

**ΜΠΟΛΙΒΑΡ, BY NIKOS ENGONOPOULOS:  
SCULPTURAL MONUMENTS AND THE POETICS OF PRAISE  
FROM PINDAR TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

**Liana Giannakopoulou**

*University of Cambridge*

---

This paper explores the Pindaric tradition in *Μπολιβάρ*. It discusses how the poetics of praise and their function in Pindar's odes may illuminate the modern poem's form and aspirations especially as far as the role of the poet within the community is concerned. What is more, the discussion of the sculptural monuments within the poem allows for a better illustration of the tensions that Engonopoulos stages in *Μπολιβάρ* between the poet as hero and the poet as outcast. The paper also explores the cultural and intellectual circumstances in the decade prior to the publication of the poem that may have led Engonopoulos to choose the figure of Simón Bolívar as the central character of his poem and of Abraham Lincoln as Bolívar's "double" in the poem's famous conclusion.

---

**E**ver since the time of Horace, Pindar's poetry has been referred to as a poetry of the sublime: he is "like a river, rushing down from the mountains, / that the rain has filled above its usual banks"; he "coins new phrases in audacious dithyrambs"; he is "carried along in verse / that's free of rules." Whatever the topic of his praise he is "granting a tribute much more powerful than / a hundred statues"; he is "a Dircean swan or a Theban eagle carried to cloudy heights by powerful breezes".<sup>1</sup> It is also a poetry that is often described by scholars as difficult, incompatible with our own prosaic times, a poetry that dazzles us for the lack of logical relation between its parts, for proceeding by association, for the element of surprise that shocks the readers, the daring imagery and the unorthodox use of vocabulary. A poetry, then, that shares a great deal with Surrealism and whose "grammar" is clear to anyone who approaches Pindar's work today, familiar as most of us are with the language and challenges of modern art. Engonopoulos must have sensed these affinities when he included Pindar in his genealogy of Surrealist poets along with Homer and Solomos:

---

1. Tr. David West, in Horace, *Odes*, Book 4, Ode II.

Αρέσκομαι να λέω ότι οι υπερρεαλισταί ποιηταί είναι οι καλύτεροι, αλλά τέτοιοι ποιηταί ήταν κι ο Όμηρος κι ο Πίνδαρος κι ο Σολωμός. Αυτοί για μένα είναι υπερρεαλισταί, γιατί αν οι ποιητικές σχολές είναι πολλές, η ποίηση – το ξαναλέω – είναι μία. (Engonopoulos 1999: 24)

But the problematic, often damning and certainly tortuous history of Pindar's reception must also have attracted the modern Greek poet's attention in the light of the now notorious reactions to his own work. In this paper I will explore the different ways in which Pindar's poetry and its reception is embedded in the poetics of Engonopoulos' most famous poem, *Μπολιθάρ*.<sup>2</sup>

The proclamation is an obvious place to start. The fact that *Μπολιθάρ* is an ode to a heroic victor who has distinguished himself beyond the limits of his own homeland is a first element that links the two poets. We do not have here an "Ode to a Grecian Urn", or an "Ode to a nightingale" or to Liberty or a friend: all these are examples of how the tradition of the ode has travelled down the centuries and how it has adjusted to different needs and sensibilities maintaining some general characteristics of praise.<sup>3</sup> With Engonopoulos, I believe that we are going back to its very essence.

Moreover, the verse and strophic structure of the Pindaric ode is reflected in the strophic structure of Engonopoulos' poem and the way his verses are laid out on the page. Indeed, the very appearance of each verse reflects, I believe, the way Pindar's odes have been printed in modern editions, with hyphenated words responding to the requirements of metre. That is the only possible explanation for Engonopoulos' abrupt cutting of a word at the end of a verse, a practice which, otherwise, makes no sense.<sup>4</sup> As far as the overall strophic structure of the poem is concerned, *Μπολιθάρ* responds to Pindar in two distinctive ways: the labelling of strophe, antistrophe and epode at the end of the poem makes the parallel quite clear. Not all of Pindar's odes had such a triadic structure, however. Many are written in stanzas repeated for the duration of the ode and which may be compared to the stanzas of *Μπολιθάρ*. The odes with a triadic structure were meant to be danced by a chorus; the others were

2. Engonopoulos' relationship with Pindar appears to be an important *desideratum* of the criticism centered on the Greek surrealist's work but it has heretofore never been discussed. Some suggestions are made in Vourtsis (1999: 16).

3. For an overview of this topic see indicatively Shankman (1994), Michelakis (2009) and Fry (1980).

4. See for example the extracts quoted in the following pages.

meant to be sung in procession (Nisetisch 1980: 34-5). I will discuss the relevance of this for Engonopoulos' poem below.

Last, but not least, the geographical expanse in Pindar's odes is also followed by Engonopoulos. Pindar's odes, let us remember, go beyond the cultural and physical boundaries of his hometown (Thebes) and his host town (Athens) to embrace a world that stretches from Greece to North Africa and from there to Sicily. If Engonopoulos's international spirit is a reflection of Surrealism's aspirations to go beyond the narrow confines of the national, then Pindar is one of the first poets to have detached his poetry from the requirements of a specific city or race.

Then we also have more specific ideas and images within the odes that may also be compared: the confidence of the poetic voice in its ability to commemorate the victor is common in both cases; the description of the ode as a chariot or as a boat which travels, common in Pindar (Hutchinson 2012 and Calame 2012), is reflected in Engonopoulos' adjustment of this imagery in presenting the poem as a tramway that travels to the stars. Below, I will give five further indicative examples:

First of all, the idea that great deeds require great songs, which marks the very beginning of *Μπολιβάρ*, is comparable to what Pindar says in *Ne-mean* 7, lines 11-16:

Γιά τούς μεγάλους, γιά τούς ἐλεύθερους, γιά τούς γεν-  
ναίους, τούς δυνατούς,  
Ἄρμόζουν τά λόγια τά μεγάλα, τά ἐλεύθερα, τά γεν-  
ναία, τά δυνατά<sup>5</sup>

Εἰ δὲ τύχη τις ἔρδων, μελίφρον' αἰτίαν  
ῥοαῖσι Μοισᾶν ἐνέβαλε· **ταὶ μεγάλαι γὰρ ἀλκαὶ**  
**σκότον πολὺν ἕμνων ἔχοντι δεόμεναι·**  
ἔργοις δὲ καλοῖς ἔσοπτρον ἴσαμεν ἐνὶ σὺν τρόπῳ,  
εἰ Μναμοσύνας ἔκατι λιπαράμπυκος  
**εὐρηται ἄποινα μόχθων κλυταῖς ἐπέων αἰοιδαῖς.**

And if a man succeeds in an exploit, he casts a delightful theme upon the stream of the Muses. For great deeds of strength, if they lack songs are sunk in deep obscurity, and we know of only one mirror for noble achievements: if Mnamosyna in her shimmering veil consents to let a man find reward for toil in the song of verses, givers of glory.<sup>6</sup>

5. All quotations taken from Engonopoulos (1993).

The description of the victor in terms of fire is comparable to Μπολιβάρ in lines 69: "Τ' ὄνομά σου τώρα εἶναι δαυλός ἀναμμένος" and 94: "Βράς, ἀλβανιστί φωτιά: Μπολιβάρ!"

παρὰ Κασταλία τε Χαρίτων  
ἔσπεριος ὀμάδω **φλέγεν**. (Nem. 6, 38-9)

and shined by Kastalia at evening  
in the Graces' attendance.

The power of verse to travel far and to affect people's souls is another common characteristic of both poets. Compare below passages that reveal parallels in the two poets' imagery:

πέταται δ' ἐπί τε χθόνα καὶ διὰ θαλάσσης  
τηλόθεν  
ὄνυμ' αὐτῶν· καὶ ἐς Αἰθίοπας  
Μέμνονος οὐκ ἀπονοστάσαντος ἐπᾶλτο. (Nem. 6, 50-52)

and their name flies far over earth and across the sea:  
even into the midst of the Ethiopians it made its way,  
when Memnon failed to return

Κράζω τ' ὄνομά σου ξαπλωμένος στην  
κορφή του βουνού Ἴερε, [...]  
Ἀπό δῶ ἢ θεά ἐκτείνεται μαγευτική μέχρι τῶν νήσων  
τοῦ Σαρωνικοῦ, τῆ Θήβα,  
Μέχρι κεῖ κάτω, πέρα ἀπ' τῆ Μονεμβασιά (l. 58-61)

τὸ δὲ πᾶρ ποδι ναὸς ἐλισσόμενον αἰεὶ κυμάτων  
λέγεται παντὶ μάλιστα **δονεῖν**  
**θυμόν** (Nem. 6, 55-7)

But the wave rolling nearest the ship's keel  
is always a man's first concern.

Νέοι θά ξυπνᾶνε, μέ μαθηματικὴν ἀκρίβεια, τίς ἄγριες  
νύχτες πάνω στὴν κλίνη τους,  
Νά βρέχουνε μέ δάκρυα τό προσκέφαλό τους, ἀναλογι-  
ζόμενοι ποιὸς εἶμουν, σκεφτόμενοι  
Πῶς ὑπῆρξα κάποτε, τί λόγια εἶπα, τί ὕμνος ἔψαλα.

---

6. All translations are by Nisetich (1980). For reasons of space, I have not maintained Nisetich's layout.

The beauty of the victor is another noteworthy parallel. In *Μπολιβάρ* we have the famous exclamation, of course, “Μπολιβάρ, εἶσαι ὠραῖος σάν Ἕλληνας”. Compare with Pindar’s vocabulary in the following extract:

παῖδ’ ἔρατὸν δ’ Ἀρχεστράτου  
 αἶνησα, τὸν εἶδον κρατέοντα χερὸς ἀλκᾶ  
 βωμόν παρ’ Ὀλύμπιον  
 κεῖνον κατὰ χρόνον  
**ἰδέα τε καλὸν**  
**ᾧρα τε κεκραμένον**, ἃ ποτε  
 ἀναιδέα Γανυμήδει μόρον ἀλαλκε σὺν Κυπρογενεῖ. (Ol. 10, 99-105)

I praised Archestratos’ good-looking son whom I saw  
 in his might, by the Olympian altar  
 the day he won, handsome in build  
 and blessed with the youthfulness  
 that once, through Aphrodite’s favour,  
 warded ruthless death from Ganymede.

Finally, in both Pindar and Engonopoulos, the exposition of the hero’s genealogy is not just a technical aspect of praise but aims at stretching memory beyond experienced time and the life span of one generation, back to the sphere of myth or forward to the level of the divine. Either way, this transcendent, vertical dimension of memory creates monumentality (Foxhall 1995: 132-41). This aspect of praise is clear in Pindar every time the poet forges links between the victor, his family and the glorious mythical heroes in a process of apotheosis typical of the poetics of the Pindaric ode. In the case of Engonopoulos’ poem, the hero is associated with a line of other famous figures that cover a very long stretch of time (from Palaiologos through Rigas and Robespierre to the present), go as far back as Heracles<sup>7</sup> and culminate with Bolivar’s elevation to the stars and his ascension into heaven (“πού σάν τόν Ἀπολλώνιο στά ουράνια ἀνελήφθη”, l. 118).

All the above examples show that Engonopoulos goes beyond the surface of Pindaric conventions to include details of words and images that betray not only direct familiarity with the work of the ancient poet but his willingness to show this, and to frame an intertextual reading for his audience. I would like now to explore in greater detail some more subtle as-

---

7. Indeed, Bolivar’s ξυλάρα is an allusion to Heracles and a subtle way of associating the hero with the mythical past of Greece in the spirit of a Pindaric ode.

pects of the technique of praise which bring these two poets even closer through the socio-cultural function of their work: they refer to the poetics of praise, especially with regards to the communal aspect of the ode and its performative dimension. Both these aspects presuppose and are enhanced by the presence of sculptural references. That is the reason why sculptural imagery and metaphors within Pindar's odes have been studied extensively as fundamental elements of the poetics and the practice of praise (Smith 2007). Engonopoulos includes similar features in his own poem, features that have not, hitherto, been discussed nor their relevance explained. With this discussion I will show that, through the example of Pindar, Engonopoulos aspires to restore in the modern world the communal and performative aspect of poetry and the central, hieratic role of the poet as the main agent of this.

Pindar's overwhelming imagery has of course been studied extensively, and great attention has been paid to his use of sculptural metaphors by many scholars such as Rosalind Thomas, Leslie Kurke and Deborah Steiner. They point out that such metaphors should not be taken just as an early instance of the "paragone", the contest, that is, between sculpture and poetry for primacy in artistic expression and vividness of representation as the famous lines from *Nemean 5*, 1-5 would suggest:

οὐκ ἀνδριαντοποιός εἰμ', ὥστ' ἔλινύσοντα ἔργα-  
**ζεσθαι ἀγάλματ' ἐπ' αὐτᾶς βαθμίδος**  
**ἔσταότ'·** ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πάσας ὀλκάδος ἐν τ' ἀκάτῳ,  
 γλυκεῖ' αἰοιδά,  
 στεῖχ' ἀπ' Αἰγίνας διαγγέλλοισ',

I am no sculptor, fashioning statues  
 to stand motionless, fixed to the same base.  
 No, on every merchant ship, on every boat  
 I bid my song  
 go forth from Aegina, spreading the news

With so many physical marks of achievement such as victory monuments and statues, it is not out of place to assume that these lines underline a hidden competition with other forms of celebration (Thomas 2007: 149). In other words, Pindar may well be trying to tell his audience that he, as a poet, is better than sculptors because his song is not stationary and bound to a pedestal but can travel around the world to bring good news of glory and victory. It is also important, however, to equally acknowledge the supplementary role these two celebration methods – sculpture and choral poetry – held in antiquity. In Pindar, references that amplify the effective-

ness of praise poetry or that put in greater relief its aims are clear both in the allusions to statuary within the ode and in the sculptural and artisanal dimension that writing acquires in the poems. In the examples below one can see how the poet boasts that he can erect a loud-sounding stone of the Muses, using, in other words, sculptural vocabulary to refer to his own poems:

ὦ Μέγα, τὸ δ' αὖτις τεὰν ψυχάν κομίξαι  
οὐ μοι δυνατόν· κενεᾶν δ' ἐλπίδων χαῦνον τέλος·  
σεῦ δέ πάτρα Χαριάδαις τε **λάβρον**  
**ὑπερείσαι λίθον** Μοισαῖον ἔκατι ποδῶν εὐωνύμων  
δὶς δὴ δυοῖν. (Nem. 8, 44-48)

O Megas, to bring your soul back to life again  
is not open to me: empty hopes fatten on emptiness.  
But I hasten to raise this stone of the Muses  
for Aigina and the Chariadai, honouring your speed  
and your son's, victorious twice.

One can also see how the act of praising, honouring and glorifying is described in sculptural terms in the examples below:

ἀλλ' ἐγὼ Ἡροδότῳ **τεύ-**  
**χων** τὸ μὲν ἄρματι τεθρίππῳ **γέρας** (Isth. 1, 13-14)

But I, composing in Herodotos' honour  
a prize for victory in the four-horse chariot

ἐπεὶ κοῦφα δόσις ἀνδρὶ σοφῶ  
ἀντὶ μόχθων παντοδαπῶν ἔπος εἰπόντ' ἀγαθὸν  
ξυνὸν **ὀρθῶσαι** καλόν. (Isth. 1, 46-47)

For wise men, in return of labours of every kind,  
willingly give noble recognition,  
a song honouring the man and his people.

χαρίεντα δ' ἔξει πόνον  
χώρας **ἀγαλμα** (Nem. 3, 12-13)

it will be a pleasant task  
to adorn this country

In Engonopoulos such references are bolder: the poet speaks of his praise of Bolivar in terms of writing on stone (lines 64-66):

Μ' ἔνα σκληρὸ λιθάρι χαράζω τ' ὄνομά σου πάνω στὴν  
πέτρα, νᾶρχουνται ἀργότερα οἱ ἀνθρώποι νά

προσκυνοῦν.  
 Τινάζονται σπίθες καθώς χαράζω – ἔτσι εἶτανε, λέν, ὁ  
 Μπολιβάρ – και παρακολουθῶ  
 Τό χέρι μου καθώς γράφει, λαμπρό μέσα στὸν ἥλιο.

Later in the poem he promises to erect the statue of a Kouros (lines 108-110) in honour of his hero, creating thus a sculptural monument that performs a complementary function to the poem:

(Σάν θάρθη μάρμαρο, τό πιό καλό, ἀπό τ' Ἀλάβανδα,  
 μ' ἀγίασμα τῶν Βλαχερνῶν θά βρέξω τήν  
 κορφή μου,  
 Θά βάλω ὅλη τήν τέχνη μου αὐτή τή στάση σου νά πε-  
 λεκῆσω, νά στήσω ἐνοῦ νέου Κούρου  
 τ' ἄγαλμα στῆς Σικίνου τά βουνά,  
 Μή λησμονώντας, βέβαια, στό βᾶθρο νά χαράξω το πε-  
 ρίφημο ἐκεῖνο «Χ α ἱ ρ ε π α ρ ο δ ῖ τ α».)

It seems, then, that the celebration of the victor both in Pindar and in Engonopoulos presupposes the presence or the metaphorical creation of a statue. In the time of Pindar it was common practice to erect statues as well as commissioning odes as part of the celebration to honour the victors of the games. The use of the monument strengthens the celebratory dimension of the ode and this complementary relation is reflected in the use of sculptural metaphors and imagery within the poem.

What is more, this pairing of verbal and visual art underlines what Leslie Kurke calls *megaloprepeia* as a fundamental aspect of the communal dimension of celebration and praise (Kurke 1991: 163-194). Using the example of the honorific statue as a paradigm or foil for his enterprise, the poet declares his composition able to satisfy individual and collective demands. The materialized ode together with the triumph it proclaims can become a “common benefaction” bestowed on the city by the victor. And the patron who has commissioned the ode, he too exercises *megaloprepeia* towards his community (Kurke 1991: 272).

This communal dimension is clear in both Pindar and Engonopoulos. In the case of the ancient poet, as we can see from the examples quoted above, the ode is considered as a monument that belongs to the public as the word ξυνόν of *Isthmian* 1 suggests or indeed the fact that the ode is χώρας ἄγαλμα in *Nemean* 3. Scholars have also discussed the ritual dimension of the Pindaric odes, revealed in indications of ritual practice in them (Ferrari 2012; Calame 2012). Examples of ritual practice in *Μπολιβάρ*,





is my belief that Engonopoulos' choice of a Kouros as opposed to any other type of sculpture confirms his wish to assert the communal scope of his ode in yet another way: the Kouros has a certain degree of abstraction in its representation and therefore shuns any individualized characteristics and identification by name that would be considered too bold acts of self-assertion in antiquity and would therefore be condemned. As Steiner points out (Steiner, 2002: 269) a particular personality was assimilated to a familiar and idealized type so that the audience could easily recognize itself and emulate this "everyman". This also ensured the avoidance of *φθόνος*, envy at the expense of the *laudandus*, of which Pindar was certainly aware as we can deduce from the following extracts:

ἀφθόνητος δ' αἴνος Ὀλυμπιονίκαις  
οὔτος ἄγκειται. (Ol. 11, 7-8)

without stint is that praise  
dedicated to Olympic victors.

τὸ δ' ἄχθυμαι,  
φθόνον ἀμειβόμενον τὰ καλὰ ἔργα. (Pyth. 7, 18-19)

But this grieves me,  
that envy requites your noble deeds

A clear reference to envy, spite and malice against the hero of the poem is made in *Μπολιθάρ* in lines 100-110, where Bolivar has been the target of deviousness, betrayal and backstabbing as the following terms suggest: "σ' ἐπιβουλευτήκαν", "πόσα "ντολάπια" καὶ δέ σοῦ ἴστησαν νά πέσης, νά χαθῆς", "οὐ ἔχθροί σου". This clearly indicates that the acceptance of the hero by his community and the communal harmony achieved by Pindar in his odes does not really work for Engonopoulos and his hero. This rupture, which permeates the poem in spite of the poet's consistent efforts to achieve communal integration and acceptance, will culminate, as we shall see, in the poem's conclusion, the famous ΣΥΜΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ.

But let us return to the complementary roles of poetry and sculpture: statue making and poetic immortality are connected in *Μπολιθάρ* thanks to the use of parentheses that frame two distinctive passages in the poem: lines 25 to 32 in which the poet confirms his future fame through images that show how his voice will have the power to stir people's souls; and lines 108-110 in which the poet speaks of his carving of the honorific statue of the Kouros. These passages set against each other the celebration of the poetic voice and the ideal elevation and fame bestowed by the statue.

A similar apotheosis by the hand of the poet is implied when Engonopoulos describes his hand as writing bright in the sun:

Μ' ἔνα σκληρό λιθάρι χαράζω τ' ὄνομά σου πάνω στήν  
πέτρα, νᾶρχοναι ἀργότερα οἱ ἀνθρώποι νά  
προσκυνοῦν.  
Τινάζονται σπίθες καθῶς χαράζω — ἔτσι εἶτανε, λέν, ὁ  
Μπολιβάρ — και παρακολουθῶ  
Τό χέρι μου καθῶς γράφει, λαμπρό μέσα στόν ἥλιο.

This juxtaposition of the material and immaterial reflects the poet's exploitation but also subversion of sculptural imagery in favour of the values of his own ode. Poetry is better able to bestow immortality because it is the art par excellence that is inspired by the Muses (a deified Ἐμπνευσις in the case of Engonopoulos). What is more, the fact that it was sung and performed in public ensures the transmission of tradition through oral performance and ritual enactment. This process of praise puts the poet along with the victor on the pedestal of fame and at the centre of civic life. This link becomes clear when the poet assumes the characteristics of the *laudandus*: in Pindar's odes he is referred to as an athlete or a chariot rider and in Engonopoulos as a soldier.

\*

I hope to have shown so far that *Μπολιβάρ*, being a modern victory song, shares a number of characteristics of form and imagery with Pindar's epinicians which help us better explain its purpose: to glorify a victor, and along with the victor and through the victor's persona, to elevate the poet as a conferrer of immortality and as an integral, pivotal member of the community. Surely though discreetly, the poet becomes the hero, the athlete or indeed for the purpose of our poem here, the soldier who "was there". Indeed, Engonopoulos' assertion "ἤμουν ἐκεῖ" links him with Simón Bolívar in a manner that is almost literal, that goes, therefore, much further than Pindar's metaphorical imagery. Engonopoulos was not of course present at the battles of Boyacá (1819) and Ayacucho (1824) which marked the Independence of South America from Spanish rule, but he was indeed a poet-soldier, fighting on the Albanian front a war for freedom, just like Bolívar a century before him.

But what is it that, in the winter of 1942 to 1943, made Engonopoulos turn to a South American hero and sing of his deeds in a Pindaric manner? I do agree with all the scholars who maintain that such choices are dic-

tated by the circumstances of the Second World War, that is, the need to boost and uplift the patriotic and agonistic spirit of the Greeks and highlight the values of resistance, self-sacrifice and freedom in a period of foreign occupation. I believe, however, that the above generally valid points still do not justify the specific poetic choices made by Engonopoulos: for that, we need to explore further the wider cultural and intellectual circumstances during the thirties and leading up to the outbreak of the war which may have encouraged the Greek poet to bring together within one single work the heroic figure of Simón Bolívar, the epinician tradition of Pindar and, as will be shown below, the American President Abraham Lincoln.

One such circumstance that must have had a great impact on Engonopoulos is, in my opinion, the New York World Fair of 1939-40, in which the poet participated in a collective exhibition by Greek artists.<sup>8</sup> The Fair's theme was "The World of Tomorrow" and it aimed at forging a spirit of fraternity among the participating nations as a foil to the still fresh memories from the First World War. It also clearly supported innovation in every possible aspect and promoted modern, forward-looking ideas in the arts, sciences and technology.<sup>9</sup> The Greek Pavilion, commissioned by Metaxas and designed by the architects Alexandra and Dimitris Moretis, was no. 12 in the Hall of Nations within the Government Zone. This Hall of Nations consisted of a series of Pavilions arranged around the Lagoon of Nations and the Court of Peace and was located near the League of Nations Pavilion. Clearly, as all these names suggest, in addition to the established interest of the Surrealist artists in the values of Internationalism and the modernist interest in primitive cultures quite properly discussed by many scholars,<sup>10</sup> there seems also to be a real-life experience of internationalism and primitive cultures in the context of that Fair.

On the walls of the Canada Pavilion Engonopoulos could see displays of huge totems, and the area of the fair was strewn with statues of African

---

8. The Fair itself is of course very well covered, but the Greek delegation and the Greek pavilion are only now beginning to become the object of systematic, scholarly study (mentioned by Hamilakis 2007 and by Zacharia who is involved in an ongoing research on the topic in the context of her interest in Greek Tourism and propaganda during the Metaxas dictatorship. She is discussing the Greek pavilion of the New York World's Fair from that point of view in Tziouvas (2014). For Engonopoulos' participation see Perpinioti (2007: 60-2).

9. A number of illustrated books are devoted to the New York World Fair. See for example Appelbaum (1977) and Cusker and Harrison (1980).

10. For Engonopoulos in particular see Tachopoulou 2010.

art as well as Malvina Hoffman's circular relief sculpture "Dances of the Races". A large number of Pavilions were decorated with murals, some by quite famous artists such as Fernand Léger, Pierre Bourdelle, Witold Gordon and Rockwell Kent. The Greek Pavilion was next to the Pavilion of Mexico and within the same area as those of Venezuela, Peru, Cuba and other Central and South American countries. The Federal Building's front walls featured two colossal relief sculptures by Harry Poole Camden representing Peace on one side and Common Accord Among the Nations on the other. What is more, there was a re-enactment of important historical events of American history within the same area.<sup>11</sup> The point I am trying to make here is that Engonopoulos' participation in this Fair must have enhanced his exposure to, and interest in, American and South American history, the multicultural dimension of art in the modern world and the emphasis on peace, fraternity among the nations, liberty and international co-operation. Suffice to read the addresses on the occasion of the opening of the League of Nations Pavilion to understand how such values were promoted as an important aspect of the Fair and as a foil to the traumatic experience of the First World War.<sup>12</sup>

Pindar would not have been out of place in this context. Indeed it is highly significant that the front wall of the Greek Pavilion was adorned with a few lines from Pindar's *Olympian* 13, 6-10 emphasizing the values of justice and peace:

έν τᾷ γάρ Εὐνομία ναίει, κασίγνηταί τε, βάθρον πολίων ἀσφαλές,  
Δίκα καὶ ὁμότροφος Εἰρήνη, ταμίαι ἀνδράσι πλοῦτου,  
χρῦσσαι παῖδες εὐβούλου Θέμιτος.  
ἐθέλοντι δ' ἀλέξειν  
Ἵβριν, Κόρου ματέρα θρασύμυθον.

home of Eunomia and her sisters – Dika, unshakable foundation of cities,  
And Eirena, preserver of wealth:

golden daughters of sagacious Themis.  
They are eager to repel  
Hybris, brash-tongued mother of Koros.

---

11. The so-called "American Jubilee", which recounted American history through song and dance routines. See Duranti (2006: 675).

12. Published in a pamphlet as *Addresses delivered on the occasion of the official opening of the League of Nations pavilion*, New York: League of Nations, 1939.



*"Dances of the Races" by Malvina Hoffman*

Naturally, such an excessive display of pacifism and an eagerness to promote a utopian future based on democratic values and technology could not have passed unnoticed by many critical minds who did not fail to observe how “both seasons [of the Fair] offered narratives intended to neutralize the disturbing implications of the European war” (Duranti 2006: 663). Wyndham Lewis, for one, highlighted the paradox when he wrote that “A World’s Fair and a World War, in the same compartment of time, somehow do not harmonize. [...] Gazing at the massed fountains, you think of the flamethrowers. Looking at the death’s head of the Peruvian mummy, you recall the unburied, helmeted dead of the battlefields.”<sup>13</sup>

But whereas the conflicting messages promoted by the Fair as it moved from its first season (April to October 1939) to its second (May to October 1940) have been studied extensively, the significance and connotations of Engonopoulos’ participation have not been discussed at all and it is the topic of my ongoing research and of another, forthcoming presentation. It is easy of course to blame Engonopoulos for eagerly taking part in an event framed by the ideological dictates and propaganda of a totalitarian regime. It is worth considering, however, how such a participation may have subverted the dominant discourse and especially the emphasis Metaxas’ Deputy Minister, Theologos Nikoloudis, put on parallelisms between antiquity and the present day and the promotion of “a national image of contemporary Greeks as descendants of the ancients and perpetuators and preservers of their heritage” (Zacharia, 2014: 188).<sup>14</sup> In *Μπολιβάρ* Engonopoulos creates a genealogy that challenges the line of ancestry that the regime wanted to forge; its international aesthetic breaks the national pattern; the ethnic, primitive dimension of the poem goes against the grain of the “athletic” cleanliness projected by Metaxas in its effort to promote closeness with the athletic ideals of the Third Reich. The reference, in the poem, to the controversial figure of Androutsos may be pointing to such a subversive stance too. And although the praise finally settles on Simón Bolívar, a universally accepted hero, Engonopoulos highlights, as we shall see in my discussion of the poem’s ΣΥΜΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ, the contro-

---

13. Wyndham Lewis (1940: 285-6), quoted in (Duranti 2006: 663).

14. Key players in this were the famous photographer, Nelly’s with photographs highlighting the affinities between ancient statues and modern people; Eirini Nikoloudis, wife of the Deputy Minister, who selected the folk art to be exhibited at the Fair; and Spyros Marinatos, the newly appointed Director General of Antiquities, which was instrumental in selecting the replicas and five originals to be showcased at the Fair. All discussed in Zacharia (2014: 206 onwards).

versial nature of national symbols and the conflicts that lie under any aspirations at homogeneity and uniformity sought in official, state directed discourse.

The fact that 1930 was the centenary of Simón Bolívar's death must have certainly helped Engonopoulos in his choice of protagonist: the already widespread cult of this visionary figure and his dream of Pan-Americanism was celebrated around the world. Engonopoulos might have heard about the erection of a new statue in Paris, on the Avenue des Champs Elysées, and he could have seen the Bolívar statue in Central Park, New York during his visit in 1939. In the same decade, a play by Jules Supervielle inspired by Bolívar's life was performed in Paris in 1936, and in 1938 Emil Ludwig published his biography of Bolívar (English tr. 1940), which sets out to explore the complex personality of The Liberator.<sup>15</sup> All these may have contributed to the prominence of that specific visionary in Engonopoulos' imagination.

We may, then, begin to understand a bit better the forces behind the composition of *Μπολιβάρ*. On the one hand the confidence in a peaceful world of tomorrow, a world of liberty, fraternity, equality; on the other, the outbreak of the Second World War that shatters that dream. As Engonopoulos was walking back to Athens following terrible hardship on the Albanian front he might have been asking himself a question many other poets asked in comparable circumstances: what is the point of such aspirations with war raging and always dominating human lives? Seferis asked this question too, translating Hölderlin.<sup>16</sup> But above all, it is Cavafy's "Ὁ Δαρείος" that must have been at the back of Engonopoulos' mind: "μέσα στὸν πόλεμο, φαντάσου, ἑλληνικά ποιήματα!"

The poem's subtitle of "*Ἐνα ἑλληνικό ποίημα*" must, therefore, be a tribute to Cavafy's reflections on the value and uses of the poet in times of war. There are no games here to bring peace as in the time of Pindar. On the contrary, the Olympic Games of 1940 were actually cancelled because of the war. But in that ultimate *agon*, war itself, the example of Pindar becomes the prototype of the poet whose work traditionally stood above divides and conflicts but also of the poet whose ideals seem to be increasingly at odds with modernity and the new values it introduces. It is not accidental that other poets felt the need to invoke Pindar and his epini-

---

15. I would like to thank Professor Georgia Farinou-Malamatari for suggesting Ludwig's biography as a possible source for Engonopoulos' poem.

16. As a motto to the first Logbook.



cians to express one or other of these contradictory aspects: Sikelianos composed his *Επίνικοι* at comparably crucial moments of Greek history, the first set in 1912-13 in the context of the Balkan Wars, and the second set in 1940-46 in the context of the Second World War, embracing the more traditional and heroic aspect of Pindar's tradition. Karyotakis, on the other hand, with bitter humour and a satirical voice underlines the poet's marginalization.

It is telling therefore that the two instances in which Engonopoulos actually names Pindar are clearly related to his own preoccupation with the poet's role in society and his wish to reach out to the people:

Αρέσκομαι να λέω ότι οι υπερρεαλισταί ποιηταί είναι οι καλύτεροι, αλλά τέτοιοι ποιηταί ήταν κι ο Όμηρος κι ο Πίνδαρος κι ο Σολωμός. Αυτοί για μένα είναι υπερρεαλισταί, γιατί αν οι ποιητικές σχολές είναι πολλές, η ποίηση – το ξαναλέω – είναι μία. Στα δύσκολα χρόνια που ζούμε αγαπούν οι Αθηναίοι να κάθονται και να λεπτολογούν τα παραμικρά και ασήμαντα πράγματα. Όμως δυσκολεύονται να πλησιάσουν το έργο μου, αφού ούτε αναδόχους δεν έχω στην Ευρώπη. Το έργο μου δεν έχει μιμητάς, κι ας μεταφράστηκαν σε ξένες γλώσσες πολλά από τα ποιήματά μου.<sup>17</sup>

And in another interview a few years later:

Η ποίηση δεν θα φτάσει ποτέ στο μεγάλο κοινό. Είναι πολύ δύσκολο. Και οι αρχαίοι ημών πρόγονοι άκουγαν Όμηρο, αλλά πολύ λίγοι απολάμβαναν το βάθος. Υπήρχαν άνθρωποι στην εποχή μου που διάβαζαν ταυτόχρονα Παράσχο και Πίνδαρο. Δεν έβγαινε συμπέρασμα... Να σας πω, δεν ξέρω αν πρέπει να επιδιώκουμε να συγκινηθούν από την ποίηση οι πολλοί.<sup>18</sup>

We see here the relevance of Pindar in a different context from the one discussed above: what is brought to the fore is Pindar's reception as opposed to Pindar's poetry. Pindar seems to be associated with poetic isolation and lack of followers; and Pindar is also mentioned in relation to poetry and its ability to reach out to the masses. It is difficult, Engonopoulos says, for poetry to secure a large public. Is it because good poetry is difficult and belongs to a higher sphere hard for the common man to penetrate? Or is the difficulty of poetry a symptom of the present generation's

---

17. Interview to A. Mystakides in *Φως του Καίρου* (1954), in Engonopoulos (1999: 24).

18. Interview to Frida Bioubi in IKON (1981), as above, p. 164.

inability to see, to recognize its riches and values. Is poetry for the select few?

It is not, therefore, accidental that *Μπολιβάρ* not only celebrates the heroic elevation of the poet-victor through the image of the Kouros-Bolívar, but it also dramatizes the inherent tension underlying such aspirations. Note what Engonopoulos writes in Section 5:

Καί τώρα ν' ἀπελπίζουμαι πού ἴσαμε σήμερα δέν μέ κα-  
τάλαβε, δέν θέλησε, δέ μπόρεσε νά κατα-  
λάβει τί λέω κανεῖς;  
Βέβαια τήν ἴδια τύχη νᾶχουνε κι' αὐτά πού λέω τώρα  
γιά τόν Μπολιβάρ, πού θά πῶ αὔριο γιά  
τόν Ἄνδρουῦτσο;  
Δέν εἶναι κι' εὐκόλο, ἄλλωστε, νά γίνουν τόσο γλήγορα  
ἀντιληπτές μορφές τῆς σημασίας τ' Ἄν-  
δρουῦτσου καί τοῦ Μπολιβάρ,  
Παρόμοια σύμβολα.

Engonopoulos seems to almost echo here the famous lines of Voltaire about Pindar as the poet that nobody understands.<sup>19</sup> And this problem was noted, it appears, by Pindar himself when he claimed in an admittedly controversial passage of *Olympian* 2, 83-6 that “πολλά μοι ὑπ' ἀγκῶνος ὠκέα βέλη / ἔνδον ἐντί φαρέτρας/ φωνάεντα συνετοῖσιν· ἐς δέ τό πάν ἔρμα-νέων / χατίζει” (“There are in my quiver many swift arrows, striking to the wise, but the crowd need interpreters”). Here is a poetic complaint that goes hand in hand with Engonopoulos’ life and work. And here too Pindar is a useful parallel, for he himself was not spared such a fate. It appears that hardly a decade after his death he was already perceived as being out of date and out of place. The Athenian comic poet Eupolis observed that Pindar’s verses had grown unpopular among the citizenry: “ἤδη κατασειγασμένα ὑπό τῆς τῶν πολλῶν ἀφιλοκαλίας” (Hamilton 2003: 18). Their inability to appreciate beauty makes the vulgar crowd unable to understand his poetry which was felt, as a result, to be outmoded, antiquated and belonging to an expired worldview. And Aristophanes’ presentation of Pindar in *The Clouds* confirms this discrepancy. Hamilton explains how, through a series of allusions and imitations of the Pindaric style and vocabulary, Aristophanes underlines the untimeliness of Pindar

19. “Toi, qui modules savamment / des vers que personne n’entend / et qu’il faut toujours qu’on admire”. This comes from Voltaire’s Ode 17 dedicated to Catherine the Great, and is quoted in Hamilton (2003: 2).

and the antithesis between the city (Athens) and the man (Hamilton 2003: 19-22). Even more apt is what Euripides said in his tragedy, *Electra* (387f) about the highborn athletes celebrated by the epinician poet: αἱ δὲ σάρκες αἱ κεναὶ φρενῶν / ἀγάλματ' ἀγορᾶς (Hamilton 2003: ch. 1 and Nisetisch, 1980: 14). Making such a reference to the statues which, as we have seen above, were key components of the process of praise, undermines the whole process and the inherent values of praise, challenging therefore the basic components of monumentality.

Pindar's assertion in *Olympian* 2 sounds almost prophetic in this context, confirming that literary afterlife depends on society's approval. Engonopoulos is locating his predicament in a similar context: the Athenians do not understand his work; this may be just as well, considering the gap that exists between the masses and the lofty world of poetry. This, however, results in a form of poetic isolation since such a lack in understanding necessarily results in a lack of ἀναδόχους and μιμητάς, the lack of a poetic continuity. The use of the statue by Euripides, an image that brings to mind Seferis' own ἀγάλματα, shows how well the public monument is able to incarnate the tensions that Engonopoulos wants to express in *Μπολιθάρ*: heroic aspirations and public repudiation, lofty ideals and base ἀφιλοκαλία, the poet at the centre of civic life and the poet as an exile.

The contrast between conditions so diametrically opposite is subtly but clearly made throughout the poem even before its culmination in the famous ΣΥΜΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ. A first indication is the location of the Kouros statue. Statues of heroes are traditionally placed in public squares and therefore at the centre of civic life, just as, in the time of Pindar, they would be occupying a place of pride in the agora of the victor's city. In the case of *Olympian* 7, Pindar's ode for Diagoras of Rhodes, it is actually stated that the ode itself was written up in gold letters in the temple of Lindian Athena (Thomas 1992: 106). In *Μπολιθάρ*, on the other hand, the statue of the Kouros is located outside the city, somewhere vaguely described as "στης Σικίνου τα βουνά". Already the fate of the hero seems to be taking shape. Along with praise and inclusion we have isolation, a feeling that is confirmed in the emphasis on Bolivar's loneliness: "μονάχοι πάντα" (l. 17).

This alienation is also suggested through the poetic "I". In Pindar it is complex and dialectical, what Fitzgerald calls "transpersonal" (Fitzgerald 1987: 13). It can be a "bardic I" or a "choral I" celebrating, therefore, the interconnection of unity and individuality. In Engonopoulos, on the other hand, the poetic "I" carries the unmistakable individuality of the poet

whose character never quite merges with the community.<sup>20</sup> Just as Bolívar was exiled and remained cut off from his homeland and the people for whom he fought (Lynch 2006),<sup>21</sup> so too the hero in the poem appears to be condemned to isolation and exile.

The ΣΥΜΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ of the poem, however, takes us back to Pindar and the function of the conclusion in the odes. As many scholars have pointed out, the final lines of an epinician celebrate the return of the hero from the heights of his quasi-divine elevation back to his community and his symbolic welcoming among his fellow citizens (Nisetich 1980: 41, 46). This is an act of *xenia*, which underlines the importance of hospitality extended towards the victor but embracing the poet as well. It confirms his key role in bringing the community together through the laudatory and performative dimension of the ode.

Quite unlike the example of Pindar, then, in Engonopoulos' poem such hospitality is rejected. But the imagery brought into play to dramatize this has nothing to do with Pindar. We need to turn instead to two other texts that will introduce, at last, the third character named in my title: Abraham Lincoln. The first is Engonopoulos's own poem "Ἡ τελευταία ἐμφάνισις Ἰούδα τοῦ Ἰσκαριώτη",<sup>22</sup> which has some undeniable affinities with ΣΥΜΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ. The other is a totally unexpected source, the poem of a now almost forgotten American who died in 1931 and who became famous in his lifetime for promoting the performative dimension of poetry and its association with music, song and primitive rituals (Hoffman 2011: ch. 2). I am speaking of Vachel Lindsay and his poem "Abraham Lincoln walks at Midnight" (1914).<sup>23</sup> The poem belongs to a series of eulogies that

---

20. Despite the fact that, in emulation of Pindar, Engonopoulos alternates between a first person singular ("καί τώρα ν' ἀπελπίζουμαι) and a first person plural (ἀλλ' ἄς περνοῦμε γρήγορα).

21. See esp. chs. 11 (Journey of Disillusion) and 12 (The Legacy).

22. For Walt Whitman's poem "Blood-money" as a possible source for the name of Judas in this poem see Ricks (2010: 235-39).

23. Lindsay's poem is inspired by the tomb of Abraham Lincoln in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois. The location of this cemetery, whose typical features are preserved in the "Conclusion" part of Engonopoulos' poem, was carefully selected by its designer, William Saunders, who was following the Rural Cemetery Landscape Lawn Style: it includes rolling hills, just like the hills described in the Greek poem. The construction of the tomb itself was the result of an initiative by a group of Springfield citizens who formed the National Lincoln Monument Association. It was designed by Larkin Goldsmith Mead, and it includes a bronze statue of

emerged following Lincoln's death creating a myth around his person that has been preserved until today. Its popularity was such that a statue of Lincoln inspired by this poem and given the same title was erected in 1935 in Charleston, West Virginia.

Apart from the obvious influence of Whitman, who was the first to idolize the figure of the President in his poetry, other possible triggers of the Greek poet's interest in Lincoln may again be related to his stay in New York. There are, of course, the historical re-enactments at the New York World Fair mentioned above; but at that time a Pulitzer-prize play was also being performed in the city, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* written in 1938 by R. Sherwood, which became, in 1940, an acclaimed movie. This was one of many tributes to the iconic president who was murdered for his liberal ideas and whose death created a cult comparable to that of Simón Bolívar. What is more, if Engonopoulos was indeed familiar with Emil Ludwig and his work, then the famous biographer, who had written a biography of Lincoln as well as one of Bolívar, may be another possible source for the Greek Surrealist. But the relevance of these two personalities, Lincoln and Lindsay may also be considered from yet another point of view: both of them became iconic, leading figures in their respective fields during their lifetime but both encountered strong opposition and suffered disrepute or indifference.<sup>24</sup> And as I mentioned above, Lindsay was quickly forgotten after his death. Such mixed and extreme reactions, when put together with the problematic reception of Pindar after his death, may have impressed upon Engonopoulos the precarious and solitary existence of leading figures, be it in politics or in poetry. They reflect and incarnate symbolically his own difficulties with what he always refers to as a hostile, aggressive and clueless Athenian bourgeoisie.

But let us turn now to "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight". It is clear from the outset that Lindsay's poem shares a lot with the imagery that En-

---

Abraham Lincoln the Emancipator and a bronze head of Lincoln (by Gutzon Borglum) which is associated with superstitions of rubbing the president's nose for good luck. It seems that statues of Lincoln are associated with superstitions / urban legends because such stories exist also in relation to the statue of Lincoln at the Lincoln memorial in Washington DC. There have been attempts at stealing the body for ransom, and as a result there have been a number of security actions to secure the safety of the dead president.

24. In Lincoln's case a good example of such attitudes is Edgar Lee-Masters' biography, *Lincoln. The Man*, published in 1931. On the topic see Norman (2003).

gonopoulos deploys in his poems. It is about the bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln, which is erected on a pedestal as part of a monument dedicated by the grateful citizens of the town in love and commemoration. The setting is identical: “our little town”, the mourning “figure” that “walks”, the man who “cannot sleep upon his hillside”. He is a “bronzed, lank man” and is dressed in his recognizable suit that Engonopoulos refers to as “ρεντιγκότα”. Even the line “we who toss and lie awake for long” is reflected in Engonopoulos’ description of the citizens: “στέκονταν αδύνατο νά κλείσει κανείς μάτι” or the statue “ἐτάραζε τὸν ὕπνο τῶν κοιμωμένων” and “ἀναστάτῳνε τίς ἤσυχες συνειδήσεις”.

But this is where the similarities between the two poems end. In the case of the American poet, who published this in 1914, the idea is to present Abraham Lincoln as a *genius loci*, a Christ figure who suffers as a result of the First World War and the toils it has brought to humanity. He is the beloved leader who cannot rest because he realises that his efforts for peace and concord have been shattered. It seems that, in the eyes of Lindsay, the meaning of Lincoln’s political work is relevant beyond the confines of the US and becomes a universal spiritual message of freedom. The statue of Lincoln cannot rest therefore, as a result of the injustice that reigns in Europe, reflected in the phrases “the sins of all the war-lords” and “things must murder still”. His place on the hill outside the city, therefore, is not perceived as a sign of distance and exile but as the outpost of the guardian angel and trustee of society’s hard won values. Note that the citizens do not complain at his disturbing their sleep. Quite the contrary, they choose to stay awake and wait in expectation of his passing by.

The dynamics between the statue and the citizens in ΣΥΜΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ is articulated in a rather different way. Initially and as a result of the successful outcome of the South American revolution, a monument to Bolivar is erected in a nearby hill.

Μετά τήν ἐπικράτησιν τῆς νοτιοαμερικανικῆς ἐπαναστάσεως στήθηκε στ’ Ἀνάπλι καί τῆ Μονεμβασιά, ἐπί ἐρημικοῦ λόφου δεσπόζοντος τῆς πόλεως, χάλκινος ἀνδριάς τοῦ Μπολιβάρ.

As a piece of public art, the statue represents the shared struggles and values of the people who participated in the war and confirms therefore, the purpose and function of a monument in a community: to remember

and to remind.<sup>25</sup> With the introduction of the word “όμως” however one begins to sense the first cracks in the solidity of this edifice. The strong wind, the noise produced by the frock coat of the statue and the inability of the citizens to sleep indicate a problematic relationship between the monument and the city, a growing gap between the distant figure and the public. As a result, appropriate actions by the citizens successfully bring the monument down:

“Όμως, καθώς τίς νύχτες ό σφοδρός άνεμος πού φυσούσε άνατάραζε μέ βία τήν ρεντιγκότα του ήρωος, ό προκαλούμενος θόρυβος είτανε τόσο μεγάλος, έκκωφαντικός, πού στέκονταν άδύνατο νά κλείσει κανείς μάτι, δέν μπορούσε νά γενή πλέον λόγος γιά ύπνο. “Έτσι οι κάτοικοι έζήτησαν καί διά καταλλήλων ένεργειών, έπέτυχαν τήν κατεδάφιση του μνημείου.

This deconstructive anti-climax is suggested, as we can see, with a careful choice of words and images: the initial erection of the statue on its pedestal is counterbalanced by the final demolition, opposing the verb στήθηκε with its final κατεδάφιση. The hero is no longer welcome in society: his ρεντιγκότα denotes a different fashion, old and no longer appealing, alluding to his belonging to a different era which is alien to the people. There is also a discrepancy between the messages the statue represents and the recipients: the messages are no longer understood and they are perceived as deafening noise – the imagery here is meant to both contrast traditional perceptions of choral poetry and especially Pindar as a buzzing, sweet sound of bees, and subvert the well known motif of the statue of Memnon which sings when in contact with the first rays of the sun. The coat, which denoted the leader as a prophet and Messiah rings in vain.<sup>26</sup> The revolutionary alertness has gone to sleep. With a phrase that suggests suspicious and conspiratorial behaviour the monument is demolished.

The conclusion of Engonopoulos’ poem, then, performs a function opposite to that of a Pindaric ode. The modern Greek poet stages the gradual divergence between the citizens and the hero/poet. *Xenia* is turned to exile and the poet is a *xenos* in the negative sense of the word. This gap suggests a degrading of the citizens that appear now more like Horace’s

---

25. As Rotella (2001: 1) succinctly puts it “they assume art’s power to maintain what’s held in common by joining the particular and the general and by making transient things persistent”.

26. In the Charleston, West Virginia, statue mentioned earlier, the president is wrapped in this coat, making it a prominent and emblematic feature of his appearance.

“vulgar” and Pindar’s “τό πᾶν”. From an age of heroes we have now passed to an age characterized by conformity and convention; from an age of vigilance we find ourselves in an age of slumber and “comfortable numbness”; from an age of memory and monumentality to an age of oblivion and iconoclasm. Note how this subversive situation is reflected in the use of language. After the richness, musicality and vibrant character of the poem’s vocabulary and imagery up to this point, we are left with a dull, descriptive third person prose *καθαρεύουσα* that brings the poem abruptly down to earth.

This collapse of the ode is suggested in two additional ways: first, in the “diminuendo” mode in which the counterturn finishes and, second, in the final farewell hymn to Μπολιβάρ. In the first case, the absolute superlative that is gradually diminished to comparative and then positive, as well as the very meaning of the adjective (*φρικτός* means horrible), undermine any naïve expectation that the dream of liberty can indeed be realized and endure:

τόν φριχτότατο ὄρκο  
 τό φρικτότερο σκότος  
 τό φριχτό παραμύθι  
 Libertad

The Second World War is tangible proof of how easily and how quickly such ideas are tested against the harsh realities of the world. At best they are like a fairy tale, the stuff of legend and dreams.

In the second case, the section entitled “Ὑμνος ἀποχαιρετιστήριος στόν Μπολιβάρ” confirms the element of defamiliarization and incompatibility already staged in the ΣΥΜΠΕΡΑΣΜΑ. For the hymn is a mere question framed by melancholic and nostalgic songs for a now bygone, heroic era:

στρατηγέ  
 τί ζητοῦσες στή Λάρισα  
 σύ  
 ξνας  
 Ὑδραῖος;

This question underlines precisely the issue of compatibility between the hero and his environment: the displacement of the general to a different city (an islander in a landlocked city, a hero in a possibly less distinguished place) recalls Pindar’s own situation as a misfit in the vulgar crowd of Ath-



ens (he, a Theban).<sup>27</sup> But above all, this anti-hymn is what demolishes the poem itself, bringing it down from its pedestal, making it a parody of itself.

These ideas may be projected onto the inscription on the pedestal of the Kouros. “Χαῖρε παροδίτα” is indeed an invitation to the passerby to participate in the tradition the monument celebrates and to become part of its community. What is more – to imitate Engonopoulos in his word games – spelling this word as *παρωδίτα* confirms that such a celebration can only take place thanks to the ode, to the poem itself and thanks to the artist who has created it. The passer-by, or indeed the reader, is included in the performance of the ode and through that participation, becomes active in the creation of tradition. But in the end, all we are left with is a *χαῖρε παρωδία*, a parody that subverts the ode in form, content and purpose: we have a question instead of a confident assertion and a mere five lines instead of the long and lofty celebratory performance.

\*

In his controversial essay about the politics of Greek Surrealism, Takis Kayalis discusses how the poetry of Engonopoulos and Embiricos thematizes their problematic relation with society: they lament the loss of the stable relationship between the privileged artist and a receptive community of shared values (Kayalis 1997: 102). He also points out how, as a result, they long for a heroic mythical past when the artist was accepted as the supreme leader of the tribe. My reflections on the political dimension of *Μπολιβάρ* in the context of the Metaxas dictatorship, the New York World’s Fair of 1939-40 and the upcoming war, will form the topic of a different article. But my analysis here confirms that the tension between poet and society lies at the centre of the poem. And this is clearly shown with the help of the statues in the poem: the fact that the statue of the Kouros is cast as a future promise, and is therefore not realized in the poem, and the fact that the monument to Bolívar/Lincoln is erected and then demolished at the end, dramatize the problematic, unstable relationship between poet and society and indeed confirm the impossibility of such a

---

27. Even before his death, the Athenians may have had some misgivings for Pindar because of Thebes’ alliance with the Persians at Plataea. Polybius (200-118 BC) blames Pindar as a coward whose pacifism threatened the very existence of Greece (Hamilton, 2003: 22)

role for the poet in the present: the impossibility, that is to return to the values of a golden age or to transplant those values in the modern world.

The use of Pindar in *Μπολιβάρ* helps Engonopoulos elaborate all those conflicting aspects: the poetics of the ode help him articulate the architectonics of his praise for the figure of the hero/poet; the odes again, but also the tradition of Pindar's reception help him shape the problematic relationship of the modern poet with his social environment. The use of a sculptural monument is appropriate for the expression of such controversies: monuments dramatize the tensions between stability and change; between the desire to incarnate the values of a given society and the distrust of modern communities, especially towards any authority that such forms may imply. Finally, the incomprehensibility of the work of art, may indicate the artist's rejection of an easily consumed output. Pindar stands as the prototype of the poet who, through his revolutionary means of expression, resists assimilation, challenges tradition and attempts to redefine it in his own terms. It is actually quite ironic that through *Μπολιβάρ*, the poem that incarnated such tensions, Engonopoulos managed to claim back this central role for the poet, managed, as Cavafy would have put it: ν' ἀναδειχθεῖ, καί τούς ἐπικριτάς του, τούς φθονερούς τελειωτικά ν' ἀποστομώσει.

## REFERENCES CITED

- Appelbaum, Stanley (ed) (1977), *The New York World Fair, 1939/1940 in 155 Photographs by Richard Wurts and Others*, Dover Publications.
- Calame, Claude (2012), "Metaphorical travel and ritual performance in epinician poetry", in P. Agógs, Ch. Carey & R. Rawles (eds), *Reading the Victory Ode*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cusker, Joseph P. & Harrison, Helen A. (1980), *Dawn of a New Day: The New York World's Fair 1939/1940*, The Queens Museum.
- Duranti, Marco (2006), "Utopia, Nostalgia and World War at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair", *Journal of Contemporary History* 41 (4): 663-683, Downloaded from jch.sagepub.com at Seeley Historical Library on November 26, 2015.
- Engonopoulos, Nikos (1993), Νίκου Εγγονόπουλου, *Ποήματα Β'*, Athens: Ikaros.
- Engonopoulos, Nikos (1999), Νίκος Εγγονόπουλος, *Οι άγγελοι στον παράδεισο μιλούν ελληνικά... Συνεντεύξεις, σχόλια και γνώμες*, Athens: Ypsilon.
- Ferrari, Fr. (2012), "Representations of cult in epinician poetry", in: P. Agógs, Ch. Carey and R. Rawles (eds), *Reading the Victory Ode*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fitzgerald, William (1987), *Agonistic Poetry. The Pindaric Mode in Pindar, Horace, Hölderlin and the English Ode*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Foxhall, Lin (1995), "Monumental Ambitions. The significance of posterity in Greece", in: Nigel Spencer (ed), *Time, Tradition and Society in Greek Archaeology*, London, Routledge.
- Fry, Paul H. (1980), *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode*, Yale: Yale University Press.
- Hamilakis, Yannis (2007), *The Nation and its Ruins: antiquity, archaeology, and national imagination in Greece*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hamilton, John T. (2003), *Soliciting Darkness. Pindar, obscurity, and the classical tradition*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hoffman, Tyler (2011), *American Poetry in Performance. From Walt Whitman to Hip Hop*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Horace (2000), *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, translated with an introduction and notes by David West, Oxford: Oxford University Press,

- Hutchinson, G. O. (2012), "Image and word in epinician poetry", in: P. Agógs, Ch. Carey & R. Rawles (eds), *Reading the Victory Ode*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kayalis, Takis (1997), "Modernism and the Avant-Garde. The politics of Greek Surrealism", in: Dimitris Tziouvas (ed), *Greek Modernism and Beyond*, Lahnam: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kurke, Leslie (1991), *The Traffic in Praise. Pindar and the poetics of social economy*, Cornell University Press
- Lindsay, Vachel (1914), *The Congo and Other Poems*, intro. by Harriet Monroe, New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Lynch, John (2006), *Simón Bolívar. A Life*, Yale: Yale University Press.
- Michelakis, Pantelis (2009), "Greek lyric from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century", in: Felix Budelmann (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nisetich, Frank J. (1980), *Pindar's Victory Songs*, transl. intro. & pref. by Frank J. Nisetich, Baltimore: The John's Hopkins University Press.
- Norman, Matthew D. (2003), "An Illinois Iconoclast. Edgar Lee Masters and the anti-Lincoln tradition", *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 24.1: 43-57.
- Perpinioti, Katerina (2007), Κατερίνα Περπινιώτη-Αγκαζίρ, *Νίκος Εγγονόπουλος. Ο ζωγραφικός του κόσμος*, Athens: Benaki Museum.
- Pindar (1980), *Pindar's Victory Songs*, transl., intro. & pref. by Frank J. Nisetich, Baltimore: The John's Hopkins University Press.
- Ricks, David (2010), "Ο Εγγονόπουλος και η αγγλόφωνη ποίηση", in *Νίκος Εγγονόπουλος. Ο ποιητής και ο ζωγράφος*, Athens: Benaki Museum.
- Rotella, Guy (2004), *Castings. Monuments and Monumentality in Poems by E. Bishop, R. Lowell, J. Merrill, D. Walcott and S. Heaney*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Shankman, Steven (1994), "The Pindaric tradition and the quest for pure poetry", in: *In Search of the Classic: reconsidering the Greco-Roman tradition from Homer to Valéry and beyond*, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Smith, R. R. R. (2007), "Pindar, athletes, and the early Greek statue habit", in: S. Hornblower & C. Morgan (eds), *Pindar's Poetry: patrons and festivals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Steiner, Deborah (2002), *Images in Mind: statues in archaic and classical Greek literature and thought*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Tachopoulou, Olympia (2010), *Μοντερνιστικός πρωτογονισμός: εκδοχές υπερρεαλισμού στο ποιητικό έργο του Νίκου Εγγονόπουλου*, Athens: Nefeli.
- Thomas, Rosalind (1992), *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vourtsis, Ioannis (1996), "Η δεκαετία 1944-54", in *Νίκος Εγγονόπουλος. Ωραίος σαν Έλληνας*, Athens: Ίδρυμα Γουλανδρή-Χορν.
- Zacharia, Katerina (2014), "'Postcards from Metaxas' Greece: the uses of classical antiquity in tourism and photography'", in: D. Tziovas (ed), *Re-imagining the Past: antiquity and modern Greek culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## APPENDIX I

### ABRAHAM LINCOLN WALKS AT MIDNIGHT (1914)

*(In Springfield, Illinois)*

It is portentous, and a thing of state  
That here at midnight, in our little town  
A mourning figure walks, and will not rest,  
Near the old court-house pacing up and down,

Or by his homestead, or in shadowed yards  
He lingers where his children used to play,  
Or through the market, on the well-worn stones  
He stalks until the dawn-stars burn away.

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,  
A famous high top-hat and plain worn shawl  
Make him the quaint great figure that men love,  
The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.

He cannot sleep upon his hillside now.  
He is among us: — as in times before!  
And we who toss and lie awake for long  
Breathe deep, and start, to see him pass the door.

His head is bowed. He thinks on men and kings.  
Yea, when the sick world cries, how can he sleep?  
Too many peasants fight, they know not why,  
Too many homesteads in black terror weep.

The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart.  
He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main.  
He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now  
The bitterness, the folly and the pain.

He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn  
Shall come; — the shining hope of Europe free:  
The league of sober folk, the Workers' Earth,  
Bringing long peace to Cornland, Alp and Sea.

It breaks his heart that kings must murder still,  
That all his hours of travail here for men

Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace  
That he may sleep upon his hill again?

In: Vachel Lindsay, *The Congo and Other Poems*, introduced by Harriet Monroe, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914, pp. 145-7.

## APPENDIX II

### Η ΤΕΛΕΥΤΑΙΑ ΕΜΦΑΝΙΣΙΣ ΙΟΥΔΑ ΤΟΥ ΙΣΚΑΡΙΩΤΗ (1946)

Ἡ μικρὴ ἀμερικανικὴ πόλις, ἡ χαμένη μέσα στὶς ἀπέραντες ἐκτάσεις τῶν πεδιάδων τοῦ Ἀϊρτον, ἔχασε αὐτὴ τὴ βαθειὰ γαλήνη στὴν ὁποία εἶτανε συνηθισμένη ἀπὸ τὶς μέρες, τὶς πρόσφατες ἄλλωστε – γύρω στὰ 1867 –, τῆς ἰδρύσεώς της. Ταχτικά περὶ τα μεσάνυχτα, ἄνθρωπος, παράξενος καὶ σκοτεινός, εἰσέδευε καὶ στά πῖο καλοαμπαρωμένα σπίτια ἀκόμα, ἐτάραζε τὸν ὕπνο τῶν κοιμωμένων, ἀναστάτωνα τὶς ἡσυχες συνειδήσεις, πίκραινε θανάσιμα τὶς καρδιές, καὶ μέ μιάνα μεταλλικὴ φλογέρα, πού ἔπαιζε στὴν ἐντέλεια, ξύπναγε σ' ὅλους μίαν ἔντονη, τυραννικὴ ὅσο κι ἀκαθόριστη, νοσταλγικὴ διάθεση. Περιττό νὰ προστεθῆ πὼς κανεὶς δὲν ἐθυμότανε τίποτε, μὴν ξημέρωνε, ἀπὸ τὸ φόβερό βραχνά. Ὅμως, ὅλη τὴ μέρα, λές κι' ἓνα μεγάλο βᾶρος ἐπλάκωνε τὶς ψυχές. Κάποιος νυχτοπερπατητῆς ἔλυσε τὸ βασανιστικὸ τοῦτο μυστήριον. Μιά νύχτα ὅπου, ὅλως κατὰ τύχη, τὸν ἔφεραν τ' ἀβέβαια βήματά του ἐπὶ λόφου ἐξοχικοῦ, δεσπόζοντος τῆς πόλεως, ἀντελήφθη ὅτι τὸ μπρούτζινο ἄγαλμα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ Λίνκολν πού εἶταν στημένο ἐκεῖ πάνω ἔλειπε, καὶ τὸ μαρμάρينو βᾶθρον φάνταζε ἔρημον κι' ἐγκαταλελειμμένο κάτω ἀπὸ τὸ φῶς τῶν προβολέων. Ὁ «Πρόεδρος», ὁ χάλκινος αὐτός Ἀβραάμ Λίνκολν, ἦτο λοιπὸν ὁ νυχτερινὸς παράξενος καὶ σκοτεινὸς ἐπισκέπτης! Ὁ καταδότης ἠμείφθη μέ ποσὸν τι δολλαρίων. Ἐρωτηθεὶς, ὠνομάζετο Ἰούδας. Τὸ ἐπώνυμον δέ, Ἰσκαριώτης.

In: Nikos Engonopoulos, *Ποιήματα Β'*, Athens: Ikaros, 1993, pp. 106-7.