

Editorial

The purview of *Dialogos* is Greek language and literature, Greek history and archaeology, Greek culture and thought, present and past: a territory of distinctive richness and unsurpassed influence. *Dialogos* seeks to foster critical awareness and informed debate about the ideas, events and achievements that make up this territory, by redefining their qualities, by exploring their interconnections, and by re-interpreting their significance within Western culture and beyond.

The Hellenic Studies of our subtitle (it will be plain) does not correspond to any single academic subject. And yet 'Hellenic Studies' is an established institutional reality, through the Onassis Center for Hellenic Studies at New York University, the Program in Hellenic Studies at Princeton University, and the Centre of Hellenic Studies here at King's College London. The Centre at King's, like its American counterparts, was set up precisely in order to promote contacts between those academic constituencies that separately concern themselves with some aspect of Greece and the Greek-speaking world, and with that wider world related to it or influenced by it. Since its inauguration in 1989, our Centre has sponsored a variety of explorations and debates relating to Hellenic Studies. *Dialogos* now aims to give a more permanent form to such activities, opening them moreover to the wider scholarly and intellectual community.

In doing so, *Dialogos* will range over a field broader than that of any other English-language journal in the related disciplines. The editors have striven to ensure that the first issue covers a wide spectrum, and will seek to ensure that future issues do the same. In these times of academic specialism, such an enterprise may seem superficial, even self-defeating; so it is important to make clear in what spirit the enterprise is conceived. The journal's main title, we believe, does make it clear. *Dialogos* does not aim at *vulgarisation*, however *haute*, though it does aspire to high standards of expository clarity and linguistic precision. What *Dialogos* intends to cultivate, through each of its diverse contributions, is the model of an author addressing an audience beyond his or her card-carrying specialism. Such an address need not be (in that over-used expression) interdisciplinary, any more than it need be 'general' or (in the limiting sense) 'popular'. What it will necessarily be is outward-looking: it must embody the awareness that between

separate scholarly and intellectual discourses, or *logoi*, communication and connection are both desirable and possible.

The prevailing mode and idiom of *Dialogos* is that of dialogue. And for this reason it is proper, indeed emblematic, that the first issue begins and ends with samples of dialogue concerned with the dialogues of Plato and contains, besides, discussions in which 'dialogue' is the focus of attention in its own right: how did the 'national poet' of independent Greece, Dionysios Solomos, reconcile the two halves of his ancestry and the twin sources of his poetry, Greek and Italian? what interactions between its diverse linguistic and ethnic communities characterized Salonica in its last years under Ottoman rule? But the reader will also discern that the other contributions too aspire in their different ways to evoke or establish dialogue with their readers by opening up questions that matter to Hellenists in a way that shows why Hellenic Studies matter. How has the acquisition of Byzantine art in France since the Middle Ages shaped a certain perception of Byzantium, and what are the consequences of this? How far does the monastic pattern of the Orthodox East – and in turn the development of the most widely disseminated literature of Byzantium, the saint's life – originate in a cultural cross-fertilization in fourth-century Syria and Palestine? How did the Byzantine educational system attempt to assimilate and transmit the huge body of ancient literature, and with what success? How far, if at all, is our modern notion of democracy compatible with its Athenian ancestor? In the case of the translations that appear in this issue – from Yannis Ritsos and from Homer – any questions raised are different in kind, but dialogue with the reader (in parallel to that other dialogue between Greek and English) is still of the essence.

There are of course many aspects of Hellenic Studies which do not figure in these pages but which will in later issues: archaeology, anthropology, drama, among others. Nor will we neglect original poetry and creative prose, in which the conversation between present and past may achieve its greatest intensity. But what the editors have endeavoured to promote from the outset is, above all, an engagement with problems and perspectives which are not ordinarily exhibited between the same covers or before the same readers: an engagement that may well be aporetic, or perhaps combative, but is always responsive and outward-looking. The fruitful continuation of such dialogue naturally depends on the vigour and resourcefulness of future contributors. *Dialogos* warmly invites their participation.

M.S.S.

D.R.