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Abstract

It has been recognized that Sachtouris's poetry is intimately related to the Greek ballads. This paper aims first to locate Sachtouris within a long and diverse modern Greek tradition of poetic dialogue with folk poetry, and then to examine, through close readings of five diagnostic poems from the period 1945–1956, how the folk tradition comes to function in the work of an individual poet in a new, post–World War II context. Affinities in theme, diction, and versification can be illuminated so as to illustrate Sachtouris's recourse to the darker side of the ballad tradition, which may be understood as a form of collective psychotherapy.

The affinity of Sachtouris's poetry with the Greek folk ballads has been observed before, notably by Yannis Dallas (1979:95–96; 1989:338–356), but the subject has by no means been exhausted. This paper aims, first, to locate Sachtouris within a Greek tradition of dialogue with folk poetry, and, in turn, to illustrate with reference to five diagnostic poems of the 1940s and 1950s how the folk tradition comes to function in its new context. To what in folk poetry does Sachtouris respond, and how?

That folk poetry lies behind modern Greece's "art poetry," "written poetry," "authored poetry," or whichever of the unsatisfactory designations we use, is widely acknowledged, and indeed proclaimed by the standard literary histories; and Linos Politis, in a lecture of 1946 (1977:47–91), gave an eloquent account of modern Greek poetry from its medieval beginnings in terms specifically of the development of the "political verse." Clearly, such assessments are not to be understood in isolation from demoticist assumptions (Garandoudis 1995a:8–12); on the other hand, that such assumptions are not necessarily involved may be seen from students of later generations who have dwelt on precisely this question (Maronitis 1987:205; Garandoudis 1993). It might be that, imbued with the justifiable skepticism of a non-literary perspective

(Herzfeld 1981), we would come to see modern Greek literature's appropriation of folk poetry as merely an outgrowth of romantic nationalism, an obsolete feature of phases of the tradition that now seem poetically dead—the phases, let us say, of Kristallis and perhaps even of Valaoritis. To take such a view, however, would be greatly to underestimate the circumspection and indeed the inventiveness of Greek poets when faced with their folk "past." Indeed, the same applies equally to prose writers: Papadiamandis, while undoubtedly influenced by the "ancient survivals" approach of N. G. Politis, shows himself to be conceptually far more circumspect and indeed imaginative (Ricks 1992a).

Ever since Fauriel's first volume of the *Chansons populaires de la Grèce moderne* (1824), each generation of Greek poets has set out to relocate itself in relation to the folk heritage. The importance of bearing this prehistory in mind when we come to look at a contemporary poet like Sachtouris is partly of literary-historical importance pure and simple: the Surrealists come after and wish to emulate or efface certain precursors. But it is also a central point of Surrealist poetics: for such poets aim to uncover layers of the mind that are psychologically ancestral, a *terra cognita* of the imagination on entering which we may have hopes of freeing ourselves from the modern condition's lack of spontaneity.

The history of the "political verse" goes back to the twelfth century in "art poetry" (Jeffreys 1983), but this meter's beginnings are far earlier. And, although such questions of continuity can be traced only speculatively (Sifakis 1992, 1996), they are not to be ignored. The period of Greek poetry from c. 1100 to 1669 is one in which the literary meter is in fact the same as the folk meter (fundamentally the same, that is, if not always similarly handled). We do not have what might be called the dissociation of sensibility present in English poetry's broad division into "popular" four-stress and "literary" five-stress meters (Attridge 1982). So it is, in a key text like *Apókopos* (early fifteenth century, but published in 1509) that we are faced with a chicken-or-egg argument. Does line 449, «Διατί στον Άδην τον πικρόν ήλιος ουκ ανατ°λλει», echo or give rise to similar lines in the folk tradition (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 174)?[1] Despite recent valuable discussion (Alexiou 1991; for a caveat, see Ricks 1992b) we cannot hope to have a definitive answer. What is clear is that the "folk" and "learned" traditions are not easily disentangled.

When we come to Greek literature since 1821, such questions do not go away. The literature is inaugurated, and self-consciously so, by Solomos's «Ύμνος εις την Ελευθερίαν», by Kalvos's *Η Λύρα*—and by Fauriel's collection of folk songs; and while folk song was rarely far from Solomos's mind (Hadziyakoumis 1969; Beaton 1989), it also plays a

discreet but central role in Kalvos's odes (see, e.g., Dallas 1989:64–65).[2] It is in the mid-nineteenth century, with its increasing obsession with classical models, that a shaping influence of folk poetry is harder to discern, with the gigantic exception of Valaoritis. Under the pressure of this tendency, a poet such as Aleksandros Rizos Rangavis, who had earlier adopted some of the manner of folk poetry (Anagnostakis and Yeorganda 1989), deserts it, while perhaps the most interesting poet of the period, Karasoutsas, has no affinities with folk poetry whatsoever. What we might say, heretically, is that the most relevant poets of this period are the folklorists themselves: not only those of the collections, which, it has long been recognized, bear the marks of editorial interference and poeticizing (Apostolakis 1929; A. Politis 1984), but, above all, the authors of the songs appearing in *Pandora* and elsewhere (N. G. Politis 1920).

The use of folk song by writing poets enters a new phase in the 1880s, no doubt still permeated by the old nationalist assumptions at the bottom, but handled very differently from the explicitly nationalist mode of Valaoritis. If Kristallis's borrowings of folk meter and motifs were mechanical in the extreme, Drosinis at least lent his pastiches urbane delicacy and wit, and Viziinos, albeit in a less complex way than in his short stories, exploited the atmosphere of folk poetry in an attempt to probe the subconscious in a manner that we shall find recurring in the twentieth century. Yet it is striking that the major poets, beginning with Palamas, keep folk song at arm's length. Of course, folk poetry is for Palamas a key source of cultural reference (Kasinis 1980; Ricks 1990:283–284), but he sees it as something that the "art poet" will make, at the very least, νεοδημοτικόν (in Pallis 1915:407). The work of which Palamas uses the phrase, Pallis's translation of the *Iliad* (see Ricks 1988), deserves mention as indicating the possibilities, but also the limitations, of literary work emulating the style of folk poetry for broader purposes.

It might indeed be argued that the fundamentally escapist or nostalgic excesses of Kristallis *et al*. made better poets more circumspect about the open use of folk song elements. Palamas's closest verbal borrowing from folk song comes in «Το πανηγύρι της Κακάβας» in *Ο Δωδεκάλογος του γύφτου* (n.d.:376–377), where a song of exile (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 171) is quoted verbatim, but harmonized with the very different metrical system of the rest of the poem so that, musically as well as in terms of content, Palamas (*pace* Apostolakis 1950:12–13) conveys precisely the departure from the folk tradition itself. Again, in Cavafy's «Πάρθεν» (Cavafy 1993:108; see Kokolis 1985:31–66), the distance from folk song is established in the poem's being framed by an act of reading; while a poem such as «Λάνη Τάφος» (Cavafy 1981:1.74),

while reflecting the mode of μοιρολόι (Mackridge 1990:134 n.22), is at the same time highly literary. (Indeed, in the case of that poem, we move from a more folkloric beginning through a change of tone in subsequent sections to a final verse with a broken caesura such as is never found in folk poetry.) Nor do we find in Sikelianos's protean experiments many clear echoes of folk song technique—rather the reverse (Garandoudis 1995b). In the case of each of these poets we are talking about someone deeply familiar with the folk song tradition—in its written form—but in each case folk song is drawn on as part of a larger synthesis, much as it is in Solomos's second and third drafts of *Οἱ Ἐλεύθεροι Πολιορκημ°νοι*.

Solomos's warning in 1833 regarding the proper use of folk poetry (Solomos 1994:577–578) was of course attended to by Seferis in the first Modernist generation a century later, and, significantly, his first overt use of folk song is the ironic miniature of 1928, «Δημοτικό τραγούδι» (Seferis 1982:25; see Gauntlett 1997). Yannis Dallas (1989:11) rightly sees the turn to the demotic tradition as constitutive of the avant-garde literary aims of the "Generation of the Thirties," and this emerges as clearly as might be in two of Seferis's programmatic critical texts, «Ελληνική γλ≈σσα» (1937) and «Διάλογος για την ποίηση» (1938). In the latter, Seferis comments on the a-logical quality of a famous folk song (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 160) and says that a poet who wrote like this "would seem to us out of his wits" (1974:87). Circumspect about, if not hostile to, Surrealism, Seferis never lets this a-logicality develop to its fullest extent in his own poetry; instead, he characteristically uses folk poetry to invert the reader's expectations. If, more often than not, folk poetry has to the reader's ear reassuring suggestions of belonging, Seferis likes to upset these, whether lightly, as in «Δημοτικό τραγούδι», or with the somber coloring of «Ο γυρισμός του ξενιτεμ°νου» (Seferis 1982:163–65, with Maronitis 1984:29–43, and Ricks 1989:147–157). In the period leading up to World War II, in particular, Seferis grimly adopts the meter and diction of the Maniat laments in «Άνοιξη μ.Χ.» and he truncates an old folk song with a redemptive message in «Η τελευταία μ°ρα» (1982:173–175, 327). This is a quite different mode from that employed in Ritsos's *Επιτάφιος* (1936), the most widely read (and heard) poem created on a folk song base.

But Seferis was not of course the only poet in the *Τα Ν°α Γράμματα* circle to turn to folk poetry, and the Surrealists to whom Sachtouris owes his greatest stylistic debt notably do so. Elytis's first poem, «Του Αιγαίου» (1935; Elytis 1978:13), has considerable programmatic significance in this respect. The three six-line stanzas of which it is composed are made up of whole or fractured political verses, delicately evoking—but also standing at some distance from—the folk tradition.

We may suggest that the development of free verse has become a catalyst, enabling poets of this generation to reencounter the folk tradition in a fresh way by alluding rhythmically to the older tradition without being bound by its metrical form (Vayenas 1996). The atmosphere evoked is much like that of folk songs related to the sea, but without the darker overtones typically present in the folk poet's attitude. In particular, Elytis evokes a sea in which the separation of boy and girl will not be permanent, and in which there is no «Κυρ-Βοριάς» to bring destruction (compare N. G. Politis 1979:no. 88). Elytis's opening stanza clearly echoes the last of these songs; its final lines «Στο πιο ψηλό κατάρτι του ο ναύτης ανεμίζει /°να τραγούδι» contain but hold at bay the lines «πολλ°ς φορ°ς σε π°ρακα γελ≈ντας τραουδ≈ντας» and «αν°βα βρε ναυτόπουλο στο μεσιανό κατάρτι» (Ioannou 1983:154–156). Keeping away the threatening associations of the sea, Elytis wishes to base a manifesto on the difference between land and sea poetry. If the earlier dominant voice of folk poetry in the art poetry of Valaoritis was very much terrestrial, heroic, and national, the voice summoned up by Elytis is to have the "tender and delicate feeling" that Fauriel discerned in the Greek folk songs from maritime locales.

In the case of Embirikos too, we find a poet turning to what Yatromanolakis (1983:89) calls an «ελληνικό, δημοτικό "κ°ντρον"»—something distinct from a traditional allegiance to the folk tradition. The debate as to what precisely constitutes ελληνικότητα for this generation (Tziovas 1989), and whether Embirikos subscribes to it, reaches beyond the scope of this paper. What is perhaps of greater importance here is to note the psychological implications of Embirikos's use of folk poetry. It is no coincidence that the title of the relevant collection, *Ενδοχ≈ρα* (1945) suggests not just a preoccupation with place but also a spiritual hinterland, redolent of the cultural past, into which the poet may take us and heal us of the ailments of the modern condition. This is particularly so of the poems in «Τα κάστρα του αν°μου» (1934), a group written at the very time of Elytis's poem discussed above, and also, for example, of «Στροφ°ς στροφάλων» in the group «Το σ≈μα της προϊας», a poem that juxtaposes the modern, cosmopolitan subject of an ocean liner with the dominant rhythm of the political verse, and ends with a distinctly Aegean landscape (Embirikos 1974:98–101). This tribute to the machine age in the spirit of Whitman's "A Passage to India" finds its expression in rhythms indelibly associated with the folk tradition, and perhaps in echoes of songs that speak of a «καράβι της φιλιάς, φρεγάδα της αγάπης» (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 129A).

Such fundamentally heartening explorations in the modes of folk song, harnessed to avant-garde poetry, are in due course overtaken by

events, as the above discussion of Seferis reveals—and in particular by the outbreak of war. Just how dominant the political verse becomes in Greek poetry in and after the war years is a large question (Ricks 1998), but even a selective roll-call of poets who used the meter in the years 1941–1944 is indicative: Papatsonis, Sikelianos, Aleksandrou, Engonopoulos, Elytis, and Gatsos. It is the last of these poets above all who planted the seeds of Sachtouris's mode with *Αμοργός* (1943). In one 24-line section Gatsos actually creates, in the folk song meter, what we might think of in musical terms as a set of variations on the famous line of folk lament (cited above): «Στου πικραμ°νου την αυλή ήλιος δεν ανατ°λλει» (Gatsos 1993:18–20), adding a hue of Gothic horror to the bleakness of the folk tradition itself.[3] The Surrealistic nightmare pictures and the folk song rhythms presented here in the midst of the horrors of wartime are precisely those that Sachtouris was to evoke for much of his career.

Gatsos was not of course the first Greek reader to prize the element of horror in the folk tradition, nor the first Greek poet to exploit it for his own purposes. As early as 1868, N. G. Politis had drawn attention to the celebrated Maniat lament of Ligorou (N. G. Politis 1868), and Seferis discerned an Aeschylean element in that tradition (1974:290).[4] That Greek folk ballads (παραλογ°ς) enact a form of psychodrama (Alexiou 1983) was discerned by late Romantic poets such as Viziinos (1916:56–57) and Mavilis (Ioannou 1983:165–173) and by Symbolists like Karyotakis, whose early poem, «Ξεπροβόδισμα» (1988:165) is a graphic example of the mode. The phenomenon is a pan-European one. As one survey somewhat comically observes, "The commonest ballad theme is tragic love of a sensational and violent turn . . . Incest and other domestic crimes are surprisingly common" (Brogan 1993:117). But World War II and the subsequent civil war brought horrors of which Greek poets could only have dreamed, and the question was how such things could be brought into poetry—if they did not invalidate poetry altogether, as Engonopoulos, for one, feared (1977:157). For at least one central figure, Embirikos, the personal and collective trauma of the war years had to wait twenty years to be addressed in that great poem whose key axis is indeed folk poetry, «Ο δρόμος» (1980:15–18; with Ricks 1987/89).

Poetry and politics come together in the title of Sachtouris's second collection, *Παραλογαίς* (1948), which itself gives an idea of how central the folk song tradition is for his outlook. The title, spelled with the very bookish ending *-αίς*, has evident literary antecedents, not just in the Greek ballad genre specified, but in a whole tradition of literary ballad within and beyond Greece—a point to which I shall return. But

Sachtouris's whole mode of writing also draws attention to the notion of the παράλογο, the irrational. This element abounded in the years of fratricidal conflict in Greece in the 1940s, and in their aftermath in the 1950s, years in which the prefix παρα- might have characterized many aspects of life: people besides themselves with παραφροσύνη, the παρακράτος about its nefarious work. Sachtouris's implication that his poems lie, in some significant sense, *to the side of* life as normally understood reflects not just a sense widespread among his contemporaries that poetry was marginal, even threatened, but also a suspicion that *only* outside direct speaking would poetry be able to come to terms with the outrages of the civil war. It has indeed been argued with some plausibility (Meraklis 1987:133–135) that the images of violence and mutilation that abound in Sachtouris's verse are coded images of a time that it would be dangerous to describe overtly. Certainly, if we read Sachtouris as a kind of refraction of the distemper of his times—not, to be sure, as a commentary upon those times—his poems gain in urgency.

But I have said that specific literary antecedents are important here. Since the mid-eighteenth century, when the revival of interest in ballads began, many poets have had recourse to related modes in order to give expression to matters that it might never have been possible to express in a more rational, less oblique way. In English poetry, for example, a ballad-related mode has permitted the exploration of obscure, forbidden areas of the mind associated with violence and sexuality (usually the two together), whether in Coleridge's "Christabel," Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," Tennyson's "The Sisters" (1832), Swinburne's "The Bride's Tragedy," Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" and—an author explicitly cited by Sachtouris (1980:17–18; see also Engonopoulos 1977:29)—Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Sister Helen." Such poems return the reader to a familiar rhythmical world that might seem comforting were it not for the ghoulish content: the ballad genre opens the way for the subconscious to encounter, through archetypes of the folk memory, what cannot be expressed directly. As Seferis put it in 1944, once again with words formed with παρα-:

> κι α σου μιλ≈ με παραμύθια και παραβολ°ς
> είναι γιατί τ᾽ ακούς γλυκότερα,
> γιατί η φρίκη δεν κουβεντιάζεται. (Seferis 1982:215)

Such words hold out the hope that with παραμύθια there will be παραμυθία (consolation). Although such a hope is little visible in Sachtouris's work, his verse, too, may be understood as a form of psychotherapy. This is clear enough in one of his best-known poems,

«Το κεφάλι του ποιητή» (1988:247), but in order to convey in detail the precise form of therapy imparted by recourse to folk poetry, I will need to quote the poems in full.

Let us begin with part 2 of the sequence «Η λησμονημ°νη» (1945):

Η λησμονημ°νη ανοίγει το παράθυρο
ανοίγει τα μάτια της
κάτω περνούνε φορτηγά με μαυροφορεμ°νες
που δείχνουνε το φύλο τους γυμνό
με οδηγούς μονόφθαλμους που βλαστημάνε
το χριστό της και την παναγία της
οι μαυροφορεμ°νες θ°λουν το κακό της
κι ας της πετάνε τα ματωμ°να τους γαρίφαλα
απ᾽ τον αναβρασμό του κήπου της ηδονής τους
απ᾽ την εξάτμιση της μπενζίνας μ°σα στο σύννεφο του καπνού
οι οδηγοί
σκίζουν το σύννεφο και τήνε κράζουν πόρνη
όμως αυτή είναι μια θλιμμ°νη παναγιά
με τον αγαπημ°νο της μ°σα στα εικονίσματα
°τσι όπως τον φύλαξε ο χρόνος
με τα κεριά όλων των προδομ°νων
που βάδισαν στο θάνατο ανάμεσα στις μαργαρίτες και τα χαμομήλια
με βάγιες δούλους κι αστ°ρια του βουνού
με σπαθιά που κόβανε λαιμούς και φοινικόδεντρα.

(Sachtouris 1988:32)

That the poem is basically made up of full political verses (e.g., line 3) or truncated ones is evident to the ear; also evident is that it contains lexical items from folk poetry rather than everyday speech (e.g. βάγιες in the penultimate line: see Maronitis 1980:43). But the sequence's title gives us a particular thematic connection with the folk song which goes by the title «Της απολησμονημ°νης» (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 82). In the song the "forgotten girl" longs for the love of a young man, and one of her three friends who have renounced love goes off to fetch him, following which the couple are united in marriage. The opening line of Sachtouris's poem alludes directly to the scene of the young man's arrival at the house of his bride-to-be—«Και πρόβαλεν η λυγερή από το παραθύρι»—but subjects the scene to the grimmest of transformations. Instead of a joyful journey, wartime pictures are evoked in a way that suggests Charos's horse laden with the dead; instead of there being one of three celibate friends to help the forgotten girl, all the widows spurn her—and her beloved is lost in war to survive only in the icons.[5]

Representative of Sachtouris's earlier mode, this poem has powerful elements but is somewhat diffuse, and the relation to folk poetry, while manifest, is less far-reachingly subversive than in the poems of

Seferis, mentioned above, which Sachtouris might have sought to match himself against. A higher degree of concentration is to be found in a poem from the next collection (1948):

Η πληγωμ°νη Άνοιξη

Η πληγωμ°νη Άνοιξη τεντ≈νει τα λουλούδια της
οι βραδιν°ς καμπάνες την κραυγή τους
κι η κάτασπρη κοπ°λα μ°σα στα γαρίφαλα
συνάζει στάλα-στάλα το αίμα
απ᾽ όλες τις σημαίες που πον°σανε
από τα κυπαρίσσια που σφαχτήκαν
για να χτιστεί °νας πύργος κατακόκκινος
μ᾽ °να ρολόγι και δυο μαύρους δείχτες
κι οι δείχτες σα σταυρ≈νουν θα᾽ ρχεται °να σύννεφο
κι οι δείχτες σα σταυρ≈νουν θα᾽ ρχεται °να ξίφος
το σύννεφο θ᾽ ανάβει τα γαρίφαλα
το ξίφος θα θερίζει το κορμί της

(Sachtouris 1988:40)

Such a poem alludes to the genre of seasonal songs for spring, and May in particular—the carnations in the penultimate line conclude one such song (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 164). But where in the May song the (implicitly male) singer ends by offering a girl three carnations to hang round her neck, in Sachtouris's poem the flowers are consumed by fire (as stubble is burned in, e.g., N. G. Politis 1979:no. 128A) and an unseasonal and sinister harvest takes place, with the girl's neck, it seems, being shorn from her body. In a world turned upside down, the very seasons are out of place, as the meeting of the clock's hands will show.

Once again, the poem's rhythm is distinctly iambic, shaped by the political verse tradition. Moreover, further allusions to folk song themes are evident: the cypresses are commonly found in laments for dead men and sometimes for women (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 187), and the gathering of elements of the dead to make a garden is characteristic of Charos (Petropoulos 1958–59:251). But the mention of flags and the choice of the word *σφαχτήκαν* rather than *°πεσαν* for the cypresses import a political dimension into Sachtouris's poem. More speculatively, we find perhaps a folk memory of the White Tower of Thessaloniki as the Bloody Tower after a massacre of 1826, for sinister allusions to the War of Independence are often present in the work of Sachtouris, the troubled and non-combatant scion of a well-known naval family of the Revolution. But such a dimension can be fully understood only with reference to the work of two older poets, Seferis and Gatsos.

The spring endowed with feminine characteristics at the start of Sachtouris's poem reflects the equally sinister «Άνοιξη μ.Χ.» (16 March

1938) of Seferis. Writing with the war imminent, Seferis uses the Maniat meter for its sinister connotations and a suggestion—as direct as he could make it without personal cost—that a spring of the *Anschluss* is really a winter. Later on, in 1943, Gatsos's folk song pastiche in *Amorgos*, which alludes to that very poem of Seferis (Lignadis 1983:128–129), contains the appearance of a sinister cloud. Writing, then, during the civil war, Sachtouris takes a cue from references made to folk song by the two senior poets in their efforts to get a grip on the events of their time, but also carries this a stage further.

Sachtouris's poem, «Ο βυθός», from the same 1948 collection as «Η πληγωμ°νη Άνοιξη», is without contemporary reference, but represents another sort of rereading of folk poetry:

Ένας ναύτης ψηλά
στα κάτασπρα ντυμ°νος
τρ°χει μ°ς᾽ στο φεγγάρι

Κι η κοπ°λα απ᾽ τη γης
με τα κόκκινα μάτια
λ°ει °να τραγούδι
που δε φτάνει ≈ς το ναύτη

Φτάνει ≈ς το λιμάνι
φτάνει ≈ς το καράβι
φτάνει ≈ς τα κατάρτια

Μα δε φτάνει ψηλά στο φεγγάρι (1988:50)

This poem takes us back to the folk song origins of the opening poem of Elytis's «Του Αιγαίου» in those irrecoverable prewar years, but where Elytis's poem ended with a song, a song comes at the mid-point of Sachtouris's poem but never reaches its addressee. The pun on κάτασπρα and κατάρτια may suggest that the girl's song can reach the young sailor in his traditional position (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 88, l.16), but an implicit curse (κατάρα), not visible in the poem but nonetheless overshadowing it, has frustrated communication. For this motif we may compare the song of the deserted girl (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 129A), whose song from a crystal tower is taken up by the wind and conveyed to a ship full of sailors, none of whom is the young man who has deserted her. The atmosphere generated is, accordingly, close to that of the song of the jilted girl (N.G. Politis 1979:128A), in which the girl says «θ°λω να τον καταραστ≈»—a word that Sachtouris exploits in his poem, as we have seen. In that folk song, we never learn whether the curse has any effect, for all that the girl's curse begins with an invocation to the moon: «Φεγγάρι μου, που είσαι ψηλά και χαμηλά λογιάζεις». The moon looks near but is far away, as the nightmare image beginning Sachtouris's

poem suggests. But no message, whether favorable or sinister, can be conveyed; indeed, the poem allows no inference concerning the content of the girl's song. It could be longing or curse alike, and the βυθός ("depth") opened up by this ostensibly plain or even childlike poem extends from within it to a gap between the poet and the reader.

Bleak as this may be, it pales before a poem such as «Του πύργου» (again from the 1948 collection):

Η κόρη πήγαινε και τραγουδούσε
η κόρη με τα φίδια της
με τα ωραία λουλούδια της

Όμορφα που μυρίζαν τα λουλούδια

Τα χ°ρια του °δενε
ο ληστής
που μούγγριζε
στα πόδια της
τα αίμα
το κεφάλι του
η γλ≈σσα
η ρίζα
το φιλί
γιομάτοι οι κήποι
αίμα
μη μιλάς

Καν°νας δε μιλούσε

Η κόρη πήγαινε και τραγουδούσε
η κόρη με τα φίδια της
με τα ωραία λουλούδια της (1988:76)

The folk song parallel is immediately signaled by the genitive of the poem's title, and the first line on its own might suggest once again the crystal or ivory tower from which a girl sings in folk songs. Moreover, lines 2 and 3 (repeated as the last lines of the poem) have the characteristic rhythm, rhyme, and half-meaningless content of a τσάκισμα, a refrain interspersed by the folk singer between the lines of a song proper (a common one is μαύρα μάτια, μαύρα φρύδια—see, e.g., Vasilakis 1980:10–11). The opening lines, then—except for the potentially sinister mention of snakes, apparently canceled by the flowers that rhyme with them—lull the unsuspecting reader into a fairy world of song.

Of course, the "castle" of the title comes to be seen not as the place of the girl's confinement, as in many a romance, but as the place where *she* confines, mutilates, and kills. The poem breaks down into a mosaic

of truncated parts at its center, the full narrative never being told—being indeed untellable—before it finally returns to the opening words, which cannot now be read in the original spirit. The girl is in fact a λάμια, a bloodsucking fairy (N. G. Politis n.d.:nos. 805–818), like the sinister κόρη who lures the widow's son to the bottom of the well where snakes and vipers lurk (N. G. Politis 1979:no. 90C). The apparent fluency of Sachtouris's recourse to folk tradition at the poem's outset, then, is revealing only of sinister depths in the tradition—depths that withhold the very power of speech from the narrator. Even the figure of the ληστής, a brigand perhaps metamorphosing into one of the Gospel's robbers, is here the subject of violence and its perpetrator. The girl is seen as a sort of Salome; indeed, what gives the poem its force is the combination of this archetype with Greek folk song rhythms that break down and then insouciantly resume.

What the poem narrates is ugly, and there is a case for saying that the archetypes that lie behind it are themselves ugly. Sachtouris is given a taste of his own medicine in a poem by Jenny Mastoraki, «Του κάτω κόσμου» (1983:16), which exploits folk song rhythms precisely to locate the deep roots of violence against women, and to derive some succor from this exposure of the truth (see Van Dyck 1998). In the last poem by Sachtouris that I shall examine here, «Η πηγή» (1956), the rhythmical roots in folk song remain deep, but the precise links of content become tantalizingly obscure:

Φεγγάρι πεθαμ°νο μου
για ξαναβγ°ς και πάλι
θ°λω να δω το αίμα σου
δεν °καιγες λυχνάρι
φ≈τιζες
το φοβισμ°νο πρόσωπο
θ°λω να δω
το φοβισμ°νο πρόσωπο
τ≈ρα
πάλι και πάλι
τότε
όλο το σ≈μα μου ήταν
μια πληγή
φεγγάρι
μια πηγή
και φ≈τιζε
της νύχτας το σκοτάδι

Φεγγάρι πεθαμ°νο μου
θ°λω να δω το αίμα σου
τ≈ρα
πάλι και πάλι (1988:109)

The poem's two opening couplets and closing triplet all form political verses, and shorter segments of the meter are also audible. But the poem seems to have cut loose from the specific folk song motifs that we have identified elsewhere, although a subconscious association of φεγγάρι and πηγάδι comes to the reader's mind and recalls «Του πύργου». In fact, the "source" specified in the title is now not so much a folk source as a general consciousness of the sources of art; though it is true, again, that πηγή will instinctively be considered a *folk* source by a Greek writer—there is a rather absurd example of this in Terzakis's novel *Ταξίδι με τον Έσπερο* (1946), where the wise old maid is called Πηγή.

The fact that Sachtouris's poem contains political verses does not indicate that these verses are primarily of folk song provenance. It is a fair bet that his opening lines will put the reader in mind of nothing so much as the second line of Solomos's *O Κρητικός* in Polylas's edition (Solomos 1994:225): «αστροπελ°κι μου καλό, για ξαναφ°ξε πάλι!» Such a feeling is confirmed by the fact that Sachtouris's poem (although it does not look like a rhymed poem) is, like Solomos's, rhymed: πάλι, λυχνάρι, πάλι, φεγγάρι, σκοτάδι, πάλι. We are returned to something like the feeling of Solomos's couplets in *O Κρητικός*, but in a truncated form that fits the narrative content with its description of the wound. And where Solomos's poem presents us with the disjointed and mysterious—but not fundamentally elliptical—narrative of a man driven out of his wits by suffering, Sachtouris's is considerably more obscure.

What we are left with amounts to a reworking of the Seferian *Nekyia* (and, with Sachtouris's contemporary Sinopoulos in mind, we may say that it is not the only such original reworking). The poem is an invocation to a dead moon to reemerge and expose the old wound (πληγή) that is itself the only source (πηγή) of light. The connection between wound and light (there, sun) is of course to be found in Karyotakis's «Δον Κιχ≈τες» (1988:22–23 and introduction p. λθ΄). These affinities (Solomos, Karyotakis, Seferis) suggest that by 1956 Sachtouris was moving away from his direct borrowings from folk song: moving away, in Solomos's term, "vertically." Yet, in an age in which poets and readers often relax into a facile image-based poetry (Pinsky 1976; Pieris 1981), it is the combination of distorted images and an intermittent beat of folk poetry that enables much of Sachtouris's poetry to transcend the *grand-guignol*. In doing so, it both recreates and exorcizes some of the horrors of the times in which it was composed. The horrors are recreated, but so, in another sense, is the mind.

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NOTES

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[1] Most of my references to folk song are made to this oft-reprinted volume as being the most widely used (if far from the most authentic) collection of folk song available to the writing poet. I refer to the songs by number rather than page.

[2] Even Garandoudis (1995a:37), who is rightly skeptical about the existence of δεκαπεντασύλλαβοι in Kalvos's work, leaves open the possibility that folk poetry may be rhythmically as well as thematically echoed in Ode III.56–70.

[3] Gatsos's move here meets with disapprobation from one distinguished student of folk song (Saunier 1978:118).

[4] Just how illuminating such comparisons can be emerges in Holst-Warhaft (1992); see Ricks (1994) for one or two caveats.

[5] This latter touch has a clear ring of the canonical poem of Cavafy with the most folkloric atmosphere, «Δ°ησις», in which we find the elements εικ≈ν, Παναγία, κερί. See also «Πριν τους αλλάξει ο Χρόνος» (Cavafy 1981:1.99, 2.39).

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