“‘Eleni’ and ‘A Place for Us’ are verbal paintings of a particular time, place and people, all of which are faded now,” explains author Nicholas Gage. And like any painting of enduring worth, his written photograph of his family’s immigrant experiences touches upon and explores several eternal themes - the search for one’s father, the meaning of family and of home, and the exhilarating but often turbulent and painful adventure of coming to live in a new land.
Queens College, CUNY
Center for Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies

The Center offers a rich interdisciplinary program in:
- Byzantine History & Art
- Modern Greek Culture
- History, Politics, Language, Literature & Greek American Politics

Leading to

BA in Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies

Courses Offered in FALL 2006

GRST 100-MODERN GREEK CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION
CODE 2859 Mondays 1:40-4:30 pm
Prof. Dan Georgakas
This course will survey major cultural practices, intellectual pursuits and ideological currents from post-Byzantine to the present period. Will examine the development of Greek identity, and the role of national culture in modern Greece.
3 Credits

HISTORY 200-20TH CENTURY GREECE: HISTORY, POLITICS & SOCIETY
CODE 1354 Tue & Thur 3:05-4:20 pm
Prof. Theodore Theocharis
This course will look at the history of Greece in the 20th century, the formation of political institutions, the evolution of democracy, social formations and trends, the role of civil society, & Anglo-Greek and US-Greek relations.
3 Credits

HISTORY 209-THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE, 324-1025 A.D.
CODE 2860 Tuesdays 1:40-4:30 pm
Prof. Vasileios Marinis
This course will examine the history of the Byzantine Empire, the founding of Constantinople; the transfer of the Imperial Capital to the East; the Christianization of the Empire; the wars with Persians & Arabs; and the Empire’s cultural expansion.
3 Credits

ART HISTORY 211-EARLY CHRISTIAN AND BYZANTINE ART
CODE 3476 Wednesday 1:40-4:30 pm
Prof. Vasileios Marinis
This course will explore the origins of the first Christian art with focus on the art of Byzantium. Architecture, Church mosaics, frescoes, marble decorations, illuminated manuscripts, textile, will be examined along with the secular art of Byzantium.
3 Credits

CODE 1145 Tue & Thur 10:50-12:10 pm
Prof. Christos P. Ioannides
This course will examine the role of Greek Americans (G/A) in U.S. politics, the 1974 Cyprus crisis as catalyst for G/A politicization, the creation of the "Greek Lobby," the Turkish arms embargo (1974-1978) & the emergence of Dukakis, Tsongas, Sarbanes, Snowe, Angelides and other G/A as national political figures.
3 Credits

GRKMD 112-ELEMENTARY MODERN GREEK II
CODE 2287 Mon & Wed 10:15-12:15 pm
Prof. Yiannis Zikoudis
Prereq: Modern Greek 101 or equivalent or Department permission
This course is a continuation of Modern Greek 101. A graded reader is introduced to present literary and cultural aspects of Greece and to offer topics for simple exercise in composition. Class hours include use of the language laboratory.
3 Credits

GRKMD 231-MODERN GREEK TRANSLATION
CODE 2255 Mon & Wed 1:40-2:55pm
Prof. Yiannis Zikoudis
Prereq: Modern Greek 203 and English 110, or Department permission;
Intensive practice in translation from Modern Greek to English and vice-versa. Texts will be chosen from literature, journalism, advertising, and business. Techniques of translation.
3 Credits

GRKMD 306-MODERN GREEK LITERATURE II
CODE 2256 Tue & Thur 4:30-5:45 pm
Prof. Michael Skafidas
Prereq: Greek 305 or equivalent
An introduction to the principal genres of 19th & 20th Greek literature. Selections will be read from lyric and narrative poetry, novels, short stories, drama, & essays.
3 Credits

GRKMD 335-MODERN GREEK NOVEL
CODE 2261 Tue & Thur 1:40-2:55 pm
Staff
Prereq: Sophomore Standing
Cross-disciplinary study of authors and dominant themes in Greek literature and culture. Taught either in Greek or in English as announced by Department.
3 Credits

Register Online:
www.webreg.qc.cuny.edu OR www.qc.cuny.edu/admissions

Queens College
Ranked 8th among
"America’s Best Value Colleges" (Princeton Review)

For More Information please contact the Center: (718) 997-4520
Email: byzgreek@qc.edu
Website: www.qc.cuny.edu/greekstudies

Welcoming “Books”

A New Feature of The National Herald

The late Theano Papazoglou Margaris, an award-winning author who used to write for The National Herald, burned extra copies of her first published work, “Efthypia and Other Stories,” in bitter disappointment when she had no place to store them. She discovered that Greek Americans were not interested in buying the book, written in demotic Greek and based on the experiences of the early pioneers who immigrated to America in the early 1900s. The early immigrants were too busy working long hours establishing their businesses and raising their families. Often they had attended only a few years of school. They had neither the time nor the interest in reading literature.

Today most of the Greek Americans, especially the second and third generations, are college educated. They include professionals and academics, as well as executives and entrepreneurs. Today there is an interest in Greek American literature, as witnessed by large attendance at venues such as the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center in Chicago, where 120 people recently came to a presentation by Nicholas Kokonis featuring his first novel, “Arcadia, My Arcadia.”

To make you aware of the best in Greek American literature, this special feature will not only bring renowned authors, like Harry Mark Petrakis, Nicholas Gage and Charles Moskos to your attention, but will also showcase less known but talented authors, like Nicholas Kokonis or Beatriz Badikian-Gartler.

We will feature not only their books but personal glimpses into their lives, their struggles and dreams, and what propelled them to write.

We publish this issue, with another to follow in November, to give Greek American authors a forum for a discussion of their work. It will also give you an opportunity to know them and to read their work. Not only do we intend to whet your appetite for reading but also hope to encourage you to put pen to paper.

We intend to publish at least two special issues a year and possibly more and to feature book reviews on a regular basis in the National Herald.

The National Herald welcomes review copies of published work in English. The books can be fiction or non-fiction, poetry or essays about Greek Americans or Greece. Translations of books from Greek to English are also welcome. Send books to The National Herald, 37-10 30th Street, Long Island City, New York 11101.

Elaine Thomopoulos
Managing Editor

Queens College
Ranked 8th among
"America’s Best Value Colleges" (Princeton Review)

For More Information please contact the Center: (718) 997-4520
Email: byzgreek@qc.edu
Website: www.qc.cuny.edu/greekstudies
Interventional Heart Group

Richard A. Shlofmitz MD, FACC
Thomas W. Pappas MD, FACC
Alan B. Goldman MD, FACC
Burak M. Arkonac MD, FACC
Theofanis Tsiamtsiouris MD, FACC
Antonio P. Madrid MD, FACC

Comprehensive Cardiac Evaluation & Treatment
Affiliated with St. Francis Hospital – The Heart Center®

Featuring the 64-Slice Cardiac CT Scan
“Cutting-Edge” Technology
For Early Detection of Heart Disease

For Consultation and Diagnostic Testing
with any of our
Board Certified Cardiologists

516.390.9640
A Son’s Growing Love for his Father

By Aphrodite Matsakis

Special to The National Herald

“‘Eleni’ and ‘A Place for Us’ are verbal paintings of a particular time, place and people, all of which are faded now,” explains author Nicholas Gage. And like any painting of enduring worth, his written photograph of his family’s immigrant experiences touches upon and explores several eternal themes - the search for one’s father, the meaning of family and of home, and the exhilarating but often turbulent and painful adventure of coming to live in a new land.

The books are a testament to the enduring strength of the Gatzoyiannis family as they face difficulties in Greece and the United States, as well as a memorial to the author’s parents. In his internationally acclaimed and prize-winning book, “Eleni: A Savage War, A Mother’s Love, and A Son’s Revenge: A Personal Story,” Nicholas Gage immortalizes his mother. In “A Place for Us: A Greek Immigrant Boy’s Odyssey To A New Country And An Unknown Father,” he immortalizes his father.

Just as “Eleni” captivates the reader with its emotionally vivid portrayal of Eleni and her children and those who shaped the family’s fate in Greece, “A Place for Us” reveals the inner struggles and complex dilemmas facing the family in the United States. Gage writes: “This story of the children of Eleni Gatzoyiannis in America is the recollection of an immigrant who arrived at mid-century, old enough to be molded by the traditions left behind but young enough to belong in the new world. The particular calamities, heartaches, and triumphs in these pages are not unique to my sisters and me, but our odyssey is as old as the nation: the arduous journey across the bridge that separates an old familiar world from a new and frightening one, to find a place for ourselves on the other side.”

Upon entering American school, Nicholas finds that “all the children ... seemed bigger” than both he and his sister combined. As if this didn’t make him feel enough like an outsider, because he doesn’t know English, he is placed in classes for the mentally retarded. His subsequent efforts to have his intelligence acknowledged and to be accepted by his peers will ring a familiar bell to many Greek American readers.

Gage’s sisters face similar hurdles but their adjustment process is complicated by the fact of being female. The Old World restrictions on women did not evaporate simply because the sisters now lived on American soil. Gage’s sisters, like many other Greek American women, struggle with the tensions between the strict Puritanical values of their Greek village and the more modern expectations for women in the United States. Gage’s descriptions of the sometimes irresolvable conflicts between the old and the new standards for women are written with such clarity and such compassion that they would meet the approval of even the most exacting teacher of the psychology of women.

Of all the sisters, Olga, the eldest, adheres most closely to the traditional role for women and the customs of the past. Upon coming to the United States, Olga wants to continue wearing mourning clothes for her mother for at least five years. But her sister, Kanta, can’t wait to toss aside her black dresses and stockings and don more colorful and softer American apparel. Olga also balks at the idea of going to church. As she explains to her father, “No self-respecting girl beyond the age of 11 lets herself be seen in church until her wedding day. You know that!”

Olga eventually finds solace, as “Eleni” contains an astounding amount of meticulous historical and sociological research on Greece in general and on Epirus and his birth village of Lia in particular. “A Place for Us” provides a detailed explanation of how the particular twists and turns of national, international and local economic, social and political forces altered his life and the lives of his family and other Greek immigrants.

Indeed, Gage has been widely acclaimed for the thoroughness and scrupulousness of his research. He states that he never relied on just one source for information, but on several historical or other documents and on numer-
ous interviews. According to Gage, none of the facts in any of his books have been disproved.

His careful detailed research is evident in other of his books. For example, his account of the tempestuous love affair between Aristotle Onassis and Maria Callas in "Greek Fire" is not based on pure gossip, sensationalistic press reports or on his own personal speculations. In preparation for writing this book, Gage reviewed a multitude of newspaper and magazine articles on Onassis and Callas, and conducted numerous interviews with those who knew these outstanding individuals the best. Gage’s “Greece: Land of Light” is chock full of information and insight into Greek history, art, mythology and village life and his "Hellas: A Portrait of Greece" reveals his vast knowledge of Greek culture, both past and present.

In his book, "A Place for Us," Gage describes the developing and sometimes stormy relations with his father. Like Telemachus who set sail in search of his long-lost father, Ulysses, the hero of Homer’s “Odyssey,” who among us has not sought to find or better know our father? And who among us has not wrestled with conflicting feelings towards that father? Hence Gage’s work speaks to and has been appreciated not only by Greek Americans but also by a much wider audience.

According to Freud, love and hate, longing and contempt, and other strong contradictory emotions towards a parent are to be expected. But for the young Nicholas, any “normal” ambivalence towards his father is intensified; he believes that his mother would be alive if his father had brought the family to the United States prior to the outbreak of war. Yet when the nine year old Nicholas arrives in the United States, it is not only anger he feels towards his father, but “love (and) longing” as well. “Like any child who has only one parent left, I longed to admire my father,” he writes.

The course and ultimate resolution of the inner turmoil resulting from this cauldron of emotions towards his father is one of the central themes of the book. Gage has described "Eleni" as a love story - a mother’s love for her children and their love for her. In many ways “A Place for Us” is also a love story - a father’s love for his son and the son’s growing love for his father. As Nicholas grows into adolescence and adulthood, he comes to see and appreciate aspects of his father of which he was unaware as a child. For example, he learns about the many people his father has helped come to the United States and the generous checks he has been sending overseas to relatives and other Greeks still suffering from the ravages of war. Over time, Nicholas becomes increasingly aware of the self-centeredness, dishonesty, pettiness and disloyalty of some of his father’s peers (fellow Greeks) and he comes to see and value his father’s good-natured soul more than ever. He also develops a deeper appreciation of the hurdles faced by his father, who arrived in the United States with the power of the written word pocket. He admires him for managing to support his family by working hard and making the most of every opportunity.

Gage states that as he entered adolescence and adulthood, he found himself making foolish mistakes. For example, one reason his father hadn’t sent for his wife and children was his assumption that since his family had survived the Nazi occupation, surely they would survive the Greek Civil War. After all, Greeks would certainly not be as merciless towards one another as the Germans had been. Christos was not alone in this assumption, for the cruelty of Greek against Greek in the Civil War was a shock to many. Another fascinating aspect of this book is Gage’s description about how he became a writer. After writing an eighth grade essay on his mother’s execution and his and his sisters’ escape and observing the deep impact of this essay on his teachers, classmates, and others, Nicholas began to appreciate the power of the written word. His writing skills grew as he helped his father write letters to government and other officials on behalf of impoverished Greeks in Greece and struggling Greek American immigrants.

After college, Gage went on to become an investigative reporter and foreign correspondent and in 1970 began working for the New York Times. He investigated and wrote articles on Onassis and Callas, and "Greek Fire" is not based on pure gossip, sensationalistic press reports or on his own personal speculations. In preparation for writing this book, Gage reviewed a multitude of newspaper and magazine articles on Onassis and Callas, and conducted numerous interviews with those who knew these outstanding individuals the best. Gage’s “Greece: Land of Light” is chock full of information and insight into Greek history, art, mythology and village life and his "Hellas: A Portrait of Greece" reveals his vast knowledge of Greek culture, both past and present.

It is not only in the United States, it is not only for the young Nicholas arrives in the United States, it is not only anger he feels towards his father, but “love (and) longing” as well. “Like any child who has only one parent left, I longed to admire my father,” he writes.

The course and ultimate resolution of the inner turmoil resulting from this cauldron of emotions towards his father is one of the central themes of the book. Gage has described “Eleni” as a love story - a mother’s love for her children and their love for her. In many ways “A Place for Us” is also a love story - a father’s love for his son and the son’s growing love for his father. As Nicholas grows into adolescence and adulthood, he comes to see and appreciate aspects of his father of which he was unaware as a child. For example, he learns about the many people his father has helped come to the United States and the generous

The course and ultimate resolution of the inner turmoil resulting from this cauldron of emotions towards his father is one of the central themes of the book. Gage has described “Eleni” as a love story - a mother’s love for her children and their love for her. In many ways “A Place for Us” is also a love story - a father’s love for his son and the son’s growing love for his father. As Nicholas grows into adolescence and adulthood, he comes to see and appreciate aspects of his father of which he was unaware as a child. For example, he learns about the many people his father has helped come to the United States and the generous
Threads of Greek American Life:
From Myth to Modern Science, Eugenides Spins a Brilliant Tale of Self-Transformation

By Antonia Callas
Special to The National Herald

When I first learned that the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, “Middlesex,” was written by a Greek American writer, I picked it up with anticipation. In a world where we increasingly expect our stories led to us in easily digestible bits, it’s hard to believe that truth, fate and epics on the scale of “The Odyssey,” are relatable, much less relevant to us today.

Yet author Jeffrey Eugenides created a sprawling whopper of a modern Greek epic so compelling Homer himself would rise from his grave to dance the “Syrtos.” And judging by the reception from the literary world and the book reading public, epics on the scale of Homer still have the capability to astonish. The novel has garnered impressive reviews since it was published in 2002 and has sold over a million copies since it was released in paperback the following year.

Jeffrey Eugenides first novel, “The Virgin Suicides” (1993), brought him literary fame and was made into a beautifully dreamy film. Then it took Eugenides 10 years to write “Middlesex.” It was well worth the wait. It is the story of a hermaphrodite. “I was born twice,” Calliope/Cal tells us, “First as a baby girl … and then again as a teenage boy, in an emergency room…” The story is narrated by Cal, who is inspired to trace his heredity back several generations: “Sing now, O Muse, of the restorative mutation on my fifth chromosome!” And it’s with that Homeric vamped that we get a glimpse of the great sweep of Eugenides intension.

This exuberant novel opens its expansive arms and sings. Lives and characters burst from the pages, taking you along for a wild ride through time from the tiny village of Bithynios on the slopes of Mount Olympus in Asia Minor to the streets of Detroit; speeding through the American landscape, blurring myth and reality in one glorious air-cushioned ride.

The odyssey begins with Cal’s paternal grandparents, Lefty and Desdemona Stephanides, a passion-smitten brother and sister who barely escape with their lives from the burning of Smyrna in 1922. On the boat to America, they are married and begin a new life in Detroit, where no one knows their true identities save for one cousin sworn to secrecy. Steeped in classical Greek references, the novel is a coming of age story as well as a tragicomic family chronicle of immigration and assimilation.

“Middlesex” unspools through Detroit’s automobile assembly lines, through prohibition, the Depression, World War II, the Nation of Islam, the 1967 Detroit race riots and 1970’s suburban America. Eugenides uses these events to explore the gap between male and female, nature and nurture, fate and free will, Greek and WASP, black and white, Old and New. If this sounds like a lot - it is. But Eugenides stitches it together firmly with a big helping of mythic subtext.

These themes of transformation, myth, fate and what it means to be a second generation Greek American were the subject of a recent phone conversation I had with Eugenides.

As it has been almost four years since the book was published, I ask him how he is feeling about the ongoing success of “Middlesex.” Eugenides pauses for a moment before answering, “Everyone has wild dreams of success ... usually it doesn’t happen, but it’s nice when it does.” The Greek community’s response to Eugenides has been building since the book was published. He received invitations to speak from many Greek organizations and was recently honored by the Esios Foundation in San Francisco.

Although “Middlesex” is a coming-of-age story, it also a big family saga that traces three generations of Greeks in America and their coming to terms with the idea of the American Dream. Eugenides tells me the novel didn’t begin as a book about Greek Americans, but about a genetic condition, hermaphroditism. When he started thinking about genetics it made him think about heritage. The subject had a classical Greek theme, making it a natural thing to use. Says Eugenides,
“While the Greek part of the book came after the original impulse, it became a major feature of the book, and I was glad about that because I didn’t want to write a book about some changing genders. I wanted to write a book about lots of different transformations of identity that had many different plots and storylines and most of them involve someone changing his or her identity. There is the transformation of the Greek immigrant obviously trying to become American, but there are many different switches that go on. My narrator presides over the larger tale of metamorphosis.”

The transformation of the Greek immigrant to American citizen is recognizable in the stories of our families: the intense drive of our parents and grandparents to forge a life for themselves from the great American Dream of being a self-made person and rising to the heights of success. Eugenides is half Greek. He is the son of an American-born father whose Greek parents emigrated from Asia Minor and an American mother of Anglo-Irish descent. Eugenides says, “I think it’s difficult for the first generation born in America and they tried to assimilate as much as possible to become American. My own father was super American. He was proud to be Greek, but it wasn’t his initial identity. He grew up speaking Greek to his parents but never went back to visit Greece or his main allegiance was definitely to America.”

The theme of transformation and assimilation in “Middlesex” also neatly cut a groove down the middle of my own life as well. Obviosly many second-generation children find themselves changing from the very thing they most identified with growing up. Cal’s story parallels this metamorphosis. While his identity is formed by a complicated history of family, by the end of the novel, he has moved to Berlin, having left all that is familiar, and is waiting to see what comes next. I ask Eugenides if he thinks having been a product of that particular era and generation we’ve been more prone to drift away from our roots.

He responds, “I think it’s typical for the second generation to be interested in reclaiming and rediscovering the ethnic heritage that you have,” he says. “I never felt I had to prove my Americanism; it was something my father felt he had to do. It was not a risk for me to be interested in my Greek heritage. Having said that, it does seem to be slowly disappearing. The Greekness of the Eugenides line seems to be increasingly adulterated – which is inevitable when you have successive mixed marriages.”

Eugenides is married to Karen Yamauchi and they have a daughter. I tell him that I am married to a non-Greek and have a son. I find it can be a struggle to continue with traditions, especially without an extended family. So I’m trying to redefine what being Greek American means for my son.

Eugenides agrees: “Since my mother wasn’t Greek, I didn’t grow up with so many of the traditions after my grandparents died. (His grandfather passed away when he was about 10 and his grandmother in his teen years.) I think if your mother is Greek you tend to hold on to it a little bit better because they are often the purveyors of culture. My father was not a big churchgoer so we didn’t go. I remember very strongly when I was young our house being full of immigrant Greeks and Greek being the major language being spoken. It was childhood when that was present and it just sort of faded away. In a way, in order to write ‘Middlesex’ I had to bone up on Greek culture myself.”

The discussion turns to the age-old concern of Greek storytellers – the conflict between fate and freewill. In “Middlesex” it plays out as contemporary genetic determinism. Eugenides says he was trying to modernize the concept of Greek fate and put it into a modern, scientific, biological context. “It occurs to me today that people are locked into an idea of genetic determinism which is no different than the ancient Greek idea in Sophocles and other writers, that you are born with a fate you can’t escape. My narrator is someone who is fated to have a genetic condition, yet that does not determine his life. So the book is really about how this person fights and achieves a measure of free will within a determined situation.”

Eugenides has said that what Calliope goes through in becoming Cal is normalized by the way he tells the story. His point was to write the story of a real hermaphrodite instead of a mythical one like Tiresias who’d been both a man and a woman and whom the gods have given the gift of prophecy. “Reading about Tiresias the seeker who has been a woman and a man, that is something that struck me early on – how useful a character that would be,” says Eugenides.

When I ask him if the inclusion of the mythology of ancient Greece was something conscious on his part or if it flowed naturally, he replies, “Nothing flowed out very easily when I was writing Middlesex! But I was conscious that the book would be a comedy and that it would also have mythological references, but not in a very serious way.”

Eugenides completely understands the stand, pride and irony of being Greek, saying, “It’s a feature of being Greek that you sort of think that you are connected to the golden age of Athens and Alexander the Great was a distant uncle. Those kinds of feelings are funny and I wanted to use them obviously.”

What is most interesting is that Eugenides says he doesn’t think of himself as a Greek American writer yet he has succeeded in capturing the very structure of our society from a Greek American point of view. “I’m an American writer and I’m trying to understand my country,” Eugenides says, “I never think about having any duty to being Greek. I am Greek, I’ve learned to write about it.”

I tell Eugenides, “When I read ‘Middlesex’ I felt this wonderful sense of relief – finally! Names, words, thoughts, and expressions I recognized as coming from my heritage were being used on the front page of an American novel. It’s about time!”

He chuckles, then says, “In everything I grew up reading, people were called Quinn or Foster. It was a big breakthrough for me to call someone Stephanides in a novel. What I am interested in doing now is trying to let my Greek identity exist in my books in a way that it actually exists in my life, which is, definitely there, but more in the background of my life. ‘Middlesex’ is a book that really treats it head-on and it’s more of an urban Greek, first generation Greek.”

I think it’s more than that. As the world shrinks, naturally we question who we are, our place in the world and where we are going with more frequency. In America, scholars such as Charles Moskos, Nicholas Gage and others query in print about the future of Greek America. While even Tiresias might not be able to divine the answer to the future of Greek America, Eugenides stalks a serious claim on the legitimacy and strength of our present.”

Christopher Janus once said, “We were brought up on myths and we must believe in myths. Maybe the whole idea of the ancient Greeks being in us is a bit of a myth, but we still have to believe it ...”

Jeffrey Eugenides has written a novel that not only makes us believe but illuminates a brilliant path toward the future.

Antonia Callas is the Media Relations Manager for the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center in Chicago. She is a produced screenwriter and has written and directed a short film. In her spare time she enjoys writing for various publications.

The mission of the ALEXANDER S. ONASSIS PUBLIC BENEFIT FOUNDATION (USA) is to disseminate Hellenic civilization throughout the United States and Canada. By cooperating with universities, colleges and art institutions in the United States, Canada, and Greece, the Onassis Foundation (USA) promotes bilateral cultural relations.

ONASSIS CULTURAL CENTER

In carrying out the mission of the Onassis Foundation (USA), the Onassis Cultural Center, opened in Fall 2000, presents cultural and artistic activities concerning ancient, Byzantine and modern Hellenic civilization. Invited participants may be Greeks and non-Greeks inspired by Hellenism. Activities include art exhibitions, theatrical and dance performances, musical events, lectures and poetry readings and film screenings. Following their presentation at the Onassis Cultural Center, these activities may tour other cultural and art institutions in the United States and Canada.

UNIVERSITY SEMINARS PROGRAM

The Onassis Foundation (USA) finances a University Seminars Program intended to increase awareness and interest in Greek civilization. Within the framework of the Program, eminent visiting professors and scholars, from both the United States and abroad, give seminars and lectures on subjects related to Hellenic civilization at university campuses throughout North and South America.

Over 60 senior visiting scholars have been hosted by more than 150 universities and cultural institutions. More than 35,000 people have attended the lectures and seminars.

Olympic Tower • 645 Fifth Avenue - Entrance on 51st and 52nd Streets New York, NY 10022 • Tel: (212) 486-4448 • Fax: (212) 486-4744 www.onassisusa.org • info@onassisusa.org

NOW ALSO OPEN IN THE ATRIUM OF OLYMPIC TOWER
The Hellenic Museums Shop & The Atrium Café
Defying Fear: The Battle of Thermopylae

By Beverley MacDougall
Special to The National Herald

"Gates of Fire" by Steven Pressfield is a testament for why people should read historical novels. Few storytellers can take you to a place that existed over 2,500 years ago and make you believe that you are really there. Steven Pressfield breathes new life into an old story.

We know the ending so why bother reading about brave men who gave up their lives for their ideals? The answer is simple: they have something to teach us. What is courage? What is fear? Is love the opposite of fear? Pressfield's "Gates of Fire" tackles these timeless themes by using the ancient Spartans to dramatize the meaning of valor.

My next question is, "How can a writer, who when he started writing the book had never been to Greece and until today only admits to knowing one word 'nai' in Greek, teach Greeks about themselves?" Proof of his understanding of Hellenism lies in the fact that the author was made an honorary citizen of Sparta in 2003, and his book achieved number one on the Greek bestseller list. Maybe the muses had something to do with the inspiration required to weave through history and revive a story that still needs to be heard.

Pressfield declares in his blog that he wrote this book because, "I thought Sparta always got a raw deal. To readers of history, it was always Athens, Athens, Athens." He also mentions how the men at Thermopylae knew what sacrifice "the hour called for, and they kept their dry laconic wit right up to the end." As proof of their courage, he cites the Dienekes' anecdote from Herodotus: that when the Spartans first occupied the pass and had not yet seen the Persians, a native of the area reported to them that "the Persian archers were so many that when they fired their volleys, the mass of arrows actually blocked out the sun." Dienekes, quite undaunted by this prospect, remarked with a laugh, "Good. Then we will have our battle in the shade."

In the actual Battle of Thermopylae there were no Greek survivors. The author uses a make-believe survivor of the battle, Xeones, who narrates his story. Interestingly enough the storyteller is not Spartan but a Hellene from Astakos who died at Thermopylae with fellow Spartan and Thespian warriors. But Apollo the Far Darter snaps death away from him. Feeling the Greek men's agony, the god chooses Xeones to tell the story of the battle, so it will not perish with the men. Thus, the Persian king's physicians miraculously revive Xeones.

"Gates of Fire" begins with Xeones blindfolded in the presence of the Persian King Xerxes and his Immortals. Xeones is the only man alive who can tell the story from a soldier's eye. King Xerxes wants to know what kind of men were these Spartans who in three days killed 20,000 of his best men. How did they live? What made them fight the way they did? What did they believe in?

Pressfield's technique of creating a non-Spartan to recount the sacred deeds of those who fought and perished at the Gates of Fire is brilliant. It would have appeared like boasting (an impossibility for a Spartan warrior) had one of the Three Hundred survived to tell the tale. Rather, Xeones, the only witness from the Spartan camp of the Battle of Thermopylae, reverently recalls the lives of those with whom he shared their final hours. Xeones, the narrator, has been in awe with the Spartan way of life from childhood.

At the age of 10 the young narrator is orphaned, and his village is annihilated by the Argives. His father's slave, an old man by the name of Bruxius, cares for the boy like a father and teaches him that: "A man may call upon courage only one way, in the ranks with his brothers-in-arms ... A man without a city is not a man. (pg. 39)." This theme of devotion to the city-state is a common thread throughout the story.

When the narrator turns 12, he is caught stealing a goose. His farmer captors mangle his hands so badly that Xeones realizes that he will never be able to grasp a spear like a warrior. Almost half dead the child resigns that the spear is an inelegant weapon and that he will use the bow to preserve himself.

After Bruxius dies, the Spartans take in young Xeones and place him on a farm to work with the helots, but his physical weaknesses make him useless. As he was born a freeman, at the age of 14 he is elevated to the class of sparring partner for the youths enrolled in the "agee" (the 13 year training program that turned boys into Spartan warriors). He is as-
signed to Alexandros, son of Olympicus, a Spartan polemarch. Each of the boys in the program is assigned a mentor (other than his father), who protects, teaches, guides him and becomes his confidant. Alexandros’ mentor, Dieneses, was the bravest of all the Spartan warriors according to Herodotus. Xeones learns by listening to Dienekes while he is teaching Alexandros, and eventually Xeones is rewarded and becomes Dienekes’ squire.

The reader learns, along with Alexandros, values and ideals through the deeds and words of other Spartans. Dienekes, mentor to both Alexandros and the reader, teaches the principles that made the Spartans the greatest fighters. For example Dienekes asks his protégé: “Answer this Alexandros, ‘When our countrymen triumph in battle, what is it that defeats the foe?’” He answers his question, “Fear. Their own fear defeats our enemies (pg. 34).”

Xeones and Alexandros are overwhelmed when they witness a Spartan youth brutally whipped to death not for stealing - but for getting caught. The young soldier is whipped to death because he refused to call for an end to the lashings, the boy went beyond fear, because he did not call to end the whipping caught. The young soldier is whipped to death because he refused to call for an end to the lashings, the boy went beyond fear, because he did not call to end the whipping caught. The young soldier is whipped to death because he refused to call for an end to the lashings, the boy went beyond fear, because he did not call to end the whipping caught.

Spartans believed that any army might win while it still has its legs under it. The real test comes when all strength is felled and the men must produce victory on will alone (pg. 68). One method that the Spartans employed to de-personalize the act of war was to make the enemy faceless and nameless. The use of obscene words and phrases was also a tactic used to de-mystify the enemy. It is at this point that I believe the author takes the book in when Xenees is forced to use coarse language. The usual filthy vocabulary, which we hear today in any movie or book about training recruits to become soldiers, is evident in the first part of the book. Perhaps, when humans have to kill one another they must find a way to cope with that fear. Coarse language may be the remedy.

“Gates of Fire,” as a whole, appeals to women as well as men because of the way the author casts the role of women in ancient times. The Spartan women are not mere baby machines for future warriors. They too have their place in the “polis.” Pressfield’s best writing is when he describes the courage and the strength of women like Arete, Xenees’ wife, and Paraleia, Alexandros’ mother. Spartan women, according to the writer, surpass all other Greek women in beauty. One of their charms is that they do not consider it as important as other Greek women do. Their goddess is Artemis, the Huntress, not Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love.

One of the most touching passages in the book is when Xenees is summoned to Arete’s house to be interrogated by Arete’s mother, Paraleia. Naturally what Paraleia wants to know most of all is whether her son possesses courage. She wants Xenees to evaluate his ‘andreia,’ his manly virtue, as a youth who must soon take his place as a warrior (pg. 145).

The lady Arete asks Xenees another question: Why does he have so much loyalty for the Spartans, when he is not one of them? He responds that when he no longer had a city, he was free to choose one. When the lady asks him why he chose Sparta when greater opportunity existed elsewhere, his reply goes to the heart of the book: “Other cities produce monuments and poetry; Sparta produces men (pg. 149).”

When the Three Hundred are chosen by Leonidas, one of the two Spartan kings, he calls on Paraleia to speak with her. He states that many have speculated how he chose the three hundred: bribes, favors or favors? “I chose them not for their own valor, lady, but for that of their women (pg. 372).” Leonidas goes on to say that when

the Three Hundred have died in battle all of Greece will look upon Sparta to see how they will bear it. The Spartans will, in turn, look at the women of the fallen warriors to take their example - they will keep a dry eye to honor their dead. Pressfield’s historical novel about the Battle of Thermopylae is a must read for not only military history buffs, but for anyone who is interested in understanding the human condition. Ultimately, we will all face death. It is something that most of us fear yet we strive forward in spite of our mortal fate. Fear is cast away by courage. The Spartans gave us the example of how to be courageous when there appears to be no hope on the horizon. Their deeds are an insight into the human emotions that zigzag through the realms of courage and fear. The author underlines the principles of the Spartan way of life to exemplify the meaning of courage, and how important this virtue was for that society, as well as how integral it should for ours.

Although the author allows us to escape with him to a place where history meets legend on a craggy mountain pass in northern Greece over 2,500 years ago, the principles and ideals of that time must never become a thing of the past. This book is extremely pertinent for every century. It delves into the psychology of sacrifice and duty for home and country. It is no wonder that “Gates of Fire” has become part of the reading list for the cadets of the American Naval Academy at Annapolis. This book is an excellent read because the author suspends our disbelief long enough to teach us the glory of the past. Be prepared to laugh, cry and feel like a Spartan - even if it is only for a short time.

For additional information on ancient Sparta as well as Greek warfare, the interested reader can consult non-fictional accounts such as those of Victor Hanson, ”The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece” (2000) and Paul Cartrige, “The Spartans” (2003).

Beverley MacDougall is a freelance writer based in Vancouver Canada. She has studied the history and culture of ancient and modern Greece and has traveled extensively throughout the country.
Reading Charles Moskos

By Dan Georgakas
Special to The National Herald

The Greek American public best knows Charles C. Moskos as the author of “Greek Americans: Struggle and Success,” by far the most widely read history of the Greeks in America. Moskos also enjoys a steady reputation among scholars. In a poll of the leading writers on Greek America recently completed by Queens College, “Greek Americans” was named as one of the top 10 books in the field. Moskos also has written extensively in journals, given important speeches before organizations such as AHEPA, and supported the research of others. For many years, Moskos, a sociologist, also has taught a heavily attended course on Greek America at Northwestern University where he is now professor emeritus.

The American public knows another Charles Moskos. When he makes guest appearances on programs like ABC’s Night Line, Moskos does not talk about Greek America, but about the United States military. Unlike so many of television’s chattering heads, Moskos actually knows what he is talking about. He is universally recognized as America’s leading military sociologist. The Wall Street Journal has gone so far as to dub him the quintessential behind-the-scenes expert. That reputation stems from more than four decades of fieldwork in every significant deployment of United States forces. His work as a military sociologist sometimes takes him to Constantinople where she was born. They would make their way to America in 1918. Moskos was the beneficiary of the good fortune three decades beyond where Saloutos for beginners. In addition to carrying forward Greek history three decades beyond where Saloutos ended, Moskos’s commentary on Greek American politicians, his analysis of community dynamics, and his memoir about his own family are significant additions to the Saloutos heritage.

The account by Moskos of the presidential campaign of Dukakis and the political tide that produced him is compelling. The era when Paul Tsongas, Paul Sarbanes and John Brademas had enormous influence in the federal government, a time when the Greek American lobby also was a force to be reckoned with, is vividly brought to life. We learn how an element in the defeat of Dukakis was American xenophobia. Moskos also neatly contrasts the view that Dukakis failed because he was too Greek and too ethnic with the view that he was not Greek or ethnic enough. His judgments are shrewd and insightful. His conclusions that “More than anything else, Michael Dukakis was the beneficiary of the good name made by Greek Americans in their home communities.”

Equally absorbing is Moskos’ autobiographical chapter. Much to the consternation of rigid academics and much to the joy of readers, this kind of memoir has become common among Greek historians. Such self-reflection adds considerable verve to chapters that are told in the third person. For example, in a single sentence about his own Epirus-born father, Moskos captures a multitude of themes about the Greek immigrants. “In December, 1916, my father - who had been born under Ottoman rule, who spoke Albanian as his first language, who was ethnically Greek, who was presumably recorded as an Italian immigrant, and who was to become an American citizen - arrived at Ellis Island.”

His mother’s family was also from Epirus, but they immigrated to Constantinople where she was born. They would make their way to America in 1918. Moskos reveals that his grandmother lived in the United States for 50 years without ever learning English, while his mother, having immigrated at an early age, spoke English without an accent. The family’s struggles and successes per-
sonalize the broader story of the Greeks in America that Moskos is relating. Capturing yet another aspect of being Greek American, Moskos ends this section by discussing his travels to the old country and his discovery that his Greek immigrant forebears were a great advantage when working abroad.

Military Sociologist

The co-author with Moskos of "All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration - This often-fatal combination" is Michael Moskos, an African American (NY: Basic Books, 1996). In their introduction, the authors assert that one of the benefits of affirmative action is the ability to give the usual politically correct argument on how to integrate an American institution.

The major thesis advanced by Moskos and Butler is that affirmative action as practiced in universities and elsewhere is inappropriate for the military. In the military, there must be absolute obedience to higher command and that only happens if officers are known to have met the same standard of excellence. The authors, of course, know full well that African Americans and whites are treated very differently by their military commanders.

The solution offered by Moskos made national headlines when summed up in the phrase, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” The basis of this idea was that the military thought it was too permissive. Moskos partly agreed with that, but he also recognizes the military way of thinking is that “if it hasn’t been done before, it’s wrong.”

Americanizing the Church

Although he understands quite well that not all Greeks are Greek Orthodox, he knows that the only way to ensure Gospel-centered religious freedom is to have the Orthodox Church in line with the rest of the world. He believes that the problem is not the Orthodox Church itself, but the fact that it is Americanizing the Church in a manner that keeps it as an incubator of Greekness while opening the door to converts. He notes that in Great Britain, Orthodoxy is the fastest growing Christian denomination.

Moskos bases his views on his familiarity with established and ongoing scholarship on Greek America. Although he does not do a lot of primary research himself, he is very supportive of and attentive to the work of scholars such as the National Herald’s own Steve Frangos.

The debate about gays in the military has also concerned Greeks in America. Although he does not do a lot of primary research himself, he outlines numerous problems that arise in contemporary Greece. Obviously, Greek language programs already exist in many universities, but Moskos is saying that supporting such programs must become a major community priority. He would like to see Greek Americans spend a year studying in Greece itself in a junior-year abroad program, but he also recognizes the great value in more modest efforts such as summer seminars in Greece.

Another topic Moskos writes about passionately is Orthodoxy. Although he understands quite well that not all Greeks are Greek Orthodox, he knows that the only mass-based national organization of Greeks is the Orthodox Church. That being so, he believes the future of Greek America is intrinsically linked with what happens in the church. He advises artfully Americanizing the church in a manner that keeps it as an incubator of Greekness while opening the door to converts. He notes that in Great Britain, Orthodoxy is the fastest growing Christian denomination.

Moskos bases his views on his familiarity with established and ongoing scholarship on Greek America. Although he does not do a lot of primary research himself, he is very supportive of and attentive to the work of scholars such as the National Herald’s own Steve Frangos. Moskos laments the reality that Greek American Studies are not treated very seriously by the majority of Modern Greek Studies programs and that Greek philanthropists seem reluctant to fund Greek American research projects. He notes that the last major conference of Greek American scholars, one that he was instrumental in creating, was in 1989.
Drexel’s Greek Legacy

Drexel’s tradition of excellence is built on a commitment to technology, cooperative education, and the use of Philadelphia as a living laboratory for our students. Drexel integrates emerging technologies into all aspects of its academic enterprise, which includes the largest private medical college and undergraduate engineering program in the nation.

These strengths have made Drexel one of America’s Best National Universities: Top Schools as ranked by U.S. News & World Report, and are reflected in the new Drexel University College of Law, which welcomes its inaugural class this fall.

Dr. Nikos Vidalakis

Dr. Nikos Vidalakis With a $1 million gift to Drexel University, the Vidalakis Family Foundation established the Vidalakis Family Cretan Scholars Program. The announcement was made by Dr. Nikos Vidalakis at the 36th Annual Pancreas Convention in Las Vegas.

Through this program, eight Drexel students annually will each be awarded a $5,000 stipend in support of their six-month cooperative education placement on the island of Crete. Drexel students of Greek descent will be considered first, followed by students of Greek descent. All Drexel undergraduate and graduate students, however, regardless of their major will be encouraged to apply for the Scholars program. Transfer students will also be eligible.

Drexel already matches dollar-for-dollar up to $2,000 scholarships awarded from any Greek-American organization including the Pancreas Association of America to students of Greek descent who come to our university. The Vidalakis family, including Nick and his wife Nancy and their children Ferri, John, Nicole and George, have a 50-year tradition of expressing their support for Cretan and Greek Orthodox causes that adhere to their doctrine: strong values reflecting a commitment to God, education, integrity, excellence and hard work. Vidalakis recently visited Drexel’s campus.

For more information on the Vidalakis Family Cretan Scholars Program, contact Marilyn Sobel, co-op coordinator at Drexel’s Steinbright Career Development Center, at Marilyn.sobel@drexel.edu.

Christopher Stratakis

Christopher Stratakis A few months after U.S. Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.), chairman of the Senate banking, housing and urban affairs committee, convinced the majority to pass legislation requiring CEOs and CFOs to be personally responsible for the accuracy of a company’s reports and requiring auditors to report directly to shareholders rather than management, Drexel’s LeBow College of Business created the Christopher and Mary Stratakis Chair in Corporate Governance. The chair is supported by a $1.5 million gift to LeBow College from alumnae and maritime lawyer Christopher Stratakis ’51 and his wife, Mary.

In July 2005 after a nationwide search, Drexel appointed Dr. Ralph Walldorf as the first holder of the Stratakis chair. Walldorf joined Drexel from Ohio State University, where he was the dean’s distinguished professor of finance.

Anthony Caneris

Anthony Caneris Anthony T. Caneris joined Drexel University in November 1996 as Senior Vice President. Having worked for Papadakis at the University of Cincinnati for five years prior to joining Drexel, Caneris played a key role in revitalizing Drexel during the past 10 years.

During his tenure, Drexel constructed, purchased or completely renovated a building per year. Leading architects to Drexel such as Michael Graves, Philip Johnson and I.M. Pei restored the classic works of some of yesterday’s best-known designers, including Frank Furness and T.P. Lansdale.

Caneris serves as the advisor to the Hellenic Society of Greek Students at Drexel University. A native of Steubenville, Ohio, Caneris and his wife of 43 years, Antoinette, are the parents of Thomas, an attorney; Onassis, a physician; Angela, a dietitian; and Adonis, an attorney; and grandparents of seven grandchildren.

Nicholas Chmiciles

Nicholas Chmiciles Drexel alumnus Kathleen P. Chmiciles ‘83 and her husband, Nicholas, donated a Main Line estate to Drexel University. The estate, named “The Orchards,” is located on 3 acres in Wayne, Pa. The Chmiciles designated that their donation be used specifically as a residence for Drexel presidents.

“The Orchards” provides an appropriate facility for hosting meetings and events with Drexel students, faculty, alumni and friends of the University.

Kathleen Chmiciles, who earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Drexel, is president and CEO of the Glenbrook Group. Nicholas is a senior partner of the Hawver Law firm Chmiciles & Takkis. The firm specializes in investor and consumer protection.
area associated with control over cognitive mechanisms. The results also suggest that it may some day be possible to develop techniques that facilitate this state of preparation, thereby enhancing creative, insightful, problem solving.

Kounios is the author of more than 50 articles and book chapters on neuropsychology and has presented more than 40 articles at psychology conferences. He and his wife Yvett (Evdoxia), live in West Chester, Pa. They have three-year-old son, Vassili, and a baby girl.

George Stephanopoulos

George Stephanopoulos, host of the ABC news program This Week and former press secretary and communications director for President Bill Clinton, visited Drexel University in 2005 and spoke to Drexel’s LeBow College of Business students about the “Business of Politics.”

Drexel President Constantine Papadakis presented Stephanopoulos with a scupture of a miniature bronze dragon—the University mascot—recognizing his achievements in reporting and politics. Stephanopoulos also received the “Dean’s Leadership Award” from LeBow College Dean George Tsetsekos.

Dr. John Kounios “Eureka!” according to legend, is what Archimedes shouted when he discovered how the state of the brain immediately prior to the solution of a problem predicts whether that problem will be solved by a sudden insight, or by a more gradual, mundane process.

These results suggest that subjects can prepare to solve a problem with insight by engaging a brain

Cuba Trip Drexel President Papadakis collaborated with Metropolitan Athenago and the General Consul of Panama in Philadelphia Georgia Athenago; and in 2004 led the U.S. delegation to Cuba to witness the consecration of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

The first religious structure to be built in Cuba in more than 40 years, St. Nicholas is located on the port side of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1987. The Greek Ambassador to Cuba George Kostoulas took an active interest in assisting Metropolitan Athenago in persuading the Cuban government to undertake this project.

Michael Capellas

Michael Capellas, CEO of MCI Inc., received an honorary degree from Drexel University in June 2001. Armenopoulos is currently the President Bill Clinton, President Jiang Zemin, Nobel Laureate Oscar Arias and inventor Dean Kamen.

Papadakis awarded the medal to Papaggeorgopoulos in recognition of his contributions to the advancement of democracy and the Hellenic culture. The mayor has established trade partnerships with countries around the world and will host Thessaloniki Expo 2008.

Dr. Athina Petropulu Greek professor Athina Petropulu teaches electrical and computer engineering to Drexel students and takes on a variety of initiatives each year that distinguish Drexel among its peers. Most recently she served as general chair of the 2005 Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers’ International (IEEE) Conference on Acoustics, Speech and Signal Processing (ICASSP). The conference honored the achievement of women in signal processing with a panel discussion including female electrical and computer engineers from around the globe.

Dr. Christos Cotsakos Dr. Christos Cotsakos, former CEO of E-Trade Group Inc., received an honorary degree of doctor of business administration at Drexel University’s 2002 commencement.

Cotsakos shared with the Drexel graduates how “E-Trade went from a company ‘people didn’t think would last six weeks, let alone six years’ to the eighth largest bank in the world.”

One of the leading founders of e-commerce and e-finance, Cotsakos has been named to “The Elite 100” by Upside magazine (December 1998–2001) and “The 100 People Who Have Changed The Way Americans Think About Money” by Worth magazine (September 2001). Cotsakos is also the author of the national bestseller It’s Your Money, published in June 2000.

For more information about academics, research and service at Drexel University, visit www.drexel.edu. Prospective students can also call 1-800-2-DREXEL to learn about undergraduate and graduate programs, or email papadakis@drexel.edu
Congratulations to
Greek American authors
for their contribution
in keeping alive
our heritage
and culture.

Through their stories
we learn about
our distant past
in the old land,
Asia Minor
or mainland Greece,
about the lives of
our grandfathers
and fathers,
their hard work,
difficulties,
successes,
hopes and dreams.

These men and women
take the
Greek experience
to a wider audience
making our children
proud of
their heritage
and our fellow
Americans aware
of who we are.

Pella Publishing:
Keeping Greek American Letters Alive

By Penelope Karageorge
Special to The National Herald

When Leandros Papathanasiou left “Voukarini, the smallest town in Macedonia,” for New York City in 1952, the 17-year-old had not yet decided on a life calling. First there were stints washing dishes and working as a busboy in the Automat, then sewing for a furrier. Fortuitously for Greek American letters, the furrier was near Hellenic Printing, on Ninth Avenue and 26th Street. During his spare moments, Papathanasiou enjoyed watching the linotype operators at work there. When a partner in Hellenic Printing offered him a job on a linotype machine, it was “Eureka!” for Papathanasiou. One of those people with “ink in their veins,” he fell in love with printing and publishing and began an important career that would lead to the founding of Athens Printing in 1962, and Pella Publishing in 1974, named after the ancient capital of Macedonia.

These intertwined enterprises have made an extraordinary contribution to Greek American intellectual and literary life. Cited by many as the unsung hero of Greek American studies, Papathanasiou says, “It’s work that I like. I don’t tire of it.” Papathanasiou’s story is both typically and uniquely Greek American, how he evolved from the Greek world to the American world without losing touch with his roots, or the motivating impulse to keep Hellenism alive. For instance, he began his serious reading in 1958 while in the U.S. Army stationed in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Working in the library, he discovered literature including the great writer Nikos Kazantzakis. “The Greek Passion” had just been published in English, and as soon as I saw it, I put it away for myself. From two until seven o’clock, that’s when I did my reading. So this was a good job, and I was even paid for it. Fifty cents an hour,” Papathanasiou recalls with a smile.

A charming man with drive and determination that can only be called “Greek,” he has almost single-handedly published and kept two important art and intellectual publications thriving and viable: The Charioteer, a critically praised annual cultural review, and the Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora, an academic publication focused on Modern Greek Studies with a special emphasis on the exploration of Greek America. The Journal can be found in the libraries of Ivy League schools and important universities, and in all schools with programs focusing on modern Greece. Says Papathanasiou, “I believe the Journal is going to be of help to anyone who is going to do some research on what’s going on in Greek America.”

The Journal’s distinguished advisory board includes scholars Professor Emeritus Spyros Vryonis, Jr. of New York University and Professor Emeritus Robert Fagles of Princeton University. Alexander Kitroeff, an editor of the Journal and an associate professor at Haverford University, one of the United States’ top ten liberal arts colleges, says: “The Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora is unique in many ways. No other journal has really focused on the important study of Greek-American. And one of the truly unique aspects of the Journal is Leandros’ input and personality. He’s devoted tremendous time and energy to it. Other journals are backed by studies associations or particular academic departments, or they have some institutional back-up. Not the Journal. It’s underwritten, supported and produced by Leandros in all ways with the help of the editors, and it’s survived as long as it has thanks to Leandros’ perseverance, and the editors.”

“Leandros is very particular, and anxious that it always comes on time. He’s known to have phoned the editors up and say, ‘We need to bring it out. Send me something.’ In a sense, he’s theunsung hero of Modern Greek Studies in the United States. He’s an extremely modest man, and shies away from a lot of publicity. He wants it because he believes in it and doesn’t want to show off in any way. The result is that not many people realize how important he’s been.”

Editor Dan Georgakas, director of the Greek American Studies Project at Queens College and a New York University professor, who has worked with Papathanasiou for years as a reader and editorial advisor, sees the Journal’s role as crucial. “The Journal of the Diaspora is an independent scholarly journal which doesn’t owe anything to big foundations. It’s underwritten, and is a place where scholars can express their views and plays a crucial role in keeping Greek studies from drying up and merely being the effort of eager scholars on an academic track.”

Professor Kostas Myrsiades, another Journal editor says: “I’ve known Leandros since the 70s when I became a co-editor of the Journal. I believe him to be one of the most important figures in the advancement of Modern Greek Studies in this country. Because of him the Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora has been able to publish important articles on Greek culture, which other journals would have been reluctant to accept because of their politics. Leandros has enabled certain important voices to be heard, which would not otherwise be heard. He has also provided an avenue for contemporary Greek culture through Pella’s Modern Greek Research (Series).”

The Modern Greek Research Series that emerged from the Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at Queens College includes “The Greek American Family in Transition” and “Reading Greek-America.”

The Charioteer, an annual review of modern Greek culture and
Leandros Papathanasiou, is joined by his sons, Spyros, on the left, and Thomas, on the right, at Pella Publishing, 337 West 36th Street in New York.

a literary treasure trove, has survived while other reviews have come and gone. Special issues of The Charioteer have focused, for instance, on poets Nikos Gatsos, also a great modern music lyricist, George Seferis and Yannis Ritsos. A special double issue presented a collection of the work of several important Greek poets. A recent issue, “The Greek American Experience” including the poetry of George Economou and Nicholas Samaras, as well as an excerpt from an unpublished novel by Helen Papanikolas and an intriguing essay on film-maker and author Elia Kazan.

Professor Harry J. Psomiades, founder and director of the Center, one of the first Modern Greek Studies Programs in the U.S., worked with Papathanasiou and Pella from the beginning and says, “Nobody can ever take the place of Leandros.” According to Psomiades, Pella, in the great tradition of small book publishers, eschewed commercialism to make scholastic significance a priority. Pella published much-needed works for minimal financial profit.

“Leandros Papathanasiou is a stalwart Macedonian.”

Furthermore, Psomiades points out: “If we don’t have books, we really don’t have Greek studies as such. The books we used in our classes were published by him at a time when we really didn’t have funding, and we needed the books, and he obliged. He’s just a fantast-
The Lion in Winter: An Interview with Harry Mark Petrakis

By Steve Frangos
Special to The National Herald

Internationally renowned writer, Harry Mark Petrakis, who will turn 83 years old this June, is still hard at work. He is most often associated with the Chicago Realism School of writing, which includes Nelson Algren, Saul Bellow and Kurt Vonnegut, among others. The short stories, novels, essays, plays and other works by this collective group of authors are now recognized as among American literature’s most critically acclaimed literary achievements.

In a career spanning nearly 60 years, Petrakis has written 10 novels, four collections of short stories, three collections of memoirs and essays, three biographies/histories and has seen his movie script, “A Dream of Kings,” made into a major motion picture.

Most recently, several stage plays and made-for-television movies based on his short stories have also been produced. This past May 11, he received an honorary doctorate from Indiana University.

Even after all his literary success, however, Petrakis is careful to note that it took him nearly 10 years to first get into print.

While many new writers of Greek descent are publishing more than ever before, it is Harry Mark Petrakis who is most associated by critics and readers alike with the Greek American experience, and especially with the Greektown of Chicago’s fabled Halsted Street.

When The National Herald interviewed Petrakis on April 26, he was in his studio in Chesterton, Indiana. The text of the interview follows below:

TNH: What is your latest project?

PETRAKIS: It’s a sequel, 25 years in the making, to “The Hour of the Bell,” the first book on the Greek War of Independence, which I wrote between 1973 and 1976. Since it covered only the first year of the War of Independence in 1821, war in the mountains, and war at sea and war on the island of Crete and the viewpoint of the Princess of the Mani, Petroby Cretanwoman’s wife, that’s why I planned to do at least one or possibly two other novels. But life and other books got in the way, so it was only a couple of years ago that I thought, at this point in my life, it might be a good final work, a big work for me, to either succeed or fail on. I started it, and have about 95,000 words out of what I imagine will be a book of about 130,000 words. This will carry the War forward, probably ending somewhere in the late 1820s - early 1830s.

Now, the war went on for several years beyond that - until 1830, when the Great Powers, again, imposed a truce on Turkey. But for all intents and purposes, after Navarino, the Turks could not win. So I’m taking some of the same characters from “The Hour of the Bell” - not all of them, but some of them - and utilizing them in the new book, “The Shepherds of Shadows.”

TNH: What’s the significance of the new title?

PETRAKIS: “The Shepherds of Shadows” comes from a reference, which I made a note on when I was working on “The Hour of the Bell.” Some writer of the era made reference to the Cretans as shepherds of freedom, and because freedom is so elusive, they were, in effect, shepherds of shadows. The contracts I’ve signed are with Southern Illinois University Press, and the book, probably at the earliest, will be published in the Fall of 2007. At the same time, they plan to reissue “The Hour of the Bell,” both in new hardback editions - if I finish it. All of these plans are contingent upon my being able to finish “Shepherds of Shadows.”

TNH: Do you feel you can finish the new novel?

PETRAKIS: Well, I think so. But you know the Roman philosopher and statesman Seneca wrote, “Never rise in the morning thinking you’ll find your life the same as it was the night before.” So I don’t take anything for granted at any age when health can, within an hour, become an issue. As it is, I work with much less energy than I had 20 years ago. So I work in shorter segments, in shorter increments of time. But I think the quality of what I’m doing is as good as any other book I’ve done in the past. Still, we are Greeks, and we do not presume.

TNH: Why did you choose this particular topic for what might be your last novel?

PETRAKIS: To my knowledge, no English language novel has ever been written on this war. It is a forgotten moment that deserves more attention. In part because, in the end, the Great Powers were pressured (to aid the Greeks) by their respective populations, who were caught up by Greek poetry in the area of the Greek War of Independence in 1821.

By Harry Mark Petrakis

Soteros Ellenas School
224-18th Street
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215
Tel.: (718) 499-5900

V.Rev. Damaskinos Ganas Pastor
Maria Manolis Principal
www.soteriosellenas.org

Congratulations to the Senior Class of Soteros Ellenas School for their excellent results and acceptances to the prestigious high schools of the city:

Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Tech., Midwood Medical Science, La Guardia, Xaverian, Bishop Kearney, Fort Hamilton.

By Steve Frangos

Special to The National Herald

Soteros Ellenas Parochial School

Kekimis theotokos Greek Orthodox Church
224-18th Street
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215
Tel.: (718) 499-5900

V.Rev. Damaskinos Ganas Pastor
Maria Manolis Principal
www.soteriosellenas.org

Collected Stories
By Harry Mark Petrakis
iUniverse, Inc., 372 pages, $19.95, Paperback

The ease with which books can be published has brought many more small publishers into the field. It used to be that, to make a printing worthwhile, you had to print 1,000 or 1,500 copies. Now, firms like www.iUniverse.com can print 5 to 10 copies; in other words, they don’t inventory books anymore; they simply print on demand. So, the number of books published - I forget the exact figure - we’re talking of a huge number each year, to include new books and then reprints. In that vast mass of books, it’s hard to get a review; it’s hard to get a publisher. The major publishers look for blockbuster books (and proven authors), like a book by John Grisham, or Scott Turow or Victoria Holt. So if you want to see your book published, you’ve got the effort to do (through the submission process with the large publishing houses), then it’s now feasible, if you have a few thousand dollars to spare, to get some copies made. Spend a little money on the artwork. Make sure you have a nice looking jacket, good quality paper and the rest. And get it published. I don’t think the younger writer should rush to self-publish. There is a natural inclination to want to see your work in print. Just wait. Try the conventional route. If not with the first book, then with the second book, with the third book. The important thing is not to get disillusioned. I’ve been to writer’s conferences where I hear writers say, “Oh hell, I put in two or three years into a book, and it comes out and barely gets any reviews. It sells...
barely enough to make back six months of the time I spent on it, let alone than three years.” But you’ve got to get over this business of thinking that you’re going to become famous or wealthy through the work. You do the work because it’s what you want to do. And you think beyond the immediate returns. If they come, that’s fine. Whatever honors, awards and monies come, that’s fine. You’re not going to reject it. But that isn’t the reason you’re kept working.

TNH: Your time in Hollywood is not as well known. Can you tell us something about that period?

PETRAKIS: We were there two years (1968-69). I did the script of “Dream of Kings.” Then we had some problems with it. The studio thought it was a wonderful script. They offered the part of Matsoukas to Dean Martin because he was top box-office draw at the time. He is a good actor and a fine singer and personality, but he would have been totally wrong for Matsoukas. He didn’t have the gravitas (heaviness, seriousness) for Matsoukas. Then they offered the part to Omar Sharif. Eventually, we got Anthony Quinn and Irene Pappas. After that, I went over to Paramount to work on what was to become “Nick the Greek,” for which a finished script still exists. But I really didn’t care think you have enough stability and sense. But you still get caught up in it.

TNH: In what sense was it negative?

PETRAKIS: It’s negative in that everything has to do with the trappings of success. I drove a Chevy, which we had driven down to California. So I was taking my family out to dinner, to a nice restaurant one night, and the car in front of me was a BMW, and the car behind me a Mercedes. And I got the impression from the attendants that I was somehow a failure. I felt their scorn. There’s a corrosive quality to this way of life. I was going into the studio everyday. We were living very well with a weekly stipend. We were in a studio-provided home, a luxurious house that, in California today, would be selling for two or three million dollars. But I didn’t like it. I sensed in another way, too, that it would probably have a detrimental effect on our family. The availability of women there - attractive women trying to get ahead in the industry - had been proven to me several times. We made the decision to come back. And I don’t regret it. We could have stayed on there and made money, probably more money than I’ve made in the ensuing years. And yet I don’t know that Diane and I would have been married, or what would have happened to our son. And I certainly know that I probably would not have written the books I’ve written back here.

TNH: In your latest volume of 34 short stories, “Collected Stories,” I was forced to pause between stories. Not out of a lack of interest, but because of their emotional impact. This isn’t “entertainment” in a light sense.

PETRAKIS: Frank O’Connor said, “A short story should be a moment of revelation.” It should provide some aspect of enlightenment to the reader about some aspect of life and human beings. And so I think my stories, even the funny ones, are, in a way, small illuminations on life, and as a consequence, you think about them afterwards. In other words, they don’t just bounce off like drops of water. They should settle, and you feel the emotion of the people (in the stories). Sometimes, in the humorous stories, that emotion is one of laughter and relief. Then again, in some of the darkest stories, there is a tension that it leaves you with because you sense the complexity of human beings. I came to writing through the short story. “The Hour of the Bell” and “Shepherds of Shadows” will be my longest novels because I have a vast canvas I’m working on. But I can’t write a long bulky novel because my training has been in the short story. So I tend to set the scene briefly and handle dialogue sparingly, and there aren’t long passages simply of description and elaboration to make these big ponderous books. I’d like to be able to write a “War and Peace,” but I’m a short story writer, and I think a good short story writer. I think the short stories I’ve written are some of the best written in this country in the last 50 years. That they deal mainly with Greeks is incidental to the fact that they are little revelations with life.

TNH: Thank you for your time, and we look forward to “Shepherds of Shadows.”

PETRAKIS: Thank you.

Steve Frangos, a regular contributor to The National Herald, is a freelance writer who resides in Round Lake, Illinois. He 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.
An Arcadian Journey: Nicholas D. Kokonis’ “Arcadia, My Arcadia”

Arcadia, My Arcadia

By Nicholas D. Kokonis

St. Basil’s Publishers,
466 pages,
$25, Paperback

By Marianne Karanikas

Special to The National Herald

This is no cold pastoral, this poignant tale of the struggles of Angelos Vlahos, a lad from a poor village in Arcadia, near the barren Virgin Mountain. Unlike Keats’ sylvan paradise, the real Arcadia is a rugged, mountainous and isolated region. The real Arcadians face persistent drought, starvation and disease.

Angelos Vlahos is a bright boy, his village schoolteacher tells him. He can make a better life for himself and his family. As the novel opens, Angelos leaves his village to travel to Polis, to take the entrance exams for high school.

“The road is a door to civilization,” Angelos thinks, recalling something he read in grade school, as he tries to avoid the rocks and dry, thorny acorns in his path to the high school. Angelos also remembers the words of his teacher and first mentor, Nikos Theoharis, who says that civilization originates in the countryside not the “polis,” and speaks of the Arcadian mountains as “eternal monuments,” where it is much easier to hear God than in the bustling towns.

A coming-of-age story, “Arcadia, My Arcadia” by Nicholas D. Kokonis has been compared to “The Catcher in the Rye” and “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.” But Angelos is far more virtuous and less cynical than Holden Caulfield. Nor does he suffer a crisis of faith as does Stephen Dedalus. Like Dedalus, Angelos confronts many obstacles. In Polis, Angelos lives in a small room in a barn strewn with hay and eats meager servings of potatoes and “bobota” (cornbread). He suffers beatings at the hands of his classmates who call him, “Hobnails” and “Garlic Boy.” He often skips trance exams for high school.

“The road is a door to civilization,” Angelos thinks, recalling something he read in grade school, as he tries to avoid the rocks and dry, thorny acorns in his path to the high school. Angelos also remembers the words of his teacher and first mentor, Nikos Theoharis, who says that civilization originates in the countryside not the “polis,” and speaks of the Arcadian mountains as “eternal monuments,” where it is much easier to hear God than in the bustling towns.

A coming-of-age story, “Arcadia, My Arcadia” by Nicholas D. Kokonis has been compared to “The Catcher in the Rye” and “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.” But Angelos is far more virtuous and less cynical than Holden Caulfield. Nor does he suffer a crisis of faith as does Stephen Dedalus. Like Dedalus, Angelos confronts many obstacles. In Polis, Angelos lives in a small room in a barn strewn with hay and eats meager servings of potatoes and “bobota” (cornbread). He suffers beatings at the hands of his classmates who call him, “Hobnails” and “Garlic Boy.” He often skips trance exams for high school.

Two mentors influence Angelos Vlahos on the road toward intellectual excellence: his village schoolteacher, Nikos Theoharis, and his high school history teacher, Zises Palamides. Both men help to instill in Angelos a sense of character, honor, and first mentor, Nikos Theoharis, who says that civilization originates in the countryside not the “polis,” and speaks of the Arcadian mountains as “eternal monuments,” where it is much easier to hear God than in the bustling towns.

A coming-of-age story, “Arcadia, My Arcadia” by Nicholas D. Kokonis has been compared to “The Catcher in the Rye” and “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.” But Angelos is far more virtuous and less cynical than Holden Caulfield. Nor does he suffer a crisis of faith as does Stephen Dedalus. Like Dedalus, Angelos confronts many obstacles. In Polis, Angelos lives in a small room in a barn strewn with hay and eats meager servings of potatoes and “bobota” (cornbread). He suffers beatings at the hands of his classmates who call him, “Hobnails” and “Garlic Boy.” He often skips trance exams for high school.

Two mentors influence Angelos Vlahos on the road toward intellectual excellence: his village schoolteacher, Nikos Theoharis, and his high school history teacher, Zises Palamides. Both men help to instill in Angelos a sense of character, honor, and first mentor, Nikos Theoharis, who says that civilization originates in the countryside not the “polis,” and speaks of the Arcadian mountains as “eternal monuments,” where it is much easier to hear God than in the bustling towns.

A coming-of-age story, “Arcadia, My Arcadia” by Nicholas D. Kokonis has been compared to “The Catcher in the Rye” and “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.” But Angelos is far more virtuous and less cynical than Holden Caulfield. Nor does he suffer a crisis of faith as does Stephen Dedalus. Like Dedalus, Angelos confronts many obstacles. In Polis, Angelos lives in a small room in a barn strewn with hay and eats meager servings of potatoes and “bobota” (cornbread). He suffers beatings at the hands of his classmates who call him, “Hobnails” and “Garlic Boy.” He often skips trance exams for high school.

Two mentors influence Angelos Vlahos on the road toward intellectual excellence: his village schoolteacher, Nikos Theoharis, and his high school history teacher, Zises Palamides. Both men help to instill in Angelos a sense of character, honor, and first mentor, Nikos Theoharis, who says that civilization originates in the countryside not the “polis,” and speaks of the Arcadian mountains as “eternal monuments,” where it is much easier to hear God than in the bustling towns.

A coming-of-age story, “Arcadia, My Arcadia” by Nicholas D. Kokonis has been compared to “The Catcher in the Rye” and “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.” But Angelos is far more virtuous and less cynical than Holden Caulfield. Nor does he suffer a crisis of faith as does Stephen Dedalus. Like Dedalus, Angelos confronts many obstacles. In Polis, Angelos lives in a small room in a barn strewn with hay and eats meager servings of potatoes and “bobota” (cornbread). He suffers beatings at the hands of his classmates who call him, “Hobnails” and “Garlic Boy.” He often skips trance exams for high school.

Two mentors influence Angelos Vlahos on the road toward intellectual excellence: his village schoolteacher, Nikos Theoharis, and his high school history teacher, Zises Palamides. Both men help to instill in Angelos a sense of character, honor, and first mentor, Nikos Theoharis, who says that civilization originates in the countryside not the “polis,” and speaks of the Arcadian mountains as “eternal monuments,” where it is much easier to hear God than in the bustling towns.

A coming-of-age story, “Arcadia, My Arcadia” by Nicholas D. Kokonis has been compared to “The Catcher in the Rye” and “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.” But Angelos is far more virtuous and less cynical than Holden Caulfield. Nor does he suffer a crisis of faith as does Stephen Dedalus. Like Dedalus, Angelos confronts many obstacles. In Polis, Angelos lives in a small room in a barn strewn with hay and eats meager servings of potatoes and “bobota” (cornbread). He suffers beatings at the hands of his classmates who call him, “Hobnails” and “Garlic Boy.” He often skips trance exams for high school.

Two mentors influence Angelos Vlahos on the road toward intellectual excellence: his village schoolteacher, Nikos Theoharis, and his high school history teacher, Zises Palamides. Both men help to instill in Angelos a sense of character, honor, and first mentor, Nikos Theoharis, who says that civilization originates in the countryside not the “polis,” and speaks of the Arcadian mountains as “eternal monuments,” where it is much easier to hear God than in the bustling towns.
bodies a central theme of the novel. Another instructor, who treats the village boys with prejudice, asks the students to comment on the Latin adage, “Et in Arcadia ego.” Angelos takes issue with the romantic sense of the saying, “Even I have lived in Arcadia.” which suggests the notion of Arcadia as pastoral paradise and draws instead on an interpretation he has read in books in the public library: “Even in Arcadia I (death) am present.” Angelos responds, “Even I have lived in Arcadia death can come. Arcadia has never been a paradise. I think man has lost the true Paradise and the new Paradise he can hope to find lies not in a country but in himself.”

Education allows Angelos to discover his internal Paradise. But this is no isolated, internal landscape. The more educated Angelos becomes, the more connected he remains to family and culture.

The Power of Family

“Many readers are struck by the powerful presence of the family in this story,” Kokonis says. “In Arcadia, My Arcadia,” the family is a container of narrative, theater of character, agent of significance.”

Angelos’ parents, despite the hardship it will cause, support his moving to Polis to attend high school. When Angelos’ mother helps him move into this room in the city, she warns him to beware of the “eaters,” the merchants, officials, politicians, and judges who feed on poor people.

It is family who nourishes Angelos. His mother brings him vegetables. His sisters pick potatoes, mules and horses had also vanished. The clay-mouthed Arcadian hills were falling into decay.

He says, “Standing stunned amidst the metamorphosed landscape a few years ago ... I pondered, ‘Et in Arcadia ego.’ Instantly I knew I had to write a story as a literary document of the bygone era. Upon returning to my American home, I took out ‘My Story,’ buried in a deep drawer of a base- ment cabinet and nearly forgotten... in those precious pages, blighted by time, I thought lay the leaven that would make the dough of my new story rise.”

Kokonis kneaded his memoirs into the literary bread of fiction, and shaped the story of Angelos Vlahos, composing and revising it on his laptop. He chose to write much of the manuscript at the popular bakery, Panera, while he enjoyed coffee and baked goods served to him by hard-working immigrants. Kokonis donated a copy of “Arcadia, My Arcadia” to the owner of Panera, in honor of his multicultural staff.

The Next Chapter of “Arcadia, My Arcadia” on Film

Since its publication, “Arcadia, My Arcadia” has a growing cadre of admirers.

“I feel greatly honored,” Kokonis says, “that the board of the newly formed OPAH Book Club of the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center chose to launch its program with a reading of “Arcadia, My Arcadia” and that upon the recommendation of the book club, the Hellenic Museum of Chicago asked me to present it to a larger audience. Presenting this story there ... remains one of the most gratifying moments of my life.”

Directors John Kousakis and James Chressanthis, among others, have expressed interest in taking the story of Angelos Vlahos to the big screen. The screenplay is presently being written by Alexander Karanikas, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Karanikas’ recent screenplay, “Marika,” won the Neptune Award at the 2003 Moondance International Film Festival in Boulder, Colorado.

It is our hope that “Arcadia, My Arcadia” will continue to delight readers and filmgoers for many generations to come.

“Arcadia, My Arcadia” can be purchased for $25, plus $4 shipping and handling, from St. Basil’s Publishers, P.O. Box, 1155, Deerfield, IL 60015. Read more about “Arcadia, My Arcadia” at Kokonis’ web site at www.myarcadia-book.com.

Marianthe Karanikas, Ph.D., teaches professional writing and creative non-fiction at Missouri State University, where she is an Associate Professor. Her essays have appeared in “Mondo Greco.” Read more about her work at www.anotherrise.net.
Pella Publishing: Keeping Greek American Letters Alive

Continued from page 15

Time” by Arthur N. Frangos, a brilliant, satiric novel in which the war between Greece and Troy has been transferred to two diners on the plains of New Jersey.

Carmen Karkas, who taught Greek at New York University, is the author of “Six Hundred Greek Verbs,” an essential work and invaluable tool for anyone studying the Greek language.

The bread and butter operation that makes the books possible, Athens Printing, demonstrates Papathanasiou’s talents as an artisan. One of the last printers to use Linotype machines, his craftsmanship rated a New York Times story in the Business Section: “Offering old-school printing charm amidst the digital revolution, Papathanasiou creates beautiful books sought after by aesthetically aware organizations including the Queens Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Academy of Art.”

Papathanasiou’s five Linotype machines are among 1,000 hot-metal typesetters still in operation nationwide. He launched Athens Printing working out of a 4,000-square-foot site at 461 Eighth Avenue, now 5 Pennsylvania Plaza. In addition to printing and publishing companies, the building also housed the headquarters of the Printing Industries of Metropolitan New York, later known as the Association of Graphic Communications. In an interview with Printing News, Papathanasiou recalled welcoming students to his shop on many occasions during his 20 years there.

Instructors from the Parsons Institute of Technology also would come to Athens Printing to show their students how the printing process worked. In 1982 the company moved into its present home, a 10,500 square foot site purchased by Papathanasiou at 337 West 36th Street.

Papathanasiou admits that it hasn’t all been peaches and cream, or, in the Greek sense, ouzo and olives. Shortly after starting Pella, he published several books including an important poetry collection. “I put an advertisement in the Orthodox Observer, with a circulation of 50,000, and didn’t get a single inquiry about those books. That was my first disappointment. If I was just doing books, I couldn’t survive. But the fact that I have the printing business made the books possible.

“I do hope I’m helping to keep the Greek literary spirit alive, because although I am 100 percent patriotic American, I have also always thought of myself as a Greek in America.”

Papathanasiou has watched the neighborhood where Pella and Athens are located evolve, and voices some nostalgia for an era when you could buy a Greek newspaper, or dine in an authentic Greek restaurant. “I’ve seen a lot of changes in the New York Greek community,” Papathanasiou says. “When I came, there were Greeks and Greek restaurants. In 1975, they all moved to Astoria. There are very few Greek stores here anymore, and you cannot find all those gift shops on Eighth Avenue or newspaper stands. Remember the Pantheon restaurant? That was the best restaurant in New York. And the Acropolis. There was even a Greek movie theater.”

Regardless, Pella continues to move forward, with all of its books now available on Amazon, and plans for a web site in the offing.

Married to Anthoussa Papathanasiou, who was originally from the island of Cephallonia, they are the parents of three sons, Thomas, Spyros, and Nikos. Both Thomas and Spyros are an important part of the enterprise. Thomas, who attended Fordham University and Farleigh Dickinson before joining Athens and Pella, recalls working with his father on Saturdays early on and regards him as an outstanding role model.

Says Thomas: “My father always worked seven-day weeks. It was rare for him to be home on a whole weekend, very rare. He still has an old school work ethic, that’s for sure. There are very few people who love their work and are good at it. My father is one of those people. For him, it’s not work. He doesn’t get up in the morning thinking, ‘Oh, I have to go to work again.’ He really does enjoy it. I hope that I can continue my father’s legacy.”


The Extermination Strategy of Turkey Against the Greeks

Continued from page 24

Hellenic civilization at New York University, has done a tremendous service to Hellenism with his history of that Turkish atrocity. “The Mechanism of Catastrophe” gives us a painful glimpse of the orgy of the 1955 Turkish violence against the Greeks in Istanbul. After reading this carefully researched book, one should be no longer in doubt that the Turks hate the Greeks and Western civilization.

Vryonis, an eminent historian of Medieval Greek, Ottoman and Turkish history, studied archival materials in Turkey, England, Greece and the United States. He interviewed survivors and used the findings of secondary literature, including the pictures of the pogrom taken by courageous Greek photographer, Demetrios Kalounomenos.

The Turkish pogrom against the Greeks of Istanbul did not happen by accident. And neither was it merely a “property” crime, a spontaneous reaction of the Turks against rich Greeks. It was, instead, a well planned and coordinated at-tack designed to extinguish the economic foundations and hopes the Greeks had for a decent life in Turkey. The Turks had decided to get rid of the Greeks in their midst. They had used genocidal methods to kill and expel the vast majority of them earlier. But a substantial number of Greeks still remained in Istanbul and Smyrna. The Turks were determined to kick them out of the country.

While the Turkish government was preparing for attack against the Greek population of Istanbul, international developments made the Turks’ premeditated crime even more vicious. The revolt of the Greeks in Cyprus against the British forces on the island convinced England to bring Turkey into the Cyprus crisis. British diplomats urged the Turks to launch a “riot” against the Greeks, a cue that solidified and speeded up the monstrous plans of the Turks. In addition, the British convinced the Turks they had a strategic interest in Cyprus.

Thus while Greek, British and Turkish diplomats met in London in late August—early September 1955 on the Cyprus crisis, the Turkish government headed by Prime Minister Menderes unleashed its pogrom against the Greeks of Istanbul. Vryonis documents the mechanism of this catastrophe: Us- ing buses, railroads and private cars, a state-funded organization, KTC or the Cyprus Is Turkish Association, imported into Istanbul some 20,000 Turks for the pogrom. On the eve of the attack KTC pogromists marked the properties of the Greeks for destruction. They had learned from the experience of the 1952 Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre in France. On the evening of September 6, 1955, the Turkish terrorists attacked the 45 Greek communities of Istanbul in waves. Armed with crowbars and fire, they destroyed homes, businesses, churches, cemeteries, hospitals and schools. Within less than 10 hours, all that the Greeks had built over decades, including their businesses, apartments and homes, were in ruins.

Vryonis says that the pogrom was the result of the “continuity of hatred, suspicion, and envy with which a significant segment of the Turkish people viewed the Greek minority among them.” Just as significant is the history of the relations between Turks and Greeks and Turks and non-Muslims over the centuries. Turkish Islam developed a “historical hatred for everything non-Muslim.” This put religious fanaticism “at the core of the pogrom’s fury.” The pogrom was simply the “extermination strategy” of Turkey against the Greeks. This should be a warning to the European Union, which is reviewing Turkey’s application for membership. This lesson should also ring bells in Greece, which, ignoring history, pretends it can shake hands with its potential killer.

We should be grateful to Vryonis for bringing to light a story that, for the most part, has been buried in England, the United States, Turkey, England and the United States, ignoring morality, have seen fit to side with Turkey, policies that led to deceptively disguised research in those countries. Turkey, meanwhile, tested in Cyprus the lessons it learned in cleansing Is-tanbul of Greeks.

Vryonis’ book is useful and extraordinary, and will serve, for another reason as well. It’s a model of disinterested scholarship, using evidence from all sides, allowing the facts to speak, bringing out of darkness stories of heroism and tragedy. Through his patient and thorough exa-mination of the origins and evolu-tion and effects of the pogrom.

E. G. Vallianatos holds a doctorate in Greek history. He is the author of “From Graikos to Hellene” and the forthcoming “The Passion of the Greeks.”
An Immigrant Family’s Unfulfilled Promises and New Beginnings

By Elaine Thomopoulos
Special to the National Herald

In “Old Gloves: a 20th Century Saga,” Beatriz Badikian-Gartler paints a picture of immigrant life with bright colors and vivid imagery. With pain, pathos, unfulfilled promises, as well as hope for new beginnings. In describing her novel, she says that the novel is based on her family’s history; that the family’s story is the skeleton and she adds the flesh. Flesh and blood is what she does add, making each of her characters alive, as if they are in the room with us. It shows them in all their humanity, including their imperfections and foibles, as well as their love, courage and perseverance.

The saga, which spans 70 years, starts with two families, one Armenian and the other Greek, living in small villages in Turkey at the turn of the century. In 1922, Turkish soldiers force the families, along with thousands of other Christians, from their homes and on a horrendous “death march.” The families escape to Greece where the son of the Armenian family, Grigorios, and the daughter of the Greek family, Eleftheria, fall in love, get married and begin their odyssey to Buenos Aires, New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

Badikian-Gartler relates various compelling vignettes about the families, including the loss of family members and friends during the death march and their difficult resettlement in Greece as refugees. She tells a riveting story about how the Greek refugee mother, who escaped to Greece with her children, is reunited with her husband.

“A bearded haggard-looking man faced her, a faint smile on his lips. ‘I have nothing to give you. Go away,’ she said in a loud, angry voice. His clothes in tatters, his face smeared gray, his hand extended, she looked at his fingernails, brown and long, ‘Go Way,’ she repeated and moved back to the other side. The family escapes the New York aunt, joins friends in Los Angeles and finally settles in Chicago. In 1976, Alicia’s parents leave Chicago to return to Greece, leaving her in Chicago. She ponders the questions many immigrants have asked, “Where is my home?” and answers, “I’ve been trying to figure out where ever since I left Argentina. Back there there’s never occurred to me to question it. But here… I don’t feel completely at home yet. I’m not as miserable as I was in the beginning, but there is a tiny part of me that believes I just arrived yesterday and will be returning tomorrow. Strange, I feel very temporary. I see my surroundings as new all the time, and yet I feel a certain base coming and going in this city. Maybe if I stay a few more years, I’ll accept it as home. Or I’ll just get so used to it and never question it again. Or maybe I should go back to Argentina. But I have no one there, except friends and neighbors.”

She also questions her identity, saying, “When people ask me, what’s your nationality? I never know what to answer. What do they mean? Where was I born? Or what are my parents’ nationalities? Everybody is something else in this country. Nobody is just American. But if I say Argentine, am I dismissing my parents and grandparents? Am I forgetting everything they went through and pretending they didn’t exist? Am I Greek and Armenian then? I don’t feel Greek and Armenian; all I know is the stories I heard from my parents about their own struggle, their parent’s struggles and so on and so forth… Later, after lunch, I’m going to jot down the stories they used to tell me - before I forget them. They’ll come in handy someday. I can use them in poems - maybe I’ll even write a novel.”

This is exactly what she has done. Badikian-Gartler has written an outstanding first novel based on the family stories she heard over and over again ever since she was a small child. Badikian-Gartler says that many of the incidents relayed in the book actually happened. Both her mother’s and father’s families suffered in the Asia Minor death march. Her maternal grandmother truly did not recognize her bedraggled husband when he appeared at her door. The Germans executed her father’s friends during the Occupation. She and her mother and father faced the same kind of struggles in Argentina and the United States that she writes about in her book.

Questions of identity that bothered the young Alicia of the novel are the same questions that the author faced when she emigrated with her mother and father from Buenos Aires to the United States in 1970 and which continue to nag at her today. Life as an immigrant is not all about going from rags to riches, but also about not fitting in, pining for family and friends left behind, prejudice, quarrels, sickness and unfulfilled promises.

Yet, as illustrated in the novel, there is also love and an unending hope for new beginnings and a better life. Badikian-Gartler herself struggled to achieve that new beginning. Despite the opposition of her father, she enrolled in college and became a writer.

Badikian-Gartler, who speaks fluent Greek and Spanish, earned a doctorate in creative writing from the University of Illinois at Chicago and has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants in the language arts. She was named one of “100 Women Who Make a Difference” by Today’s Chicago Woman Magazine. She is the author of “Mapmaker Revisited,” a collection of poetry, “Akewa is a Woman,” a chapbook of poetry and is co-editor of “Naming the Daytime Moon,” an anthology of Chicago women writers. Badikian-Gartler has taught at Chicago’s Roosevelt University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Newberry Library. She currently teaches at Northwestern University and will be conducting a writing workshop on the island of Andros, Greece from July 1st to July 3, 2006. She lives with her husband David in Chicago. For further information and to order her book see her website: www.bbgartler.com.

Elaine Thomopoulos, who has a doctorate in psychology, is a freelance writer and independent scholar. She edited and contributed to the book, “Greek-American Pioneer Women of Illinois” and is currently project director and curator of the exhibit, Greeks of Berrien County, Michigan. She can be reached at thompson@msn.com.
Rain in the Valley: Helen Papanikolas’ Final Farewell

By Steve Frangos  Special to The National Herald


For those not readily familiar with Greek American Studies, Helen Zeese Papanikolas was, and remains, one of the leading practitioners of cultural and historical research in Greek American Studies. The author of numerous ground-breaking articles, books and memoirs, as well as several volumes of fiction, Helen earned her reputation as one of the preeminent observers of the Greek American experience.

Just prior to her final hospitalization, Helen had completed a full first draft of "Rain in the Valley." It was her ardent hope that, after she left the hospital, she would be able to re-read, revise and then see the novel published. This was not to be.

The dedication page reports that, at some point, she entrusted the final editing of this book to her son, Zeese, and her grandson, Nick Smart.

The importance of this novel for Greek American Studies can’t be stressed enough. It will stand as a highly respected writer’s last statement to her audience, and to her community. It is a novel centered on the lives and concerns of women. The book’s action focuses initially on the interactions between Greek immigrant pioneer women and their daughters.

In due course, the life Lia, the novel’s main character, undertakes with her husband Jim gains center stage. Given that the title is taken from a Greek folk poem, “Snow Falls on the Mountains and Rain in the Valley, but the Door of Wedded Lovers is Made of Gold,” it is clear that the novel is directed to Lia and Jim’s relationship.

The grandchildren of the Greek immigrants are also included in the story, but only in passing. All the action really pivots around the women born of Greek parents in America.

This choice will surprise no one familiar with Helen’s nearly 60 years of writing and research. She is attributed with igniting the study of ethnic groups in the American West in the 1970s. Aside from her historical studies, she also closely observed the folk customs and beliefs Greek immigrants brought with them to North America. Cursory, for decades, she remained one of the only writers who dealt with the extended history of labor disputes in the West. What may initially strike even the most diligent student of Greek American history as odd is her choice of Greek shepherders and their labors as the novel’s backdrop.

In "Rain in the Valley," we learn of three first cousins, all born to Greek immigrant parents around 1916. The daily experiences of growing up in a small coal mining Greektown district (which is never named) somewhere seven miles outside of Price, Utah stands for hundreds of such industrial boom towns which first brought European immigrants and others to the American West soon after 1900. Given the volume’s focus on the lives and experiences of women, much of the home and intra-community life of Greeks in that part of America sees minute examination.

NEARLY FLAWLESS ETHNOGRAPHY
This novel is engaging both as a work of fiction and as a nearly flawless ethnography. Every nuance of the past cultural and historical experiences of the Greektowns at the turn of the last century is narrated effortlessly. The cultural attitudes of Greek immigrants in their prime, and then their gradual transformation into Greek Americans, masterly unfold. Folk sayings, holiday events and attitudes about the proper roles of men and women, as well as the women’s daily duties permeate the novel.

As a longtime student of the late Helen Zeese Papanikolas’ writings, I am always amazed by the foresight she demonstrated in her work. In “The Fortress and the Prison,” for example, her main character, Alexandra, expresses ideas and goals which would gradually come to direct the life of the author.
deep, binding friendships; the swaying, yielding emotion in their native dances; their songs and laughter; the clutch of Greece upon them; the peasant customs; the weddings, baptisms, the name days and the wonderful foods (pg. 143)."

After histories such as "Toll and Rage in a New Land: The Greek Immigrants in Utah," (Utah Historical Quarterly, vol. XXXVIII, no. 2, 1970), or memoirs like "Emily and George," (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987, recently republished in paperback as "A Greek Odyssey in the American West") by the University of Nebraska Press/Bison Books in 1997), in which Helen documented the trials and triumphs of Greek immigrants in the West, her last novel may come as quite a surprise to her devoted readers.

In "Rain in the Valley," which Helen well knew would be her final and perhaps even her most enduring statement, we hear her strongest protests ever over the lives of young women born and raised in the Greektowns of the American West.

Lia Demas/Papastamos the protagonist, soon after she marries Jim Papastamos, experiences an epiphany during an otherwise uneventful family gathering: "Then an aversion rose up to Lia's throat, an aversion she did not know she had, for her life in the Demas family; for her childhood; for the strangeness of being together at all times, everyone knowing each other's affairs, their grief, shame, anger. Lia sat with the aversion growing, encompassing the talking, laughing, gossiping women at the table (pg. 117)."

Lia is very clear-sighted about why she feels this aversion, which she ultimately expresses to Jim: "I spent twenty years being swallowed up by the Papastamos family. That's not the kind of life I want. Like my aunts and my poor mother, no. I don't want to be together all the time. I don't want to be at their beck and call, like Greek brides are supposed to be. I don't want to have to run over to help your mother with cooking and canning, I want some order in my life. I'll have big name day parties on St. Demetrios Day for you and some family dinners, but not all the time. I've got to have time to myself (pg. 118)."

In conversations I had with Helen, I can honestly report she had longstanding concerns about the fact that nothing substantial had been documented concerning the Greek immigrant sheepherders of Utah, Colorado, Nevada and Wyoming. She herself wrote a very brief account of those men in the Utah Historical Society's children's publication, "Beehive."

But Helen consistently expressed her dissatisfaction, not with that particular account, as much as with the fact that she had not written more about this aspect of the Greek experience. Certainly, the Greek community of Craig, Colorado - which sees repeated, but unfortunately only limited, discussion in the novel - was and remains a leading center for sheep production. Aside from all those Hollywood cowboy movie references to the battles between cattlemen and sheepherders in 1900, the two largest industries in Colorado were coal production and the sale of sheep and goat-related products.

There is so much about this novel which is splendid and unexpected that I believe any reader, once they know that the author never had the opportunity to revise and finish the volume as she intended, will forgive some of the moments in the last two chapters. The present, which is where the novel's last two chapters end up, is of uneven quality. I'm not as convinced by the exchange between Peggy and Bessie in the second-to-last chapter, for example, as I am by the rest of the novel.

That said, there are moments which ring all too true: "At the funeral, half of the nave on the right side was taken up by the dead women's families. The great grand-children of the patriarchs had so little Greek blood in their veins that they looked no different from children seated in a Protestant church; that is, all except one teenager with the prominent nose of the Demas clan (pg. 237)."

It is no secret that the great Greek churches of the American West are of "mixed" congregations, or that they are sadly closing down.

Art and life, which imitates each other, is an almost unanswerable question for a time, place and entire generation of people. Those who read this extraordinary novel, where real life is translated into fiction, will come to learn this is her "telefeto fili" (last kiss) to us all. She gave much more than she was given, and I can't imagine any others like her will ever be born to us again. She was, simply put, a rare and gifted writer.

Steve Frangos, a regular contributor to The National Herald, is a freelance writer who resides in Round Lake, Illinois. He 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@雅h.com.
The Turks originated in Mongolia. As early as the sixth century, they started their migration and conquests in Asia. They reached the borders of the Eastern Greco-Roman Empire or Byzantium in 1071 when, in the battle of Manzikert, they defeated the Greek army and conquered Asia Minor. Nearly four centuries later, in 1453, they captured the rest of Byzantium, including Greece.

By the time the Turks became the Greeks' neighbors and, eventually, conquerors, the Greeks had seen numerous other plunderers coming through their country, burning, looting and enslaving, the routine business of roving barbarians. But there was something different about the Turks. They set their sights on Greece as a permanent settlement. They were non-Europeans enslaving Europeans. As Moslems, in addition to the usual humiliations of conquest, they used their religion as a weapon, converting and abusing the Greeks. Greece under Turkish occupation sank into illiteracy and extreme poverty. The Turks tried to prevent any future uprising among the Greeks by kidnapping their young sons, making them the personal guard of the Sultan. But, against huge odds, the Greeks persevered. They knew they had to win their own liberation. Those who left for Europe studied medicine or the sciences or went into business, making money to help those left behind. In 1821, conditions were auspicious for rebelling against the Ottoman Empire, and the Greeks won their freedom.

Despite the emergence of an independent Greek state in 1830, relations between Greeks and Turks never became normal, much less cordial. The Turks hated the infidels, and the Greeks were full of anger and revenge for their past suffering and the Turks' bad treatment of the Greeks still living in the Ottoman Empire. These feelings always floated under the surface of Greek-Turkish relations.

By the early 20th century, however, the Ottoman Empire began to collapse. In the chaos of the disintegration following World War I, the Turks launched a genocide killing 1.5 million Armenians and 1.0 million Greeks. The unsuccessful Greek occupation of Smyrna from 1919 to 1922 gave them another opportunity to cleanse Asia Minor of Greeks.

By mid-20th century, most of the remaining Greeks in Turkey - some 80,000 - were living in Istanbul. Despite the adversities the Greeks faced in the first four decades of the twentieth century, they had, by late 1940s, a vibrant community in Istanbul with good schools, outstanding hospitals, welfare services, numerous churches, and about 4,500 stores selling and making all that one could possibly want. The Greeks were medical doctors, bankers, engineers, architects, lawyers, pharmacists, teachers, artisans and businessmen. On September 6-7, 1955, the last phase of the Greco-Turkish tragedy unfolded to consume these Greeks.

What is extraordinary about this atrocity is not that it happened, but that the Greeks were unprepared. Their memories of Byzantium and their deep roots in Ionia-Asia Minor blurred their real assessment of the Turks. Greeks knew that they lived in a dangerous country. They knew that the Turks were jealous of them. Their long history of living in a Moslem country was full of periodic atrocities and hatreds. They should have known that, as infidels, they could go on bribing the Turks for so long. Yet they were caught unprepared by the blow the Turks inflicted on them during the bloody evening of September 6-7, 1955.

Speros Vryonis, emeritus
Alexander S. Onassis professor of