

Elliot Mason: Destination Athens

My PhD research is focussed on a medieval *metaphrasis*, that is translation or re-writing of an early Christian Greek treatise into an antiquated classicising style by one Matthew Blastares, a monk based in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki. The Greek language has always been one that has had a myriad of with significant variations between its mutually comprehensible dialects, and on top of this there has always been a radically different stylistic register for the formal language. *Metaphraseis* are the practice of taking a text composed in one dialect or language register and re-written into another, and were an important cultural feature of Byzantine literature.

Despite the manuscript containing the text central to my research was written and is stored in the great medieval city of Thessaloniki, I applied and gratefully received a *Santander Travel Award* from Royal Holloway to spend some months in Athens. I have been learning the modern Greek language since I started my undergraduate and after I completed my Master's I spent a year at the University of Ioannina in Greece, however when I returned to RHUL to begin my PhD I have been constantly searching for opportunities to push for perfection in my knowledge of the modern language, but this has been difficult away from Greece. Numerous Greek universities provide programmes in the Modern Greek language at either very low prices or else funded entirely by the Greek state and hence I submitted my application to help fund accommodation in Greece while undertaking such a programme at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Of course, however helpful these lessons are, they are only part of the learning experience and the ability to be resident in Athens has been invaluable, which would have been impossible with the *Travel Award* from RHUL.

For my research knowledge of the modern Greek language is invaluable, firstly as a great deal of previous research has been conducted in that languages but also because a vast amount of foreign literature has been translated into that language which has not been translated in to English. Unfortunately, the majority of this research is still not available electronically and is not generally stocked in British libraries. In order to access this one really does have to be resident in Greece and the modern capital is home to a plethora of libraries such as the National Library of Greece and of the University of Athens, as well as those of the numerous foreign archaeological schools resident in that city, most notably for me the American and the British schools.

The *travel award* which I was granted has stretched surprisingly far, and helped open many doors for me along the way. My research in Greece is, I am happy to say, ongoing, and a visit to Thessaloniki is on the horizon where I will have the opportunity to study the manuscript containing the text central to my study. I am tremendously grateful for the money I received as part of the travel award and would recommend

all to seriously consider utilising this opportunity if they have a research project in mind.

