

## CENTRE FOR BYZANTINE, OTTOMAN AND MODERN GREEK STUDIES

School of Historical Studies – University of Birmingham

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The Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies is the only University teaching and research department in the UK which brings all these subjects together within a single unit. It is an internationally-recognised centre attracting students from as far afield as Canada and the USA, western and eastern Europe, Russia, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey and the Arab world. Our full-time and associate staff cover a wide range of fields and expertise in respect of both the history and languages of the East Mediterranean regions: all aspects of late Roman and Byzantine history, art history and archaeology; many aspects of Islamic history of the medieval and modern periods; Turkish history from the early medieval to modern period; Balkan, particularly Greek, history up to the present day, as well as Greek literature and language in the medieval and modern periods; and international relations, particularly in respect of relations between the Great Powers and Balkan and Near Eastern states from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day.

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The Centre also has close links with the Institute of Fine Arts, which houses both the magnificent Whitting Collection of Byzantine coins and seals, the coins forming one of the largest and most important such collections in Europe, and an excellent art history library. In addition, the Centre for Islamic Studies, housed in Selly Oak Colleges and part of the School of Historical Studies, includes both the famous Mingana Collection of Arabic manuscripts as well as a superb library of Arabic texts and related literature covering the history of the Islamic world from the beginnings until modern times. Members of staff in both institutions work closely with staff of the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies in the teaching and supervision of students pursuing their specialist subjects.

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**Current e-mail addresses for all members of staff can be obtained from the departmental secretary, Mrs G.E. Bye, at:**

*Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies,  
University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, England*

Tel: 0044-121-414 5775

Fax: 0044-121-414 6866

e-mail: [G.E.Bye@bham.ac.uk](mailto:G.E.Bye@bham.ac.uk)

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Through the experiences of the characters in these seven interrelated stories Dimitris Hatzis portrays the life of a provincial town in north-eastern Greece during the inter-war period and partly during the Occupation. As more traditional modes of living give way before the onset of modern innovations the impact such changes have on his characters is the author's central concern. In this respect, this particular community stands for all communities exposed to the inevitability of change and the altered ways of thinking that ensue. Whilst he willingly embraces the new, the teller of these humane tales cannot simultaneously help regretting the passing of the old, and this tension characterises much of the book and contributes to its special feeling.

Haris Vlavianos, *Adieu*, trans. David Connolly, 1998  
ISBN 0 7044 1886 X £8.00

Haris Vlavianos (born 1957) is one of the finest and most prolific of contemporary Greek poets. In 1983 he published his first collection of poetry and since then has published five more collections, a book of aphorisms on poetry (the form of Wallace Stevens's *Adagia* which he has translated), and a number of translations of leading poets including: Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, John Ashbery, William Blake. He also edits the biannual journal *Poetry*, which publishes Greek poetry, articles reviews and essays on poetry as well as translations of foreign poets.

*Adieu* is his most recent collection, published in 1996. It is a lyric farewell to his family, particularly to his mother, to his student life at Oxford and his past as a whole. By conversing with beloved persons, places and poetic voices of the past, it represents a rethinking and a reassessment of love, of poetry and of the human condition. The four sections of this collection represent the stages of Vlavianos's development from a difficult childhood to poetic maturity. It is as if poetry compensates him for the disintegration of his family and at the same time emerges as the positive outcome of this traumatic alienation.

Stratis Doukas, *A Prisoner of War's Story*, trans. Petro Alexiou, 1999  
ISBN 0 7044 8570 2 £8.00

Doukas's story is one of the most powerful literary accounts of the ordeal of those Greeks who were unable to escape in time across the Aegean to mainland Greece after the Greek-Turkish war of 1922. Acclaimed for its oral simplicity and captivating narrative qualities, it is the story of Nikolas Kozakoglou, an Anatolian Greek prisoner of war, who escapes death by pretending to be a Muslim. His story is one of survival, not heroism, hatred or revenge. It is a testimony to sheer human versatility and resilience and indirectly reveals how, although Greeks and Turks lived together on the whole peacefully in earlier times, they also remained deeply ignorant and suspicious of each other's religious practice. *A Prisoner of War's Story* can be seen as an episode of a larger epic, blurring the distinction between fact and fiction, legend and history.

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## CONTENTS OF VOLUME 22 (1998)

**Albrecht Berger, Jonathan Bardill** The representations of Constantinople in Hartmann Schedel's *World Chronicle*, and related pictures.

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**Spiros Kaminaris, Panagiotis Panagopoulos** Conclusion.

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME 23 (1999)

**David Woods** The final commission of Artemius the former *dux Aegypti*.

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