

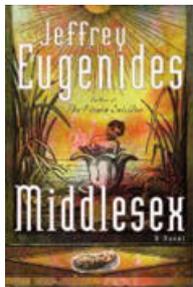
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 [Environment](#) |
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 [Education](#) |
 [About Greece](#)

[Home](#) > [Global_greece](#)

Spotlight



Jeffrey Eugenides



'Middlesex' is an epic tale about a Greek-American hermaphrodite living in Detroit

Teiresias in Detroit

Jeffrey Eugenides' second novel is just about your average Greek-American hermaphrodite

Jeffrey Eugenides hit the literary big time in 1993 with his slim but peculiar debut *The Virgin Suicides*. Heavyweight *New York Times* reviewer [Michiko Kakutani](#) remarked that Eugenides tale of five beautiful but unhappy sisters and the boys who are obsessed with them "insinuates itself into our minds as a small but powerful opera in the unexpected form of a novel...lyrical and portentous, ferocious and elegiac".

Six years later, Sofia Coppola wrote and directed the [film](#) version (dad Francis Ford co-produced), thus securing ongoing interest in the novel and in Eugenides, who had since published fiction in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *The Yale Review*, *Best American Short Stories* and *Granta's Best of Young American Novelists*. He had also received Guggenheim Foundation and National Foundation for the Arts fellowships, Whiting Writers' and Henry D. Vursell awards before moving to Berlin on a [fellowship](#) at the American Academy.

Nearly one Odyssean decade later Eugenides, still in Berlin, completed his much-anticipated second novel. [Middlesex](#) is an epic Greek tale, tracing in its 500-plus pages the genetic and social history of Calliope Helen Stephanides from Asia Minor to Detroit to Berlin. And there's a curious twist in that story: in its course,

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Calliope is transformed into Cal. Eugenides' narrator suffers from a rare hermaphroditic condition that has him born looking like a girl even though he is genetically male.

Inspired by **Herculine Barbin** - a 19th century hermaphrodite whose [memoirs](#) were discovered by Michel Foucault - Eugenides studied the hermaphroditic condition pinpointing a rather unique type, namely the 5-alpha-reductase deficiency syndrome which only manifests itself in small inbred communities. Eugenides then put hermaphroditism and small inbred communities together and came up with...Greek!

Why did you decide to make hermaphrodite Cal Stephanides a Greek-American?

I didn't set out to write a story about a Greek family. I wanted to write about a real, living hermaphrodite. Hermaphroditism brought up classicism. Classicism brought up Hellenism. And Hellenism brought up my family. Only the outline of the story is autobiographical, however. My paternal grandparents migrated from Asia Minor, as the grandparents in the novel do. But, of course, they weren't brother and sister, as Cal's grandparents are. I should make that very clear. The skeleton of the story comes from my family's history but the meat on that skeleton is all invented.

My grandparents died when I was very little. I didn't know a lot about them. When I was very young, our house was full of immigrant Greeks. Though I don't speak Greek, the sound of it is very familiar, the music of my childhood, you could say. Still, I never knew the details of my grandparents lives. One of the pleasures of writing *Middlesex* was that it allowed me to get to know my grandparents imaginatively in a way I never had in life. I learned a lot about the conditions of their lives and the things they had been through and suffered and overcome.

What intrigued you about the possibilities of a hermaphrodite protagonist/ narrator?

Every novelist needs to have hermaphroditic imagination. The job is go into the heads of both men and women.

So, when people ask me why I chose a hermaphrodite as a narrator, I ask in return, "Why isn't every novel narrated by a hermaphrodite?"

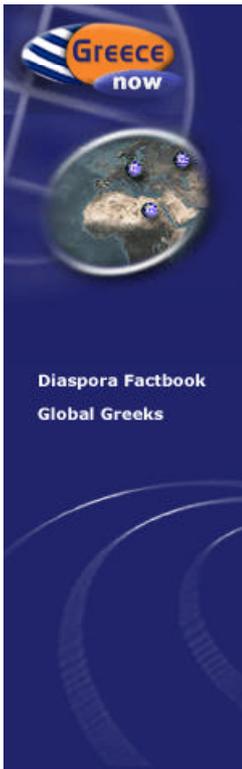
Cal is a modern incarnation of his mythological ancestor, Teiresias. Do you tend to see modern-day Greeks as direct descendents of the ancient Greeks?

I don't put much stock in that sort of thing. I think it's just as ridiculous for modern Greeks to draw personal pride from ancient Greece as it is for modern Egyptians to draw pride from ancient Egypt. Ancient Greece is a gift to the world. It belongs to everybody. Even to an American like me. My narrator refers to Greek mythology a lot, but always in a mock epic fashion. Cal is a real person, living in the modern world. He's aware of the weight and grandeur of classical Greek thought and he invokes it. But it's always tongue in cheek. *Middlesex* is a comedy. And comedy, by my lights, is the only way to deal with the fact of being Greek-American.

Pages> [1](#) | [2](#) |

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Spotlight



Panos Karnezis



The cover of Karnezis' first short-story collection

Engineering literature

UK-based Panos Karnezis talks about the long road from the steel industry to the becoming an author

[Little Infamies](#) explains Karnezis, "charts the arrival of progress (electricity, television, public transport) and the effect these have on the isolated locals. Some of the characters who appear are the priest who is determined to save his congregation whether they want it or not (and he is also a bit of a criminal investigator), the complacent mayor, his wife and daughter, the liberal doctor, the Freemason lawyer, the orphaned seamstress..."

What motivated you to write about Greek village life?

I started to write while working for the steel industry in Sheffield. It was my first job. I guess the transition from academia to the "real world", as well as life in a place where I had made no friends yet, made writing my way out of boredom and the cure for my homesickness. Greek village life was as further away from everyday English life as I could have mustered - without resorting to the brief consolations of science fiction and fantasy.

How much of your own 'Greek experience' has ended up in these stories?

Having been born in a small provincial town, and with relatives living in the countryside, I would often travel back while growing up in Athens. So some of

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my inspiration has to draw from that experience. I say, "it has to", because it is an unconscious process. I suspect I have been influenced more directly by the Greek film comedies of the 1950s and '60s. I always regarded the immediate and direct transcription of some story we accidentally overhear in a coffee shop, or - even worse - of one told in good faith by a friend, as a form of pornography. On the other hand, some event that has slowly percolated through the pores of our brain and is subsequently mixed with at least an equal amount of imagination could be used to give a story an air of authenticity.

You chose the long road towards literature - via an engineering degree. How did the transition from engineering to writing occur?

I've been reading fiction ever since I was a teenager, but I had written nothing before the age of 29 when I moved to Sheffield. Then I came across an advertisement in a national newspaper about correspondence Creative Writing courses. In the beginning writing was a fun pastime, but little by little it became more important. At the same time my interest in my profession waned and after two years there came a point when I would even write at work. At that point I started to think of it as a possible alternative career. I think my training in engineering has taught me to approach the creative process as something of a mathematical problem with given quantities and unknown variables. I worked a lot, for example, on testing how to write dialogue, characterisation etc, by studying the work of the great authors.

A number of mathematicians have written 'mathematical' novels. Do you have an engineer's tale to tell?

I do not, I am afraid. Writing was a way out of engineering - a good profession by any standards, but one that ultimately did not suit me. Having said that, I am aware that specks of my technical knowledge (which is slowly disappearing from disuse, I have to admit) make their way here and there in my stories.

Do you write directly in English? How well does English express the stories you are writing?

I do write directly in English. Because I write in a foreign language I am aware of how much an artificial creation words are, and not something innate. And also, how much one could bend them, cut them down and varnish them to express what one needs to. I write in English because I live in England and feel the need to communicate with the people around me (any translations would be a great plus, of course. The idea of communicating with an international audience - no matter how small - is humbling). That was how it started, and it remains the reason I write. I find it easier to write things down than tell them to someone in the pub. I think, this is perhaps what makes a writer out of all the people who love to tell stories.

How would you compare the Greek and English literary scene?

I am not particularly knowledgeable in Greek literature. Running the danger of being unfair, I have the impression (from newspaper articles and reviews, as well as a few books that come my way) that the Greek literary scene still looks perhaps inwards, while the English is for some years now looking outwards. By this, I do not only mean the themes and techniques, but more importantly the ideas: the ever-present machismo, the undercurrent misogyny, the somewhat parochial political views... Perhaps these are the reasons why not enough Greek literature has found its place on foreign bookshelves. But my comment strikes me now as a gross generalisation. I expect there exist many exceptions - like Apostolos Doxiadis's [Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture](#). There are, I am sure, several other good Greek books which have yet to appear in English simply because no one has translated them - or done so, badly.

What are you reading at the moment?

[Jeffrey Eugenides'](#) Middlesex.

Do you think you'll be returning to Greece to pursue a writing (or engineering) career?

I have no plans of returning to Greece in the foreseeable future. Having lived abroad for more than ten years, I now feel more at home in England.

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The Islands



View of Corfu town



At the Corfu Durrell School: Food, wine, sea, sun and great discussions



Gerald Durrell with his furry friends

Learning through travel

The Durrell brothers spent happy years on Corfu where a school now offers learning holidays in their name

“You have two birth-places,” wrote [Lawrence Durrell](#), the Anglo-Irish author best known for his experimental novel, *The Alexandria Quartet*, “you have the place where you were really born and then you have a place of predilection where you really wake up to reality.” Many philhellenes can say this about Greece, this “*palimpsest*” (to borrow from Kazantzakis) of history and culture. But what, really, is this thing that links someone to a place other than that of their birth? Is it a simple desire to learn about foreign things, or is it something much deeper, an ancestral memory?

Whatever the case, when tourists become travellers and when travellers feel they’ve made a connection to a foreign place, they seek more than just a traditional meal and a fun nightlife. Organisations like the [Durrell School of Corfu](#), which make learning the central focus of their holiday programs, offer travellers such an alternative to standard tourist packages. Indeed, for the people at the Durrell School there was no “better place to establish and nurture a school about the Durrell brothers than on their beloved island of [Corfu](#)”.

The two brothers have left an intangible legacy in the air of Corfu (*Kerkyra*, in Greek). Lawrence and Gerald Durrell moved there with their mother in 1935; in

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fact, Lawrence found little to keep him in England and spent most of his life elsewhere. An entertaining account of growing up on the isle can be read in Gerald's 1956-classic *My Family and Other Animals*, where he says it was, "rather like living in one of the more flamboyant and slapstick comic operas". For him, Corfu was the place where the "world turned from black to white to technicolour".

Sunny curriculum

The Durrell School is keen on providing a memorable learning experience in a location rich in history and culture capitalising on issues that were significant to the Durrells. And 'Durrellphiles' travel to Corfu to partake of this unique opportunity from as far as the USA, Canada and Australia, but also from the UK, India, France, Ireland and Holland.

While this year's program was originally cancelled due to the "current geopolitical conflicts", it has since been deferred to midsummer 2004, from June 12 through to 26. It's certainly a program to look forward to – two weeks packed with food tasting, field trips, discussions on linguistic, social and political issues, as well as entertainment via the [Karaghiozis](#) shadow puppet theatre. An impressive faculty from around the world, public and academic experts (including [Nicholas Gage](#), best-selling author of *Eleni*) in the arts but also the sciences, will participate in all daily activities and lead discussions.

Despite the uncertainty of global travel, however, a shorter revised program is also underway this summer, through to June 24, including fieldtrips to Episkepsi, Old Peritheia, Loutses, [Paxi](#) island and [Kalami](#) bay (to see the house where the brothers lived) as well as discussions and analysis of topics such as "Reading Cultural Landscapes", "Globalisation and Nationalism", "Translation" and "Post-colonialism". Lawrence Durrell's *The Black Book* will also be the centre of a discussion on "Writing Against The Grain".

This mixture of field experiences and table-based discussion tunes into the legacy of the brothers – Gerald was a

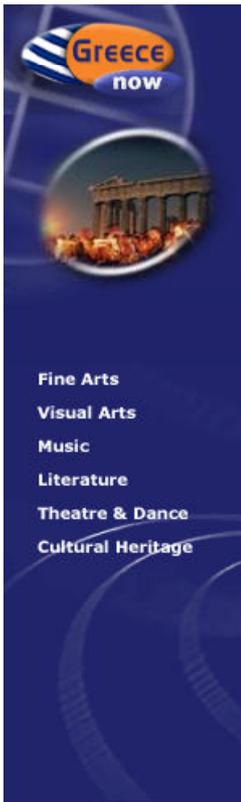
renowned zoologist and keen conservationist and Lawrence, a master of the written word, a thinker who combined his natural affiliation with Eastern philosophies (the brothers were born in India) to the struggles and journeys of his Western heroes.

Thus understandably, the idea of the journey is central to the school's programs. After all, people from all over the world travel to the verdant [Ionian](#) island to learn, ultimately, about themselves and their relationship to each other via their keen interest in the brothers Durrell, enriched by the beautiful surroundings. And we suspect, as Durrell keenly observed in his *Black Book*, "There is only trial and error on a journey like this, and no signposts."

* To contact the school write or call at durrells@otenet.gr, phone/fax: +30-26610-21326, 11 Filellinon St, Corfu, Greece 49-100

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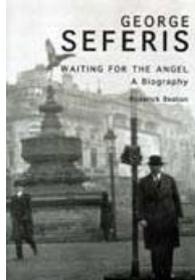
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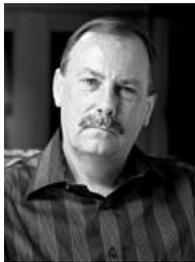
Literature



Roderick Beaton's 'Waiting for the Angel' is the first ever biography of Nobel-prize winning poet, George Seferis



Seferis the poet,
Seferis the diplomat



Seferis' translator
and now biographer,
Briton Roderick
Beaton

Beaton's Seferis

George Seferis' biographer, Roderick Beaton, speaks to GreeceNow about his book, its sources and his beloved poet

"I've grown up in the company of Seferis' poetry," [Roderick Beaton](#), author of *Waiting for the Angel*, the first-ever biography of the Nobel-prize winning poet, essayist and diplomat, told *GreeceNow* via email. Beaton may well know [George Seferis](#) better than anyone else, but still not "the way we know our friends, family and acquaintances." More like "the way a novelist knows the characters of his fiction."

A world authority on Modern Greek literature and culture and currently Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature at [King's College](#) London, Beaton never actually met Seferis. "I can't quite imagine what it's like to write the biography of someone you've known," he says. "I could imagine a certain shock, even a sense of alienation, as you find yourself getting to know a different person entirely."

From diplomat to poet

It is a complex figure that steps out of the pages of Beaton's book. As a poet, Seferis brought Greece's ancient past and present face-to-face into dialogue; the theme of ethnic continuity and identity has since been a social and literary obsession for the modern-day Greek. Themes of alienation and exile, of wandering and death are recurring ones and his

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emotionally eloquent verse "Wherever I travel, Greece wounds me," has come to represent the predicament of the modern Greek both within Greece and throughout the [Diaspora](#) .

His literary work influenced British and American writers including [Lawrence Durrell](#) and [Henry Miller](#) and his diplomatic career placed him in the position of Ambassador to Great Britain at a historic time. When in 1969 he finally, albeit reluctantly, made his notorious statement against the dictatorship of the time he became a national hero and spokesperson for freedom and his funeral, two years later, saw a massive protest against the 1967-1974 Junta.

But behind the public face (or under it) there are layers and layers of "interplay between poet and diplomat, public and private, poetry and politics", a palimpsest, as it were, of man, child, lover, diplomat, Greek, exile, poet

. To uncover the many aspects of Seferis, Beaton spent years studying previously "unpublished letters, journals, pocket-diaries, drafts of poems and essays, Seferis' annotations in his books and on hundreds of press cuttings, official documents of the British and Greek governments". He also received help from the poet's stepdaughter [Anna Lontou](#) , his sister **Ioanna Tsatsou** and niece Despina Mylona.

Beaton was surprised by, for example, "how deeply antipathetic Seferis was to the Greek monarchy; how indecisive he could be in certain kinds of personal crisis but at the same time how courageous in his public life; exactly where he stood on the vexed question of the future of Cyprus at the end of the 1950s and why."

There are surprises in store for all. The Greeks, Beaton ventures to say, who will get to read the work in a translation by **Mika Provata** this month, will most probably be surprised by the political aspects of Seferis' life such as his being a supporter of the Left who advocated 'people's rule' (*laokratia*). "I think the story of the diplomatic negotiations over [Cyprus](#)

in the late 1950s, as I tell it from (mainly) Seferis' point of view, will contain some surprises."

Reaching out an international public

The biography is largely aimed at an international readership. "I'm trying to reach those British and American readers," says Beaton, "who seem to love literary biography but don't any more read literature itself, certainly not poetry, and certainly not (many of them) a poet as "difficult" as Seferis."

To some, it may seem odd that no Greek author has as yet tackled the mammoth task of writing the poet's biography (that is, apart from his sister who wrote the memoir, *My Brother George*). Beaton explains that the literary biography genre is far more popular in England than in Greece.

But more than, that "a good biographer has to have a certain distance from his/her subject," adds Beaton. "Approaching Seferis from the perspective of a different language and culture obviously adds to that distance, though also at a certain cost. No doubt there will be those for whom I do not sufficiently appreciate what is often called "the Greek reality" (*elliniki pragmatikota*); but then, I hope to persuade readers of my book that Seferis does not belong only to Greece. The [Nobel Prize](#) is a worldwide distinction, and Seferis' poems and essays have been translated and admired all over the world."

The biographer's viewpoint

The portrait of this poet reads like a history within a history. Seferis' diplomatic career placed him right in the thick of history-in-the-making before, during and after WWII. The Greece we see through Seferis, suggests Beaton, is "the Greece of the Great Schism; a [Venizelist](#) and post-Venizelist Greece, constantly struggling to redefine its identity, and sometimes even just to survive, after the disaster of 1922. It's also not just the story of Greece, in the sense of the Greek state, but of Hellenism as a much wider culture; how these two interact and relate to one another is part of the untold history of Greece (or Hellenism) in the 20th century. And some of it (I hope!) does get told in this book."

Weaving the story of a poet and diplomat must be a formidable task. Does this biographer – as a lifetime lover and teacher of Seferis' poetry – seek to bring the aspects of man, poet and diplomat together into a pleasing and complete whole, to twist the implications of history, to be kind?

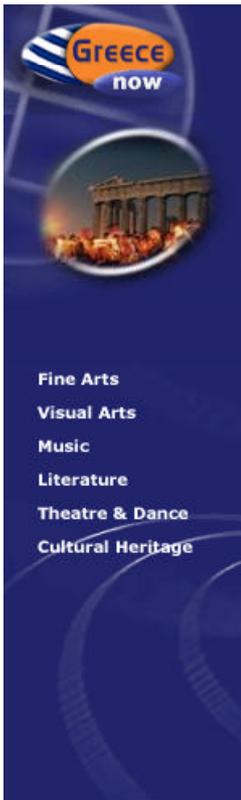
“Pleasing and complete: not exactly,” replies Beaton. “I think the biographer's job is to impose a degree of structure and coherence on the events of a life which probably didn't seem like that to the person living it; in that sense I think the biography as I've written it has a certain shape which I find satisfying - but that's only possible when you can stand at a certain distance from your subject.”

Some fans of biography may well confess to reading in order to discover the weaknesses in the artist as a man. Asked to point to a weakness in Seferis, Beaton noted the poet's desire to “to speak simply, to be given this grace”. “But both as poet and diplomat [Seferis was] committed from the beginning to indirectness, to being 'cryptic'; for him that was both a necessary refuge and perhaps even a virtue. I wonder if his greatest weakness as a poet wasn't perhaps that he never understood [Cavafy](#) , who really did know how to "speak simply".

“The most fascinating thing of all about Seferis,” concludes Beaton, “is the sheer complexity of the man, of his thought and work: it's like an incredibly intricate ball of wool (*kouvari*), and wherever you pull at a thread, everything turns out to be intimately connected to everything else. You never get to the end of Seferis.”

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Literature



Dr David Ricks of London's King's College



'Modern Greek Writing': 500 pages, 50 Greek writers in English translation

Found in translation

Q & A with David Ricks on his new anthology of 'Modern Greek Writing in Translation'

When the [Centre for the Greek Language](#) first presented the idea of an anthology to [Dr David Ricks](#) of King's College, London, he was happy for the opportunity to "present a reasonably representative, single-volume picture of modern Greek writing of a kind which had never been available."

In his [Modern Greek Writing: An Anthology in English Translation](#) Ricks (author of *The Shade of Homer: A Study in Modern Greek Poetry and Byzantine Heroic Poetry*) showcases fifty of most important writers since 1821; Greek men of letters (but also women, like poetesses [Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke](#) and [Jenny Mastoraki](#)) ranging from [Cavafy](#), [Seferis](#) and [Elytis](#) to [Kazantzakis](#), [Papadiamantis](#) and [Makriyannis](#).

Within the book's 500 pages one finds a selection of genres: poetry, prose and memoir, historical, literary and experimental writing accompanied by Ricks' precise and informative commentary linking text to context, uncovering influences and evaluating each author's contribution to the Greek literary tradition.

How did you select the writers represented in this anthology?

I chose from among those writers who, on the basis of my knowledge of their original

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writings, I considered most worthy of attention and then searched for translations of them.

Were new translations commissioned especially for this anthology?

It was not the Centre's aim to commission new translations, but to provide, in part, a history: a survey of the cultural interactions between the Greek-speaking and English-speaking worlds which have generated the corpus of published translations we possess. One thing I have attempted to do (on which the critic Aris Berlis commented acutely) is do justice to worthy translations from the distant past in the first quarter of the book. That said, there is no doubt that a volume with commissioned translations would have had a quite different cast: choosing the final fifty writers might have been more difficult, but representing them by their best work in the best possible translations would have been rather easier.

Are writers or texts missing due to the lack of available translations?

As I say in the Preface, the absence of **Kontoglou**, **Skarimbis** and **Beratis** is particularly regrettable; and in a work of commissioned translations, I would have tried to represent Sikelianos and [Karyotakis](#) much more fully. Coverage of the field in translation can be very haphazard, with the years before 1960 particularly ill served by what is available.

What difficulties did you encounter in compiling this anthology?

The difficulty about which one might grow most ill-tempered was the number of merely incompetent translations of fine Greek texts, especially in verse. A knowledge of Greek and a way with English are less often found in one person than you might think.

How would you characterise a successful translation?

Running counter to an influential strain in modern Translation Studies, I would say that a successful translation must be thoroughly domesticated within the target language: it should not inhabit a half-way house of linguistic private judgement on the part of the translator, but be integrated

within the host tradition. At the limit, I accept that that makes some texts untranslatable.

Who makes up the new generation of translators working from the Greek?

I find it hard to speak of a generation, because translators, especially from Greek, lament the fact that they tend to work in isolation, but I am happy to see that some of the gaps I've mentioned (Skarimbass, Sikelianos) are now being filled by enterprising translators. Some of your own translations are included.

Which writers or period most interest you?

I'm interested in all the writers represented in the volume. Had I more time and talent, a complete translation of Karyotakis' *Elegies and Satires* would be a compelling enterprise.

Why was the book not conceived of as a bilingual anthology?

The Centre took the view (as it did with the excellent Greek anthology, *In Conversation with Cavafy*) that to include the Greek would halve the size of a selection, which was for an English-language audience. [Princeton University Press](http://www.princeton.edu/) once had a fine record in bilingual collections, but the price of paper now inhibits this. I'm happy to see that a forthcoming anthology to which I've contributed, *A Century of Greek Poetry* (Cosmos Publishing 2004) will be bilingual – and 1,000 pages!

What socio-political and historical course is traced out by the literature in the book? What do we learn about Greece from the collection?

The book attempts to trace, through the individual (and often individualistic) responses of writers since 1821, some sense of how poetry and prose have responded to (and indeed helped to create) certain moods in certain historical settings. It is easy for foreigners, who know the peaceful and prosperous Greece of today, to ignore the often-painful history behind this and also to be too little aware of the resources literature has to offer in unpropitious circumstances.

Greece was rather isolated from the important intellectual movements of greater Europe. How is this reflected in the anthology texts?

I wouldn't myself say that modern Greece was ever isolated from Europe's life of the mind: take Papdiamantis, who was completely au courant with all sorts of figures like [Oscar Wilde](#) , whom he deplored.

How are issues of the original language tackled in a translated anthology?

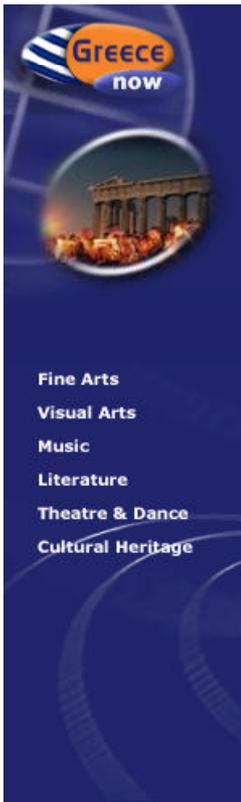
That is a long-standing conundrum, especially since so much literature of merit was written in the "purist" form of Greek. But trying slavishly to replicate Greek diglossia in an English text tends to produce anything but the right effect.

Could you choose just one prose writer and one poet as the most representative of the period covered in the anthology?

I don't think just two could be representative; but if I had to keep just two, I would, with Elytis, say: "Commemorate [Dionysios Solomos](#) , commemorate Alexandros Papdiamantis."

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Fine Arts



Thierry de Cordier's controversial work explores the sexuality of Christ



This solitary, nature-loving sex scene was deemed too wild for one Athenian – so she slashed this photograph by Thanassis Totsikas

Outrageous Outlook?

Contemporary art exhibition, meant to broaden our outlook, turns into blow for artistic expression

It was going to be the exhibition that would place "Athens on the international art scene". It was going to present images strong enough to remain memorable in this image-saturated society. For [Christos Joachimides](#), the show's curator, it was going to "allow Greeks to see some very significant art, up close, for the very first time".

Yet [Outlook](#), the [Cultural Olympiad's](#) highlight, soon turned – in the words of journalist Nikos Konstandaras – into "Outrage".

It all began forty-five days after the [official opening](#) of the exhibition. More than 22,000 Greeks (including many school groups) had walked through the three spaces making up the biggest ever exhibit of its kind in Greece, their responses (strong or lukewarm) recorded in the press. All was well.

But then [Yorgos Karatzaferis](#), founder and leader of the nationalistic right-wing **People's Orthodox Party** (LAOS), was briefed of an exhibited painting by Belgian artist [Thierry de Cordier](#) depicting a wooden cross and a penis with semen dripping from the crucifix. From his private TV channel Karatzaferis started attacking both the controversial work and the event's organisers causing some upheaval of public sentiment.

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De Cordier had long been working on the theme of the sexuality of Christ influenced by Leo Steinberg's works, such as [The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and In Modern Oblivion](#) , but Karatzaferis (in full 'vote-grabbing' mode, what with national elections coming up) was not to know. He threw art theory out of the gallery door and pronounced the work "the most obscene, immoral, shameless painting" he had ever seen. It is safe to say he had not seen the Gilbert and George cross made from faeces exhibited in the same [Athens School of Fine Arts](#) building just two years earlier.

Sin... removed

Karatzaferis called for a Supreme Court inquiry into whether a crime had been committed and wanted to know who was responsible for this "vulgar" choice, but [Culture Minister Evangelos Venizelos](#) acted quickly. Consulting with Joachimides and de Cordier himself, the painting, entitled *Aperges Me* (Dry Sin) was promptly removed and an announcement explaining the reasons mounted in its place.

Had the culture minister not acted **Miltiades Evert**, the main opposition's former leader, would have: "If this picture is not withdrawn I will personally take it down with my own hands," he once announced on TV. Epiphanius Economou, spokesperson for the [Greek Orthodox Church](#) , chimed in to say, how the painting "an insult to our morals and customs and our religion".

As the media incited debate, the general public became divided. Greek news portal [In.gr](#) polled its visitors asking whether they agreed or disagreed with the removal of the De Cordier artwork. The results over the week showed a near even split.

According to Joachimides, the telephones were on fire as if the citizens who had thus far ignored the exhibition had suddenly been snapped into life shouting, "take down the penises" and threatening to break everything. When a bomb threat was called in, the building was closed to the public and anyone wanting a last-minute glimpse of the offending canvas was prevented from entering.

Similar attacks

When the painting had been removed and the exhibition doors opened again, a “37-year-old woman in conservative dress” wearing a “large crucifix” and described as being “disturbed” strutted in an exhibition hall and slashed a **Thanassis Totsikas** photograph of the artist copulating with a watermelon in an Edenic setting. The woman was given a warning by security, only to strut back in and make an attempt on a full frontal nude (ironically of Praxiteles’ Hermes torso) sketched by American artist [Raymond Pettibon](#) .

“I can't believe it, Greece is in the [EU](#) , this is the 21st century,” Joachimides told the press. Totsikas asked for the rest of his three-fold work to be removed while the Pettibon work was returned to its [Benaki Museum](#) home, albeit with its edges slightly torn.

The issue is not so uncommon when one looks around the globe. In 1997 the Brigham Young University [art museum in Utah removed](#) four nude and semi-nude sculpture classics (*The Kiss*, *Saint John the Baptist Preaching*, *The Prodigal Son*, and *Monument to Balzac*) by seminal French sculptor [Auguste Rodin](#) , which were “considered offensive to community morals and religious views”.

Elsewhere, when **Rudolf Giuliani** was up against Hillary Clinton for a U.S. Senate seat in New York, he made a [big fuss](#) over the 1999 Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibition *Sensation*, because it included a work by Briton [Chris Ofili](#) called *The Holy Virgin Mary* depicting the Madonna adorned with elephant dung. Giuliani called for the closure of the show arguing for the “correct use of public funds”. [Republican representatives argued](#) the same way to the Senate in 1989 in response to **Andres Serrano's** equally controversial [Piss Christ](#) .

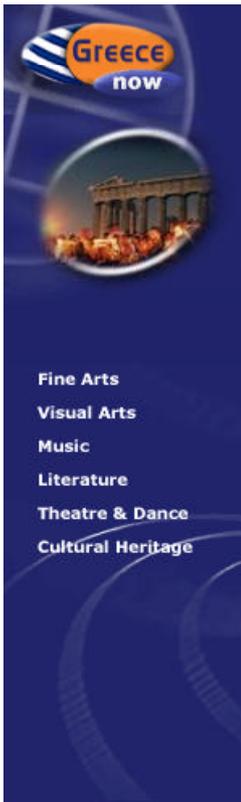
Artistic sympathy

Outlook cost the Greek government some 2.3 million euros. For local artist **Alekos Fassianos** the money could have been better spent promoting Greek artists to the world, rather than bringing “so-called modern” art to Greeks. Another esteemed

local artist [Takis](#) felt the work was in bad taste but should have been left alone with at the very least a warning 'Not for children'. In the end, "the intense debate provoked...overshadowed the exhibition's substance and...prevented the general public from coming into contact with modern art," said Venizelos in a written statement.

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Cultural Heritage



'The History of the Greek Language: From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity' will be published in English by the end of 2004



Ancient Greek isn't placed on a linguistic pedestal but is seen as a living language that survived through time

Linguistically diachronic

Demystifying the Ancient Greek language: a journey of history, culture and politics

The modern Greek's obsession with the heritage of the Ancient Greek language, as cultural symbol and proof of continual link with a "glorious" past, is a passionate subject amongst academics, politicians and laymen alike. When in 2001 the encyclopedic *A History of the Greek Language: From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity* was published it sold 2,200 copies in the first three months and then went on to be reprinted twice – a remarkable feat for a local text aimed at a specialised academic crowd.

Six years in the making, the effort bears the editorial leadership of **Anastasios Foivos Christidis**, Director of the Department of Linguistics of the [Centre for the Greek Language](#), and tackles the question of the Greek language from its very beginnings to late antiquity (around 7th century AD) following its journey via its historical, cultural and social interaction.

By the end of 2004 scholars and academics worldwide will finally be able to read the History in English bearing, moreover, the esteemed stamp of the [Cambridge University Press](#). The translation is funded by the culture ministry <http://www.culture.gr> and executed by the Centre for the Greek Language. The organisation (which promotes the language within Greece and throughout the [Diaspora](#) by publishing

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educational material and supporting teachers of the language worldwide) oversaw the original publication.

International penning line-up

This mammoth, interdisciplinary volume consists of 123 texts written by 40 Greek and 30 foreign specialists and is aimed not only at linguists and classical philologists but also historians, anthropologists and translators.

“Especially laudable,” writes [Gonda Van Steen](#) in April's edition of [The Classical Review](#) , “is the contributors' joint effort not to put Ancient Greek on a linguistic pedestal but, instead, to present multiple, varying histories of the Greek language, its developments and dialects.”

Indeed, the volume is divided into nine units exploring, amongst other things, the general phenomenon of language, Ancient Greek dialects and the interplay of language with history and culture. Most interesting is the exploration of the language as it interacts with other languages, such as [Semitic](#) , [Iranian](#) , [Latin](#) , [Celtic](#) , [Indian](#) and [Arabic](#) .

An extra four texts will be added to the English edition, which look into the language of the gods, bilingual Greek-Semitic texts of the Hellenistic period, the fate of the language during the Renaissance, as well as the adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet into the Greek language.

In search of linguistic continuity

Using key words such as *ellinismos* (hellenism), *filotimia* (conscientiousness), *paradissos* (paradise), *aghios* (saint) and *psychi* (soul) and tracking their semiotic metamorphosis over time, the History analyses the triangle of interdependence between language, culture and history. The impact of Christianity on the language is also explored.

The chapter entitled “Language and Civilisation” traces the use of specific vocabularies and dialects present throughout the literary tradition of epic poetry, ancient tragedy and comedy, from Homer's time through to the [Hellenistic](#) age. The chapter sheds light on the basic institutions of the time, via the use of

specialist vocabularies. The book does not shy away from addressing the use of language in all its forms, from the most common to the most formal, taking proverbs, riddles, puns and obscenities also into consideration.

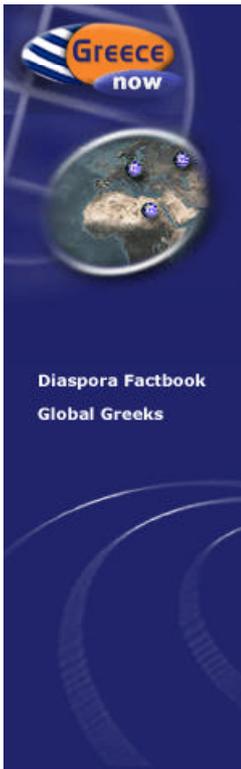
Christidis stresses that while the relationship between modern Greeks and the ancient language must be “demystified” it need not leave Modern Greek destitute. The book achieves this without playing into the modern-day obsession with the Greek language.

The question of language has been central in modern Greece ever since the [foundation of the Modern Greek State](#). During the last 20 years an increasing feeling of insecurity over the nation’s ‘ethnic fate’ has resulted in growing concern regarding the dangers faced by the Greek language.

As Christidis had noted in an earlier interview with Greek daily *Eleftherotypia*, some groups support the idea (others just [ridicule it](#)) that the Greek language is an “outer-historical miracle” and that Greeks are a “chosen people”. “This is false – there is no language outside of history,” Christidis objects, stressing that the book focuses on the distinctive qualities of the Greek language, which are “historical and not mythological”.

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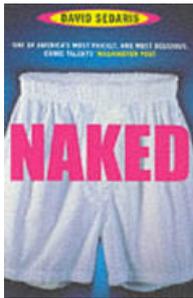
Spotlight



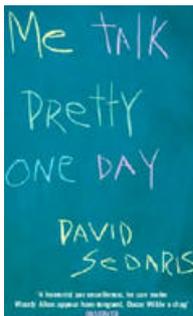
Greek-American David Sedaris: The 'funniest man alive'?

Sedaris says

A look into the life and works of Greek-American funny-author and funny-man David Sedaris



The 'Naked' collection of stories



'Me Talk Pretty One Day' by David Sedaris

[Time Out New York](#) called him "the funniest man alive", [New York Magazine](#) believes he's "the most brilliantly witty New Yorker since Dorothy Parker" and when critic Craig Seligman read him (over lunch) he "spewed a mouthful of pastrami across [his] desk" as he laughed.

The playwright, essayist, author, radio star and stand-up comedian [David Sedaris](#) started to really make people laugh back in 1992 when, on [National Public Radio](#) he recounted his experiences (later published as *The Santa Land Diaries*) as one of Santa's elves during a Christmas job at Macy's.

His collections of stories and autobiographical essays about his daily world, his odd jobs (New York apartment cleaner and volunteer at a mental hospital to name a few), his habits (smoking) and his wacky Greek-American family and upbringing in Raleigh, North Carolina, have become bestsellers.

Often anecdotal in nature and an embellished mix of fact and fiction (he admits that he is "prone to exaggeration") his books have garnered a huge following in the States: there was *Barrel Fever* in 1994, *Holidays on Ice* in 1997, *Naked* in 1997 and *Me Talk Pretty One Day* in

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2000. *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim* will hit US bookstores in June 2004.

His work has also appeared in the *New Yorker*, [Harper's](#) and [Esquire](#). His live shows — delivered in his characteristic nasal voice with “deadpan creepiness”— completely sell out. He's performed at [Carnegie Hall](#), **David Letterman** has invited him on [his show](#) and there's been talk for a while now about Wayne Wang (*Smoke*) making a movie of *Talk Pretty*.

On the other hand, plays, like *The Talent Family*, that he pens with his sister, actress **Amy Sedaris**, have been produced at [La Mama](#), [Lincoln Center](#), and The Drama Department in New York City. He's won the *Time* Humorist of the Year award and became the third recipient of the Thurber Prize for American Humour.

Turning personal to popular

In short, whatever Sedaris writes or talks about, he makes funny. He's spent the last few years living a lot in France and so *Talk Pretty* includes anecdotes about his linguistic adventures and the habits of the French (“smoker's paradise”) and what they think of Americans.

Ultimately though, his funniest material continues to come from his own family and relatives. He inherited a bit of Greek from his father (who was born in the US to Greek migrants) and since then, as he stated in [an interview](#) “the Greeks have...claimed me, so now I'm on these Greek-American radio programs and doing interviews for newspapers in Athens.”

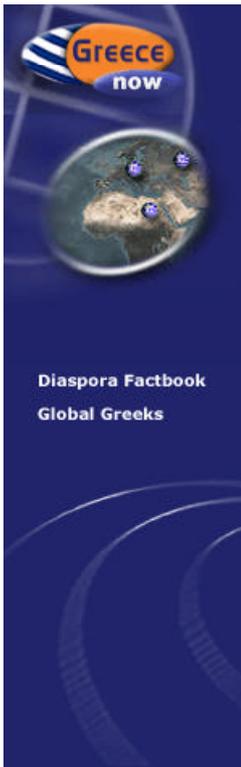
But unlike his Greek-American peers making cinematic and literary headlines, Sedaris' Greek jabs are nothing like Nia Vardalos' [Big Fat Greek Wedding](#), where humorous pokes at Greekness are more poignant than biting or [Jeffrey Eugenides](#)' more eloquent Greek-American hermaphrodite in his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Middlesex*. Sedaris is straight and cutting: “The Greeks invented democracy and called it a day.”

The Greek grandmother is one of Sedaris' most memorable characters. His own "Ya Ya" walks on her hands and knees to kiss a Greek Orthodox priest's shoes. His mother's protests against the arrival of her mother-in-law from "the old country" are not triumphant and "Ya Ya" isn't deposited to a "nursing home" or "zoo" but rather comes to stay in the family home. The comedy it produces is brutal. "That might play back on Mount Olympus," Sedaris has his mother shriek, "but in my house we don't wash our underwear stockings in the toilet."

In his stories, Sedaris is called "Greek", "homo" or "Einstein" depending on the obsessions of the characters with whom he interacts. And while it is the friction caused between dysfunctional and different characters that drives his work, that brings out the bizarre in the mundane, Sedaris himself slips through any label.

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[Home](#)>[Global_greece](#)

Spotlight



Antique's dance hit 'Opa Opa' made the top 10 throughout Scandinavia



Elena Papparizou and Nikos Panaglotidis are Antique

Greek-Swedish dance mix

Sweden-born Greek duo introduce popular Greek music to the international clubbing scene

When Greeks migrate for employment, family reasons or sheer adventure they are never alienated by their Greekness. Even [Diaspora](#) -born second- or third-generation children find themselves inextricably connected with their ancestral land. Elena Papparizou, 17, and Nikos Panaglotidis, 21, born in Sweden of Greek parents, have turned their Greek-connection into musical success by blending current popular Greek tunes with intoxicating dance-pop beats.

Known as **Antique**, the duo first hit the Swedish top 5 in August 1999 with a Greek dance-pop tune called "Opa Opa", which climbed to the top 10 in all of Scandinavia and sold gold in just five weeks. "All I remember after that," says Elena, "is being in a car or aeroplane and travelling around promoting ourselves. We were in Greece late last year where we appeared in a couple of dance clubs in [Athens](#) and [Thessaloniki](#) and travelled throughout Europe and as far as Canada, Cyprus, Albania and Beirut."

So the "opa" exclamation, once expressing the *joie de vivre* of Greek peasants, has become an all-European clubbing anthem reminding everyone of summer fun on Greek islands. Indeed it was on those very islands that Antique was born. Swedish DJs Jonas Scheldt and the C&N Project (namely Niclas Olausson and "Chippe"

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Carlsson who've collaborated with [Dr Alban](#) and [Dana International](#)) were spinning tunes on club decks in islands like [Rhodes](#) and [Kos](#), when they came up with the idea of creating a unique 'Greek sound' that could be exported to dance-pop lovers worldwide.

When the remixing of popular Greek hits was over, "Opa Opa" was born. Yet in an effort to pump up the rhythm of the track, the Swedish DJs went in search of a singer. The sole prerequisite was that she could sing Greek. Elena Paparizou - who had been singing since she was 8 and was involved in theatre and musicals before turning to rap, R&B and soul - was the ideal candidate. Soon thereafter, she was joined by Nikos Panaglotidis, an old friend who has been an accomplished [bouzouki](#) -player since the age of 9 and was also singing in a traditional Greek band.

"Opa Opa" was released as a CD single in August 1999 by [Bonnier Music Scandinavia](#) and sold 60,000 copies Scandinavia-wide. [Virgin](#) released the single in most of Europe, while Magic Records did the same for Poland and [V2 Records](#) in Greece. Almost a month later, there followed a debut album of the same name. Made up of 12 dance tracks, the album features both Greek and English lyrics, a couple of instrumental tunes, such as "Westoriental Trip", and a track written by Elena herself, "I zoi einai tora" ("Life is Now"). The super popular remix "Dynata Dynata" was released as a single in October 1999.

The Greek connection

In Greece, Antique's debut album has sold 15,000 copies including singles. V2 Records, who released the album in May 2000, maintain that Elena is hot property in Greece and is especially well received by the public, as enthusiastic fan mail on the [Antique website](#) proves. "Keep teaching the world to sing in Greek!" urges fan Ioanna in her e-mail to the band site.

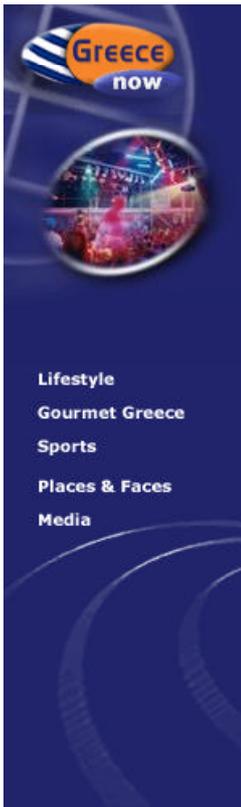
The pair have always maintained close contact with Greece. For Elena and Nikos, holiday periods often meant visits to relatives in Thessaloniki and [Volos](#) respectively. They both speak fluent Greek and keep close contact with the small but

tight-knit [Greek community](#) in their hometown of [Gothenburg](#), southwest Sweden.

Though popular Greek music now plays a central role in her lifestyle and career, Elena wasn't always an avid listener of Greek music. "I had always connected Greek music with my holiday trips to Greece. I collected the tunes I liked, which held a nostalgic appeal, and took them back home. Now, I listen to much more Greek music. Speaking of the band's name Elena muses "What do you think of when you hear the name Antique? Something old-fashioned, a part of history - that's the Greek element. We are the new history and our philosophy, the Antique philosophy, is to just have fun."

* Antique are currently working on their second album, due to hit record shelves after March

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Lifestyle



A gesture of openness from the Greek Orthodox Church: liturgy in English



English-speaking believers are now able to follow the service

English Orthodox Church

A church in downtown Athens offers liturgy in English for the English-speaking community

It is a bold step to take for a conservative institution; a necessary evil, as it were. The [Greek Orthodox Church](#) is now holding regular services in English at the Sacred Chapel of Saint Andrew (**Aghios Andreas**) in Plaka. An initiative of the [Archbishop of Athens](#) to cater to the growing number of English-language speakers who wish to go to church, the move has been very positively welcomed by the community.

GreeceNow spoke to Protopresbyter Thomas Synodinos who was responsible for executing the Archbishop's wishes. "There are many English speakers who live and work in Athens and come to church, but don't speak Greek," he explained. "A few days ago, an English man, who's been living in Athens for years but never learnt the language, came to thank me. He was very happy."

To accommodate English speakers then, the services will be conducted by Father John Raffan on Sundays between 7.30 and 9.15 a.m. (for the [Orthros service](#)) and between 9.15 and 10.30 a.m. (for the Divine Liturgy), but also on special occasions, including Easter.

"This is the first time the Greek Orthodox Church has organized an English-language service on a regular basis," said Father John to [AFP](#). And while [media reports](#) note that the announcement comes just months before a massive influx of

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foreign tourists for the [Olympic Games](#) , Father Thomas explains that it is simply the Church's aim to provide an accessible service to the existing community, made up of English-speaking diplomats from Orthodox countries, Greeks of the Diaspora (many of whom already follow the [Greek Orthodox liturgy in English](#)) and foreigners attracted to the faith.

Linguistic riddles

A Scotsman who converted to Orthodoxy back in 1982, Father John stresses, "Many people believe the Orthodox faith appeals more to the heart, more to the senses also – the liturgy is very rich, they just feel at home with it." He adds that the liturgy translation is 'borrowed' from the [Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America](#). The Church there already exercises a policy of "[flexible bilingualism](#)" , with hymns sung in Greek and all plain texts, announcement and the sermon delivered in English.

This gesture will certainly make church-going a more meaningful experience for English speakers, but the majority of Greek church-goers do not understand much of the liturgical Greek either. That's because the service hails from the medieval Byzantine church tradition and is spoken and sung in third-century Greek, [Koine](#) , also the language of the New Testament and of texts attributed to historian Polybius and philosopher [Epictetus](#) .

While proposals have been made to perform the liturgy in modern Greek, to make the service accessible to the majority of Greeks, especially the youth (in the same way that the [Vatican](#) allowed the use of the vernacular) the Church continues to support the preservation of the *Koine* Greek, because it contributes to the "mystery" of the liturgy. It is generally believed that the use of modern Greek will not attract more people to the church, because the "beauty" and "splendour" of the traditional liturgy far outweighs the precise meaning of the words.

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Adventure



Explore the untamed countryside of Greece on horseback



Various breeds of Greek horses are available for beginners and experts alike

Equine galore

Discover untamed rural Greece on horse back through agro tourism

Ancient Greek mythology spoke of centaurs wild beasts that were half-man and half-horse and roamed the mountains of [Arcadia](#) and Thessaly. And [Homer](#) wrote of the notorious Trojan Horse, one of mankind's most famous instances of subversion. Contemporary Greek horses may be less famous and ferocious, yet they offer visitors a unique chance to explore the countryside while sitting on their saddle.

Thirty minutes from [Thessaloniki](#) on the Yeorgakopoulos estate in the small village of Lefkohori, Yiannis Kotelis and his wife Vasso breed a variety of Greek horses and play host to daring visitors who are eager to roam the untamed Greek countryside on horseback.

Four-and-a-half years ago the couple decided to take their "five horses and a cabin on the mountain" and invent some sort of "rural paradise" in the form of an agro tourism business initiative. With funds from the [Agriculture ministry's](#) agro tourism scheme, the couple now boast about 30 horses, a traditional guest house with five separate units (GDR15,000 or 44 Euro per unit nightly) plus appropriate facilities for children. What's more, the venue's dining area and kitchen offer traditional local dishes (around GDR3,000 or 3,80 Euro per head).

Luring nature lovers

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"We are not aiming to attract professionals," says Yiannis. "We call upon horse lovers and people who want to track down targets and experience a run through the countryside atop a horse." Apart from horse riding, archery, target shooting and mountain bike rides are also available to visitors. Horse riding, however, is the main attraction and Yiannis' four-year dressage training enables him to guide absolute beginners. An hour-and-a-half atop the horse of your choice will set you back about GDR5,000 or 14,67 Euro.

"Our philosophy," offers Yiannis, "is to bridge the gap between the urban and the rural people and to promote links between the two by providing opportunities for city folk to get to know the country. I believe that the people who visit us from the cities truly enjoy themselves and exhibit a real need to be in nature, to go for long walks, to actually see the animals."

The horse-breeding couple will soon be building a park area that will house various domesticated animals for children to become acquainted with. Indeed Yiannis and Vasso have already welcomed groups of school children to the farm, as part of their environmental studies programmes, while they've also been organising special days for children with mobility problems who are taught to ride horses.

Agro tourism's realm

The agriculture ministry's commitment to agro tourism aims to achieve "the balanced development of local societies, the elimination of inherent inequalities, the maintenance of the environment and the ecosystem and the creation of supplementary incomes [this] is the starting point for a different era for agricultural economy and restructuring of the Greek countryside." The bulk of agro tourism in Greece consists of small-scale, family-owned tourism initiatives, which aim at providing lifestyle alternatives for rural population as well as improving their income.

* The Lefkohori estate is on the road from Thessaloniki to Serres, some 6km off the Lefkohori intersection. For bookings, call Yiannis or Vasso on 0394-82405 or mobile 0944 776258. For more horse

riding opportunities in Greece check the sites of [Trekking Hellas](#), [Hidden Trails](#) and [Fantasy Tours](#).

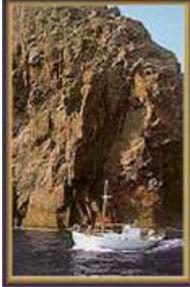
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The Islands



Some beaches on Kythnos isle are only accessible by boat



Combine a visit to one of the many chapels on the isle with a dip in the water



Soil and sea: The Kythnos password

Barren beauty

Kythnos isle's mythical waters, miraculous icons and solitary beach trees

It has been said that Kythnos is the least interesting of the islands that make up the Cyclades. Maybe it's the peculiar barrenness that makes it so. Whatever the reason, the isle situated between [Kea](#) and [Serifos](#) generally attracts fewer visitors than its more popular relatives making it an ideal escape away from crowds. And, if you ask the locals, there's lots of see and do.

For starters, the Mesolithic site on the island points to the oldest settlement uncovered in all of the Cyclades, namely that of the **Dryopes**. In ancient times, the isle claimed fame by offering two ships in the [Sea Battle of Salamis](#) and had its name honourably carved into the golden tripod at [Delphi](#).

The ancients had also discovered the magical quality of [Kythnos](#) waters. Indeed, over the years the island has remained famous for its radioactive thermal springs rich in sulphur, saline, and ferrous waters, considered to have the medicinal properties of the gods and known to help those suffering of dermatitis, rheumatism and arthritis.

Often referred to as Thermia (folk term for "springs") the island has two spas, **Kakavos** and **Agii Anargiri**, reaching temperatures of about 52 degrees Celsius and situated at a distance of about 50 metres from the other in the seaside settlement of **Loutra** (literally "baths"). A

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popular site since the antiquity, Loutra had its first pump-room facilities probably built by the Turks and the 19th century. The Thirties and Sixties also saw much activity. Recently, what with the [trend](#) back to traditional medicine heightened, interest has been regenerated.

Around the villages

The three out of four hotels on the island (**Kythnos Bay, Xenia Anagenissis and Meltemi**) are located in Loutra (there are lots of rooms to rent elsewhere around the isle), making it a good base, though capital **Hora** (or Messaria) and **Dryopidha** are the picturesque centres of the island and more characteristically Cycladic in their architecture.

Moreover, these are the villages in which the 1,800 permanent inhabitants live during the winter. The white-washed streets paved with concrete slabs often decorated with folkloric motifs such as boats, flowers and birds and the gardens filled with multi-coloured flowers make these villages very hospitable along with the locals cheerful greetings of *kalimera* (Good day) or *yia sas* (hello).

From Loutra, one should go in search of the famous Castle of Orio or **Kefalokastro**. Built in around 1650 this is where the islands capital was situated during the Middle Ages. The journey is best taken in a 4x4, as the roads are scruffy and too narrow for comfortable driving. Ask the locals first and be prepared to walk towards the final mountain top destination. The view of neighbouring isle Kea from there is sublime and the area is full of tombs, walls and man-made caves carved into the rocks.

Places of worship

Legend has it that 100 churches fit within the walls of this castle. Today only two remain. The other castle, **Rigokastro** (or Vryokastro), is hardly recognisable even if you ask a guide to point to its ruins. While many members of [parliament](#) have promised to help the restoration of the site, nothing has yet happened.

The churches on the island claim some interesting stories and are worth a visit. South-west on the island in the village of

Flambouria, where, according to legend, traces of the steps of the Virgin Mary can be tracked all the way from the beach to the Church of Panagia Flambouriani. The monastery of Panagia Nikous is known for the "secret school" held in the monastery's basement during the Ottoman era and the monastery of Panagia Kanala (located south-east near the village of **Kanala**) houses the miraculous icon of the Virgin dating back to the 15th century.

Meanwhile, post-Byzantine Agia Triada situated in Hora is the oldest church on the island. Frescoes and icons of the post-Byzantine period are well preserved, while ancient sculptures and inscriptions have been found in the area around the church.

Many churches are located beachside, so a sightseeing trip can accompany a dip in the water. The beaches around Kythnos enjoy a strange barrenness. Most are sandy and offer shade by way of almyriakia (trees that grow on sand). There are at least 15 top quality beaches to choose from with especially cool and clean waters, try **Kolona** or **Apokrissi** first. Many other beaches can be reached via small boat from **Merihos** (the island's port) or Loutra ask locals for information as formal timetables are not implemented.

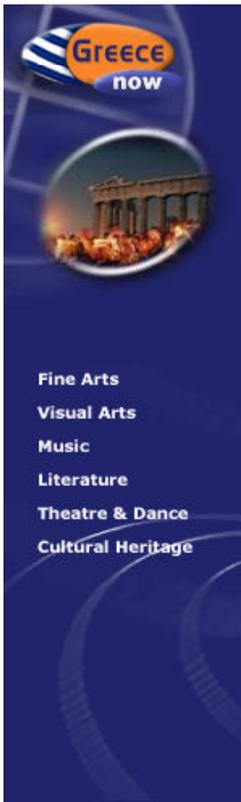
Ecological pursuits

Lastly, the Kythnos Aeolic Park boasts the first steps taken in producing alternative energy sources. The wind park was built in 1983, making it the first of its kind in all of Greece. It has since undergone numerous changes and improvements and now accounts for almost all energy use on the island.

Ferryboats make the journey between Pireas or Lavrio and Kythnos' port daily during summer.

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Theatre & Dance



US press has described Hassabis performances as 'breathtaking'



'Movement that is functional, conventional and pedestrian'



'Lights', a highly praised choreography by Maria Hassabi

Maria's moves

Cyprus-born dancer and choreographer Maria Hassabi charms the Big Apple

The question, "Why did you move to [New York](#)?" begs itself but the answer is quite obvious. Maria Hassabi replies to it anyway: "It was the place I needed to be because I wanted to dance."

"In the beginning," the Cypriot dancer/choreographer tells Athens daily [Ta Nea](#), "I just focused on pursuing my studies in the city. But I fell in love with New York, then jobs began to flow in and I'm still here."

Hassabi decided to head off to the US, as so many young artists do, to fulfill her dream of studying modern dance in Los Angeles. She graduated from the [Californian Institute of the Arts](#) in 1994 and then moved to New York where she undertook further training in the [Alexander technique](#) and in [Pilates](#). She also studied under [Merce Cunningham](#).

Soon thereafter collaborations with up-and-coming choreographers started flooding in. Actually Hassabi still dances regularly with the New York-based dance company [Chamecki/Lerner](#) so that she doesn't get to miss dancing.

From everyday movement to the catwalk

When it comes to her choreographic side, Hassabi explains that the area of her work is contemporary dance, "as translated via whatever happens in the present". Here is

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how the [New York Times](#) described the contemporary dance scene: "Manhattan's downtown choreographers have been using movement that is functional, conventional and pedestrian to illuminate movement that we think of as art." In this sense, Hassabis work fits in.

In one of her more recent works entitled *Lights* (performed in Athens earlier this year, at the [Biennial of Young European Artists](#) in Sarajevo last year as well as at the International Festival of Contemporary Dance in Portugal) her dancers are lit dramatically from below and mimic a model's catwalk poses "they jut out their hips, lift a shoulder...their profiles in striking poses, all the while quite expressionless" or move over and around their light.

Hassabi explains that, each dancer controls his/her own light and as such is able to control what is shown and what is hidden from the spectator. "It is a game that begins with the light and the stories unfold by the dancers."

Goals and acceptance

After seven years as a dancer and two-and-a-half years as a choreographer, "there is a lot of stress". Still Hassabi maintains that "a city like New York can surprise you with so much culture all around - with exhibitions, music, dance, art and the endless amount of news and information".

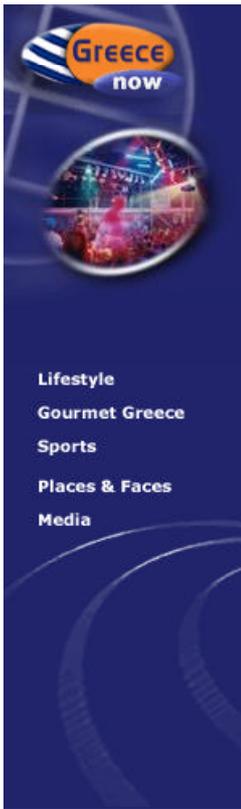
Surprises also come in the form of positive reception of her in the press. [The Village Voice](#), for example, called her work "breathtaking". [Showbusiness Weekly](#), said last year, "Maria Hassabi performs a continuously moving cycle of dance that entrances the audience. She locomotes on the floor, her hips barely leaving the ground. Although the movement requires incredible strength, her style barely implies effort as she glides over her shoulder to another corner of the stage."

Her work has also shone on the catwalk and **Calvin Klein's** invitation to choreograph his Spring 2002 collection must have come as an added pat on the back for Hassabi, who regularly accepts work in the fashion industry, though she remains faithful to dance.

And how does a Cypriot find expression in the Babel of New York? "My work began here and so it has a New York look and attitude," she says. "In any case, in New York we are all foreigners. You just need patience to be accepted. That is all."

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Gourmet Greece



Academic Antonia Trichopoulou: Awarded for her work on the Mediterranean diet



The 'divine gift': Olive oil, the principal fat of the traditional Mediterranean diet



The Mediterranean diet pyramid, developed by Oldways and the Harvard School of Public Health

Defining traditional food

As the Mediterranean diet attracts worldwide interest, serious legislative planning is sought

The Mediterranean diet has outlived a plethora of its faddy counterparts to play a key role in helping us to understand how to eat healthily. Now a Greek research team have been awarded by the [Community of Mediterranean Universities](#) for their efforts to define and safeguard the "traditional" mediterranean diet.

The abundant consumption of plant foods and olive oil, the moderate amounts of wine and scanty doses of red meat making up the Mediterranean diet pyramid, as detailed by [Oldways](#) in association with [Harvard School of Public Health](#), is acknowledged worldwide as a prime example of a healthy nutrition. Still, for team leader and academic Antonio Trichopoulou these rediscovered nutritional habits raise the question of how to promote and protect traditional Greek cuisine's authenticity - both in local [restaurants](#) and stores as well as abroad where the demand for high quality traditional products is on the rise.

While research groups continue to conduct studies on how certain foods protect the body from sickness (work is underway on antioxidants, on how olive oil hampers the development of breast cancer cells as well as on the increase of lipids in the blood after food intake), Trichopoulou is pushing for legislation that will protect the term "traditional product" from abuse,

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especially in view of the [2004 Athens Olympic Games](#). Though the Greek food industry has not shown much interest, Trichopoulou has been collaborating with the [agriculture ministry](#) to draft a plan safeguarding the terms "traditional product" and "traditional diet".

Actually, Trichopoulou is interested in developing a framework in which the maintenance, promotion and protection of the Mediterranean diet's principles will be implemented. She is keen on creating videotaped records of traditional recipes so as to capture the secrets inherited from generations of Greek housewives. Moreover, young chefs, she suggested in an interview with daily [Kathimerini](#), need to be trained to cook with Greek principles instead of persisting to create bad versions of French cuisine drowned in cream.

Promoting healthy delicacies

The world has already tuned into the value of foods such as spinach pies, chickpea patties, eggplant dishes, candied fruit, [pasteli](#) and other traditional Greek foods. Still, as Trichopoulou underscores, it is essential to know that real pasteli is made of honey and not glucose, while traditional yoghurt is free of the additives normally included so as to prevent water loss and make the product last a month in the refrigerator. For its part, the abundant use of olive oil also secures the consumption of ample quantities of vegetables, since Greek vegetable dishes cooked in olive oil have been traditionally consumed as a main course.

In keeping up with the times, Trichopoulou is also keen on promoting traditional alternatives for the fast food industry. There is no better quick snack than a well-made cheese or spinach pie, she says, but one made with specific guidelines not just in terms of technique but also in terms of raw products and quality control.

According to Trichopoulou, careful planning and research must also be conducted in the effort to semi-industrialise the traditional food market, thus guaranteeing that large quantities of good foods can be produced without sacrificing quality. To this end, a quality certificate programme has been

established for restaurants that cook in agreement with the rules of Mediterranean diet, i.e. with [olive oil](#), Greek feta cheese and [Greek wine](#).

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Antiquity



Nikopolis, for those who prefer walking through history



The Odeum was constructed in the 1st century AD and remained in use until the second half of the 3rd century



The 50km-long aqueduct carried water from the springs of River Louros to two cisterns in the Nymphaeum of Nikopolis

Victorious ruins

The ancient city of Nikopolis in southern Epirus is a unique destination for classical and Byzantine buffs

Nestled in a leafy nature reserve outside [Preveza](#), ancient [Nikopolis](#) spans an area of about 900 hectares, making it an ideal destination for those who prefer walking (or biking) through history. The on-site museum (tel: 06820-41336) may be small with little on offer by way of displays, but the magnetic quality of the area lies in the fact that in Nikopolis the classical and Byzantine ruins coexist so intimately with their natural environment, modern-day residents.

As the name suggests, Nikopolis is a victory city built by Roman emperor [Octavian Augustus](#) to celebrate his win over Antony and Cleopatra at **Aktium in 31 BC**. Its strategic trading position between East and West with harbours on the Amvrakikos Gulf and the Ionian Sea vouchsafed its rapid development into a flourishing commercial centre. Nikopolis began to decline during the 3rd and 5th centuries, flourished again in the 6th, to be finally abandoned during the 10th and 11th centuries.

When excavations first took place in 1913, a year after the liberation of Preveza from the Turks, ancient Nikopolis held the main archaeological attention through to the late-1920s when work began on the [Dodoni](#) site. Excavations continued through to 1938 with finds deposited in the Preveza mosque, but WWII not only interrupted work but resulted in the

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bombing of the mosque. Little survived apart from some architectural parts and sarcophagi.

Over the years excavations continued on and off and restoration work was conducted on such monuments as the Odeum, the north thermae, the Nymphaeum (where the [aqueduct](#) which carried water from the Louros River ended), the large theatre, the Roman wall and the villa of Manius Antoninus. The discovery of an ancient base depicting the gods Apollo, Demeter, Hermes, Aphrodite and Athena in May 2001 re-sparked interest.

Future optimism

The 2004 Olympic milestone is proving to be highly beneficial for archaeological sites. Last year, culture minister [Evangelos Venizelos](#) announced that one of the priorities through to 2004 would be the development of Greece's archaeological sites, which will mean that the major sites, and this includes Nikopolis, will experience changes. They may be slow in coming but the local wish of turning Nikopolis into an archaeological park could well materialise.

For starters, currently under construction is a new museum, about 2kms from where the present museum is situated. Hopefully when it is complete many of the finds that have left Preveza and gone to [Ioannina](#) will return to their native place. The most significant pieces on display at the on-site museum (built in the Sixties) include a [statue of a lion](#) dated to the 3rd century BC and a statue of a beardless man identified as [Aprippa](#), one of Augustus' generals, dated to the 1st century BC.

Excavation fever

Ongoing work in the area is divided into two camps: archaeologist Konstantinos Zachos heads the [12th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities](#), while Frangiska Kephallonitou heads the [8th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities](#). The last few years have seen the initiation of a rescue programme aiming to "measure and study the monuments of Nikopolis that are concealed beneath the dense vegetation and also to map, systematically record and study the portable finds that have been handed in."

Archaeologists have been able to "study the city at different periods and to trace all the features of Roman town planning in which science and art coexist and at the same time to note the changes of archaeological expression imposed by Christian beliefs at the transition to the Early Christian period." One example of this is a [marble cylindrical base](#), whose original 6th-century relief, depicting an Amazon battle, was later replaced by mosaics depicting saints heads.

From antiquity to date

One of the more interesting figures who ended up at Nikopolis was the Stoic philosopher [Epictetus](#). A slave in Rome, he was freed after Nero's death and later banished with all other intellectuals by emperor Domitian. He arrived at Nikopolis in the beginning of the 2nd century where he continued to teach.

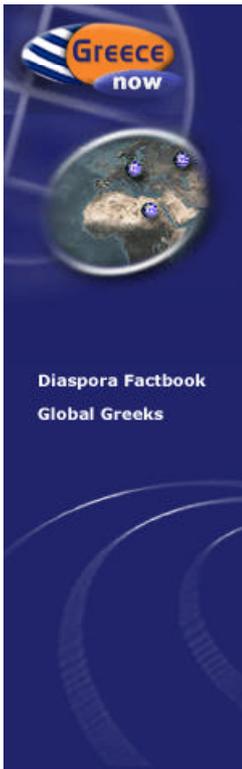
Though Epictetus' teachings - as recorded by his pupil Arrian - are at times quite 'Christian' (he believed that we should love our enemies) classical Nikopolis was essentially pagan; the city was dedicated to Aktian Apollo and the [Aktia festival](#) took place every four years. A [statue of Athena-Minerva](#) attests to the fact that a variety of pagan cults must have passed through Nikopolis as settlers from neighbouring towns migrated to the city.

Christianity began to spread in the 5th century. Legend has it that St Paul founded a church in Nikopolis. The [Basilica of Alkison](#), one of the sites most characteristic ruins, dates back to the mid-5th century suggesting that Christianity was established in Nikopolis by that time.

Turning to nowadays, the **Nikopolia Festival's** cultural events, held at the ancient theatre, may have been put on hold due to the archaeological work, but local initiatives are ongoing. The Aktia Nikopolis Foundation (tel: 06820-22233), headed by enthusiastic local businessman Nikos Karabelas, hopes to organise an international symposium on Nikopolis in the near future. Meanwhile, Karabelas is archiving the areas historical, folkloric, environmental and national heritage.

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Spotlight



The Old Havana district where the Greek Orthodox church of St Nikolaos is being erected

Orthodox Cuba

A new church is being built in Cuba for the first time in 43 years - and it's not Roman Catholic



Havana's main Roman Catholic Cathedral



Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I will be present at the official opening of Havana's St Nikolaos church this fall

The temple of Saints Constantine and Helen in Havana, Cuba, hasn't heard a sermon in years. Instead, the Greek Orthodox Church has been the home of a children's theatre company. When Archbishop Athenagoras was elected to head the newly established [Holy Metropolitanate of Panama and Central America](#) in 1996, the Greek Orthodox liturgies were taking place at borrowed premises.

[Pope John Paul II's](#) visit to the Caribbean island in 1998 - the year when Christmas was officially reinstated in Cuba - proved a major opportunity to discuss religious matters. It was then that Archbishop Athenagoras together with the Greek Ambassador to Cuba, Yorgos Kostoulas, and the [American Archdiocese](#) began to put pressure at diplomatic and political levels for the return of Sts Constantine and Helen.

Although to date the church remains a theatre, something much more remarkable has happened. The [Castro](#) government has instead agreed on the construction of a new Greek Orthodox church, the first religious structure to be built in all of Cuba in 43 years. On Sunday 20 January, in the presence of Cuban government representatives and foreign diplomats, the Archbishop and Kostoulas placed the

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foundation stone of what is to be Saint Nikolaos (or Nicholas), the new Greek Orthodox church.

"In recent years many churches were returned to their respective congregations," explained Archbishop Athenagoras speaking to **GreeceNow** from Panama. "But this is the first time that the government has allowed the construction of a new church." And indeed, with the Cuban government's own initiative and in the most exquisite of locations - the port side in Old (or Colonial) Havana, a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) since 1982.

When the official opening takes place in about 10 months time both [Ecumenical Patriarchate Bartholomew](#) and Fidel Castro will be present in the [St Francesco de Assisi square](#), the picturesque part of the city that St Nikolaos will call home.

As to the better part of the credit for the church's construction this must be given to the Greek Ambassador. "He is such a fine diplomat with a lot of love for the Church," says the Archbishop. "From the moment he arrived in Cuba he made it his main priority on a diplomatic and political level to gain the return of the church of Sts Constantine and Helen. He has done what no one else has done in 43 years."

Respect and creeds

The generous gesture towards the Greek Orthodox church may seem a little incongruous, since, if anything, Cuba would normally be associated with the [Roman Catholic](#) church; the clear majority of Cubans are officially Catholics and only few thousand residents belong to the greater Orthodox church; as for Greek Orthodox, well, there's only about 50 Greeks in all of Cuba!

Yet the Archbishop explains that, "from my understanding, this has less to do with numbers than with the respect towards the Greek Orthodox Church. Firstly, we are not involved in the politics of the West and secondly, Cubans are very interested in our Church, we've had a number of conversions too. There is a real sense of respect at the local level. In the future we hope that more churches will be built in

other locations around Cuba, but this is really a trend affecting all of Central America."

The [US State Department's 2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom](#) however, found that "while some observers have noted a greater acceptance of religion in Cuba in recent years, the Government continued to engage in active efforts to monitor and control religious institutions, including the surveillance, infiltration, and harassment of clergy and church members".

Still for Father Timotheos - a Cuban who converted to the Greek Orthodox Church and works at the Archdiocese headquarters in [Mexico](#) - this is a significant event not just for the Greek Orthodox Church but for all churches in Cuba. "An event like this is an example of the religious freedom existing in Cuba. Many may not believe that this can be the case in a Communist country, but it truly is. And the years since the arrival of Archbishop Athenagoras have been very positive for the Greek Orthodox Church."

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The Islands



The waterfall at Fonias river, where one can swim under the shade of the sycamore trees



Water is Samothraki's divine gift with hundreds of streams and brooks flowing down Mount Saos



The sanctuary of the Great Gods

Verdant mystique

Samothraki, the Greek island where you can bathe under the shade of the sycamore trees

In recent years, the idea of [Samothraki](#) as the Greek island destination with a difference has been getting around by word of mouth. Those who hail the merits of this north Aegean island speak whimsically of its singular mountain terrain, its abundance of crystal clear water, its archaeological finds along with an intangible mysticism that hovers in the air.

Still to be pushed by travel agencies and yet to be transformed by high tourism, Samothraki (southwest of the mainland port of [Alexandroupolis](#)) is a treasure chest of untrodden paths. Be, however, prepared for minimal resources and don't expect five-star comforts. Moreover, if you don't have someone to show you around, Samothraki could prove difficult terrain. Not just geographically, but also because simply it hasn't become attuned to the visitor.

Locals, for one thing, are not the tourist-wise sort plaguing the more popular islands; they come across as easy-going but fairly tacit individuals when it comes to strangers. The lack of standard comfort may discourage some visitors, still those sticking to the goal of getting to really know Samothraki will be amply rewarded - with sights and tales found nowhere else in the [Aegean Sea](#).

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When you arrive at [Kamariotissa](#) port (by ferry or hydrofoil from Alexandroupolis or [Kavala](#) , by long boat-trip from Pireaus), don't be disappointed. Its just another non-picturesque port. So, don't stay there, move right on. Six kilometres northwest from Kamariotissa is Palaiopoli (fittingly named "old town") where you will encounter the impressive ancient [Sanctuary of the Great Gods](#) and the island's [archaeological museum](#).

Timeless mystique...

The Sanctuary is indeed a good place to start. After all, when one thinks of Samothraki, what promptly comes to mind is Nike or the "Winged Victory" marble statue. This goddess of victory, considered the finest example of [Hellenistic](#) Greek sculpture, once stood on this very site (she is now on exhibit, with head and arms missing, at Paris' [Louvre Museum](#)) at an imposing 8 ft high, her wings spread wide and her soft garments blowing in the wind.

Samothraki's sanctuary was a place of worship where the mysteries in honour of the [Cabeiri](#) (often associated with the Great Gods) were performed for over 1,000 years during Ancient Greek and Roman times. Equal in importance to the [Eleusinian mysteries](#) the Cabeiri mysteries differed in that both citizens and slaves could participate in them, worshipping the power of fertility and seeking protection for seafarers.

...and natural wonders

Modern-day evidence of the fertility once secured by the Cabeiri is everywhere. For what dominates the Samothrakian landscape is a plethora of olive, oak, chestnut, maple, bush cedar and sycamore trees as well as various bushes including mastic trees, nettles, myrtles, wild pear trees and rose bushes.

Water is a divine gift here with hundreds of small streams and brooks flowing abundantly from a multitude of sources on Mount Saos. Its peak, Feggari (literally moon), reaches an impressive 1,611 metres thus gaining the title of the highest in the whole of the Aegean. It is here,

legend has it, that [Poseidon](#) chose to watch the [Trojan War](#) from, comfortably sitting at the mountaintop.

The path leading to Feggari, following a three-hour trek, begins just outside [Therma](#), a small town whose thermal springs and baths were known since Byzantine times for their therapeutic effects.

Yet what most visitors rush to savour, once on Samothraki, are the majestic Saos Mountain's umpteen waterfalls and ravines, dotted with crystal-clear freshwater pools where one can (or plain should) bathe. The most popular place to do so is at [Fonias River](#), which boasts one of the biggest waterfalls and about 15 water-filled natural pools (locals call these *vathres*) in which one can swim under the shade of the sycamore trees.

The Fonias area is a popular destination for free campers of all ages, while other waterfalls and vathres are located at Gria Vathra, Vatos (access to this one only by caique), Ksiropotamos, Aggistros, Yiali and of the imposing Kremastos (literally hanging).

Back to the beach

For those who prefer lazy sandy beaches, Pahia Ammos (literally fat sand) is located at the southernmost part of the island. Getting there, however, can prove adventurous, as you'll have to look out for a dirt road that begins at Lakoma. For its part, the beach at Kipi, offering black volcanic pebble and deep waters, is indeed one of the more private beaches in Greece.

Apart from being refuge for one of Greece's rarest mammals - the [Monachus monachus](#) monk seal, which lives in the sea caves on the south-eastern side of Mount Saos - Samothraki is also home to over 50,000 wild goats (or *agriokatsika*) that graze freely on the island and according to locals are very tasty. Meat eaters should not miss out on ordering this trademark meal (the best place to eat wild goat is at the village of Profitis Ilias, located two kilometres north of Lakoma).

Before heading back to the port for your departure, spend some time in [Hora](#), the

isle's amphitheatrically built capital. It is located 6 kilometres inland from Kamariotissa and hosts about one third of the entire island population. As a special treat, do try some traditional local bread, patiently kneaded and allowed to rise seven times.

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