

Callaghan Resurrects Indian Languages

As an enthusiastic graduate student at Berkeley in the early 1950s, Catherine Callaghan became interested in the extinct Costanoan languages and the nearly extinct languages of the Miwok Indians of central California. Now a professor of linguistics, Callaghan has been through many seasons of field work with the few remaining Indians to recover the Miwok languages.

It is generally believed that the original language, Proto Miwok-Costanoan, was spoken about 4,000 years ago somewhere inland from San Francisco Bay. About 2,500 years ago, for reasons unknown, the language evolved into two separate languages--Proto Miwok and Proto Costanoan. Since that time Proto Miwok divided into seven languages, Proto Costanoan into eight. Callaghan notes that extensive transcriptions of three Costanoan and six Miwok languages now exist.

According to Callaghan, whites and Spaniards in the area probably had the most dramatic effects on the evolution of these languages after they conquered and suppressed the Indians for many generations. Because these unfortunate experiences often led Indians to reject their heritage, gathering data was not always easy for Callaghan.

Working with the remaining speakers of the languages, Callaghan has been able to determine the grammar of four of the Miwok languages, which puts into reach her goal of reconstructing the original Proto Miwok language. She has written numerous articles and books on the Miwok languages, the most significant of which are *Northern Sierra Miwok Dictionary* and *Plains Miwok Dictionary*. The National

Science Foundation has been a faithful supporter of her research for many years.

Callaghan also has recaptured many of the Indians' artistic customs and some of their fascinating folklore. Her research has added significant information to local historical records, such as the possible origin and prehistoric migration patterns of the Indians and how language is related to culture. Callaghan believes the latter is "especially significant today, when we are trying to undertake changes to make our society less racist and sexist."



Callaghan earned a B.A. in Mathematics and a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of California at Berkeley.

To achieve her second goal, the reconstruction of the Proto Costanoan language, Callaghan is using the handwritten notes of linguist J.P. Harrington (deceased), which provide grammatical and genealogical documentation of three of the Costanoan languages.

Callaghan is encouraged that there has been a renewed interest among Indians and whites in California to revive and preserve the languages and the cultures. The Lake Miwok Indians have invited her to develop

teaching materials for their children. This is reward, in some measure, for a lifetime dedicated to such an important task.

The Scandal of the Hellenic

by Vassilis Lambropoulos

In almost all current academic controversies, one common issue is always raised and negotiated with great intensity: the place of the Greek heritage in western tradition. Whatever the subject may be (curriculum or gender, methodology or values), it seems that everyone considers this heritage a blessing or a burden: a blessing, to the extent that we trace most of our arts and sciences to classical antiquity; and a burden, because this presumed lineage has given the West a false and discriminatory sense of superiority over the rest of the world.

The necessity, the size, and the consequences of this huge debt are hotly debated. Some proclaim that we need a coordinated effort to recover the ancient values. Others denounce what they perceive as dangerous parallels between Greek and western imperialism. A third group argues that the Greeks should not even be credited with discoveries that they stole from their Near Eastern neighbors. Thus we hear some calls for a new classicism, and others for a systematic "de-hellenization." In either case, the claims made about our relation to Greece are so grand that the identity and future of our culture appear to be at stake.

This is precisely what I call the "scandal" of the Hellenic: the irresistible idea overwhelming the West that any decision about its place and responsibility in the world requires yet another re-evaluation of

its Hellenic past. I call it a scandal because I find this idea puzzling. Why should we, twenty-five centuries later, afford the Greeks such a uniquely privileged position? Why the Hellenic and not any other ancient civilization--the Persian, say, Egyptian, Chinese, or Mayan? They too produced glorious empires of commerce, religion, and art. When and why did we choose to trace our beginnings to the small world of those dispersed autonomous cities that never united in a single state?

We usually concede that there isn't much we can do that they haven't done already. For example, our concepts (and not just language) are ancient: when we inquire about truth, politics, beauty, or nature we apparently use Greek principles of philosophy, democracy, aesthetics, and epistemology. Our stories about heroism, fate, love, or creativity draw from mythology: when we look for figures that symbolize the human condition, we repeat the stories of Antigone, Prometheus, Helen, or Odysseus. Our fascination with Greece becomes even more astonishing when we realize that, most of the time, what we have in mind is only the Athenian achievement of less than one hundred years.

This scandal of the western obsession with the Hellenic has become my general area of research: not Greek antiquity itself but the ways in which *we* represent and appropriate it for *our own* purposes. In my current book-length manuscript, I propose that the Hellenic as a distinct object of study and emulation (or aversion) is a relatively recent invention. I show that at the beginning of the modern era in the sixteenth century, the Protestant middle class which emerged powerful out of the collapse of feudalism, constructed ancient Greece as a historical model (of

governance, wisdom, and culture) to counter the Roman ideal of the preceding regime. The Greek model was an original and strategic means of legitimation for the socio-political order that the new class wanted to establish--a grandiose way of discrediting the authority of the Latin (medieval and Renaissance) tradition by telling an entirely different story about man, society, and justice.



Associate Professor Lambropoulos earned a B.A. from the University of Athens and a Ph.D. from the University of Salonica in Modern Greek Literature.

I investigate the emergence of the Hellenic and its role in the modern era by discussing its importance for the theology of Søren Kirkegaard, the cultural theory of Matthew Arnold, the philosophy of Theodor Adorno, the literary criticism of Erich Auerbach, and the aesthetics of Jacques Derrida. I am interested in the intellectual genealogy of modernity not just the history of an idea. What I hope to compose is the history of a central truth--the Hellenic inheritance of the West--which, far from being self-evident, may now be examined as a constitutive part of the dominant ideology.

Corbett Wins Double Honor

by John Gabel

The English Department, like a number of other departments in the University, has long had a table in the Faculty Club where department members and friends have gathered to enjoy lunch and conversation. In recent years the number of diners showing up in the southwest corner of the Faculty Club basement has grown sufficiently large that smaller tables have had to be added to the big one to handle the crowd. About a year ago the decision was made to endow the Faculty Club with a really sizable replacement table, which was duly designed, ordered, and for a while forgotten.

When finally the new table arrived and Thomas Ruff and Company insisted upon payment, a unanimous vote was taken at lunch to have Professor Edward P. J. Corbett pay for it (he not being there that day to vote). As his colleagues said, "Ed, a man of your scholarly distinction deserves a chair at this university; but lacking that, you can have a table, if you'll put up the money for it." Not surprisingly, the good-hearted Ed Corbett agreed to do so; and when the table was installed, a brass plaque was attached to the table, memorializing his generosity.

Still, Professor Corbett's colleagues felt that he deserved something more than a table that he had paid for himself. So at his recent retirement dinner (*cum roast*), they presented him with a captain's chair bearing both the seal of the University and a brass plaque with his name in handsome Gothic letters. It is worth noting that Edward P. J. Corbett is probably the only professor in Ohio State history to have had not only a named university chair but a named university table created in his honor!