dating from the same time as "Μέρες του 1896", namely "Το 25ον έτος του βίου του" (1925), Cavafy presents a character whose desire for a particular man has led him to

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[9] Only in the last two lines is the distinction between the ignorant and the know-all collapsed. This is indicated both by the metre and by the typographical layout (Mackridge 1990: 139-40).

resign himself to the social disapproval that will be the necessary consequence of his persistence in pursuing this man.

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"Τα επικίνδυνα" (1911) and "Από την σχολήν του περιωνύμου φιλοσόφου" (1921)
Here we have two poems published ten years apart and set in Alexandria at a time when paganism is giving way to Christianity. In the first, the fictional Syrian student Myrtias is "εν μέρει εθνικός, κ' εν μέρει χριστιανίζων", while the reason why the anonymous character in the second hesitates to pass himself off as a Christian is that his parents are "ostentatiously pagan" and might cut off his monthly allowance. To be sure, the first already presents a fictional character speaking; yet Myrtias's confidence that he can give himself over to "dreamed-of pleasures, / to the most daring erotic desires, / to the lascivious drives of the blood" without fear, since, through contemplation and meditation, he will "again find his spirit, as before, ascetic", is undercut by the title, which could be seen as a direct and categorical authorial comment. By contrast, even though the ex-student in the second poem is presented in the third person, Cavafy uses the fictional technique of free indirect discourse and avoids direct comment on the character's confident belief that his looks will allow him to indulge in pleasure for ten years, after which he can start looking for a serious and respectable job. In both poems, then, a similar situation is presented, of a young man postponing the day when he will settle down to a respectable life, and meanwhile indulging in the pleasures of the flesh in the confidence that he will not be fundamentally changed by these experiences. But whereas Myrtias's own words are categorical and portentous, the other characters' words are flippant and cynical. Reading "Από την σχολήν" in the light of "Τα επικίνδυνα", we are aware that the character's confidence is illusory, but Cavafy's avoidance of words such as "dangerous" in the second poem excludes any didactic dimension from the poem. With "Τα επικίνδυνα" we can link a poem dating from between the two poems, namely "Η διορία του Νέρωνος" (1918), where Nero muses that "Πολύ αρκετή / είν' η διορία που ο θεός τον δίδει

/ για να φροντίσει για τους μέλλοντας κινδύνους", and there is a specific reference to "ηδονή".

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"Τα άλογα του Αχιλλέως" (1896/1897) and *"Ο ήλιος του απογεύματος"* (1918/1919)
In both of these poems, separated by twenty-two years, there is a displacement or decentring of experience. In the first, the death of Patroclus is viewed not through its impact on his lover Achilles, but from the perspective of Achilles's horses, who are at the same time divine gifts to the hero from Zeus and the former's possessions. In the second poem, as I have written elsewhere (Mackridge, forthcoming), the speaker is visiting a room where his lover had lived but which is now being rented out as office space. In his attempt to reconstruct the room as it had been when his lover had lived there, the speaker concentrates on the positions formerly occupied by the now absent furniture. The speaker metonymically displaces his affection and tenderness from the lover to the furniture: "Θα βρίσκονται ακόμη τα καϋμένα πουθενά". Instead of wondering where his former lover is, he ponders the fate of these possessions. The absence of the lover is symbolized by the absence of the furniture. It is perhaps no coincidence that both of these poems contain, at or near the end, the same form of the tragic adjective "παντοτινή", referring to the permanence of the loss of the beloved, and the reader wonders whether to infer that the lover in the second poem is, like Patroclus, dead.

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"Θερμοπύλες" (1901/1903) and *"Υπέρ της Αχαϊκής Συμπολιτείας πολεμήσαντες"* (1922)
Each of these poems has a similar beginning: "Τιμή σ' εκείνους όπου..." ("Θερμοπύλες"), "Ανδρείοι σεις που..." ("Υπέρ"). Both categories of honoured men have fallen in battle, while others are blamed by name for their fate. The earlier poem contains much generalisation that is irrelevant to the historical situation: δίκαιοι, ίσοι, λύπη, ευσπλαχνία, πλούσιοι και πτωχοί, την αλήθεια ομιλούντες, χωρίς μίσος για τους ψευδομένους.

Thermopylae is a glaringly obvious and portentous allegorical symbol. By contrast, the second poem is contextualised by its last two lines, in which the (modern) poet tells us that the preceding lines were written in Alexandria by an Achaean in the seventh year of the reign of Ptolemy Lathyros, that is, in 109 BC, thirty-seven years after the battle of Leucopetra, in which the Achaean League was decisively defeated by the Romans. Here, then, opinions and feelings concerning admired characters are no longer expressed by an uncontextualised and therefore authoritative poetic voice, but by a particular individual who is precisely situated in place and time; and the degradation of the moral environment in which the fictional poet is writing is suggested by the nickname of the contemporary ruler of Egypt, Ptolemy VIII, namely "Chickpea". Furthermore, if Seferis is right (as I believe he is), the later poem refers indirectly to a specific contemporary historical event, the defeat of the Greek forces in Asia Minor in 1922 and the expulsion of the entire Orthodox Christian population from Asia Minor (Seferis 1974: 329-30).

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"Απολείπειν ο θεός Αντώνιον" (1910/1911) *and* *"Εν δήμω της Μικράς Ασίας"* (1926)

In the first poem the speaker directly addresses an individual who finds himself in an analogous situation to Mark Antony, one of the central figures in the crucial Roman power struggle that ended with the Battle of Actium, which in turn ensured that the Greek world would henceforth be ruled directly from Rome. The speaker's words consist of urgent and impassioned exhortations concerning the proper (that is, Stoical) way to react to crushing defeat. In the later poem, published fifteen years later, the speaker is a fictitious municipal official, a petty participant in the same events in which Antony was a protagonist. He views Antony and Octavian from a distance as no more than interchangeable names. In contrast to the speaker in the Antony poem, the speaker in this later poem expresses a flippant and cynical attitude to the political subjugation of his whole civilisation to a militarily superior outsider. Yet at the same

time he expresses a smug sense of the *cultural* superiority of the Greeks *vis-à-vis* their conquerors.[10]

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I have intended to show that by pairing one of Cavafy's early poems with one of the later poems we can highlight certain aspects of each of them that can help us form a clearer picture of the development of Cavafy's poetics and of the world-view that it embodies. Over time, and as his experience of life and art increases, the sententious and didactic general statements of his earlier career give way to the lively presentation of specific situations and incidents whose ambiguity demands constant reconsideration on the reader's part. As I have suggested, my own pairing of poems has been based on my own personal intuitions. In this way I hope to have suggested a fruitful method of reading Cavafy's poetry and to have encouraged others to find their own connections between the early and the late poems.

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[10] For the cultural superiority of the Greeks over the Romans cf. Artemidorus's superior knowledge in "Μάρτιαι ειδοί"; but see also "Πρέσβεις απ' την Αλεξάνδρεια", where the Delphic oracle has lost its divinely sanctioned decision-making powers and consequently its cultural prestige in the face of Roman *realpolitik*.

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