

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



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People are drawn to Greece for many different reasons. Cast your eye down the list of contributors to this issue, and you will find authors and publishers, university classicists and researchers, students and educators, journalists and photographers, translators and modern historians, photographers and filmmakers. In the course of editing this edition of *ARGO*, I was struck by how far a profession may influence one's way of seeing a place.

In his article on Greek cinema, for instance, filmmaker Nikos Nikolopoulos (page 33) reveals how attuned his eye is to changes in natural light and season. It is not simply a case of choosing a beautiful location, he shows, for within a week a forest can turn from autumnal red to wintry black. Speed plays an important role in the artistic process, and it is in the artist's skill to make it a benefit rather than a constraint.

For our cover story (page 24), translator and musician Joshua Barley travels to Epirus in search of a song that is particular to the region. Folk song in Greece, he explains, tends to have only one melody, but in Epirus it is polyphonic ('many-voiced'), like woven thread, and all the more haunting for it. It is telling that Barley hears music in the landscape long before he reaches his destination. The drone of the sheep and jangle of their bells are 'the first intimations of the

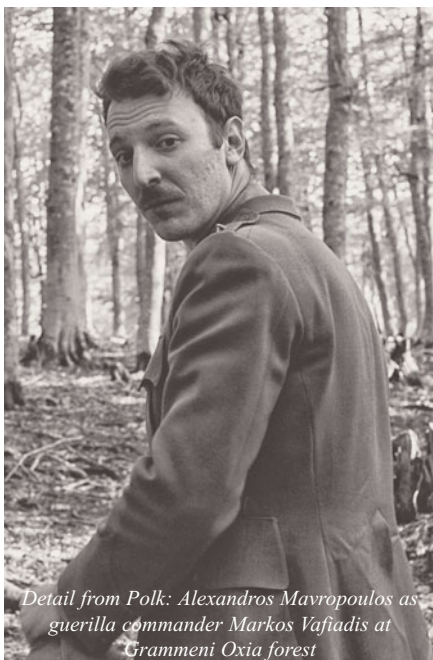
song'. The rivers he passes on his quest roar 'just as the syllables of their names roll around the enamel of the teeth'. He inspires us to sit back and listen, just as Nikolopoulos encourages us to bring a critical eye to our surroundings.

In a less meditative strain, Carol Atack (page 6) considers the recent EU referendum in the UK and the effects it has had on our understanding of democracy. In light of a number of recent publications, she poses a question that has surely been on many classicists' and journalists' lips since spring: can the direct democracies of Classical Greece offer us any guidance or solutions today?

Finally, it is with great pleasure that we publish Giles Milton's thrilling account (page 30) of Operation Harling, the first major Anglo-Greek sabotage mission of the Second World War, which sought to cut off Erwin Rommel's army in North Africa. Inspired by research for his latest book on the 'ungentlemanly warfare' of the SOE, Milton's article reminds us of just how important the history of Anglo-Hellenic relations is. That is a history that *ARGO* is dedicated to preserving.

I do hope you enjoy the issue.

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Detail from Polk: Alexandros Mavropoulos as guerilla commander Markos Vafiadis at Grammeni Oxia forest

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