

Modern Greek Program

Research in the Aegean *by Johannes Foufopoulos*

The Aegean gale has picked up to howling strength and is driving salty spray into our eyes while the waves are lifting cupfuls of icy water into my apparently not quite tight enough rainjacket collar. As our boat, a 6 meter long, open-decked inflatable zodiac, fights its way against the weather, it becomes airborne between waves and, with the engine screaming from the sudden lack of resistance on the propeller, it lands with a crash into the next wave. In the meantime, I notice with a certain uneasy feeling in my stomach that while darkness is falling rapidly, Paros, our home port, does not appear to be coming any closer. I also remember the words of a fellow colleague, "Get the data but come home alive!" and start wondering whether we are taking too many risks in the name of science.

Johannes Foufopoulos is an Assistant Professor in the School of Natural Resources. His research on the Aegean wall lizards was recently featured in the Athenian newspaper To Vima.

Pictured right: One island of our study sites, uninhabited Antikeros in the southeastern Cyclades.

Below: A bucketful of lizards, the harvest of a day's hard field work. More than 30 male Aegean wall lizards were captured by the field team on the island of Kopria and are awaiting transport to the team's base on Paros.

Together with a team of faculty and students from the Universities of New Orleans, Athens and Crete, I have been visiting a number of small islands in the Cyclades cluster located between Greece and Asia Minor. On these remote islets, baked by the hot sun and whipped by the fierce *meltemi* winds, some of the most remarkable survivors

of the Mediterranean cling to existence: small populations of the Aegean wall lizard which somehow eke out a living on what is little more than steep, thorn-covered rocks. What is even more remarkable is that these lizards, incapable of swimming, have been surviving on these islands since the last Ice Age, when rising sea levels cut them off from neighboring landmasses.

The purpose of our visit is to sample genetic material from these small lizard populations and study their ecology and secrets of survival.

Obtaining genetic samples from these animals involves capturing them and collecting their tail tips (which will regrow in a few weeks). However, as I quickly realized on the first day, Aegean wall lizards are neither particularly tame nor inclined to part with their tail tips. This means that I have spent many hours crouched in painfully uncomfortable positions, staring at spiny bushes with the lizards eyeing me back from their well-defended refuges with well-justified suspicion. Our preferred method of capture has been to dangle a small worm tied to the tip of a fishing rod in front of a bush to lure the hungry lizards into a smooth-walled bucket from where they cannot escape. Unfortunately while some of the lizards are ravenous enough to be lifted with the worm in their jaws into the bucket, others are much more cautious, making repeated visits to the same island a necessity.

The reasons for studying these unusual populations go well beyond lizard biology. Because conventional

population genetic theory would predict that such tiny populations should not exist, having fallen prey over the millennia to inbreeding and the resulting erosion of genetic diversity, we hope to learn something about their genetic make-up, immune systems, and their



general ability to persist over time. By understanding the general principles that govern population survival, we hope to be able to help other similarly isolated populations of vertebrates persisting on habitat fragments such as grizzlies in Yellowstone National Park or endangered trout in small lakes. When it comes to population genetics, nature does not care whether a given population consists of bears, lizards, snails or dandelions: it is the absolute population size and the time of isolation that matters.

The Aegean Sea, with its thousands of islands, each of them representing a unique combination of size, habitat types, and time passed in isolation, provides an outstanding system to study not only the long-term effects of habitat fragmentation, but also evolution in general. As a prominent Greek biologist once famously said, "If Darwin had visited the Aegean Sea rather than the Galapagos Islands, he would have come to exactly the same conclusions regarding the nature of evolution."

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5th annual platsis symposium on the greek legacy
citizen socrates 9/29/06

rackham amphitheatre, 4th floor

2pm - performance of plato's "the apology of socrates" by yannis simonides, 4pm - lectures, 6pm - reception



Κ Π ΚΑΡΑΦΗ PROFESSORSHIP IN MODERN GREEK ENDOWED BY THE FOUNDATION FOR MODERN GREEK STUDIES

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From the Modern Greek Program Coordinator

The Greek Language and Undergraduate Education: a recent workshop and its findings

What resources are there for learning Modern Greek—the spoken language, culture, and history of Greece and Greeks? This is a question people ask us frequently, and one we look into regularly as we prepare our classes.

Greek is an old language—one of the oldest with a continuous written record—yet its modern, spoken form is a new subject in American colleges and universities. We who teach Greek find its newness exciting. It inspires us to be creative—to invent new classes, produce new teaching materials, and search the ends of the earth for just the right book, song, film, TV clip, or article to help students explore and grasp a topic. But creating new instructional materials takes time, and relying on texts that are not effective or tailor made to our needs can be frustrating. This is a common experience shared by people who teach Greek in North American colleges and universities.

To address the challenges of teaching and learning Greek, the Modern Greek Program at UM (with support from the Modern Greek Studies Association) hosted a workshop on the Greek Language and Undergraduate Education on March 25, 2006. We invited a representative group of faculty from Modern Greek Programs in the U.S. and Canada, who evaluated the effectiveness of existing instructional materials, presented new methods and resources, and discussed ways to share resources such as syllabi, exercises, and tests. Attending the workshop were faculty and instructors from Columbia, Cornell, Ohio State, San Francisco State, Simon Fraser, and Yale Universities.

The findings of this hard-working group are now available in a complete report, which you will find posted on the UM Modern Greek website's "Window to Greek Culture" page (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/modgreek/window/>). A new experiment with great promise is the Distance Learning Tutor that is being created and put to use by Simon Fraser University under the supervision of Professor of Linguistics Panayotis Pappas.

Here I'm listing some excellent electronic resources

available to anyone with a computer and a strong desire to learn Greek. Enjoy!

www.cls.yale.edu/lexis is a wonderful Electronic Pictionary for Elementary and Intermediate Modern Greek conceived and developed by Dr. George Syrimis of Yale University and funded by the Stavros S. Niarchos Foundation. This multimedia courseware helps students to learn Greek vocabulary by theme, parts of speech, and level (its "chapters" coincide with those of the textbook, *Greek Today*). The picture dictionary incorporates image, audio, and text. On each flashcard page, students view an image, along with several buttons that allow them to 1) view the Greek vocabulary word that is depicted by the image, 2) view the English definition, 3) hear the word pronounced, and 4) view and hear the vocabulary word in a sentence context.

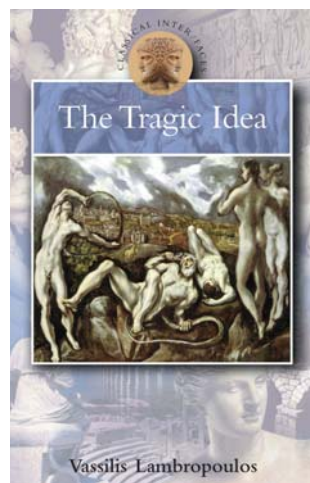
www.cls.yale.edu/ikones, also from Yale University, helps intermediate and advanced students develop comprehension. It offers a series of 5-minute video selections with conversations in Greek on a range of topics, from a young couple having an argument to two chefs competing in their cooking skills.

<http://www.asprilexi.com/> is a website for advanced students of Greek who want to explore word uses and...learn a new Greek word every day.

Two music-related websites for advanced students of Greek are <http://www.kithara.vu> and <http://stixoi.info>. Both give the lyrics of thousands of Greek songs, which can be searched by title, first line, lyricist, songwriter, singer, and label. The latter of these two websites also offers English translations!

www.hau.gr, the website of the Hellenic American Union in Greece, offers many resources, including free Modern Greek lessons in the form of podcasts (http://www.hau.gr/hau/en/services_mg_podcast.html). A new lesson will be available every Friday. In all 80 podcasts will be made available, which anyone can download to an iPod or mp3 player.

~Artemis Leontis



The Tragic Idea, a new book by Vassilis Lambropoulos, C. P. Cavafy Professor of Modern Greek Studies at UM, is hot off the press and will arrive in bookstores in the U.S. this fall. *The Tragic Idea* focuses on an issue of contemporary interest. Frequently in our day we attribute a "tragic" quality to experiences, values, events, works of art. When we do, perhaps we think this tragic idea is a time-tested, ancient one related to 5th century Greek tragedy. Yet this usage of the "tragic" as a distinct quality is actually quite modern. Lambropoulos traces the rise of the tragic idea from early Romanticism to late Modernism, following its transformation from a word identifying a genre of drama into a term used to describe a distinct quality of human existence and experience. To explore how tragedy acquired a second, parallel life away from the stage, it analyzes succinct statements by major writers that comprise one of the most absorbing philosophical conversations in modern times: the debate about the tragic meaning of life. *The Tragic Idea* is published in a new series, "Classical Inter-Faces" (series editors Paul Cartledge and Susan Morton Brand, publisher Duckworth Press), which studies how Classical ideas and materials have helped to shape the modern world.

My Greece *by Elise Liadis*



Elise Liadis

"Ah, America, a very important place, you know." Standing inside the UN controlled buffer zone that separates the internationally unrecognized "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" and the Greek Cypriot portions of the island, the recurring words of foreign diplomats and Cypriot officials returned to me. A faded "Enjoy Ice Cold Coca-Cola" sign swung in the gentle morning breeze from a decrepit shop front, riddled with bullet holes and overgrown with grass and shrub, giving an austere picture of the peace that once existed, and the brutal destruction of so many lives, properties, hopes, and dreams that were abandoned when war first tore apart this beautiful city.

I stared in awe at this portion of a now modern capital, frozen in time. Excluding the rare but shocking reminders of war such as an abandoned movie theatre with sandbag filled windows, while the rest of Nicosia has been re-built and made tourist friendly, the buffer zone remains a war zone. Cautious not to stray off the dusty path, as both our UN tour guide, and the barbed wire fences warned of mine fields still uncleared from the war, I found myself fascinated and appalled, hopeful and overwhelmed, sad and disappointed, as the destruction before me made the island's painful history clear.

That hot day in July, the bright sunlight typical of a Cypriot summer shone, for me, with both hope and despair. A child of immigrant parents, while fully steeped in American popular culture,

strains of Hellenism permeated and confused my identity. "You are Greek-American. The Greek comes first," my mother would remind me as once again, without fully comprehending, I found myself caught between two cultures and worlds. A toddler who learned Greek before English, a kindergartener who with frustration realized the distinction between two languages, a rebellious teenager who defied family members by insisting on speaking only English, I felt the sources and consequences of this tension between identities pervading my life.

In a strange and confusing whirlwind of emotions, as the devastating consequences of the struggle of powers became undeniably apparent, and scenes of war spun around me with the same speed as my thoughts, again I heard, "Ah, America, a very important place, you know." The very words that had previously filled me with embarrassment and frustration over the level to which America was elevated and my affiliation with it, were unexpectedly empowering, liberating, and inspiring. I felt a sudden strong desire to intervene, to assist in a way that previous assistance had not succeeded, a desire that even a month into my State Department internship, I had yet to feel. I had perceived my position as a citizen of a country that imposes its will on the weak as unavoidable, if not regrettable. The United States, regardless of my thoughts, actions, and emotions, is a world leader, and as history has proven, great powers have and will continue to exert their force

over the world. Born into a position of international privilege, I have been given the choice to remain a frustrated observer of situations worldwide that sadden the soul, or to use this privilege to make a difference. A child of immigrant parents, imbued with a desire to make the most of life's hard won privileges and a refusal to squander opportunity, I saw my Americanism for the first time, not as a part of my identity of which to be mildly ashamed, but instead, as a possession to proudly claim. It was there, behind the "Green Line" of barbed wire and intimidating national guards that politically, religiously, and linguistically divides the island, that I, a 21-year-old American-born citizen, first embraced my Americanism. I would use not only my Hellenism, but also my Americanism as an aide, a source of power, a jumping off point in making a difference.

Elise Liadis received her B.A. in Organizational Studies, with academic minors in Modern Greek and Economics. She will be attending Harvard Law School in the fall.



A glimpse of the buffer zone. Photo taken by a Cypriot national

Research in the Aegean continued...

Given the exceptional promise of the Aegean Sea as a place to study the ecology and evolution of animals, our team has made a commitment to return in future years. Already, preliminary results from our first field season point towards a rich and promising future. And even though this means that occasionally, like tonight, we return home beaten up and dripping wet, the exceptional beauty of the place and the friendliness of the islanders make this a worthwhile enterprise.



Pictured above: Field work on the small islet of Daskalia. After the lizards are caught, they need to be measured, weighed and marked before being released back into the field again. From L to R: Johannes Foufopoulos, Paschalia Kapli, Petros Lymberakis, and Theodora Strutensky

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Modern Greek Studies Association

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Upcoming Events

Wednesday, 9/20/06

Reception for prospective and current Modern Greek students. 5pm, 2163 Angell Hall.

Friday, 9/29/06

5th Annual Platsis Symposium on the Greek Legacy: Citizen Socrates
2pm, Rackham Amphitheatre

Friday, 10/6/06

HSA presents Greek film night,
7pm – title & location TBA

Wednesday, 10/18/06

Public Reading: Christopher Merrill.
7pm, Rackham Amphitheatre

Friday, 10/20/06

HSA presents Greek film night,
7pm – title & location TBA

Sunday, 10/29/06

HSA presents Byzantine choir performance:
Schola Cantorum
3pm, Rackham Auditorium

Monday, 10/30/06

Public Reading: Keith Taylor and William Reader,
“Battered Guitars: The Poetry and Prose of
Kostas Karyotakis”
7pm, Shaman Drum, 311 S. State St.

Wednesday, 11/1/06

Lecture by Thomas Maloutas, Professor of
Urban Social Geography, University of Thessaly,
Greece. “Urban Geography of Contemporary
Athens”
4pm, Classical Studies Library, 2175 Angell Hall

All events are **FREE** and open to the public.
For up to date information on all our events,
please visit our website at:
www.lsa.umich.edu/modgreek/events

Curriculum News

The Office of International Programs awarded a study abroad grant to Artemis Leontis for her Modern Greek class “Athens: Present and Past.” The grant will be used to integrate a 2-week study in Athens component into her class at the end of Winter terms ’07 and ’08.

The LSA Citizenship Theme Year Steering Committee awarded the Modern Greek Program a grant to support upcoming Modern Greek events, including the 5th Annual Platsis Symposium “Citizen Socrates” on Sept. 29, 2006. Additional events will be announced for Winter ’07. The Modern Greek Program is honored to be chosen to be a part of LSA’s theme year on citizenship.

Modern Greek Courses offered in Fall ’06

Elementary (101), Intermediate (201), and Advanced (301) Modern Greek Language
Introduction to Modern Greek Culture (MG 214)
Travels to Greece (MG 340)

Related courses offered in Fall ’06:

Anthropology of Europe (Anthrocol 309)
A History of Eastern Christianity from the 4th to the 18th Century (History 286)
Ideas of Rebellion in the Western Tradition (since the aftermath of the 18th-century revolutions) (Complit 730)

Please visit our website
for a complete review
of our Winter ’06 events:
www.lsa.umich.edu/modgreek

Celebrating Our Students

FMGS Scholarships for 2006

The following students received Summer Research and Travel Scholarships from the Foundation for Modern Greek Studies in 2006: **Giorgios Bis** studied intensive modern Greek language on the island of Paros in June ’06. **Peter Hasiakos** studied modern Greek Language at the Institute for Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki in August ’06.

Best of Luck to Our Graduating Seniors

We wish the best to this year’s (Spring 2006) class of graduating seniors who received a concentration or minor in Modern Greek: Michelle Flevotomas, Max Holtz, Elizabeth Liadis, Niki Serras, and Phillip Vlisides.

Honors and Awards

Winners of the 2006 Modern Greek Translation Prizes are **Peter Hasiakos** (Modern Greek I) and **Christina Gerazounis** (Modern Greek II). **Peter Hasiakos** was also the recipient of a 2006 Context for Classics Translation Award, winning first place in the undergraduate division for his translations of poems by Yiorgos Chouliaras. You can read his winning translations on our website:

www.lsa.umich.edu/modgreek/window.



Peter Hasiakos and Christina Gerazounis at the Phillips Prize Ceremony

Featured Student: Jenny Gastwirth



Jenny Gastwirth (B.A. English ’06) began attending Medill Graduate School of Journalism at Northwestern University in June. She is earning a Master of Science Degree in Journalism (MSJ) with a concentration in broadcast journalism. Her program operates on a quarter system, in which three quarters are spent working in newsrooms in both Evanston and downtown Chicago, and one quarter is spent working for Medill News Service in Washington D.C. As an undergraduate, Jenny enrolled in every Modern Greek class offered except for the language classes. We asked her to share with us some thoughts on the Modern Greek Program:

“My experiences with modern Greek studies at the University of Michigan were invaluable. As a little girl, I had a taste for Greek cuisine and an appreciation for the colorful Greek families who would often surround my family’s dinner table. This interest in Greek culture led me to take my first course in modern Greek studies, “Travels to Greece,” at Michigan. After that course my freshman year, I discovered that I loved more in Greek life than the food. I had an affinity for Greeks’ culture, their history, their mythology, and their art and literature. My professors, Artemis Leontis and Vassilis Lambropoulos, augmented my interest in Greek studies through their knowledge and infectious enthusiasm for their courses. The classes that I gained the most from on an intellectual and personal level at Michigan were undoubtedly those taken from the Modern Greek Program.”