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National
Herald

ΕΘΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΗΡΥΞ

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Watching the Dance, Olympos, Karpathos, 1961-63

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I am the curator of the exhibit, "Greeks of Berrien County, Michigan," a collaborative effort between a community institution, The History Center at Courthouse Square, and a local church, the Annunciation and St. Paraskevi Greek Orthodox Church. Especially touching to me have been the tears that have welled up in exhibit viewer's eyes as they witness, through photos or words, the experiences the immigrants faced when they chose to journey to a far-away land, leaving family behind.

In this issue we review four non-fiction books dealing with the immigrant experience. They include "Growing Up Greek in St. Louis" by Aphrodite Matsakis; "My Detroit: Growing up Greek and American in the Motor City" by Dan Georgakas; "Demetrios is Now Jimmy: Greek Immigrants in the Southern United States, 1895-1965" by Larry Odzak; and "Remembering Newark's Greeks: An American Odyssey" by Angelique Lambros. Through these books, you can vicariously experience the immigrant experience. You may find tears welling up in your eyes.

Several themes emerged from these books. Tears were shed on both sides of the ocean when families were separated. The immigrants faced virulent prejudice when they came here at the beginning of the 20th century.

They worked at backbreaking menial jobs to put bread on the table and help their families back in Greece. (We didn't become one of the best-educated and wealthiest immigrant groups overnight.) The immigrants struggled to transmit their Greek heritage to the younger generation, a generation that sometimes fought against the old-world ways and rebelled against going to Greek school. Most of the immigrants (not all) realized the dream of finding a better way of life for their families in America and became respected members of the community.

I invite you to read these books as well as the other books we have reviewed for this issue of "Books." They include candid books about Greece in modern times: "Facing Athens: Encounters with the Modern City" by George Sarrinikolaou, as well the "The Passport and Other Selected Short Stories." by Antonis Samarakis, translated by Andrew Horton. There are also books about Greece in Roman and Byzantine times: "Sailing from: Byzantium, How a Lost Empire Saved the World" by Colin Wells; "Cyriac of Ancona, Later Travels" translated by Edward W. Bodnar with Clive Foss; and "Greek Athletics in the Roman World" by Zahara Newby. For those who want lighter fare, try the spicy novels penned by Tori Carrington (aka Tony & Lori Karayianni) about private eye, Sofie Metropolis, who lives and works in Astoria, New York.

The literary supplement is pleased to receive copies for review from independent presses and individuals. All titles received will be given serious consideration. Submit publications, written in English about Greece or Greek Americans, to The National Herald, 37-10 30th Street, Long Island City, New York 11101.

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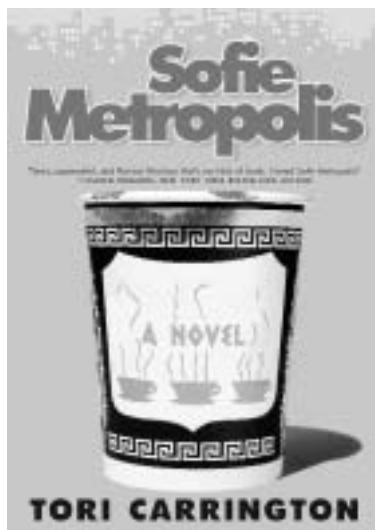
Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. It is wholesome and bracing for the mind to have its faculties kept on the stretch.

Sir Richard Steele 1672-1729, British Dramatist, Essayist, Editor

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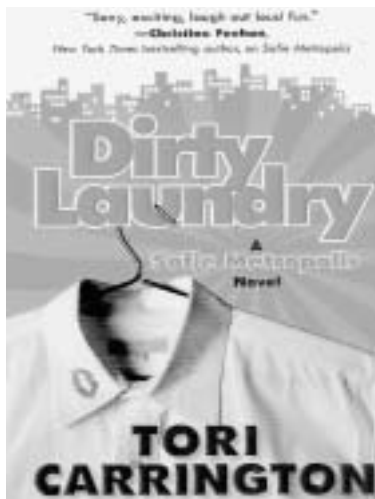
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“Sofie Metropolis”

By Tori Carrington

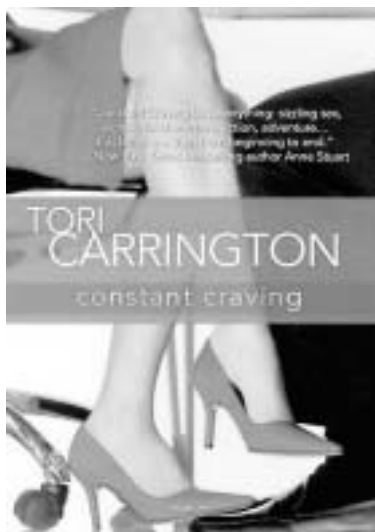
Tom Doherty Associates,
284 pages, \$21.95 hardcover,
\$6.99 paperback



“Dirty Laundry: Starring Sofie Metropolis”

By Tori Carrington

Tom Doherty Associates,
318 pages, \$23.95



“Constant Craving”

By Tori Carrington

Harlequin Temptation Line, 218
pages, \$4.99 paperback

Sofie Metropolis: The Greek American Nancy Drew

By Aphrodite Matsakis

Special to The National Herald

It was love at first sight. The minute Tony Karayianni laid on eyes on Lori (at a Greek restaurant of course), he knew she was the love of his life. Decades later, their romance is alive and well. Even more amazing, this dynamic husband-and-wife duo, who use the pen-name Tori Carrington, are the co-authors of over 35 romance and mystery novels which Harlequin Worldwide has published in over 24 different languages (including Greek) in over 100 countries. Their books have made bestseller lists and won multiple national awards. To date, there are over three million copies of their books in print. Lori tends to be the chief writer and Tony, the master plotter.

Sofie Metropolis, often called the Greek American Nancy Drew, is the heroine of both “Sofie Metropolis” and “Dirty Laundry.” These fast paced mysteries, which take place in the close-knit Greek American community of Astoria, NY, are laced with plenty of humor and plenty of sensuality, “souvlakia,” and “koulourakia” as well. (There are recipes for some of Sofie’s favorite Greek dishes at the back of both books.) Although far from being sociological tracts, the Sofie series portrays some of the clashes between old world and new world standards, especially pertaining to women. On the one hand stand Sofie’s mother and grandmother, who rarely leave the home. (Sofie’s Yiayia pretends she doesn’t understand English. Sofie’s mother hasn’t changed her hairdo in 30 years!) On the other hand stands Efi, Sofie’s younger sister, who tattoos and pierces her body with little regard to her mother’s protests. Instead of smiling politely at the Greek American prospective bridegroom whom her mother has invited to meet her, Efi walks out him to keep her date with another man.

In the middle stands Sofie, Private Investigator, with one foot in the Greek world and one foot, out. Like the heroine in “My Big Fat Greek Wedding,” Sofie finds a clever way to escape her fate as a waitress in a family restaurant. “I used to be Sofie Metropolis, waitress and good Greek daughter – not necessarily in that order. Now I’m Sofie Metropolis, PI.” Yet, even in the midst of her life-threatening detective work, she can feel compelled to return her mother’s incessant phone calls. “I hated that my mother still had the ability to make me feel guilty,” Sofie says.

In search of clues, Sofie enters



TONY KARAYIANNI

Lori and Tony Karayianni (aka Tori Carrington), are authors of over 34 romance and mystery novels published in over 24 different languages, including Greek, in over 100 countries. To date, there are over three million copies of their books in print.

dangerous buildings and other life-threatening situations. She’s a quick-thinking “leventissa” who can shoot a gun, and in “Dirty Laundry” she proves her mettle by standing up to mobsters. Yet when her mother’s friends ask her for favors she considers beneath her professional status, like finding their lost pets (for free of course), the good Greek girl in Sofie can’t say “no.”

While her family worries that their “gerontokori” (old maid) may never marry, Sofie is more worried about her lack of a love life than her lack of a husband. “I could swear I woke up this morning to the sound of my body humming. Humming. You know, like some kind of internal alarm clock had gone off denoting how many weeks had passed since I’d last had sex. It hadn’t helped when I’d figured out I’d been lying on my vibrating cell phone and that the caller was the wrong number. I figured that at this point I was lucky not to have lost my mind, although even that might be up for debate. ... I can see it now, Sofie Metropolis PI and born-again virgin.”

Her lustful desires for a handsome Australian bounty hunter is a constant theme, and her wry observations about being a single woman, especially a Greek American single woman, are continual sources of humor. “The advantage of living alone is that you don’t have anyone around you to bother you. The problem with being alone is, well, that you don’t have anyone around to bother you,” Sofie observes.

In “Sofie Petropolis,” Sofie takes on the case of a cheating spouse that turns into a case of attempted murder. Sofie is the intended victim. In “Dirty Laundry,” she investigates the case of a missing Greek American dry cleaner suspected of laundering money for the mob. In the process of trying to solve this mystery, she encounters mobsters who want to throw her into a river wearing cement shoes. “The minute a figure emerged, I squeezed off a round ... and found myself falling backward, ass-first ... my pistol bouncing away from me. I’d forgotten about the kick of the powerful firearm ... Of course, it didn’t help that my knees were

knocking together so loudly they nearly drowned out the screams of a man who’d obviously been hit.” In both Sofie novels alongside the main action are several intriguing and entertaining subplots, like those involving an alleged vampire and a lost ferret.

In “Dirty Laundry,” Sofie also looks into the possibility that her family has “dirty laundry” of its own. (Is her father cheating on her mother?) In both suspense filled novels, readers can find themselves making the sign of the cross in hopes that Sofie will stay alive, while at the same time chuckling at her hilarious comments about her insecurities and ambivalent feelings about almost every part of herself – her appearance, her personality, her professional skills, and, of course, her “crazy” but lovable Greek American family and friends.

The Carrington’s first Greek American heroine, Eva Mavros Burgess, appeared in their first published title, “Constant Craving,” which is now being reissued by Harlequin. It’s full of the constant craving (sexual at first and later on, emotional as well) between the green-eyed drop-dead gorgeous Eva and an “American” detective, Adam Grayson that ultimately culminates in sizzling sex. The plot of “Constant Craving” revolves around white-collar criminals willing to kill to protect their loot. Internal action is also involved as Eva, who broke the “good Greek girl” rules of her family and left her small town in Mississippi for an accounting career in the big city, comes back to her hometown in hopes of mending the rift between herself and her crusty old-fashioned Greek father. She also hopes to find the warm family life she had abandoned. At one point during her big city career, she asks herself what her life had become:

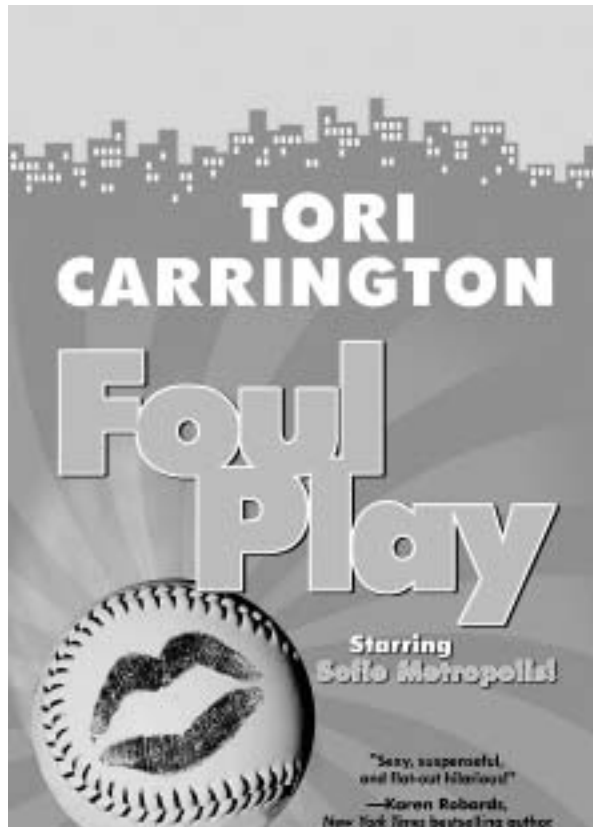
“An emotionless void in which she functioned in no more an important manner than a machine? ... Scared she might find out she’d made a mistake so many years ago when she left Belle Rivage and the overbearing presence of her father? Trading it instead for a life without emotion, without love?”

Tony Karayianni was born in a small hillside village in Ancient Olympia and moved to Athens with his family when he was three. In his early teens and early twenties, he was a drummer in a number of pop Greek bands. In 1976 he immigrated to the U.S. In 1982 he met Lori. She describes herself as an “American mutt” from Toledo who

now is familiar with and in love with everything Greek, both ancient and modern. Tony feels that in many ways Lori is "more Greek" than he is. The couple visits Greece as often as they can and hope to retire there. When they get too homesick for Greece, they take a trip to Astoria, Queens, New York where they can feel as if they are in Greece. "Except, of course, when the 31st train squeals to a stop nearby."

Before becoming writers, Lori was a computer programmer, and Tony was successful as an industrial painter and in other positions. However at one point they found their work had become unfulfilling. In a single personal truth-seeking session, this courageous couple changed the course of their lives. They decided to abandon the security of their current jobs and to devote themselves to writing. "Tony was a few years older than me then (although he is officially three years younger now)," says Lori.

Like many new writers, they took on jobs which paid enough to meet their bills but which allowed



The third Sofie novel, "Foul Play," is scheduled to be released in May 07.

them the time to write. They published their first book 13 long years later. Yet, says Lori, "We would not change one moment of our struggle for fear of upsetting the chain events that have led us to the complete delight and passion and satisfaction that saturates our lives now."

The couple began by writing ro-

mance novels because, as they state, "The first thing any writing instructor worth her salt will tell you to do is to write what you know. And what do we know better than our own ongoing romance?" From the very beginning, however, largely due to Tony's influence, says Lori, mystery and suspense always found a way into their book. "So it was a given that when our stories for Harlequin began getting longer and more complicated that we would go the mystery route. Sofie is a natural evolution of sorts. ... Our desire (was) to view Greek American life from our son's viewpoint. Sofie, simply put, is the daughter we never had. So we married the two elements (our interest in both writing mystery and in Greek American culture) and Sofie was the

result."

The third Sofie novel, "Foul Play," is scheduled to be released in May 07; the fourth remains unnamed. The authors promise it will be a little lighter and full of well-researched spooky and quirky Greek superstitions. They have also contracts for four additional books and, says Lori, there are "another

27 unpublished manuscripts languishing in the attic with the dust mites."

For further information on the Carrington books (ordering information, reviews and discounts), their travel schedule and how their writing contributes to admirable charitable endeavors, visit www.toricarrington.net or www.sofiometro.com. Like their writing, Lori and Tony's web pages are full of life. They include personal messages from the two authors as well as their favorite recipes. Even if your "yiyia" makes the best Greek food in town, you may want to check out Lori and Tony's fare. They make their own bread and their youngest son, Tim, travels one and half hours each way to join them for homemade Sunday dinner. "And he's always sent home with enough food to last him until his next visit," says Tony. How Greek is that?

The Sofie books are funny, sexy, witty and full of action. However, they provide more than superficial entertainment. Like most good books, they make one laugh, cry, and expand one's knowledge of the world and of one's self.

Aphrodite Matsakis, Ph.D. is a counseling psychologist and the author of 13 books on a variety of psychological topics, as well as of "Growing Up Greek in St. Louis" (Arcadia Publishing, 1998). Visit www.matsakis.com for further information.



Mission Statement

Goneis magazine is the only global-Greek family publication with carefully selected editorial content helping moms and dads celebrate the joys of parenthood and the Greek family of the 21st century. Our reading community has special cultural characteristics, and Goneis makes every effort to shed light on our Hellenic traditions and history.

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By George
by Harris "Bud" George

"...I asked them whether this was the road to Karava. The oldest of the three smiled even more broadly and said, 'Monsieur, this is not Paris. There is only one road to Karava.'"

Harris "Bud" George's collection of stories begins with his orphaned father coming to America at the age of 16 and becoming the first Greek businessman in Towson in 1912. His mother's imperatives about growing up in the Baltimore Greek community, his brother's establishment of what is today the largest Greek Orthodox parish library in the western hemisphere, and his sisters' first attempt at Greek cooking and monomania about teaching English vocabulary are engagingly chronicled, as are the author's fascination with Kythera - the island of his parents' birth- and its lore. George shows how Greek as a second language is handy, how the Greek character manifests itself in airline passengers, in Greek newspaper reporters, and in the Greeks of Capetown, Manila and Gdansk. Stories of his years in the US Navy offer amusing adventures in Capetown, Ceylon, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Japan, Portugal, and Greece. Also included are the author's most challenging experiences practicing law for 47 years - from foreclosing a mortgage on a herd of cattle to representing the accused in Maryland's First Savings and Loan scandal.

Towson, Maryland native Harris "Bud" George finished his Duke University undergraduate Phi Beta Kappa work at the age of 19 and passed the Maryland Bar at 22. He then entered the US Navy, following which he has practiced law.

Can be ordered through bookstores or online at www.itascabooks.com, subject: Biography

FORTHCOMING BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT, FALL 2007

A Weft of Memory
A Greek Mother's Collection of Folk Songs and Other Poems

by Vasiliki Scotes and Thomas J. Scotes

Vasiliki Scotes was born in a small village in Epirus, Greece, but lived most of her long life in Harrisburg, PA. Nearing the age of 100 she spent the last few years dictating to her son, Ambassador Thomas Scotes, as many songs as she could remember from her childhood in Theodoriana.

This is a bilingual edition, with all the songs and poems transcribed in Greek and translated into English by Tom Scotes, who includes

stories and notes about village customs, information about when and under what circumstances the songs were sung, and how they were danced.

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“Remembering Newark’s Greeks: An American Odyssey”

By Angelique Lampros

Donning Publishing,
192 pages, \$40

New Book Extols Legacy Of Newark’s Greeks

Beautiful Evocation of Almost Vanished Immigrant Society

By Penelope Karageorge
Special to The National Herald

You don’t have to be from Newark, N.J. to fall in love with “Remembering Newark’s Greeks: An American Odyssey” by Angelique Lampros. The book, 192 pages, alive with more than 300 photographs and a wealth of interviews with dozens of individuals, offers a magnificent microcosm of Greek American immigrant society. It’s a delicious baklava of a book with its layers of memory, capturing the warmth, beauty and uniqueness of that largely vanished world of Greek Americana and should resonate for Greek Americans from California to Maine.

Although one of the smallest ethnic groups in America, Greek Americans can take justifiable pride in becoming a huge success story, attaining the highest educational level of any immigrant group in the U.S. Spurred to achieve by hard-working, deeply committed parents, many Greek American



HELLENIC PUBLIC LIBRARY: HERITAGE COLLECTION/COURTESY OF THE CONIARIS FAMILY

Students of St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church School are poised and ready to perform in a Christmas pageant, ca. 1932-1933 at the Ukranian Stritch Hall in Newark, New Jersey. Recalls Dr. Charles Coniaris: “We would memorize Greek plays, ten to twelve pages long, and perform, even if we didn’t know what the words meant, and present them to the community.” First row from left: Andrew, Venetia, and Charles Coniaris. Second row: Manny Lamprou, Stella Sakelakos, Rose Billias, Greek School teacher Mr. Karandreou, Harriet Vretos, Anthoula Koronakos and Irene Pawlakos. Row three: Alice Pawlakos, Nick Lamprou, _____ Manos, Faye Chletsos, John Coniaris and Honey Vretos.



HELLENIC PUBLIC LIBRARY: HERITAGE COLLECTION/COURTESY OF MARY THOMAS MARALAKOS

The Tsotakos family, from left: Georgia, Stella, and Pauline Tsotakos, with Anthony Panagakos and Michael Pontiakos, ca 1930s.

doctors, lawyers, scientists, business titans and media giants today wax nostalgic about sweeping the floor in their dad’s restaurant, the atonal wail and beat of rebetiko music at church dances, the discipline of Greek school. “Remembering Newark’s Greeks” evokes that world and could, in fact, offer a model to other communities to hurry out and collect photographs and reminiscences before they disappear.

Author Angelique Lampros, a retired teacher and administrator who grew up in Newark, and co-curator Peter Markos, also a Newark native, teacher and administrator, spent almost seven years tracking down stories, reminiscences, artifacts and photographs for the book. The project began eight years ago when Lampros received a call from Markos, whom she had known as far back as Greek school. He had just read a book about Newark’s “Little Italy,” and asked, “How about doing a book on Newark’s Greeks?”

“I thought it was a great idea,” Lampros recalls. “It would be a way of honoring our parents and remembering those people who

gave us what we have today, to honor their legacy. From the beginning, I felt strongly that the book should not be written from the perspective of a historian. Instead I wanted to capture the words, the feelings and the images of the people themselves.”

At first Lampros and Markos attempted to get a grant from the New Jersey Historical Society to fund their efforts. Despite being rebuffed, they put together a plan of action. “We started contacting the older people who we knew and we interviewed them,” Lampros says. “We traveled the state of New Jersey seeking out Greek Americans who had lived in Newark and talked with them. We went with a tape recorder. They had wonderful stories to tell, as you can see from the quotes from their interviews. I transcribed all the interviews and put them aside. We also collected photographs.

“We sent out letters to churches in the area, with interview questions, and asking people to send in their photographs. They responded. They dropped off the photographs at my house, or we picked the photographs and interviewed

the people. At one point, my home was filled with over 500 photographs.”

While the interview process was going on, they connected with Dr. Conant Price, a professor at Rutgers University, who introduced them to Charles Cumming, assistant director at the New Jersey Information Center. “Cumming was a Newark historian, a wonderful, wonderful man who passed away a year ago, which was devastating,” Lampros says. “Both Price and Cumming became really interested in the project, and Charles said, ‘Let’s do an exhibit at the Newark Public Library.’ It took about a year to set it up.”

Working towards the library exhibit, Lampros and Markos continued tracking down photographs. “Some people were reluctant to part with their pictures,” Lampros recalls. “Others were eager and said, well, when you’re finished with this, will you return them? Others said, “You can keep them.” What we told people was – you don’t want to someday see your photographs in a flea market, and have somebody else claim it’s their family! If we keep the photos at the

Newark Public Library, they will be there a 100 years from now. And this became our purpose.”

The Hellenic Heritage Fund at the Newark Public Library was established to collect the material and preserve it there. “The information was placed on microfilm and digitized,” Lampros says. “These are the voices, the images of the people of Newark, the Greek Americans of Newark, and this information will be available to their children and children’s children at the Newark Public Library forever.”

The exhibit opened to great acclaim in 2002 at the Newark Public Library. “It was a year getting the exhibit ready,” Lampros says. “We were at the library all the time, working with the professionals there. The library applied for grants and received a grant from the New Jersey State Humanities Organization. They themselves added funds to the project. It opened on October 21 when about 500 people came to the library, even from as far away as Washington, D.C., old-time Newarkers.

“The library in itself is beautiful, and this exhibit covered three floors. It was really wonderful. While the exhibit was on, Peter and



HELLENIC PUBLIC LIBRARY: HERITAGE COLLECTION/COURTESY OF TOM CAPETANOS

In 1930, George’s Restaurant at 85 Halsey Street, Newark, provides a bustling scene. Mr. Capetanos can be seen in the left foreground, and Mrs. Capetanos at the back.

I would go down and give tours to people who requested them. We addressed the Friends of the Newark Public Library and the

Newark Historical Society. The exhibit was so successful – thousands of people came – that the library extended it for an extra month.”

When the exhibit closed, Lampros still yearned for a book with photographs and interviews, a book that would capture precious

memories. “We sent a proposal to the Rutgers University Press, and I gave them three chapters, but they had a different vision of what they wanted to the book to be,” Lampros recalls. “They wanted more of a historical perspective. So I put that aside, and began working on my idea, a commemorative book that would collect the voices and images of the people.”

With the encouragement of the Newark Public Library, and the help of good friends including two professional editors, and others who volunteered their services, Lampros was able to complete what amounted to an inspired work. Ultimately the book was published with backing from the Mavrode Family, the Upper Bucks Medical Associates and the Endoscopy Center in Sellersville, Pa.

At the first book signing, held at Snuffy’s Pantagis Renaissance, a Greek restaurant, more than 200 people showed up, and it turned into a gala event. John T. Cunningham, who wrote the book’s introduction, told Lampros it was the “best book party I’ve ever attended.”

Statistically, the Greeks were a

Continued on page 8

◆
Best wishes
to the
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authors
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New Book Extols Legacy Of Newark's Greeks

Continued from page 7

small portion of Newark's population, numbering about 8,000 at their peak in the early 20th century. But their hard work and industry, commitment to community and family, helped shape the city. Between the 1920s and 1950s, 65 percent of the city's downtown eateries were owned and run by Greeks.

In the book's Forward, Dr. Clement Alexander Price, a Rutgers-Newark Professor of History and the Director of the Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience, states: "The Greek experience in Newark enlivened the city during a period of economic promise and cultural diversity that unfolded from the late 19th Century through the first three decades of the 20th Century. It was the city's Golden Era."

Price points out that the growth of the public sphere in education, the arts and cultural institutions made Newark a more diverse and cosmopolitan place. "The Greek immigrants and their progeny were hardly bystanders to this emerging change in the way Newarkers entered the 20th Century. They established a foundation for a community of remarkable cohesions and purpose."

At one time, all the immigrants



COURTESY OF ANTIGONE LAMPROS

Angelique Lampros, a retired teacher and administrator who grew up in Newark, is the author of "Remembering Newark's Greeks: an American Odyssey." Together with Peter Markos, she curated the acclaimed exhibit on Newark's Greeks, which was presented in 2002 at the Newark Public Library.

who arrived in New Jersey seemed to live in Newark or close enough to attend St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and send their children to Greek school. This was the "hub" and forms a centerpiece for the book that begins with "The Odyssey," arrival in America, and moves on through the years, including World War II. The book includes some wonderful surprises, including the menu from the Greek steamship, the Byron, and the note on it written by Mary Vasilow Pantelis, age 16: "O Byron, the ship that brought me to this black, foreign land in 1927."

Newark's Greek immigrants embraced America, the land that was the living embodiment of the Greek idea of democracy and were determined to make good. "My father came as a young boy in 1896 from Tripoli and began by shining shoes in a shoeshine parlor. At night, all the boys slept in the back room. My father slept under the sink. There was no heat, the water dripped on his head, and it was freezing. He vowed the would never be poor like that again," said Dorothea Adams Pantages.

Author Lampros grew up living "over the store" on the third floor headquarters of the Boston Candy Company, owned by her father. Her godfather owned the building, so it was "all in the family." Al-



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The Theophiles children, Constantine with twins Angeliki and Angelo, pose in Greek costumes, ca. 1920s.

though Lampros did not usually work in the store because of her parents' concern that she devote herself to her studies, she recalls the hustle and bustle of Easter

when everyone pitched in.

"At Easter time everyone worked in the store," Lampros says. "We had the whole section in the middle of the store filled with

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HELLENIC PUBLIC LIBRARY: HERITAGE COLLECTION/COURTESY OF THE JUVELIS FAMILY

Four young beauties perform a Greek dance at the Griffith Building on Broad Street, Newark, in June, 1936. Adam A. Adams (Adamopoulos), a “Horatio Alger” success story who rose from shoeshine boy to owner of a chain of movie theatres, contributed the classical Greek costumes (bobby sox courtesy of the dancers). From left: Elinore Saratoes, Kay Tsotakos, Ethel Juvelis and Eva Halulakos.



HELLENIC PUBLIC LIBRARY: HERITAGE COLLECTION/COURTESY OF MARY G. MAROULAKOS

Surrounded by hat blocks and blocked hats, Nicholas Gianaris stands behind the counter of his Automatic Hat Shop at 51 West Market Street in this 1940s photo. Newark boasted several hat cleaning and blocking establishments operated by Greek Americans including the Continental Hat Renovating Shop owned by the dapper Dimitri Metsoopoulos, known as the “Kaiser” because he waxed the tips of his luxurious moustache.

planks and stands, with chocolate rabbits, chocolate Easter eggs. My mother would help wrap things up. My godparents – everyone was there.”

Lampros, who graduated from Montclair State University and earned an M.A. at George Washington University, has been involved with Greek activities, ranging from the Daughters of Penelope to teaching Sunday school, all her life, and takes enormous pride in her Hellenic heritage. The book helped fulfill a dream for herself and co-curator Markos. “I felt the book had to tell a story in sequence,” Lampros says. “Why people came here and why they ended up in Newark, and how they went about building their businesses, their involvement, how important the family was. The anecdotes have been the most important part. To put the book together, I went through every one of the interviews. The narrative is just to tie in the memories and quotes – to pull it all together. The important part of the book is the images and voices of the people.

“I’m just sorry we didn’t start this earlier, because so many of the people we interviewed have passed away. I would say about half of them. This is a positive book. It tells a story. It tells what happened. Life was difficult. This is the immigrant’s experience, whether it’s Newark, or Chicago, or Salt Lake City or Vancouver. They had a difficult time, but they made something of their lives. They did it for their families and their children.

“St. Nicholas Church will be leaving Newark. It’s sad, because that’s where our parents were and our religion flourished. But we have the book, and we’ve had a wonderful reaction to it.”

Lampros, Markos and all of the other people involved with this labor of love worked without remuneration, and all profits from the book, well worth the price of \$40.00, will go directly into the Hellenic Heritage Fund. The book can be purchased from the Newark Public Library (the first book ever sold by the Library) or by visiting the Library’s website at www.npl.org/greek or by calling 973-733-7793. It’s also available at The Greek Store in Kenilworth, N.J.

A freelance writer, Penelope Karageorge is the author of two novels and a poetry collection, “Red Lipstick and the Wine-Dark Sea” (Pella). She is working with Zikos Tasios of Tasios Productions, Athens, to produce her film script, “Drinking the Sun,” a romantic comedy set on the island of Lemnos and is currently seeking a U.S. co-producer.

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ΕΘΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΗΡΥΞ

Explaining Immigrant Mobility: Don't Neglect the Race Factor



“Demetrios is Now Jimmy: Greek Immigrants in the Southern United States, 1895-1965”

By Larry Odzak

Monograph Publishers, 260 pages, \$24.95

By Yiorgos Anagnostou

Special to The National Herald

No single story can capture the experience of early immigrant Greek America. Men who toiled in the mines and railroad construction under dangerous labor conditions experienced immigration differently than those who owned small businesses. Men and women interacted with different American publics. Among women, those who were consumed by tradition-bound domestic chores saw America from a different angle than those women who worked as wage laborers. And the experience of those who conformed to dominant ideas cannot possibly compare to those who resisted what they saw as an unjust status quo.

Researchers have started to explore this fascinating heterogeneity. They have been focusing on previously neglected topics such as women, the working-class, cultural and political activists, and artists. At last, there is an interest in recovering views that have been socially marginalized, and in the process understanding the past from multiple perspectives.

“Demetrios is Now Jimmy” contributes to our understanding of one aspect of Greek America’s vari-

ety, regional diversity. Of course, the book addresses a well-covered topic, the economically successful male immigrant. But it also takes up an understudied topic with regional focus: Greek America in the American South during the Jim Crow era. This was a period of legal racial segregation (1876-1965) characterized by anti-foreignism and brutal racist violence.

This historical study is based on the author’s doctoral dissertation. Lazar “Larry” Odzak (b.1933) is currently an archivist-historian at the North Carolina State Archives. He received his Ph.D. degree in U.S. History from Strassford University (London, England, 2003). His book, “Demetrios is Now Jimmy,” follows academic conventions. The author sorts through a considerable corpus of scholarly works on immigration and ethnicity, whose citations are dispersed throughout the book. A readable account, the book provides useful archival information and oral testimonies on regional history. Comparative in scope, it dedicates whole chapters to immigrant adaptations in cities such as New Orleans, Birmingham and Tarpon Springs. Furthermore, a chapter exploring the “Formation and Development of Greek Immigrant Communities in the American South” includes discussions and comparisons of the cases of Atlanta, Jacksonville Savannah, Charleston, Raleigh, Charleston and Mobile.

The book discusses the transformation of the Southern Greeks from immigrants to ethnic Americans through “selective adaptation.” The argument here is that immigrant adaptations must be seen as a process of acculturation, not wholesale assimilation. A key to the selective retention and intergenerational transmission of ethnicity was the early establishment of ethnic and religious institutions. To this end the author discusses the changes that defined two prominent institutions, American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) and the Greek Orthodox Church, up to the mid-1960s. A chapter entitled “Fraternal Bonding and Conservatism: Jimmy Joined AHEPA” situates the establishment of AHEPA and its subsequent development within the region’s racial politics. Another chapter, entitled “From Byzantine Rites to Civil Rights,” discusses the transformation of the Greek Orthodox Church in the South from immigrant to ethnic.

Because “Demetrios is Now Jimmy” is a book published by a non-



This is Alex Kontos, circa 1908. Kontos started by peddling fruit when he first arrived in the U.S. Then about 1902, he contracted with a Mobile distributor to sell wholesale bananas in Birmingham. He had a virtual monopoly on the selling of this fruit in the Birmingham area and became known as the “Banana King.”

university press, I will not review it in terms of its scholarly omissions and limitations. Though I will refer to some of its shortcomings, critiquing will not be my main focus. I will not reflect, for example, why a book that situates immigrants in the context of race relations and mobility utterly ignores important academic sources on “white ethnics,” labor struggles, and race. Rather, I wish to discuss the contributions that this work makes to our understanding of one aspect of Greek American history, namely immigrant socioeconomic mobility, and to illuminate the implications of its findings for future research.

A particular research question animates the author’s project. The primary goal is to test the hypothesis known as the “Southern variant” of the Greek immigrant experience. First proposed by sociologist Charles Moskos, the hypothesis states, “Greeks in the South achieved economic and residential upward mobility faster and in greater proportion than Greeks elsewhere in the United States.” Odzak builds on empirical evidence to prove that this hypothesis is true in regards to self-employed immigrants, but not the working class. He compares the “ratio of Greek-owned businesses, excluding the itinerant vendors, to the total Greek population” in Northern cities to corresponding data in Southern cities, concluding that the percentage of self-employed

immigrants was higher in the South. He also cites the early “Greek family formation in the South,” and the Southerners higher rates of immigrant intermarriage with whites as further evidence of mobility. The author believes that the “Southern variant” was caused by a combination of factors. They include: the importance of “timi” (honor), which prodded them to succeed in the workplace, the relentless pressure to assimilate, the acceptance of those who assimilated as “white,” and the smaller numbers of the Greeks in the south, which discouraged the formation of immigrant enclaves.

In his inquiry, the author places the immigrant Southern experience within the context of economic and racial relations in the region. On the one hand, he observes, the vision of an industrialized “New South” brought about dramatic population growth in cities and towns of the region. The example of Tampa, Florida, illustrates the scale of urban transformation. The town’s population grew from about 5,500 in 1890 to nearly 38,000 in 1910. This growth in turn created an urgent demand for a substantial service sector: groceries, cafes, quick lunch stores, dry cleaners and shoeshine parlors among others. The prospect of becoming a self-employed business owner catering to white society attracted to the South immigrants of various

nationalities. There is mention of Jews, Italians, Syrians and Greeks, among others, but not of Asian immigrants. Here one must stress that Jim Crow segregation did not extend this crucial opportunity to African Americans. Therefore, it was immigrants who were recruited to fill this much-coveted economic niche.

The author points to the importance of cultural values to explain immigrant success. He covers a well-trod territory when he suggests that immigrants strove for mobility because failure would have compromised their “timi” (honor), shaming them in the eyes of their family and community. Thus, according to the author, it was the cultural dictates of the honor system that fuelled the desire to succeed at any cost. Consequently, hard work to the point of sacrifice, dogged persistence and frugality, are seen as causes that resulted in the much-sought-after financial security, even prosperity, among early immigrants.

One of the author’s contributions rests in showing how erroneous it is to explain ethnic success on the basis of cultural values alone. The discussion makes it clear that one must account how other variables in the host society – institutional and everyday racism for example – may propel some groups to the path of upward mobility, while barring this opportunity to others. Odzak takes into account how the pervasive racism against African Americans in the American South favored immigrant mobility.

In discussing the issue of male immigrant success in the context of economic and racial relations, this book parts from traditional Greek American historiography. The fresh perspective is that in racially segregated regions it was the immigrants who were seen as the solution to a growing demand for service businesses, not local racial minorities. Odzak suggests that the relatively light tone of the immigrants’ skin provided the ticket for entering this economic niche in white society from which African Americans were excluded. He writes, “skin color helped a large proportion of the first generation Greek migrants to the Southern cities to achieve economic progress.” In other words, the “whiteness” of the immigrants worked as a racial privilege; it granted them a competitive advantage in a labor market that relegated African Americans to menial jobs. Therefore, the roots of immigrant success were partly embed-

ded in a system of racial discrimination.

The historical record is unequivocal here. Immigrant mobility was not achieved in an environment for equal opportunity but occurred at the expense of African Americans. This realization must put to rest the popular belief that immigrants self-propelled themselves to mobility, that they rose exclusively on their own bootstraps. It counters the self-congratulatory rhetoric one hears so often in accounts about "white ethnic" success.

What about Southern anti-foreignism? In what ways did it affect the immigrants? The author makes a strong case that the integration of immigrants was conditional. In exchange for acceptance as "white" they were pressured to publicly display total conformity to the dominant culture. The case of a café owner in Pensacola, a certain Chris Lochas who was accused for violating Federal Law and was run out of town by the Ku Klux Klan, illustrates the degree of public intimidation. Those who did not conform were targeted as unwanted cultural and racial outsiders.

The result of this climate of fear was the rampant Anglicization of names, adoption of the mannerisms and the ideologies of the dominant society, unconditional support of 100% Americanism, and en-mass joining of American fraternal organizations. It was this ruthless pressure to conform, the author suggests, that contributed to

the immigrants' upward mobility.

However, conformity was not merely limited to outward appearances in manners, dress and speech. Most significantly, the immigrant experience in the American South entailed a momentous historical compromise: compliance with the racial status quo of the region. Acceptance of a system of racial oppression was the tremendous cost that immigrants had to pay in order to ensure their business prospects. In the chapter on AHEPA, Odzak provides examples of the relationship between the all-powerful Klan and the Greek immigrants, showing how immigrants internalized and enacted the racial logic of Jim Crow. In addressing this hugely sensitive issue, the author is ambivalent. On the one hand, he embarks on an internal critique of the organization (the author mentions his affiliation with AHEPA in the dust jacket of the book), expressing discomfort in view of the fact that George Wallace, Alabama's segregationist governor, became an AHEPA honorary member in the spring of 1964. On the other hand, he rushes to defend the immigrant acceptance of Jim Crow as a pragmatic, "prudent observance of the American Southern custom of segregation."

The author sets himself the ambitious goal of covering 70 years of Greek immigrant adaptation in the South. But his discussion of the second and third generation is way too general and often sketchy. The



Larry Odzak is currently an archivist-historian at the North Carolina State Archives, and a visiting scholar at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

aim to identify historical patterns and to paint history with broad strokes occludes particular events, everyday situations and minute incidents that do not fit the general pattern. One wishes, for example, that the author had dedicated fuller attention to the complexity of the racial situation in the South. It is well known that Greek immigrants elsewhere in the United States were initially classified as non-whites by many social scientists and the wider public. In the racially hierarchical taxonomy of that era they were seen as inferior to whites but superior to other racial groups such as Asian immigrants and African Americans. Scholarly studies on this subject

convincingly show that occupation, participation in labor politics, and resistance to assimilation served as important criteria to classify immigrants as non-white in the American West and elsewhere. Unfortunately, the book pays only scant attention to how this racial dynamic played out in the South. It simplifies a vastly complex racial situation into a binary—"black and white"—system, where "the significant presence of blacks tended to raise white immigrants to the next rung." The author ignores the presence of immigrants from Asia and does not elaborate on the "non-white" classification of and hierarchies among immigrants from Southeast Europe and the Middle East. He provides only a tantalizing example—the case of Lochas whose lack of acculturation was equated with a "non-white" status. But because the focus of the book is on the "successful," acculturated male businessman, there is no attempt to document what happened to those who refused to assimilate. This inattention is illustrated in the unfortunate choice of words the author uses to describe unassimilated immigrants. In describing them as those who "were not able or skillful enough to show that they were 'white' and 100 percent American," he fails to recognize those immigrants who consciously resisted assimilation.

A number of questions could guide future research. Did sectors within the immigrant community

in the South (women, the working class, or wage laborers who eventually became small-business owners, for example) hold alternative visions of success? Did they resist racism and its cultural counterpart, 100% Americanism, embracing alternative visions of a socially and economically just American society? There is tantalizing evidence of resistance, when, for example, the author mentions in passing that "few brave voices (within the Greek community) were openly raised" in support of civil rights in the South. But the reader is left wanting more. Who resisted and how? How did public opposition to the racial status quo affect one's life?

To answer these questions, researchers must seize the moment and shift attention away from the model of the economically "successful" male toward the study of those individuals or groups whose success entailed a vision and commitment to a more just society. We all stand to gain by identifying these unexplored pasts and by figuring out how these pasts can be of value to Greek America today.

Yiorgos Anagnostou is an associate professor in the Modern Greek Program at Ohio State University. His book, "Contours of 'White Ethnicity': Popular Ethnography and the Making of Usable Pasts in Greek America," is forthcoming from Ohio University Press.

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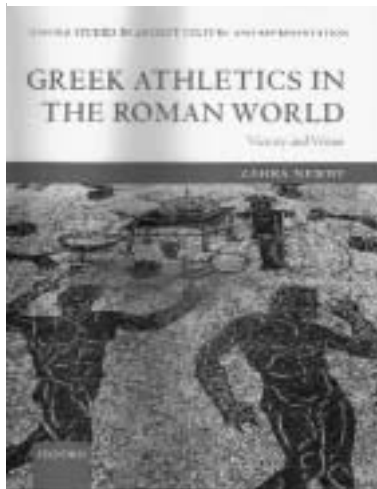
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Greek Athletics and Ruins, Romans and Western Civilization



“Greek Athletics in the Roman World: Victory and Virtue”

By Zahra Newby

Oxford University Press,
314 pages, \$ 150



“Cyriac of Ancona, Later Travels”

Edited and translated from the Latin by Edward W. Bodnar with Clive Foss.

Harvard University Press,
459 pages, \$29.95

By E.G. Vallianatos

Special to The National Herald

According to the Roman poet Horace, 65-8 BCE, Hellas conquered her wild Roman conqueror. The Greeks had long-standing relations with the Romans, building “poleis” in Italy and Sicily as early as the eighth century BCE. The Romans borrowed their alphabet, art and religion from the Greeks and, in time, their athletics.

Greeks used athletics to express their political and religious identity, including their adoration of manliness as virtue, which they expected of their athletes. Exercising in the nude out in the open and competing during religious festivals was both an act of piety towards the gods and a characteristic of being Greek. Like philosophy, literature, science, democracy and the dramatic theater, athletics was a Greek creation that distinguished Greeks from non-Greeks.

According to Zahra Newby, Greek influence, including Greek athletic influence, among the Romans did not flow without problems. There were tensions between Greeks and Romans. The Romans, after all, destroyed Greek freedom, annexing Greece in 146 BCE. But despite the difficulties of the relationship, including the misuse of Greek athletics by Romans, Greek culture mattered to the Roman ruling class.

Zahra Newby’s “Greek Athletics in the Roman World” is a wonderful, lavishly illustrated, and pioneering book, an original scholarly study documenting the far-reaching impact Greek athletics had in the Roman Empire. Romans adopted and adapted Greek athletics for sports, cultural elegance, pleasure, and politics. The emperor, says Newby, put himself “at the very heart of Greek festival culture,” holding the keys to the Greek athletics becoming a measure of some kind of Hellenization of the ruling class. A city that wanted to start a “crown” or “sacred” game had to have imperial approval. So communities in the Roman Empire, both Greek and non-Greek, made Greek athletics a badge of identity, distinguishing themselves from others in the Mediterranean.

Greek athletics was especially important to the Greeks living under Roman domination. The Panhellenic games took their minds away from the harsh political reality governing their lives, allowing them to celebrate their common culture.

Pausanias, a second century Greek geographer from Asia who

occupies a central role in Newby’s study, documented the Greek nature and seminal importance of athletics in Greek culture. He traveled extensively in mainland Greece. His (“Periegesis Hellados” (“Guide to Greece”) remains one of the best descriptions and histories of the country. He says one sees many wonderful sights and hears many wonders in Greece, though one could find nothing more divine than the rites at Eleusis and the athletic contest at Olympia.

At Eleusis the Athenians celebrated the Eleusinian Mysteries, a fall festival to praise of the gods Demeter and Dionysos for the crops that had just been sown and to seek their blessings for a good life. Olympia hosted the Panhellenic Olympics, which celebrated the virtue of manliness in athletic competition and Greek identity.

Pausanias anchors athletics at the core of Hellenism, giving Olympia, as a result, the center of the Greek world. This was where the Greeks came together for their Panhellenic dreams, worshipping Zeus, surrounded by hundreds of beautiful statues and magnificent temples, admiring their past achievements, feeling good about being Greek. History was alive in Olympia, talking to the Greeks in a way they could understand too well. In addition, “poleis” erected statues of their Olympic victors at home, thus preserving their connection to Olympia – and their memory of Hellenism.

Newby is right to suggest that Greek athletics for the Greeks in the Roman Empire was essential “in the creation of good citizen-soldiers, civic festivals, or the Hellenic lifestyle while incorporating and celebrating the contemporary world.” While Greek athletics in Greece accommodated the participation of Roman athletes, it was a fulfillment for the Greeks alone. The Romans, Newby says, failed making the connection between victory and virtue; and neither did the Romans consider the training of athletes at the gymnasia as a necessary step to the upbringing of soldiers and citizens.

Unfortunately, imperial Rome adopted Christianity as the state religion in the fourth century, a policy, which in my opinion, had catastrophic consequences for the Greeks, their civilization, and, of course, athletics. In 393, the Christian Emperor Theodosios I abolished the Olympics. Christianity triumphed in Europe at the expense of both Greek and Roman culture, indeed precipitating the fall of Rome to the barbarians in

409.

The Eastern Graeco-Roman Empire or Byzantium survived down to 1453 and Greek culture, in very limited quantities, survived largely underground. We waited a millennium of darkness for the rediscovery of Greek and Roman culture in the Renaissance, a period starting in the fourteenth century Italy.

The “Later Travels” by Cyriac of Ancona (Ciriaco de Pizzecolli, 1391-1452) is a great document about the passion of the Renaissance for the Greeks, why they really mattered.

The protagonist of this extraordinary and original story, Cyriac of Ancona, was an Italian merchant and a philhellene scholar who traveled through mainland Greece, the Aegean islands, and Asia Minor on the eve of its horrendous collapse of Greece to the Turks in 1453. Everywhere he went he collected manuscripts, ancient gems and coins. He went to Mount Athos where he bought most of the works of Ploutarchos and other Greek texts from the monks of the Iveron monastery; he examined the texts of Platon, Aristoteles, Galenos (Galen), Hippokrates, Herodotos, Nonnos’ “Dionysiaka,” and Archbishop Eustathios’ commentaries on Homeros in the library of Grand Lavra.

Cyriac also copied Greek inscriptions and described the ruins of temples and theaters, making sketches and drawings of buildings and statues. He denounced the neglect of his contemporaries for antiquities, interpreting that attitude as “negligence, slothfulness and lack of humane culture.”



Zahra Newby is senior lecturer in Classics and Ancient History at the University of Warwick, UK. She read Classics at Oxford University before taking her Masters and Ph.D. at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

He left us with valuable impressions of what he saw. For instance, in 1447, he saw Greeks in southern Peloponnesos, near the ancient polis of Amatheia, celebrating being Greek with an annual athletic contest, “androdromon pentastadion,” in which: “They compete in a men’s footrace over a distance of five stadia, which they run barefoot, mind you, and dressed only in a linen undertunic; and whoever runs more swiftly and comes in first is given ten bronze drachmas, which they call ‘hyperpera’; the second [is given] five; the third, three; and after that, all the others, in order of finishing, a little cash or a quantity of Hyrcanian meat.”

At another site, this one near the gymnasium of Sparte, he copied a Greek inscription from a marble base: “The city (honors) M. Aurelios Aristokrates, son of Damainetos, priest for his family, 48th from Heracles, 44th from the Dioskouroi, permanent gymnasiarch ... incomparable citizen.” Herakles was the Greeks’ greatest hero, founder of the Olympics, and son of Zeus. And Dioskouroi (Kastor and Polydeukes) were sons of Zeus and native to Sparte.

Cyriac went to Lakonia in order to see his “very good friend” George Gemistos Plethon, “the most learned of the Greeks in our time.” True, Gemistos Plethon (1362-1452) was a Platonic philosopher who single-handedly tried to resurrect Hellas in Peloponnesos. However, the Western Christian dismemberment of Byzantium in the thirteenth century, the ever-present Turkish danger, and the Christian policies of the Greek leaders undermined his efforts, crippling his Renaissance.

Cyriac captures the hopelessness of Greece in the mid-fifteenth century. He says the “once famous Laconian towns” were in “utter collapse or demolition,” a calamity no less severe than the moral decline of the Greeks living in the midst of those ruins. In 1447, he concluded that the Spartans had “fallen completely from that famous pristine moral integrity of the Laconian, Lacedaimonian way of life.” Cyriac reports that “those who dwell in the Laconian land, on the Spartan foothill of Mount Taygetus, in the town of Mistra, men who practice a poor sort of agriculture or commerce or ignoble trades and every kind of worthless superstitious rite, are ruled by barbarians or by foreigners.”

No doubt, Cyriac was close to the ancient Greeks. Cyriac worshipped Hermes, Zeus, and the Nymphs and Muses, especially

Kalliope and Kymodokea, "the most brilliant and kindly of Poseidon's Nereids." Yet he felt comfortable with Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. He was a "lover of antiquity," half polytheist, half Christian, much like the humanists of the Renaissance. His work earned him the title of the Father of Classical Archaeology, influencing more Europeans to continue his search in the land of Greece and Rome, slowly resurrecting our understanding of the genius of Greek culture.

But Cyriac was no apolitical academic. He cared for the Greeks of his time as well, though he shared the biases of the Catholic West against them. Before his visit to Peloponnesos, he saw countless Greek women and girls and boys being sold like cattle in the markets of Macedonia and Thrace. In Adrianople, he came across a slave market selling thousands of Greeks. These were the prisoners of the Turks after the 1431 fall of Thessalonike. He rushed to Rome where he lobbied his friend Pope Eugene IV to declare war against the Turks, whom he described as "barbarians" and "the cruel devourers of Christians." Eugene followed Cyriac's advice. First, he invited the Orthodox to join the Catholic, and the churches became one in 1439, ending the 1054 schism. Then, in 1443, the pope launched a crusade against the Turks, the year Cyriac went to Greece, exploring the country until 1449. The letters and diaries of



Fr. Edward Bodnar, S.J., Professor Emeritus in the Department of Classics at Georgetown University, is interested professionally in the survival and rediscovery of Classical Antiquity (architecture, sculpture, inscriptions, coins, gems, manuscripts) in early Renaissance Italy and the late Byzantine (prior to 1453) Levant, particularly as reported in the travel-diaries, letters, drawings, and other writings of Kyriakos (Cyriac) of Ancona.

those years make up the contents of this memorable volume.

In 1446, Cyriac visited Chios and, instantly, he fell in love with the birthplace of Homeros. He was very impressed with the global export of the gum, the "glittering

mastic" of Chios. The world, he said, "was being filled with the scent of this island's gift, this wholesome exhalation."

In 1447, the state of the Greek world deteriorated sharply. Cyriac came across Turks settling Gallipoli, a Greek polis facing Asia on the Hellespont or Dardanelles. He says that in Gallipoli he saw "long lines of barbarians laden with booty," including Europeans trading with the Turks. He was struck with sorrow with the "captives from the Greek nation, miserable in their iron chains." Some of those enslaved Greeks told him that the Turks had invaded Peloponnesos, devastating the defensive works at the Isthmus. Cyriac blames the Turkish invasion of Peloponnesos to the "slothful neglect of our princes." "What an enormity!" he says. "Alas for the ancient nobility of our superior race! For I think that the pitiable disaster inflicted on this people by the barbarians – even if they are Greeks and in a sense deserve punishment – that this lamentable downfall of Christians must be thought of as a serious setback for our religion and a great humiliation of the Latin name."

True, the Greeks were about to vanish. Pope Eugene's crusade against the Turks failed because the divided Europeans were unwilling to fight for the Greeks whom they considered heretics worthy of punishment. They had conveniently forgotten that the

Greeks' church had become one with the church of the Catholics. Officially, Pope Eugene was the pope of the Greeks as well. The Greeks were to disappear from Christendom. Byzantium's fall in 1453 dissolved the union of the churches.

The Renaissance, too, came to a premature end, Christianity silencing it in the late sixteenth century. But the Greek genie was out of the bottle. The texts of the Greeks – the relatively few that survived the first Christian fires -- were now in many published books and dispersed all over Europe to be easily tossed into flames. So despite the anger of Christianity, inflamed by the Protestant Reformation, Greek influence survived in Western Europe, spreading beyond Florence, Padua, Rome and Venice.

The books under review give us an honest clue of the Promethean importance of ancient Hellenic culture and the horrific price Greeks paid for losing their freedom to the Romans and, through them, to the Christians. Greek athletics cushioned the conquest of Greece by Rome while the ruins of Greek culture, which the Italian merchant Cyriac of Ancona studied in the 1440s, triggered the Renaissance that made our world.

E.G. Vallianatos is the author of "The Passion of the Greeks: Christianity and the Rape of the Hellenes" (Clock and Rose Press, 2006).



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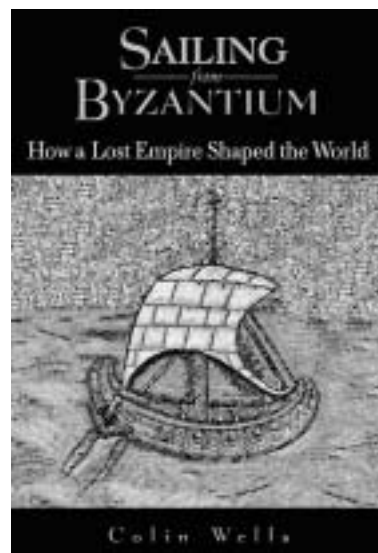
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A Voyage to a Past that Shaped Our Future



“Sailing From Byzantium: How a Lost Empire Shaped the World”

By Colin Wells
Delacorte Press,
335 pages, \$22

By Mark N. Lardas
Special to The National Herald

Asked about the glory that was Greece, most – including those of Greek descent – talk about Ancient Greece: wise Athens, laconic Sparta; or ancient wonders: the Colossus of Rhodes, the Statue of Zeus, even the Lighthouse of Alexandria.

We even claim Alexander, despite not-quite-Greek Macedonian antecedents. He was so successful, and created the mold from which “live fast, die young, leave beautiful memories” would later be taken.

Most overlook Byzantium. The Byzantines are often viewed as losers – beaten by both the barbarian West and Islamic East. Or as a distant, romantic destination, as in the Yeats poem “Sailing to Byzantium.” Byzantium is also associated with overcomplicated bureaucracy

– “getting my drivers license was downright Byzantine.” How important could the Byzantines be?

Yet Byzantium’s influence lives today. We see it most directly in the Orthodox Church. A product of Byzantine civilization, it still forms the core of Greek American heritage.

Byzantium’s gifts forged the modern world. The record of their accomplishments has generally been accessible only to scholars, presented in arid papers or convoluted books. It has rarely been accessible to the general public.

Until “Sailing From Byzantium” appeared, in 2006, that is. In a slim volume (it contains under 300 pages of text) Colin Wells explains how Byzantium influenced the development of three of today’s most important civilization: Western Europe, Arab society, and the Slavonic world.

Had Byzantium disappeared along with the Western Roman Empire, our world would be much different – and much worse. The heritage of Ancient Rome and Greece would have been lost.

The Western Renaissance, nor the Islamic Enlightenment that preceded it, would not have taken place. Civilization of Russia and Eastern Europe would have been delayed – that part of Europe would have remained Iron Age barbarians for another 500 years.

Wells shows the gifts that each neighbor received from Byzantium. Like a Byzantine triptych, the book has three sections, one for each of Byzantium’s neighbors, where the reader follows the history of Byzantium’s interactions with and influences upon each neighbor.

The gifts were very different, too. Each civilization obtained what interested it most. The West took humanism – the basis for today’s liberal arts education. Borrowings from Ancient Greek literature and humanities – grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy -- fueled the Renaissance. Eventually these gifts propelled the west into revolutionary advances in both the social and physical sciences that remain the hallmark of Western civilization.

The Arabs extracted Greek science, medicine and philosophy. This led to the Arabic Enlightenment, a golden age of Islamic science. It gave them a technological lead over their neighbors – until fanatics forced the repudiation of gifts obtained from ancient pagans.

The Slavs, especially the Russ, from which Russia would emerge, adopted Byzantium’s art, music



Colin Wells has studied with eminent Byzantinist Speros Vryonis Jr. at UCLA and holds an M.A. from Oxford University in Greats (Greek and Latin language and literature). He has spent over a decade lecturing and writing about history. In “Sailing From Byzantium,” Wells offers an assessment on Byzantium’s impact on the modern world.

and religion – as well as Byzantine’s fatalism. A combination of Orthodoxy’s mystical contemplation and missionary zeal propelled the Slavs to dominate the north-eastern quarter of the Eurasian continent.

Wells discusses how the affected cultures acknowledged their borrowings from Byzantium. Renaissance Europe recognized the knowledge that fueled it came from Constantinople. Moscow still styles itself “The Third Rome,” with Constantinople as the acknowledged “Second Rome.”

Yet, as Wells shows in this book, circumstance allowed the breadth and scope of the Byzantium’s influence to be forgotten. Sometimes distance caused the memory to fade – the English-speaking peoples who write most of today’s history had little direct contact with Byzantium. Much of the core of western hard science – medicine, astronomy, and physics – has roots in Islamic science, developed during the Islamic Enlightenment, which was fueled by Byzantium’s gifts. The Europeans of that time did not realize where the Arabs gained their knowledge.

Wells also shows the conflicts that raged within the Byzantine

world, including the tensions between the Hesychasts – who felt that faith and Orthodoxy were the solutions to Byzantine problems – and the Byzantine humanists – those that felt that reason alone was sufficient, when combined with the knowledge of the Ancient Greeks.

Reason and faith were warp and weft in the fabric of Byzantine society. Neither Hesychasts nor humanists could maintain a healthy society without the presence of the other group. Wells shows how the increasing unwillingness to compromise – by both groups – weakened Byzantium.

The book’s greatest irony? The Hesychast triumph over the humanists early in the 14th century was a major factor in preserving Ancient Greek literature the Hesychasts despised. Byzantine humanists departed for Italy with copies of these ancient books – books that would have been destroyed in the Islamic conquest of Constantinople in 1453 had the humanists won and stayed.

Wells’ book restores Byzantium to the prominence that it deserves. He shows how this civilization fought to preserve its ancient heritage, how it went through its own sets of dark

ages and enlightenments, and how the knowledge it had was passed on to three other civilizations. He does so in a book that is approachable – and fascinating.

Wells, a self-described WASP, grew up in upstate New York, where he now lives. What drew his interest to Byzantium – and write a book like “Sailing From Byzantium?” It took 15 years of effort for Wells to sell the book to a publisher. To find out, The National Herald interviewed Wells.

TNH: How did you connect with Byzantium?

CW: I was an English and history major at UCLA in the 1980s. For some reason I signed up for a class in Byzantine history, which was a subject I knew nothing about. I didn't even know what “Byzantine history” meant. But I got hooked right away.

The professor, Speros Vryonis, Jr., reminded me of someone I knew – the father of my best friend, who belongs to a Greek American family. Or rather a Greek Canadian family – they are from Montreal, and had a summer place in the town where I grew up in northern New York. They even shared the same bad jokes! So there was a Greek American genesis to the book, in a way.

TNH: Although you never studied under Vryonis as a graduate student, you believe Vryonis proved to be one of the most profound influences on your education and approach to history, correct?

CW: I took Vryonis' three undergraduate Byzantine history classes and then two graduate seminars that he offered on historiography. He kindly let me enroll in even though I was an undergraduate.

In none of these did the theme of faith and reason come up that I remember (I got that from reading articles of his much later). But I did absorb some aspects of his overall approach, a sort of rational, even dispassionate, evenhandedness that I still aspire to in my writing.

For example, in one of the seminars we looked at controversial areas of Greek historiography like the famous ‘racial continuity’ question, which arose after 19th century European scholars disparaged modern Greeks as basically Slavs in racial background and therefore not really ‘Greek.’ This was part of the ‘glory that was Greece’ thing taken up by the Germans, the British, and others.”

After presenting the various sides of the controversy itself, Professor Vryonis' response was basically to chuckle at this foolishness and to observe that the Hellenization of the Slavic immigrants in the Greek mainland merely underscored the great vitality of Greek culture.”

TNH: Were there other major influences in your study of Byzantium?

CW: John Meyendorff, an Orthodox priest but a fine historian, who like Professor Vryonis focused on faith and reason in his analysis. One of my great regrets in life is that I never got to meet Father John (as he was known), who passed away in the early 1990s, just as I was beginning the research for Sailing from Byzantium.

Also, a professor of international relations at the London School of Economics named Fred Halliday, who emphasizes changing historical circumstances and how they give greater political traction to some agendas and less to others. In many ways, the overall approach to history I take in the book is an extension of some of the arguments and interpretations of these last two scholars.

TNH: Why did the different cultures that were influenced by Byzantium take such different directions with the information they collected?

CW: Ultimately, it should be recognized that the younger cultures took as active a role as the Byzantines themselves. It wasn't just Byzantium passing on its culture,

but these other cultures actively seeking out those aspects of Byzantine culture that really excited them. There was as much pull as push. That such different things could be found in Byzantium tells you something about its extraordinary cultural richness, too.

TNH: If someone, whose interest was sparked by “Sailing From Byzantium” wanted to read further, does you have any recommendations?

CW: For a lively read, I'd start with John Julius Norwich's short history of Byzantium. He's a great raconteur, and since his books focus on palace intrigue and military history, it would be a good complement to my book.

TNH: Suppose you could hold a dinner, inviting five people discussed in his book – with a few modern scholars, to season the evening. Who would you invite?

CW: Manuel Chrysoloras (a diplomat and educator who was the first modern teacher of Ancient Greek in Italy), definitely, since all accounts describe him as so interesting and dynamic. Hunayn ibn Ishaq (a Nestorian Christian who translated Greek medical and scientific works into Arabic), too, to represent the caliphate. Cyprian (a

Bulgarian monk, who introduced the Russian Orthodox Church to Hesychastism), the contemporary of Chrysoloras. His determination did so much to shape the course of Russian history.

That's one for each section in the book. For the other two guests, perhaps Patriarch Photius (who instituted the mission of Cyril and Methodius) would have to be invited, just because he's so monumental a figure. I'd probably want to invite a modern scholar like N.G. Wilson, too, who would love to pick Photius's brain on the state of classical literature in ninth century Byzantium.

Then maybe an emperor – it would be a toss-up between Justinian, Heraclius, Basil II, Alexius I, or Manuel II. Each was a superb leader and a pivotal figure in Byzantine history with fascinating insights to offer. If I invited Manuel II, maybe I'd invite the pope, too, along with Karen Armstrong (a modern monotheistic theologian), just to stir the pot a bit!

TNH: What is next for you?

CW: My next book will be a brief history of history. It will start from the birth of history – with Herodotus and Thucydides, and come forward to the present day.

History grew out of the ancient Greeks' attempts to explain the natural in a rational way.”

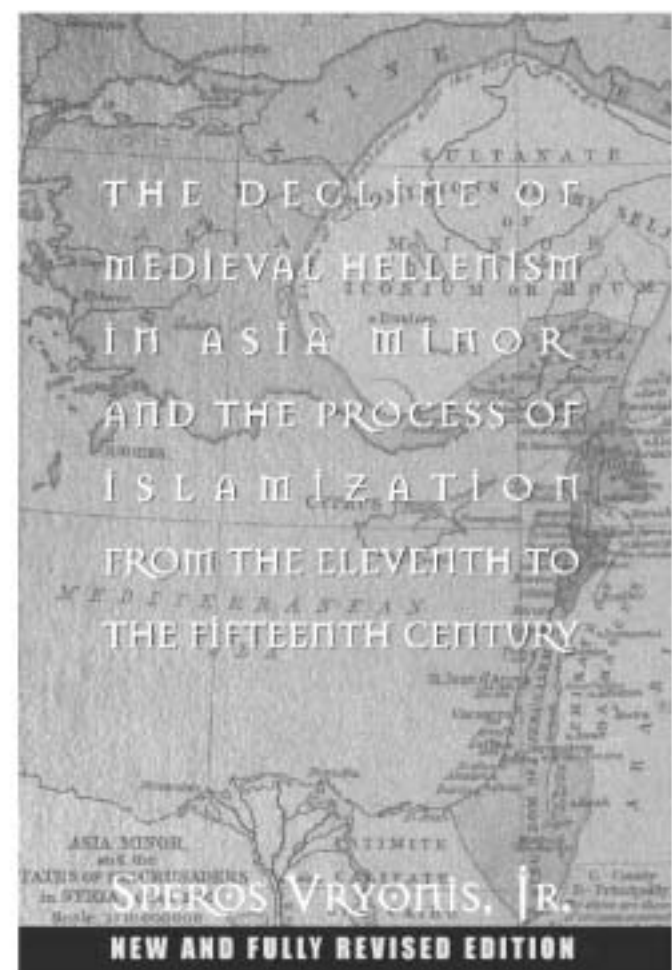
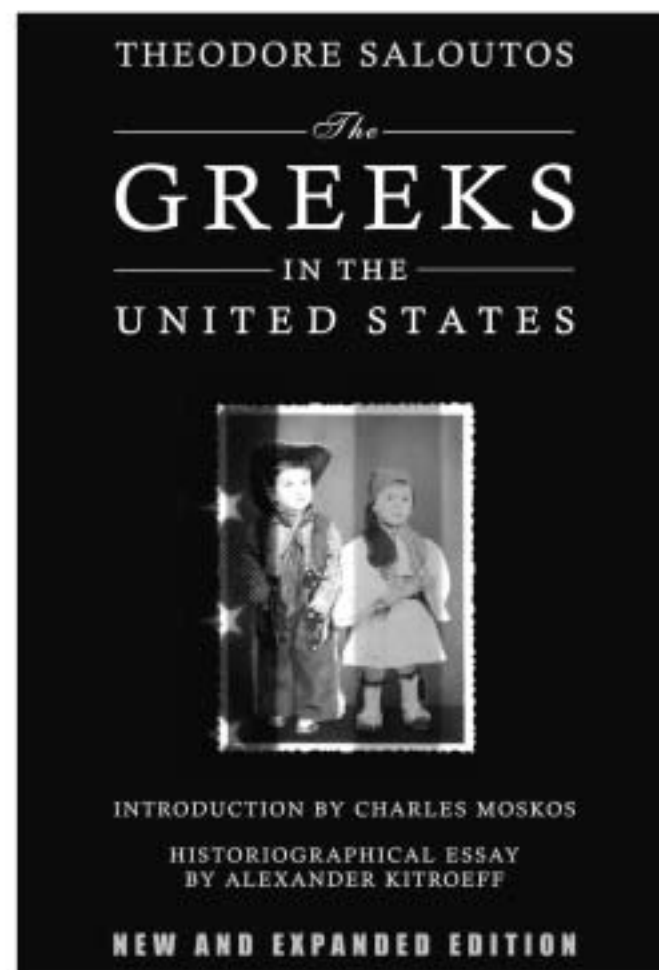
TNH: A “brief” history? Does this mean another attempt to create an approachable book on a difficult subject?

CW: When I started out, I wanted to become the Stephen Jay Gould of Byzantium, the guy who made a complex and relatively unknown subject into something that a curious general reader could find interesting and accessible. Now I've expanded that ambition a little -- I'd like to be the Stephen Jay Gould of history as a whole. It seems to me history could be better served by its popular writers. But Byzantine history will always be a touchstone in that effort. History is a Greek invention, and the Byzantines were the ones who carried it on when it disappeared in the West.

TNH: With luck, we will not need to wait another 15 years before the next book appears.

Mark Lardas, a Texan of Greek descent, was born and grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan. An engineer who works at a major aerospace company, he is also a freelance writer, amateur historian and model-maker.

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- A student at Jamaica Day School of Saint Demetrios has love a -love for his fellow human beings so that we all may have a better world to live in.



“Facing Athens. Encounters with the Modern City

By George Sarrinikolaou

North Point Press, 2004, 144 pages.
\$18

By Neni Panourgiá

Special to The National Herald

“The scene gnaws at me as if I have been confronted with this sort of indecency for the first time ... Perhaps because this is my city” George Sarrinikolaou writes on page 43 of his book “Facing Athens: Encounters with the Modern City.” And this sentiment is at the core of this book, the sentiment that the author encounters all the misery, all the indecencies, all the cynicism and harshness of life for the first time in Athens.

This is a demanding and sophisticated book that needs to be confronted on its own grounds. George Sarrinikolaou can write, and he can write well. His phrases are expertly turned, his transitions smooth, his command of the English language astonishing, the emotions that it can transport to the reader rich and deep. There are brilliant moments, such as the description of Omonoia Square. Yet, there is something heavy and unbearable in this book, like a tombstone. In short, there is no joy in this book, with the result that one is left recognizing perfectly the slice of what Sarrinikolaou calls “Athens” (as he talks not about the city of Athens but the greater administrative region of the capital) while trying desperately to find the rest of the fragments

This is particularly alarming to

Effacing Athens

me, an Athenian of many generations, making me wonder whether it is a distorted sense of Athens that I have or Sarrinikolaou’s Athens that I do not recognize. The most disturbing element of this book is the impression it gives that there is no place in this city where the psyche can find some rest from the slaps and miseries that make up modern every day life the world over. There are no real friendships, nor relationships that exist outside either of the adoration of the insignificant and the superficial (the night clubs, the men’s groups, the employer and the immigrant relationship) or outside the cynicism that Sarrinikolaou has found pervasive in this city of over four million people, a city certainly on the brink of ecological collapse. And we know all this because, as the author mentions on page xii of the Prologue, the forces that shape Athens today are four and very specific: money, history, immigration, violence.

Sarrinikolaou has bones to pick with the city, and it is in the last chapter that the reader finds out where the source of his discontent is located: in the experience that his family has had in the city in the few years that they lived there. This is one of the strengths of the book, that it does not give it all away from the beginning. But we have to wait until page 114 to be told that this author does have some contact with his family in Athens, and more importantly, that he still has a grandfather in the city. Until then we do not know that Sarrinikolaou has ever visited his grandfather, much less that he cares enough for him to wait all night long outside the operating room while the grandfather is undergoing surgery and to be utterly appalled by the behavior of the internist and the surgeon who, Sarrinikolaou claims, left the operating room in the middle of the operation to go outside and remind the family of the arranged bribe in order for them to finish the operation.

One wonders, however, about Sarrinikolaou’s emotional reaction to the event. Is his reaction a deeply felt, genuine sense of love and affection for his grandfather, or is it a moralism that seeks to chastise and expose Greek doctors for doing things that doctors in other, civilized places would never think of doing? Anyone who has been to the emergency room in the U.S. and has been greeted by the insurance manager before being seen by a doctor would be hard pressed to talk about such differences, of course. Although later on, on page

122, when his grandfather dies and Sarrinikolaou, incongruously (for his relatives, as he notes) weeps, he recognizes that he does not weep for his grandfather but that he grieves “for a lifetime ... spent away from them, for all the years ... lived without Grandfather, for all the time that I can never get back.”

The book is written in 10 chapters which, much like the Ten Commandments, point out the mortal sins of modern Athens and Athenians: Domestic violence, racism, ostentation, greed, systemic exclusion of the foreigners, prostitution, corruption, adultery, hatred, hypocrisy. The chapters are the backbone on which Sarrinikolaou tries to portray present-day Athens while, all the while, is trying to figure out why his family’s experience of Athens has been as unbearable as it truly seems to have been. This is a family that lived in four different houses in four different neighborhoods in the course of ten years: Liosia (a working class neighborhood primarily

Sarrinikolaou has bones to pick with the city, and it is in the last chapter that the reader finds out where the source of his discontent is located

squatted by Gypsies and the place of the city dump, Sarrinikolaou notes, but also the place where internal migrants settled in the 1950s), Petroupolis (another working class neighborhood squatted from the 1930s to the 1950s, legalized after 1955, and with a quarry active until the 1970s), Dafne (an old working-class neighborhood) and Nea Penteli (an upper middle-class neighborhood built in the 1970s on forest land). Precisely because this trajectory is so atypical in a city where most of its residents owned their houses and had close ties to their neighborhoods, the encounters of the Sarrinikolaou family in the different parts of the city must have been difficult.

The family immigrated to New York in 1980, when the author was 10 years old, and settled in Astoria. Since then the parents divorced, the father who used to beat his wife returned to Greece, and the mother and two children remained here. Sarrinikolaou mentions in passing that he has visited Greece almost every summer since the year of migration, although there is no mention anywhere as to whether those visits produced any friendships, acquaintances, or closeness with the family that had remained in

Athens. This omission allows Sarrinikolaou to claim an exceptional position and voice a particular complaint: his encounters for this book were all fresh ones, giving him thus the opportunity to start relationships and friendships anew while, simultaneously, excluding him from the depth of already established friendships. But one has to wonder about how available Sarrinikolaou makes himself to deep relationships by shifting positions constantly between being there and not being there at the same time. How would it be possible for anyone to be both a detached objective observer and a participant at the same time? As anthropologists know, something has to give: either the claim to objectivity or the claim to belonging to the inner core.

Throughout the book one gets the impression that Sarrinikolaou’s Greek is on native level, that he has not acquired the hesitance of the returning native language, that when he encounters people there is no trace of an accent or of disconnect with the current language that would betray the fact that he does not live in Athens. But by trying to see what a non-native would see in Athens by traveling through the “other” neighborhoods, those where the tourists and native Athenians never go, Sarrinikolaou has produced the dialectical opposite, the flip side of what every celebratory guide to Athens has produced until now: where “good food and great music” would appear in any other guide cheap whiskey and bad music appears in Sarrinikolaou’s. Where “blue skies and the beautiful Parthenon” appear in any Fodor’s, in Sarrinikolaou we encounter dirt, scum, and the kitsch of the Acropolis. The result is as superficial and stereotypical as any. The only difference is that Sarrinikolaou looks at other surfaces than Fodor’s does. And he makes mistakes. Panathenaikos is not “a third Athenian team.” Panathenaikos was the first athletic club to be established in Athens, in 1908, and the “eternal” opponent of Olympiakos. Actually the two teams are referred to as the “aionioi,” meaning “aionioi antipaloi” (eternal opponents). Athenian soccer was really dominated by the adversity of these two main clubs for the largest part of the 20th century until AEK became a stable enough team to puncture the scene. If Sarrinikolaou’s visit to Athens for the purposes of this book took place for three months in spring of 2003 (as he alludes to) Olympiakos was not playing in Kalogreza (the Olympic Stadium) but in Rizoupoli, and Olympiakos



MARTIN BRADING

George Sarrinikolaou, born in Athens in 1970, came to New York with his family at the age of ten. He was educated at Cornell and Columbia and worked as a journalist before turning to environmental policy.

did not tie with Akkratitos (the team from Liosia, Sarrinikolaou's native neighborhood) but won 4-0 in September 2002 and 5-2 in February 2003. The famous tennis club is not

the one of Politeia but of Ekali, and long before Kifissia was picked for the summer residences of the Benakis, the Deltas, and the Dragoumises in the turn of the 20th

century it was a village where Arvanites had lived without break for four centuries.

Do these mistakes matter? Do they cancel Sarrinikolaou's experiment of producing the most truthful account of Athens possible? Do they take anything away from the literary value of the book? The response to these questions is located in the project that Sarrinikolaou has set for himself. Sarrinikolaou calls on his eyewitness experiences of the city to account for the validity of his claims. He does not seem to rely on second-hand material. He himself goes to the soccer match where he sees AEK soccer fans exhibit behavior "straight out of a Nazi rally" as he writes. He himself goes to Metaxourgeio, the working class neighborhood at the center of Athens where he encounters three middle-aged men sitting on the stoop of a house. Through this encounter with them that lasts for a couple of hours (at most, if that long, as he never tells us) he comes away having decided that the Athenian suspiciousness towards the others is not, as Greeks claim, xenophobia, but outright racism. This is not a conclusion at which he arrives through second-hand information, but one that is securely located on his own, unmediated experience. He doesn't rely on the description of others about the encounter between the filthy rich residents of Politeia and the dirt poor Albanian day laborers; he gets on the bus to Politeia and sees the Al-

banians as they leave the mansions with "dirt caked in the cracks of their fingers and under their fingernails" as he imagines "the manicured hand of the villa's mistress dipping into a Chanel purse to pay her Albanian gardener," and concludes that "this Garden of Eden needs the cheap labor to keep it watered and pruned." He witnesses the complete collapse of gender relationships and notes that "what strikes him in Athens, as opposed to his other home, New York, is how conspicuous the role of money can be in sexual relationships." Suspending disbelief for a moment about the role of money in sexual relationships in New York and deciding not to pose the question of marriage as institutionalized prostitution (as Sarrinikolaou seems to be implying), one needs to ask what are the terms of comparison of the two settings: the newly rich Athenians and the newly rich New Yorkers? The newly rich Athenians and the off-the-center, intellectual New Yorkers? Immigrants in the U.S. and immigrants in Greece? It is this level of superficiality that makes the mistakes about Panathenaikos, and Ekali, and Kifissia matter. It is the fact that there is something that is suspect about his claim to the authenticity (and truthfulness) of his witness experience, not because we, as readers ask for such truthfulness, but because he, as the author, has set truthfulness at the core of his book.

There are two pervasive desires

in this book. One is the desire for the true and accurate representation of modern day Athens. The other is the desire for a pure and unadulterated beauty in Athens, a utopia that would have made the harshness of the author's childhood more bearable. But that's not what Athens is. Athens, just like any other big and old city, is a conglomerate of events, experiences, terrains, people, desires, specters of the urbane. There is nothing exceptional in Athens; it's a city that has beauty and ugliness, wealth and poverty, truth and lies, joy and sorrow, cruelty and tenderness. Just like the humanity that inhabits it. After all, as Kevin Andrews told us so many years ago, "If it's beauty you want go to Italy, go to the Cotswolds, go to a museum; don't come to Athens where something else might happen." So, should you read this book? Absolutely. Should you trust it? Only at your own risk.

Neni Panourgíá is associate professor of anthropology at Columbia University. Her book, "Fragments of Death, Fables of Identity: an Athenian Anthropography" (University of Wisconsin Press) received the Grand Jury Prize of the International Society for Ethnohistory (1996) and was a co-winner of the Chicago Folklore Prize (1997). Her new book, "Dangerous Citizens: The Flesh of Dissidence and the Terror of the State," is forthcoming (Fall 2008).



Photo by A. T. Chakalis

The restoration and replanting of the Greek Cultural Garden is being coordinated by the Hellenic Preservation Society of Northeastern Ohio



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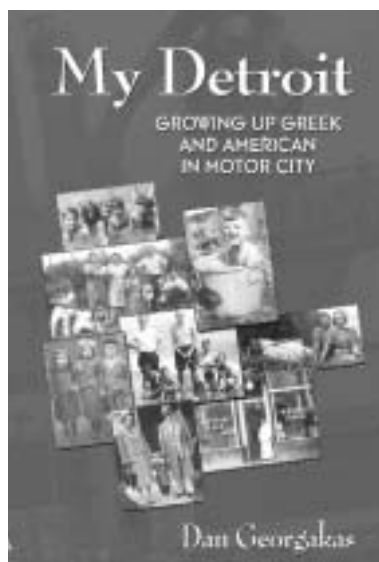


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The Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center of Chicago is proud to announce the creation of a Hellenic Writers Guild which will showcase authors and their works from all over the nation. Under the umbrella of the museum, the guild will allow for; promotion of authors and their works, archiving of their books and body of works in our library, opportunity to sell volumes in HMCC gift shop, allow works to be entered into competitions, offer space for book signings at the HMCC and many other things.

To this end, the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center asks that all Greek American authors submit their names, address, e-mail address, phone number and bibliography list of their works to the attention of Nick Vern, Hellenic Writers Guild Chairman, 801 W. Adams (4th Floor), Chicago, Illinois 60657.

Authors may also submit this information via email at HellenicWritersGuild@hellenicmuseum.org.



“My Detroit: Growing Up Greek and American in Motor City”

By Dan Georgakas

Pella Publishing, 312 pages, \$17 paperback

Dan Georgakas' Memoir Gives Us a Better Understanding of the World

By Steve Frangos
Special to The National Herald

Dan Georgakas' long-awaited biography “My Detroit: Growing Up Greek and American in Motor City” offers more than was expected (New York: Pella, 2006). I say long awaited because this memoir is a reworking of a nearly two-year serial of biographic vignettes that appeared from late 1988 well into 1989, in the now defunct newspaper, GreekAmerican. Readers with a familiarity with this series will be both surprised and perhaps more than a bit confused by what has transpired in the nearly 15 years of ongoing reflection and considerable rewriting. In this time of unprecedented change within the Greek American community, Georgakas has forged a thoughtful narrative any Greek in the United States will be served well to closely consider.

Georgakas offers a multiple-world perspective. What did Greeks do or how did they act is always offered in counterpoint to how did others in Detroit respond to the world around them. Georgakas escapes any Greek-Other duality. All his recollections note the sharp demarcations existing among the innumerable ethnic groups and social classes that made up the Detroit in which he grew up.

The book is divided into 12 chap-

ters. Rather than beginning with his birth, Georgakas opens with his first visit to Greece. Then he traces his life in Detroit, inner woven with stories about his parents, papou and the other Greeks of his youth. Yet at all times Georgakas never examines or considers any Greek; himself, those in Greece or the Detroit Greeks outside of their wider social contexts.

Dan Georgakas is a leading intellectual figure in Greek American studies and an extremely well-recognized labor historian. His volume, a unique contribution, will appeal to those interested in the history of ethnic groups in urban America, as well as those interested in the cultural, economic and class transformations evident in Detroit from roughly the 1940s into the 1970s.

In the last three chapters of his memoir, Georgakas offers a sweeping presentation of persons and historical events. The notable and the unknown cross these pages at a pivotal moment in the history of Detroit. As both an American and a Greek American biography, these final chapters are among the most significant in this entire volume. Let me stress Georgakas never leaves you guessing who some one is in this memoir. Soon to be internationally famous writers are next to long-lost friends. Yet it is with these final chapters that Georgakas turns his prime focus away from Greek America to one directed towards broader political, social and artistic issues centering on Detroit and America at large. Georgakas does deftly fold many of these non-Greek issues back onto the concerns and thoughts of his fellow Hellenes, but the focal point has definitely been turned.

With all that being said, I see Georgakas' memoir as the means to help us in our growing understanding of the inherent complexities of Greek American memoir.

Greek American Memoir falls within three distinct periods. The first encompasses those Greeks who came to the United States as refugees and orphans between 1821 and 1829. Among these volumes are C. Plato Castanis', “The Greek Exile” (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1851), “Photius Fisk: A Biography” credited solely to Lyman F. Hodge but clearly co-authored by Fisk (Boston: 1891), and George M. Colvocoresses', “Hoi sphages tou 1822 kai he zoe mou/The Massacres of Chios-1822: A Personal Narrative written for my Family” (Athena: Ekdose Philo-proodou Homilou Kampou, 1992). As I have written in the past, these accounts are offered as straight forward autobiographies/biographies

unquestionably intended for a Protestant American readership. Without going into greater detail these accounts largely follow abolitionist/slave narratives of this period.

The Second Period of Greek American Memoir corresponds to the 1880 to 1920 era of Greek immigrants. The Second Period does have its own host of recognizable genre subsets: “my experiences as an immigrant,” “my life in America as a Greek abroad (clearly offered in opposition to someone actually presenting themselves as simultaneously a Greek and an American),” “my experiences growing up the child of immigrants.”

Given what follows, I must stress here that at all times these accounts are offered as real world events in an acceptable Western literary point of view. No conventions or genre motifs are violated by either the First or Second group of Greek American memoirs. Each writer, in both groups, attests that the account is as true to events as they can reproduce. Most often, but not at all times, the sequence of events is offered in a chronological fashion from birth to death. If the writer is a person of historical prominence then the events offered in the narrative may cover specific aspects of their life or career, rather than a complete retelling of everything in their lives.

The Third Period of Greek American Memoirs begins in the 1980s and offers a revolution in presentation. This period does in point of fact con-



Dan Georgakas, author of “My Detroit,” is the director of the Greek American Studies Project at Queens College and a New York University professor.

tain volumes that absolutely adhere to the accepted norms of Western biography. Fine examples of this genre would include but are not limited to “Greek American Pioneer Women of Illinois,” Elaine Thomopoulos, editor (Charleston: Arcadia, 2000), “Growing Up Greek in St. Louis” by Aphrodite Matsakis (Chicago: Arcadia, 2002) and Connie Kiosse's “The Best of Friends Two Sisters, One Journey” (Haverfield PA: Infinity Publishing .com, 2003).

What distinguishes this period from all others is an ever expanding sub-group of accounts that completely ignore the accepted presentation of a Western memoir. With ever



Xenophon Georgakas and Demetrius Demos, boyhood friends from Sidirokastro, a village in the Peloponnesus near Kyparissia, are shown shortly after their arrival in Detroit in the mid-1910s.



Dan Georgakas and his mother on their front porch in Detroit: 1964.



Panayiotis Vlahantones, the “mayor” of Detroit’s Greektown, at a Greektown grocery in 1976.

growing numbers we see memoirs such as “Aimilia-Georgios/Emily-George” by Helen Papanikolas (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), Nicholas Gage’s “Eleni” (New York: Random House, 1983), or “Austin Lunch: Greek American Recollections” by Constance M. Constant (River Vale, Cosmos, 2005) which all completely veer away from the accepted genre format of Western memoirs.

The above authors (as well as the others in this broad grouping) blur one person with another by first offering their own thoughts and then jumping into another person’s mind and offering that second person’s thoughts. Many of these collective biographies open with the statement of collective authorship with then no indication of when one or another of the co-authors is speaking. Many present dialogue that the author freely admits they never heard. And regrettably more than a few largely ignore any kind of story development (as pacing, or in a well-balanced beginning, middle and end story format) by stuffing the narrative with information about a wide array of people largely peripheral to the central story. All of this occurs with the overall effect that from a Western point of view they are no longer writing a ‘factual’ biographical account of any sort but one that is fantasy at best.

The common core of these new Greek American biographies is the conflation or compression of various personas into a single voice. I take it on faith that any and all the writers, living or dead could and still can distinguish between themselves and others. That these Greek American writers, each and every one, knew/know Western conventions

concerning memoirs. That each of these writers could/can tell fact from fiction. So, logically if all that is the case why violate these conventions? Why leave yourself open to this kind of criticism?

Readership can be the only answer.

If “Emily and George,” “Eleni,” or “Austin Lunch” or any of the other Greek American memoirs that assume this collectivist persona stood alone, they would be an aberration. Yet a group of writers totally unconnected to each other have independently chosen the same multi-persona presentation. Logically then, given their common choice of a collective-voice, all I can assume is that they are all independently drawing upon some organic commonly held Greek American collective understanding. Since this choice is so clearly in open opposition to the dominant culture’s concept of what constitutes an autobiography/biography/memoir, then these Greek American writers are not writing to please or even engage Anglo-Saxons.

I do not believe any Greek Americans are carefully seeking out earlier Greek American writers to learn about a commonly shared past. I do not believe there is a self-conscious shared Greek American voice that is learned from reading. That is what makes this explosion of multi-persona accounts so exciting to discover. These authors are drawing on shared cultural mode of expression that is in no sense literate.

“My Detroit” and these collectivist memoirs intersect at one crucial point: the rejection of a single cultural point of view as being inherently superior over all others. Castanis, Fisk and Colvocoresses were confined not simply by the genre re-

quirements of the Western memoir, they also faced the then indisputable supposition of the natural superiority of American over Greek culture and society. This common “separate but equal” stance is not the same position. But it does speak to a shared discomfort and rejection of accepted memoir conventions.

For Georgakas’ non-Greek readers the last few chapters of “My Detroit” may prove far more interesting than all the rest. This has to do with who Dan Georgakas became after the events described in this volume end. Dan Georgakas is of that group of scholars who have gained intellectual renown before they turned or returned their intellectual attention to their Greek heritage. Academics and Intellectual Others such as Theodore Saloutos, Helen Papanikolas, Andrew T. Kopan, Alexander Karanikas, Charles Moskos, Alice Scourby and Eva Catafygiotu Topping all gained their livelihoods and whatever prominence they initially achieved in some field other than Greek American Studies.

Figures such as Kopan or Karanikas were so prominent in the Greek American community that many will say I am totally misrepresenting their lives. But let us not forget that while Kopan and Karanikas were unquestionably dynamic Greek American civic leaders, in their professional careers they were required by the academic system they entered to address other requirements first and only afterwards work within the system to change it to their own ends.

It is interesting to note here is that those who take the collectivist viewpoint are not academics. It is my belief that these writers are drawing upon the Greek concept of “dikos” which roughly translated means, in social terms, as “those family and friends with whom I am a part.” This can explain the conflation of identity, the inclusion of so many individuals in many of these accounts and the announcement that the narrative speaker is more than one person.

In “My Detroit: Growing Up Greek and American in Motor City,” Georgakas offers a multiple-perspective, where more can be learned by situationally “seeing” the world as a Greek, American, or Other than any one viewpoint taken alone. Georgakas extends and so refines this interpretative perspective by demonstrating that fundamental economic and social class considerations can never be ignored. I believe Georgakas’ biography, among its many other accomplishments, can serve as an intellectual bridge to those authors engaged in the multi-persona perspective.

Inherently each perspective recognizes the social chorus all around us. Georgakas places people in various groupings that, depending on



Five ladies and three generations. Bottom right: Katina Ziguris; Back right: Sophia Georgakas with the Vlahos family: daughter, mother, grandmothers in 1955. All but the Vlahos daughter were born in Asia Minor.

the situation under examination, highlight their similarities and differences under varying conditions. The collectivist voice, on the other hand, fuses persons and perspectives in a claim to be many individuals speaking as one. To be sure, it is a critical difference that cannot be ignored. There is a Greek folk saying, “One hand washes the other and both wash the face.” It is in that spirit that we can see Georgakas’ biography and the collectivists as offering insight into each other without denying them their own individual perspectives and considerable individual achievements.

As any reader of the especially fine “My Detroit” will quickly discover, the author gives us a better understanding of the world around us. This has always been at the very heart of that ardent Hellene and true American, Dan Georgakas. We once again find ourselves in his intellectual debt.

Steve Frangos, a regular contributor to *The National Herald*, travels throughout the country investigating and gathering historical information about the Greek American community. Readers can contact him at greekwrite@yahoo.com.

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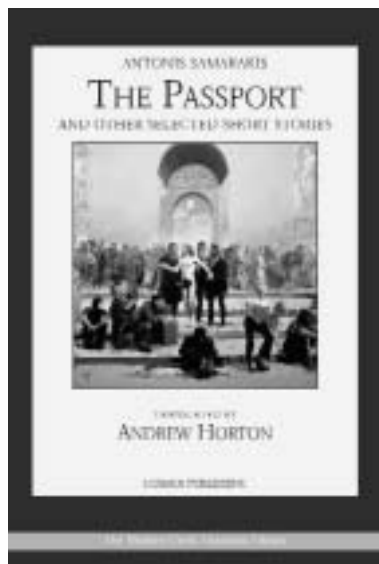
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“The Passport and other Selected Short Stories”

By Antonis Samarakis
(Translated by Andrew Horton)

Cosmos Publishing, 110 pages,
\$16.95, paperback

By Dan Georgakas
Special to The National Herald

The publication of “The Passport and other Selected Short Stories” is a testimony to the renewed vigor of Greek American literary presses. These publishers always have been priceless community resources, but in the past few years, both the number of works being translated from the original Greek and the quality of that work has increased markedly. Much of this publishing activity has been in the field of poetry as Greece is rightly heralded as a nation that has produced great contemporary poets such as Noble Laureats George Seferis and Odysseus Elytis and international literary legends such as C. P. Cavafy. For most of the twentieth century, in fact, poetry books have outsold fiction in Greece, a distinction shared with Wales and Iceland.

The effort given to promoting Greek poetic achievement has often resulted in a lack of attention given to Greek-language novelists and short story writers. Nikos Kazantzakis is the major exception. Even the general public knows of him as the author of “Zorba the Greek.” But most Americans, even most Greek Americans, would be surprised to know that Antonis Samarakis (1919-2003) is just as highly regarded by the internation-

A Greek Voice for our Times

al literary public. Samarakis has been translated into no less than 33 different languages. Although some of his stories have been available in English-language magazines, a new collection of his short fiction has been long overdue. “The Passport and Other Selected Short Stories” answers that need and strives to bring a notable Greek author to the attention of a broad American public.

The eight stories that have been anthologized and translated by Andrew Horton are vintage Samarakis. Each story focuses on a single character who is bedeviled by one or another aspect of contemporary society. The problem often involves the maddening ways of an errant political or social system. Just as often, however, the problem stems from within an individual who is confounded by his or her inability to deal with the stresses and anxieties of the modern world. However complex the political or emotional problems being addressed, the writing is always crisp and direct. Samarakis writes in the economical tradition of a Hemingway rather than in the rambling style of a Faulkner.

Horton, who is a screenwriter and has written extensively on how to write character-centered scripts, believes Samarakis’ spare writing style can be described as a kind of cinematic realism. By that, he means that a Samarakis short story, like a film, mainly explores the exterior surfaces of the physical world and how the protagonist confronts those surfaces. Most of the psychological drama unfolds in dialog rather than internal meditations. The characters speak aloud, even when speaking with themselves. Repeated references to the time or day nail down the physical setting, but the descriptions are only detailed enough to spur readers to use their own imaginations to complete the scene.

Horton is not alone in appreciating the cinematic aspects of Samarakis’ fiction. In 1960, Nikos Koundouras transformed the Samarakis short story “The River” into a film with mixed English and Greek dialog. “The River” won a number of prizes and has been screened in the United States as “This Side of the River.” Another story, “The Jungle,” was one of four stories in an anthology film titled “Tetragono” (The Rectangle, 1977). Sections of his most famous novel, “The Flow” were the basis for a Japanese television drama and several stories have been used for dramas presented on Greek and Canadian television.



TNH/COSTAS BEJ

Greece's General Consulate in New York and the Hellenic Literature Society hosted a celebration of Greek author, Antonis Samarakis, on February 16, 2007 at the Greek Press and Communication Office. Samarakis' book, "The Passport and Other Short Stories," translated by Andrew Horton, was presented. From left to right are Catherine Boura, Consul General of Greece in New York, Andrew Horton and Eleni Samarakis, widow of Antonis Samarakis.

These productions not only underscore the cinematic qualities of his writing but their universality. In 1970 he was presented with a major literary award in France, capping a decade in which he had won a number of literary honors in Greece.

THE STORIES

“The Passport,” the story that gives the anthology its name, was published in 1973, the final year of the rule of the junta. The story deals with an accountant fighting the police bureaucracy to get a passport, a situation that mirrored Samarakis’ own real-life plight. Rather than seeking safety abroad when the junta seized power in 1967, Samarakis had opted to remain in Greece. He thought that his literary fame offered enough protection for him to be able to argue for change from within the national borders, and he often gave interviews to the foreign press in which he criticized the regime. Mainly, however, he wrote fiction that mocked the oppressive state bureaucracy. Four of those stories (“The Passport,” “Mama,” “The Knife,” and “The Last Participation”) are in this collection. In 1970, the junta rewarded his efforts by seizing his passport. At various points in the struggle, the secret police told him that their harassment would cease, and he

would get a passport if he would only write a few kind words about the colonels.

Rather than give in to the junta’s demands, Samarakis wrote more plainly than ever before about the dictatorship in “The Passport.” The story’s power, as is often the case with Samarakis, is that it isn’t a complaint about a specific regime in a specific time and place. The nation in which the events transpire is not identified as Greece. Instead, the story examines the responses of an ordinary man when confronted with the maddening and coercive machinery of an anonymous, oppressive state. Language becomes an issue in that struggle. The honest citizen, much like the philosopher seeking wisdom, uses language as a means to clarify thought. The state, in contrast, is like a sophist who uses language as a means of manipulation. The objective of the state is to win the argument at hand, often at the cost of abandoning logic, objective data, and matters of principles. “The Passport” and other stories espousing democracy that he wrote in this period endeared Samarakis to a Greek public sickened by dictatorship. Given that 2007 will mark the fortieth anniversary of the coup, this anthology reminds us of how positively Greece has evolved since the fall of the dictatorship.

At a presentation of the anthol-

ogy at the Greek Press Office in New York, Horton read “Mama.” The story begins with a woman learning that the tunnel in which her son works has collapsed, killing many workers. She goes to the scene, and we follow her as she struggles to find out the particulars of the accident and whether her son is among the survivors. The story has a powerful ending that brought tears to the eyes of some of the audience in New York. The power of that ending lies in the unexpected manner in which Samarakis transforms the mother’s responses into emotions that go beyond the strictly personal and familial. When I asked Horton if he thought this was the best story in the collection, he said not necessarily so, but that it illustrated the “emotional punch” so characteristic of Samarakis.

The startling ending of “Mama” is a quality shared with other stories in the collection. In one of them, the narrator, who has engaged us in a complex tale, turns out to be dead. He has been speaking at his own burial ceremony. We only discover this at the end, but this is not just “a trick;” a wider point is being made about the perspective with which we view events. Some critics have compared these techniques to Franz Kafka, but Samarakis is far more hopeful than Kafka at his most op-



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Antonis Samarakis (1919-2003), one of modern Greece's most translated fiction writers, was the author of two novels and four short story collections.

timistic and much funnier. In terms of the dead man talking, rather than Kafka, I was reminded of the floating body of William Holden who is the voiceover in the film classic "Sunset Boulevard." A romantic rendezvous and related aspirations in other stories also end up in unexpected terrain.

In some stories, the characters speak directly to the reader in the first person. In others, dialog carries the story line forward. Whatever the narrative strategy, Samarakis always uses colloquial language that is stripped of literary allusions and other formalities. The original

Greek was largely in the demotiki rather than katharevousa, but always in the manner Greeks actually speak with one another. Horton has done yeoman's work in finding American equivalents that catch the populist nature, comedy and feeling of the original Greek while retaining the sense that this story is not unfolding in the United States.

A MOVEMENT OF THE SOUL

Samarakis famously observed that he wondered if Greece, in the process of giving off so much cultural light to the world, what he called "the lights of civilization," had forgotten to keep one for itself. His perspective is not that of an elitist but of a fervent democrat. He was concerned that culture in Greece had been debased. When a professor at a university described himself as a civil servant, Samarakis was outraged. He thought professors should be tribunes of culture, and that is not the job description for civil servants. One of the stories in this collection, "Anatomy Lesson, Etc." features a professor who begins very much in the civil servant mode but becomes the tribune his students had mistakenly thought he was all along. In that story, as in others, Samarakis expresses great faith in the ability of youth to inspire courage in others and to renew the national culture.

How citizens, particularly educated citizens, could tolerate a junta bewildered Samarakis. He thought no cultured person could accept such "stupidity" and "suppression." What individuals might score on an academic exam and how many books they might have read or even written was meaningless if they abided tyranny silently. His anger was not a matter of ideology so much as one of spirit. And much as Samarakis detested the junta, he did not think the colonels were alien mutations. He considered them fruit of a rotten cultural

tree, which meant that much in Greek culture needed to be rectified. But the political views of Samarakis are not easily categorized. During World War II, he had been in the Resistance against the Nazis, had been captured and then had escaped. He did not, however, have allegiance to any particular party. He said he belonged to "the movement of the soul." Although something of a generic anarchist who distrusted all governments and honored the potential of the average citizen, he thought it was wrong to ban any political party, including the Communists. In an interview given in 1965, he said that the intellectuality and spirituality of the common man was on a much higher plane than that of the king, church leaders, politicians, university professors and writers. He traced the worst aspects of modern Greek culture back to the establishment by outside forces of a foreign sovereign surrounded by wealthy homeland and foreign supporters. He posited that the students who had revolted at the Polytechnic in 1973 had laid the foundations for a better Greece.

Samarkis didn't like to be called a writer or author. He said he did not want to be a slave to his or anyone else's notion of "art." He did not think it necessary to write every day. He would write only when he had an idea or situation worthy of exploration. From time to time, he started with a conclusion and searched for a premise. Whatever



Andrew Horton, translator of Antonis Samarakis' "Passport and Other Selected Short Stories," is head of the film department at the University of Oklahoma and the author of two books on Theo Angelopoulos.

the genesis for his writing, he wanted his work to be infused with the same creative and playful spirit he had felt as a child of ten when he began to write poetry. His fiction writing had begun in the late 1940s when he had explored story ideas and themes with friends at a favorite taverna in Athens. His friends had urged him to write out his tales on paper so the stories could be more easily shared. He did so and published them in 1953 under the title "White Hope." As often is the case in Greece he paid for the publication himself and personally took it around to bookstores. When

a critic at To Vima reviewed it favorably, he began to reach a wide range of readers. His work would flow in numerous directions, winning plaudits from both the public and critics, at home and abroad. Among his American fans was playwright Arthur Miller who thought his novel "The Flow" was memorable for its profound understanding of the meaning of democracy. Novelist Graham Greene thought the novel was a masterpiece of imagination, wit and technical skill. In 1982, Samarakis would be honored by Europhalia for his overall contribution to literature.

For some years before his death, Samarakis had hoped to see his junta-era stories collected and had worked with Andrew Horton to that end. Cosmos Publishing must be commended for publishing the stories as part of its Modern Greek Literary Library series. "The Passport and Other Selected Stories" anthology exemplifies one of the many ways that the Greek American community and its allies continue to support contemporary Greek culture. Samarakis embodies some of the best values in Hellenism as he speaks brilliantly and persuasively for what Horton terms "the inner territories of freedom and moral dignity."

Dan Georgakas, author of "My Detroit," is the director of the Greek American Studies Project at Queens College and a New York University professor.

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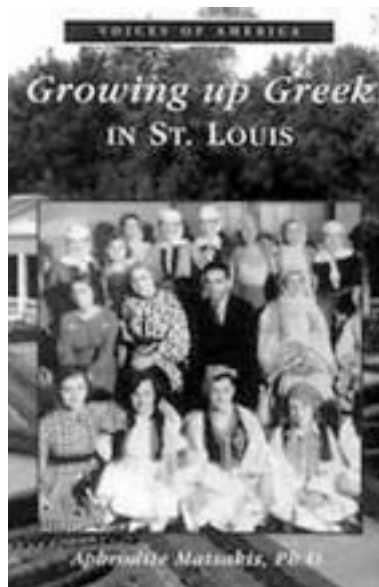
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“Growing Up Greek in St. Louis”

By Aphrodite Matsakis

Arcadia Publishing, 128 pages, \$19.99 paperback

The New “Historia” of St. Louis Greeks

By Steve Frangos
Special to The National Herald

“Growing up Greek in St. Louis” by Aphrodite Matsakis is yet another of the collective biographies streaming out of Greek America on nearly a daily basis. It is a finely written and well-conceived account that deserves the widest audience possible. Where “Growing Up Greek” differs from the other, now almost 100 accounts written since 1980, is in its unwavering clarity. Aphrodite Matsakis’ narrative demonstrates that no outside expert is really ever really necessary. Any thoughtful individual, from any group, can speak of their experience without the benefit of an outsider interpreter.

In contemporary American and Greek societies the expert is king. This says more about the heavy social conditioning in both these societies than it does anything inherently fundamentally special about a specialist.

I am so impressed by “Growing up Greek in St. Louis” because it is in the tradition of work by Helen Zeese Papanikolas and Eva Catafygiotu



In 1915 Tschlis and Rallis Grocery Store located at 6th and Elm, the current location of Busch Stadium, was part of St. Louis’s early Greek town. When Peter Tschlis came to St. Louis in 1904, he worked as a gandy dancer (one who laid railroad tracts) until he saved enough money to open the store with Andrew Rallis in 1907. They sold Greek imports, meat and other items. A butchery was located in the back. In 1915 Rallis and his family returned to Greece to live.

Topping, Efthalia Makris Walsh and others. Direct simple prose can describe and explain any social situation. Matsakis is forthright about this account being based solely on her subjective experience:

“When I first shared this manuscript with relatives, some of them commented, “That never happened!” or “It happened, but not like you say!” Not only do they disagree with me, but with each other. Alas, truth is elusive. Even people growing up in the same family can have vastly different experiences.

“Undoubtedly some of my memories have been tainted by time and subsequent events and photos. With the exception of my relatives, I have changed names and other identifying details about persons, sometimes combining individuals into a composite, for purposes of confidentiality. Except for my family, any resemblance to individuals, dead or alive, is purely coincidental.

“Yet there are no fabricated stories here. Although certain non-essential specifics may have been different, the emotional essence has remained true. To the best of my knowledge, I’m recording what I saw, heard, and experienced inside.

“I write as a Greek American who now, more than ever, values her heritage and hopes to see it sustain the younger generations as much as it did me. But I also write as a woman. If one of my brothers had written this book, it would probably be different in both perspective and tone (11).”

For those of you who have not read any contemporary ethnography on modern Greece this description of who is named or not named, the subjective collection of data, and the creation of composite characters to il-

lustrate prevalent social actions are all commonplace narrative devices. These ethnographies are always based on the written notes of the ethnographers. So it is from this compilation of diary entries of observations and conversations collected in the past (themselves based on the memories or explanations of others) on which the ethnographic “present” is quite consciously composed.

Since we have no contemporary university based sociologist, anthropologist, folklorist or even historian researching and writing about Greek American society and culture we are indeed fortunate that talented individuals such as Aphrodite Matsakis have taken the trouble to research,

think about and write such works of real and lasting significance.

Matsakis has set herself the task of writing of her experiences growing up Greek. The book therefore is not a historical account of all things Greek in St. Louis. Still by taking this very self-consciously personal approach the author has in fact provided us a much fuller sense of daily life from the late 1940s until the present than the average historical account.

“Growing up Greek in St. Louis,” like other volumes by Arcadia Publishing’s Voice of America series, is 128 pages long, with 10 chapters and some 112 historical black and white photographs. The photographs are vital to this account’s narrative. We not only see the individuals mentioned but we also “see” physiological and social similarities to other Greek American communities around the country. Very often this carefully selection of photographs (and their captions) not only illustrates the narrative but frequently extends the story over time.

The sequence of chapters reports on this commonality. Chapter One, “From Karpathos to St. Louis,” outlines the passage to America by the author’s immigrant ancestors. In Chapter Two, “Shake, Rattle, and Roll,” among the author’s very first memories is the Greek propensity for social gatherings, which invariably include song and dance. Chapter Three, “The Double House: the Greek Side and the American Side,” speaks of how the actual layout of the author’s home compartmentalized her two identities. In Chapter Four, “The Greek School Blues,” the mixed response every child feels for



After the author’s *Yiayia* Aphrodite died in 1954, the women in her immediate and extended family wore black for many years. Nobody forced them to: they did so willingly to express their sorrow. Pictured in black from left to right (front row) are Sophia Gorman; (standing), Theodora Anagnos, Maria Caputo and Theodora Matsakis. The bereaved husband, Elias Papageorge, seated in the front row, is wearing the traditional black mourning tie. For years after his wife’s death, he sat before her picture and sang love songs to her on his mandolin. Seated to his right are his three grandchildren. Being children, they were exempt from wearing mourning clothes.

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Aphrodite Matsakis, Ph.D.

attending afternoon school is examined at length. Chapter Five describes "An Old Fashion Greek Christmas; Chapter Six, " 'Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death' recalls all those Greek school programs Matsakis and her cohorts were made to participate in. In Chapter Seven, "The Grandmothers in Black," the author first describes the immigrant generation of women and then notes the transformations in successive generations. Chapter Eight, "Good Bye Sweet Dreams," is an especially thoughtful account of the author's grandmother's life of sacrifice. Chapter 9, "To Fast Not To Fast," examines the complexities of "how Greek or how American to be?" Finally, Chapter 10, "How I Got to Go to College," explores not only the author's efforts to receive an education but how previous generations of women in her family were denied or successfully fought for education.

I can without reservation recommend this book to anyone who wants to read a concise, thoughtful narrative of Greek American life. These are the kinds of book one would hope would be used in the classroom or recommended by friends.

In that regard there does seem to be a fundamental problem. From conversations I have had with various authors and company representatives Arcadia Publishing Company is having difficulty selling their Greek American volumes outside their geographic areas of focus. I was especially surprised when Arcadia editors as well as individual Greek Americans authors asked me during our conversations if I knew of any way to improve their sells. As I told these individuals, I see this dilemma as an expression of the Greek tendency even here in North America to only care about those Greek individuals they know personally. This 'city state' mentality has deep roots in our community's self-view and so social structure.

We can see this orientation in the contents of the nearly 100-biographi-

cal/collective historical volumes Greek Americans have produced since 1980. In the original Greek, "historia" simultaneously means 'history' and 'story.' Uninfluenced by any professional class these Greek American writers have been expressing their collective sense of self without having to get approval from anyone. The "proof" that Greek Americans have a common cultural and historical experience can be seen not simply by virtue of the similarity of themes and conclusions seen in these books.

The very 'voice' that we hear is a collective, familial and squarely based on a Greek community basis. Throughout this volume Matsakis cuts to the core issue: "The extended family, including those still in Greece, not the nuclear family, was the rule of the day (21)." The St. Louis community Matsakis so clearly describes was her "village" of everyday experience as it is for all Greek Americans no matter where they live.

Matsakis unfortunately begins the volume's first sentence with a minor point of Greek American history that is inaccurate: "Although some Greeks claim that Christopher Columbus was Greek, the first bona fide Greeks came to the U.S. in the early 1800s (Moskos 1990)."

In 1768, the New Smyrna Colony of some 1,200 colonists, with more than half this contingent being ethnic Greeks, was established in eastern Florida. The Saint Photios National Greek Orthodox Shrine in St. Augustine, Florida honors the memory of this migration to the New World.

Aphrodite Matsakis writes without fail or pause when it comes to St. Louis or Karpathos. It is only with those less than a handful of references to Greeks outside that worldview where she has momentarily misstepped. This is absolutely the only flaw I discovered in this otherwise exceptional account.

Aphrodite Matsakis and I are from the same generation. The Greek American society she describes is the mirror image of the one I grew up in. It will be by reading books such as "Growing up Greek in St. Louis" that future researchers, be they born in Greece or otherwise, will come to a better and clearer understanding of the origins and social world that now constitutes Greek America.

Steve Frangos, a regular contributor of The National Herald, is a freelance writer who travels throughout the country investigating and gathering historical information about the Greek American community. Readers interested in contacting him are encouraged to e-mail him at greekwrite@yahoo.com.

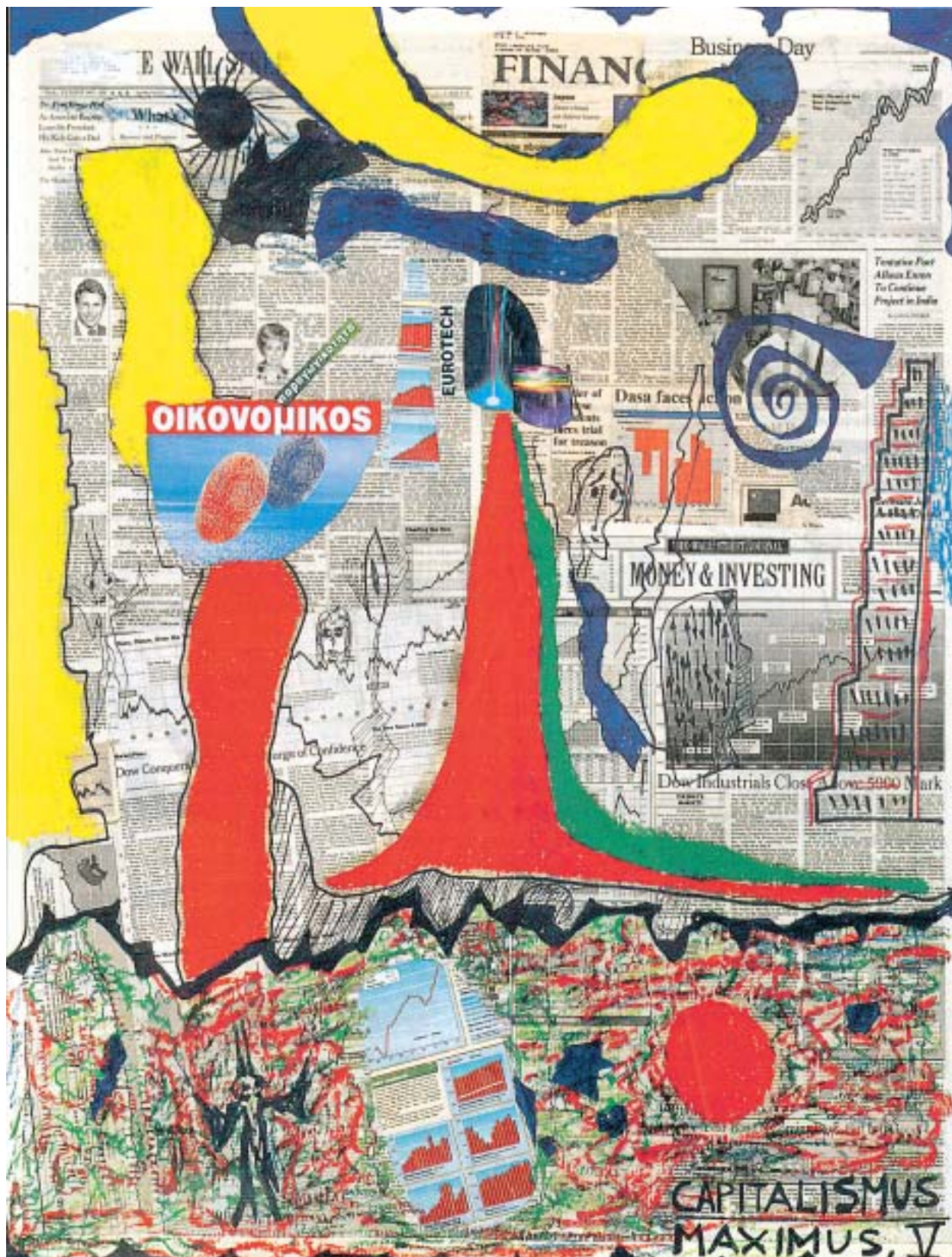
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