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## On Being Greek in America: Identities

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Upon arrival in the United States of America, Greek emigrants immediately become Greeks in America or American Greeks. How long that identity remains in place is a matter of individual psychology. More often than not, the American Greek, consciously or unconsciously, continues to prioritize Greek culture, only accepting whatever American cultural demands are deemed necessary for an acceptable life style. Again, more often than not, this American Greek identity slowly morphs into a Greek American identity in which American rather than Greek culture becomes prioritized. Less common are those American Greeks who immediately seek to aggressively embrace assimilation, which means discarding Greek culture and Greek identity as quickly and completely as possible. A fourth option, and easily the most complex is that of identifying as simultaneously Greek and American, a dynamic relationship between the two culture without fixed cultural ratios, boundaries, or priorities.

Grammatically speaking, the aggressive assimilationist view makes *American* a noun; the American Greek view makes *Greek* a noun and *American* an adjective; the Greek American view makes *American* a noun and *Greek* an adjective; and the Greek and American view makes both *Greek* and *American* nouns. Although one or another of these identities may dominate any given period or place, all are always present and all are constantly evolving to meet

changing social realities. Each time period also contains significant variables. The two most important are differences between recently arrived immigrants and established immigrants and the differences between the American-born and their immigrant forbearers. The four categories just outlined are not necessarily consciously evoked by even the majority of the Greeks in America, but, as will be demonstrated, they are the identities evident in community and individual behavior. These differences regarding ethnic self-identity are more than historical categorizations; they profoundly shape the nature and fate of the Greeks of America.

### The Assimilationists

Community publications and Greek Americanists rarely deal at length with the aggressive assimilationists for the obvious reason that by definition, the assimilationists have left the community. Consequently, if one's focus is on Greeks in America, the assimilationists no longer exist. Nonetheless, we certainly want to know how numerous these aggressive assimilationists may be. Do they come from a particular region? Are their numbers significantly greater or lesser in any given time period? Are they more or less numerous than their counterparts in other immigrant groups? This is an area that might be of more scholarly interest to students of the global Greek diaspora than to scholars more involved with emigrants who sought to retain their Greek identity to one or another degree.

Aggressive assimilation primarily pertains to the immigrant generation. The American-borns who opt for American culture are simply embracing the culture into which they are born and schooled. In that sense they are best thought of as passive rather than aggressive assimilationists. That said, there are a considerable number of the American-born who consciously reject Greek culture with some vehemence, rather than simply seeing it as irrelevant. The most dramatic choices to reject Greek culture are often found in accounts written by Greek women rebelling against traditional households.<sup>1</sup>

One might imagine that in the pre-1880 period, when there were so few Greeks in America that the number of aggressive assimilationists would be high. This is not the case. In many cases, being distinctively Greek during a period when Classic Greek culture was revered was advantageous. The pre-1880 period was also a time when a small number of elite families remained decidedly Greeks in America with meaningful family and financial networks tied to Alexandria, Smyrna, and Constantinople as well as Greece proper.<sup>2</sup>

The exact opposite of the aggressive assimilationists are the rejectionists, those emigrants who opt to return to their homeland rather than stay in America. Their motives can be any combination of dissatisfaction with American culture and longing for the homeland culture. These may be thought of as failed or disillusioned birds of passage. Also not to be overlooked is that some may, in fact, have simply filled their objective of earning enough money to finance a better life in Greece.<sup>3</sup> Making a count of such persons is difficult. Due to the way records were kept, the same person, going back and forth might be counted more than once. There is the additional problem that many emigrants who considered themselves to be Greek carried passports from various Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean governments. U.S. Department of Labor statistics indicate 198,000 persons self-identified as Greek departed from the U.S. in the period 1908–1931.<sup>4</sup> Immigration statistics in that same time period referring only to immigrants from Greece proper show some 400,000 immigrants. Thus, the number of returnees could be as low as 25% or as high as 50%. Even the lower number would make the return rate of Greeks among the highest of European emigrants.

### The American Greeks

In contrast to the positive reception Greeks had enjoyed in post-revolutionary America, the time known as the Greek Fever, the Greeks of the massive migration between 1880–1924 were treated

with suspicion and hostility. As Greek communities formed, strategies for dealing with this hostility merged with ideas of how best to survive as a Greek community in America. One option was to remain American Greeks, Greeks who happened to reside in America. This view in its various nuances dominated the early period of mass migration and for decades afterwards. Considerable evidence for this sense of identity is found by examining the Greek press, Greek Orthodox Church culture, Greek cultural organizations, and Greek intellectual life in America.

The two major Greek-language dailies, *Atlantis* (1894–1973) and *Ethnikos Kyrix* (National Herald, 1915–present), published articles regarding life in America, but their major focus was on events in the homelands. Rather than reporting on the Republican and Democratic parties, *Atlantis* was a voice for Greek monarchists and *Ethnikos Kyrix* a voice for Greek republicans. Even the left wing press was written almost exclusively in Greek, which isolated its pages from American-born Greeks who had not mastered their parent's language. Dozens of other newspapers functioned during this period, almost all pretty much following in the mode of *Atlantis* and *Ethnikos Kyrix*.

The Greek Orthodox Church in America was another citadel of the American Greek orientation in the first forty years of the twentieth century. One of its primary thrusts was stern disapproval of marriage with non-Greeks. Nor was the Church particularly welcoming to converts. Its principle social outreach was to promote and support Greek language schools. Federal agencies would note with some alarm that when priests spoke of the motherland and the mother tongue, they meant Greece and Greek, not the United States and English.<sup>5</sup> That view apparently was shared by some ten thousand Greek men in America who returned to Greece to fight in the Balkan Wars. Many fewer volunteered for service in the American military in World War I. This American Greek identity was not ideologically defined. During the Spanish civil war, Greek volunteers from America usually fought in brigades with other Greeks rather than with the American volunteers mainly concentrated in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.<sup>6</sup>

The Greek American Progressive Association (GAPA), founded in 1923, used Greek as its organizational language and was launched as a rival to the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) whose organizational language was English. GAPA's major priority was to support Greek language schools and generally promote Greek language culture. Through to World War II, GAPA remained a viable organization that was sometimes stronger in specific geographic regions than the more successful AHEPA. The lodges of the much smaller leftist International Workers Order, an ideological rival of GAPA and AHEPA, was also organized on an ethnic rather than a class basis.

The clearest artistic expression of American Greek identity was in music. The very popular nightclubs that sprang up in New York City in the 1920s were built around individual singers such as Marika Papagika. Her repertoire and that of other singers were not limited to Greek, but included songs or passages sung in Turkish, Ladino, and Armenian. The predominantly male audiences for the cafés were not just Greeks but immigrants from various parts of the Near East and the Balkans, making the ambiance of these cafés multicultural. The nightclubs would remain viable through to World War II and remnants of that world would hang on until the 1970s.<sup>7</sup>

The major writer in the American Greek tradition was Theano Papazoglou-Margaris. Although active in theater and politics, she became famed for her short stories and columns in *Ethnikos Kyrix*. Her work won international recognition in the Greek-language world and her *To Chroniko tou Halsted Street* (The Chronicle of Halted Street) won the 1963 Greek state prize for literature, making her the first writer living outside of Greece to be so honored. Another writer who made an international impact was Maria Economidou who wrote *The Greeks in America as I Saw Them* (1916). Unlike contemporary American muckraking journalists, Economidou's expose was not aimed at swaying American public opinion but at mobilizing the Greek elites and the Greek government.

Taking a different road was Demetra Vaka Brown, who authored fifteen books, most of which were written in English.<sup>8</sup> Vaka Brown

became the Greek writer best known to the general American public, but her focus was life in the Ottoman Empire, not life in the United States. One of her most widely read books, *Haremlik*, for example, has as its subtitle: *Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women*.<sup>9</sup>

Nicos Calas, a literary figure of international renown, lived in the United States for many years, but continued to write his surrealist poetry in Greek. Less well-known poets such as George Coutoumanos and Takis Tzortzis also published in Greek. Regina Pagoulatou carried on this tradition of publishing in Greek to the end of the twentieth century. Many of her chapbooks, however, appeared in bilingual formats, and her *Exile, A Chronicle, 1948–1958*, an account of her years in a post-Greek civil war concentration camp appeared in English.<sup>10</sup>

Greek language theater was largely confined to semi-professional companies that performed irregularly and often collapsed after a few years. The only known professional company to perform regularly was the Lemos Theater, founded by Adamantios Lemos in Athens in 1944. The troupe gave its first American performance in 1956 and for the next ten years used New York City as a base as it traveled a circuit from Chicago to Boston. Although it mainly played in church auditoriums, small playhouses, college venues, and ethnic centers, the Lemos Theater also staged plays at New York's Carnegie Hall, the Fashion Institute of Technology, the Barbizon Plaza Theater, and the Broadway Theater on 42nd Street. The theater collapsed in the 1967 with the advent of the junta in Greece and has had no successor.<sup>11</sup>

The most extreme form of the American Greek identity involved Greeks who vaguely imagined they could emulate the Greeks of Egypt who had retained cultural autonomy for nearly two hundred years. Egyptian Greeks lived in Greek neighborhoods, were educated in Greek language schools, and enjoyed a measure of self-government. Many Egyptian Greeks never learned to speak much Arabic and their contact with Egyptians was often limited to matters of commerce. This situation was possible largely due to the colonial status of Egypt. Similar autonomy in America would have

been far more difficult, if not impossible. Nor would it have been much easier to be part of a cosmopolitan multi-ethnic culture such as that which thrived in Smyrna.

With the passing of the years, keeping Greek as the basic identity with American as a modifier became increasingly difficult, particularly as the majority of the community became American born. Nonetheless, even in the twenty-first century, there would be isolated neighborhoods or individuals who remained American Greeks. Poetry, fiction, and memoirs written by Greeks in America invariably speak of a relative or neighborhood elder who had lived in America for decades and had never learned to communicate in English or function outside of ethnic society. Whether scorned or admired, such persons are always cited as exceptions to the dominant culture of the Greek community.

### The Greek Americans

Given that American society offers no viable means of success except through assimilation of one kind or another, the transformation of American Greek identity to Greek American identity was all but inevitable. That trend grew stronger with the end of mass immigration in 1924, was strengthened by the courtship and protection of the foreign-born by the New Deal of the 1940s, and was dominant by the post-World War II era. Capping this process was the education of American-born Greeks in the public school system, and an outmarriage rate that rose to at least 80%.

Emblematic of the organizational shift in national identity was the steady growth of AHEPA, which was launched in 1922 primarily in response to harassment of Greeks by racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan. One of AHEPA's goals was to facilitate Greek entry into mainstream America which meant familiarizing Greeks with the laws and culture of the United States. Another priority of AHEPA, from its inception, was to identify the Greeks in America as heirs of the Classic Age of Greece rather than as Ottomanized quasi-Europeans or even as descendants of the Byzantine Empire.

Although challenged throughout the 1920s and 1930s by GAPA and other groups, AHEPA grew steadily in membership and influence. By the end of the 1950s, AHEPA was the premier secular organization of the community, a position it has retained to the present time.

A measure of how Greek identity had waned even in the first fifty years of mass immigration is that in 1907, when the total number of immigrants from Greece proper in the preceding two decades totaled a bit over 180,000, the Panhellenic Union, the largest lay organization of its day, had a membership of 20,000 in 150 chapters. More than thirty years later, in 1939, when the total number of immigrants from Greece proper was approximately 426,900, AHEPA had 25,000 active members in 365 chapters.<sup>12</sup>

At the conclusion of World War II, AHEPA politically identified with the aims of American foreign policy. In practical terms, this meant taking a strong anti-Communist position during the civil war in Greece. This included support for the military interventionist policies of Harry Truman during the war and the Marshall Plan afterwards. During the 1950s, AHEPA did not question the harassment of Greek American leftists during the McCarthy era, and it remained relatively silent about the murderous conditions in the concentration camps the monarchists in Greece operated following the civil war. Later, AHEPA would give de facto support to the junta of 1967–1974 during its earliest days, when the dictatorship enjoyed open support by American politicians such as Vice-President Spiro Agnew. This is not to suggest that AHEPA was an ideologically conservative organization in all its efforts, but simply, that in regard to foreign affairs, from 1940s–1960s, it was an uncritical supporter of American policy in the Eastern Mediterranean.

AHEPA became more politically agile in foreign policy matters following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 which was set off by the attempted coup against Archbishop Makarios by Greek junta leaders in Athens. AHEPA now often criticized American policies regarding Cyprus. It also challenged America's tepid support of Greece in the FYROM (Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia) name controversy, America's ardent support of Turkey,

and American positions regarding other problems in the Eastern Mediterranean. In all cases, however, AHEPA acted as an American organization wishing to correct errors in American foreign policy and not as an American megaphone for policies dictated by Athens or Nicosia. AHEPA publishes the voting records of American politicians on Greek and Cypriot issues, but it does not publish rankings or positions of politicians in Greece. AHEPA often works closely with the American Hellenic Institute, whose mandate is to influence American foreign policy by lobbying politicians in Washington and educating shapers of policy such as scholars, Congressional aides, and journalists.

Speaking at the Clergy-Laity Conference of 2008, Archbishop Demetrios, present primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America, declared the Church was no longer an immigrant institution. With that statement he signaled that a strictly Greek-cultured Church was a thing of the past. The Church now sponsored proselytizing campaigns in Africa, fostered Hellenization of non-Greek spouses, and welcomed converts, including clergy. The Archbishop's statement was not an abrupt change of heart, but a result of an evolution in Church thinking that had been developing for some forty years. Archbishop Athenagoras (1941–1948), Archbishop Micheal (1949–1958), and Archbishop Iakovos (1959–1996) had all worked to Americanize the Church. The most obvious change was to accept that given that outmarriage was unavoidable, it was wiser to see the non-Greek spouse as an addition to the Church rather than seeing the Greek spouse as a loss. As the twentieth century ended, it was not uncommon for Hellenized spouses to hold prominent Church offices and for converted clergy to be in charge of a parish.

Through to end of the 1930s, Greek Orthodox priests in America were still exclusively imported from Greece and Greek-speaking diaspora communities. The Church recognized that many of these priests did not have a comfortable relationship with their parishioners. It also recognized that a viable Church in the United States must produce its own priests. These concerns were laid out in a statement in 1934 regarding the founding of a seminary in

America.<sup>13</sup> Change came slowly and minimally. The first class of fourteen American-trained priests would not be graduated until 1939. The lack of clergy, particularly American-born clergy, has remained a constant concern. In the first decades of the twenty-first century, there were not enough priests, even with converts, to regularly service the Church's five hundred parishes. Moreover, numerous parishioners complained that their priests often either did not speak Greek or did not speak Greek fluently.<sup>14</sup>

Individual parishes often sponsored activities such as organized athletics, youth clubs, retiree groups, and cultural societies in a manner more like Protestant and Catholic parishes in the United States rather than Orthodox parishes in Greece or Cyprus. American prelates never attend partisan gatherings in Greece but are often guests at the Republican and Democratic presidential conventions. The Church also became active in ecumenical organizations such as the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Christians and Jews. Archbishop Iakovos was particularly visible in such outreach efforts and was featured on the cover of *Life* when he marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, Alabama. In addition to reaching out to non-Orthodox Christians, Iakovos sought to find a means to coordinate all Orthodox entities in the United States and raised the possibility of moving the Ecumenical Patriarchate to Washington, D.C.

Although *Ethnikos Kyrix* continues to publish daily in Greek, its publisher readily acknowledges that most American-born Greeks are illiterate in Greek. Seeking to meet their needs, *Ethnikos Kyrix* launched an English-language weekly titled the *National Herald* in 1986. *The National Herald* and other weeklies continued to report on events in Greece, but the majority of their pages were given to news of Greek America. In the 1970s, *Ethnikos Kyrix* also published *Greek Accent*, a slick-paper popular monthly. After that journal's demise, its cultural space was filled by the still-publishing independent *Odyssey*. Populist journals of various kinds continued to appear throughout the first decades of the twenty-first century. These include *Greek Circle*, *Ethos*, and the *Greek American Review*. The predecessor of these English-language publications was *Athene*:

*American Magazine of Hellenic Thought* (1940–1967) which offered a blend of history, literature, and social commentary.

A landmark intellectual event of the later twentieth century was the creation in 1974 of the Modern Greek Studies Association (MGSA), an organization primarily of North American-based scholars who took modern Greece as their scholarly focus. Although research by the MGSA was mainly on modern Greece and the modern diaspora, the organizational language was English as was the language of its biannual symposiums and its major publication, the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. English is also the language of the other academic Greek-oriented journals that continue to publish: the *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, the *Journal of Modern Hellenism*, and the *Charioteer*.<sup>15</sup> American publication of books in Greek has virtually ceased with the exception of instructional texts, dictionaries, and some poetry collections. The later often have facing-page English translations. The last major academic work in the United States published in Greek was *Ellines tis Amerikis: 1528–1948* written by Bobi Malaforis.<sup>16</sup>

Artistic expression by Greeks of the United States became overwhelming rooted in American culture in the final five decades of the twentieth century. Numerous Greeks became associated with the best in American art; Elia Kazan and Maria Callas immediately come to mind. In the literary world, Harry Mark Petrakis wrote passionately about Greeks in America. Some of his novels became best-sellers, some of his stories were adapted for television, and one of his novels became the basis for a Hollywood film. Similar success was enjoyed by Nick Gage with his *Eleni*, which became an international best-seller and was adapted for a film. Olga Broumas won the Yale Younger Poets Award (1977), the first non-native speaker to be so honored, and Jeffrey Eugenides won a Pulitzer Prize for his *Middlesex* (2002). George Pelecanos emerged as one of the nation's top mystery writers, and Helen Papanikolas became known for her sharply edged fiction. At a popular entertainment level, Telly Savalas became a television icon with his creation of Kojak, a highly sophisticated and appealing Greek police detective in charge of an important police unit in New York City. John

Aniston became a fixture on daytime soap opera and his daughter Jennifer Aniston starred in one of television's most successful night-time comedies. John Cassavetes and Gregory Markopoulos would be idolized by the avant-garde film world while *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002), written by and starring Nia Vardalos with Rita Wilson, another Greek American, as producer, would become the highest grossing, low-budget Hollywood film in American film history. The list could go on for pages. What is unassailable is that Greeks in America interested in the arts did not aim their work at Greek Americans but at the general public. They most certainly were not American Greeks, and many were less Greek Americans than Americans of Greek descent.

The impact of the Second Wave of mass immigration (1965–1980) on the trend to Greek American identity has not been systematically studied, but that impact appears to have been fleeting. Unlike the immigrants of the Great Migration, the Second Wave immigrants, who numbered approximately 200,000, tended to have a much better formal education than their predecessors and to come from urban culture. They also often had the help of relatives already resident in the United States, and the United States they encountered, rather than regarding them as undesirables, as had been the case at the turn of the century, now considered Greeks to be model immigrants.

Financial well-being came far more quickly for the Second Wave immigrants than it had for Greek immigrants in earlier periods. The annual listing of the fifty wealthiest Greeks in America, published by the *National Herald*, for example, shows that 20% of that group are Second Wave immigrants and another 5% are post-World War II immigrants.<sup>17</sup> At the cultural level, a highly disproportionate percent of the faculty in the Modern Greek Studies programs are Second Wave immigrants. Second wave immigrants have also been successful at the Main Street level of commerce. On the Atlantic coast many of them became proprietors of pizzerias and donut shops. Their advent also marked the entry of *gyro* as a new staple in America's fast food menu. Another strong indicator of success is that the US Census of 2000 indicated that the Greek

community in America as a category was one of the most affluent and highly educated ethnic communities in the United States and that it was decidedly more like than unlike other Americans.<sup>18</sup>

Second wave immigration, of course, brought new energy into ethnic organizations and increased the use of the Greek language in America. One example of language revival was the creation of *Proini* (Morning, 1976–1990), a new Greek language daily published by a Second Wave immigrant from Cyprus. The new paper took a center-left editorial stance while *Ethnikos Kyrix*, following the demise of *Atlantis*, became more center-right. In 1986, *Proini* also began to publish the *GreekAmerican*, an English-language weekly whose very title had no space or hyphen between the two capitalized national identities. The *GreekAmerican* received considerable support for its non-traditional way of looking at Greece and Greek America. Among the topics it addressed were Greek Jews, Vlachs, homosexuality, feminism, and other subjects not covered by other newspapers.

The new wave of Greek speakers sometimes created rifts in Greek Orthodox parishes. The American-born had increasing been asking for more English or English-only in Church services, and many advocated a union of some kind with other Orthodox bodies in America. The newcomers were strongly inclined to want to retain the Church as they had known it in Greece or Cyprus. They wanted more, not less Greek, and felt closer union with other Orthodox groups would likely result in a dilution of their Greekness. In New York, the largest Greek center, the tensions slowly abated, but in Chicago and elsewhere, the tensions persisted for a considerable period of time. The New York pattern generally has proved to be more common than that in Chicago.

A startling example of the language rift occurred when a Chicago public school proposed including Greek in its bilingual curriculum. The established Greek Americans vigorously opposed the proposal on the grounds that it would hamper the Americanization of the Second Wave Greek immigrant children and would stigmatize Greeks as having the same cultural assimilation problems as the children of recently arrived Spanish-language immigrants.

In contrast, the Second Wave parents supported the program as a means of retaining Greek sensibility for their children while simultaneously helping them adjust to a new culture. The Second Wave immigrants did not necessarily identify as American Greeks, but the established community clearly prioritized rapid Americanization for them, even though the Greek identity of their own children would undoubtedly have been strengthened by the proposed program.<sup>19</sup>

Some thirty years later, the views of most Greek Americans on this topic had altered. Having realized that Greek was a dying language in America, most Greek Americans had become advocates for charter public schools with Greek language components, the study-in-Greece programs of various durations, and other initiatives that would cultivate a sense of Greekness and develop Greek language skills in their children. Americanization had been a de facto priority in pre-World War II, but keeping Greek culture alive increasing become the top priority as the century came to an end.

### Greek and American

The most problematic and less common identity of Greeks in America involves persons who considered themselves bicultural or transnational Greeks. Bicultural identity in the United States as an acceptable, much less a desirable self-image is a relatively recent cultural phenomenon. The traditional American view has been that the United States should have a monolingual common culture to which immigrants had to assimilate as quickly as possible. At its crudest level, this led to the infamous melting pot metaphor and chronic hostility to non-Europeans and non-Christians. A considerable body of literature has examined how the concept of "whiteness" played into what was and was not acceptable in mainstream culture. Yiorgos Anagnostou has made an extensive study of how this analysis might apply to Greeks in America.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, in the wake of the civil rights movement, the changing global economic order, and mass immigration from Spanish-speaking

nations, the traditional American cultural givens had significantly weakened by the onset of the twenty-first century. Being Greek and American could conceivably have a place in an America comfortable with biculturalism.

Also affecting Greek identity in America were cultural changes in Greece. For the first time since the founding of the modern state, Greece had become a destination for immigrants. As of the second decade of the new century, immigrants made up more than 10% of the total population. Many of the immigrants only used Greece as an entry point to Europe, but a considerable number, particularly those from neighboring Balkan states, considered their relocation as permanent and educated their children in the Greek public school system. Thus, an Albanian immigrant can become the parent of a cultural Greek. In a related phenomenon, many young Greeks have gone to study, work, live, and marry in other EU nations. They are still citizens of Greece and identify themselves as Hellenes. Whether they eventually return to Greece or not, whether they outmarry or not and how their children will culturally indentify is unknown. A related development is that the skepticism of homeland Greeks regarding the degree of Greekness of those in the diaspora has waned to some degree. An American-born Greek has been elected Prime Minister and another American-born has been elected mayor of Athens, electoral outcomes that would have been as impossible in the Greece of the 1950s as an African American being elected president of the United States. This complex of new social realities suggest that to be Greek in the twenty-first century will likely have much less to do with genetics and geography than culture in the broadest sense.

The most common expression of Greek bicultural identity in the United States has been the attempt to combine the most attractive features of Greek culture with the most attractive features of American culture. In actuality, however, such an embrace often means finding some Greek root for an American practice. A number of writers have advanced a more complex view. An example of such thinking is Dean Kostos' introduction to his anthology featuring the work of more than fifty Greek American poets:

Although it may no longer be fashionable to use it, I am interested in the hyphen that traditionally linked *Greek* and *American* because of its value as a metaphor—a bridge between two worlds, two identities. Do we traverse this hyphen leading us to divide our time like Peresphone, between two worlds? Are we Greeks in America and Americans in Greece? Instead of the either/or, perhaps another option exists, the hybrid identity . . . we have partaken of both cultures, and have grown roots in both terrains. These roots have entwined with the words we write.<sup>21</sup>

Entwined cultural roots are a feature of many of the poems in the anthology Kostos edited. A similar view was voiced by Yiorgos Anagnostou in his review of *The Journey: The Greek American Dream*, a documentary film by Maria Iliou, “the Greek American journey toward inhabiting two worlds—the dream of inhabiting the hyphen—ultimately inspires awe and wonder.”<sup>22</sup> Biculturalism may also be defined as bypassing or negating the spaces between the two cultures and embracing each as a totality. The goal is not balance but a symbiotic dynamic. Thus, which culture is dominant in any given moment or how this cultural coexistence functions in daily life remains highly individualistic, as does the relatively weight of each culture.

Bicultural identity is often evident in academics and intellectuals whose work directly involves Hellenic issues. Scholars in Modern Greek Studies programs may use English when teaching, at professional gatherings, and in journals, but their scholarship requires an intimate relationship with Greek language sources and venues. That a considerable percentage of Modern Greek Studies scholars in America were reared and educated in Greece makes them intimate with both cultures on a very personal and fundamental level.

Not all American artists with Greek heritage identify with Hellenic culture or have Greek language skills, but bicultural artists are not rare. Elia Kazan, for one, is a figure at once almost quint-

essential American yet with a fundamental Greek sensibility he called the Anatolian smile. Maria Callas is another example of a meshing of American and Greek culture, even if the Greek aspects are mainly evident in her personal life rather than in her art. A less ambiguous example of a bicultural artist is dancer/choreographer Athan Karras, who became famed internationally for his mastery of traditional Greek folk dance. Karras danced in Broadway musicals, directed an important dance studio for Hollywood stars in Los Angeles, established various dance societies, and trained dancers at American universities, but he was also a star dancer in Dora Stratou’s legendary National Dance Ensemble which championed Greek folk dancing in Greece itself. Karras also assisted Stratou in locating authentic regional costumes and steps. Filmmaker Valerie Kontakos is not as famed as Kazan, Callas, and Karras but she is indicative of a later generation of Americans at home with both Greek and American culture. Her first film was in English made in the United States about Greek American visual artists. Her second film about baseball in Greece has a soundtrack mainly in Greek but has obvious interest to Americans. She continues to work with the same sensibility. The point here is not to establish a roll call of artists who might be classified as bicultural but to indicate the kind of activities such artists undertake.<sup>23</sup>

Another pathway to biculturalism involves individuals and families who retain close ties to their native region in Greece or Cyprus. Greeks are famed for their tendency to form *topika somateia* (societies based on regional and even civic origin). Many of them are informal but the plethora of such organizations indicates a desire of many Greeks in America to retain an intimate contact with Greece. Maintaining such ties with the homeland is more common with Second Wave immigrants and their immediate offspring than in earlier cohorts of immigrants and their children. Not only is the Greek origin more recent but new electronic technology makes maintaining family ties far easier than at any time in the past.

The new technology, in fact, is a significant factor in making the bicultural option viable. Greeks can work with Greeks anywhere in the world on joint projects with an ease and at a cost unimaginable

even twenty years ago. In previous eras, individuals who did not live in areas with a large Greek population did not have ready access to current Greek newspapers, films, radio, television, or cultural events. Today, even high-level Greek language instruction tapes are easily accessible on the Internet and computer programs. In sum, the advent of the Internet allows individuals to be as Greeks as they wish to be, whatever their geographic location, whether their focus is in business, art, family affairs, or politics. Contact with Greeks anywhere on the planet is only a fingertip away.

The potential number of Greeks in America who might be considered bicultural is not large. Of that group, the vast majority are Second Wave immigrants and their children. In that sense an immigrant who begins as an American Greek can refuse the evolution to Greek American by opting for some form of biculturalism. Depending on the emotional and cultural environment in which they were reared, second generation Greeks whose parents are both Greek might also find biculturalism appealing, particularly if they have experienced trips to Greece or Cyprus at a formative time in their life and/or have studied modern Greek culture in a university. Second generation Greeks of mixed ethnic parentage and subsequent generations of multi-ethnic heritage are not precluded from identifying as Greek and American, but the cultural probability is much lower. Such a choice on their part would have to be deliberate, a conscious choice among many alternatives, including biculturalism that does not have a Greek component.

Australia, Canada, and other nations offer governmental support for biculturalism that is largely lacking in the United States. Consequently, any building of bicultural institutions has been a project of the Greek community. Although a number of Greek organizations have energetically sponsored study abroad programs in Greece, these efforts have involved very little follow up and often simply result in deepening symbolic identity rather than changing its nature. Enormous amounts of time, energy, and funding have gone into efforts to maintain the Greek language in America, but these efforts have failed to produce many Greek-speakers in the third and fourth generation. Unless that pattern alters, the bicultural

tural option is doomed to involve only a tiny fragment of the community. One can be a phil-Hellene or a Greek American without direct access to Greek language sources, but one cannot be bicultural via translation.

### Twenty-first Century Prospects

What the course, pace, and nature of bicultural identity in America might be in the future is unknowable. Even if biculturalism becomes one of the American norms, it would seem that it has come a few decades too late for the Greek community. Most of the foreign-born are deceased or aging; and their offspring are showing the same assimilation patterns as previous Greek immigrant generations. Even if an unexpected Third Wave of mass immigration should take place, there is little reason to believe its sense of identity would take a course significantly different than that of the Second Wave. The Greek community presently currently lacks a cultural base for biculturalism, and there are no well-funded projects designed to create such a cultural infrastructure.

The pattern of other European immigrant groups in America is that once mass immigration ebbs, successive outmarriage marginalizes and then eliminates the homeland culture. The advantages of becoming mainstream Americans are so overwhelming that passive assimilation becomes the fate of both those who seek it and those who do not. Greek Americans are quick to proclaim that they are proud to be Greek, but there is dwindling support for ethnic organizations, presses, and cultural projects. Despite well-attended ethnic parades, lavish banquets, award ceremonies, and Orthodox festivals, being Greek in America is increasingly a symbolic rather than an existential identity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>A collection of such experiences is found in Constance Callinicos, *American Aphrodite: Becoming Female in Greek America* (NY: Pella Publishing, 1990).

<sup>2</sup>Accounts of such connections are featured in Michael Contopoulos, *The Greek Community of New York City: Early Years to 1910* (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Zaratzas, 1992). Includes an informative foreword by Constantine G. Hatzidimitriou.

<sup>3</sup>A pioneering study of returnees was written by Theodore Saloutos, *They Remember America* (Berkeley: University of California, Press, 1956).

<sup>4</sup>Cited by Saloutos, *They Remember America*, p.31.

<sup>5</sup>Constantine Yavis, Report on the Greek-American Community, Department of Justice, April 21, 1944. Reprinted in *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* V. XIV, No. 1 & 2 (Spring-Summer 1987), p. 114 contains a list of attitudes about identity promoted by the Greek Orthodox Church.

<sup>6</sup>Stefanos Tsirmakis, Lefteris Tsirmakis, *No Pasaran* (Athens: Slynchorni Epochi, 1987).

<sup>7</sup>Steve Frangos, "Marika Papagika and the Transformations in Modern Greek Music" in Spyros D. Orfanos (ed.), *Reading Greek America* (NY: Pella Publishing, 2002), pp. 223-2439.

<sup>8</sup>Yiorgos Kalogeras discusses the authorship issue in his introduction to a new edition of Demetra Vaka Brown, *Haremlik: Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004).

<sup>9</sup>A consideration of Brown's sense of identity and how she was perceived by the American public is found in Eleftheria Arapoglou, "Vaka Brown: The Historicized Geography/Geographic History of an Immigrant," *Journal of Modern Hellenism*, N. 21/22 (Winter 2004-2005), pp. 82-103.

<sup>10</sup>Regina Pagoulatou, *Exile: A Chronicle - 1948-1950* (New York: Pella Publishing Company, 1999) with a translation by Theony Condos.. Pella published most of Pagoulatou's poetry books as well. Characteristic of these bilingual editions was Regina Pagoulatou, *The Angels* (New York: Pella Publishing Company, 1988). Translation by Apostolos Athanasakis with collages by Yanni Posnakoff.

<sup>11</sup>For a history of the theater see Athena G. Dallas, "First First Legitimate Greek Theater in America published in the Twentieth Anniversary catalog of the Lemos Greek Repertory Theater, 1944-194 published by the Lemos Theater. This booklet contains some fifty pages of information about the theater and will be deposited in the U of Michigan archives in the near future. Since the demise of the Lemos Theater, there have been a number of short-lived efforts to the present Greek plays in translation, and in the Astoria section of Queens, New York, they have been semi-professional companies in the post-junta era who perform in Greek.

<sup>12</sup>James Nestor, "The Greek Church in America" (Evanston, IL: PhD Dissertation, 1940) published in Paul G. Manolis, *The History of the Greek Church of America: In Acts and Documents* (Berkeley, CA: Ambelos Press/Livani Publishing, 2003), V. III, pp. 2353.

<sup>13</sup>A full discussion of this issue is found in James Nestor, *The Greek Church in America*, pp. 2342-2351.

<sup>14</sup>*The Future of the Greek Language and Culture in the United States: Survival in the Diaspora*, a report from the Archbishop's Commission on Greek language and Hellenic Culture deliver to Archbishop Spyridon, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America, May 27, 1999, published by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, p.1.

<sup>15</sup>At the onset of 2013, the publisher of the *Charioteer* announced that there would be only one more issue. This issue will be devoted to a historical account of the journal which has been published continuously since 1960.

<sup>16</sup>(New York: Isaac Goldman printer, 1948).

<sup>17</sup>Special supplement of the *National Herald* (February 19, 2011) has biographies of these individuals and their net worth.

<sup>18</sup>Anna Karparthakis, Dan Georgakas, "Demythologizing Greek American Families," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* V. 36, N. 1 & 2 (double issue 2010), pp.45-61.

<sup>19</sup>Discussed by Charles Moskos in *The Greek Americans* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1989 revised edition), pp. 83-84.

<sup>20</sup>Yiorgos Anagnostou, *Contours of White Ethnicity: popular ethnography and the making of usable pasts in greek america* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009).

<sup>21</sup>Dean Kostos, (ed.), *Pomergrante Seeds: An Anthology of Greek-American Poetry* (Boston: Somerset Hall Press, 2008), pp. 17-18.

<sup>22</sup>Yiorgos Anagnostou, "The Journey: The Greek American Dream," a film review in the *Journal Of Modern Greek Studies* Volume 27, N. 2 (October 2009), p. 455.

<sup>23</sup>One could also speak of a related phenomenon in Greece. Maria Iliou's feature film *Alexandria* has Greek dialogue. Her documentary *The Journey: The Greek American Dream* is a study of Greek Americans that is primarily in English although debuted in Greece at the Benaki Museum. Her second documentary *Smyrna: The Destruction of a Cosmopolitan City* was made with Greek funding and had a massive release in popular cinemas but is primarily in English. Alexander Kitroeff, a Greek American, was the historical consultant for both films. Other films of this kind would include *Buzz*, a film made for Greek national television by Spiro Taravaris about A. I. Bezzerides, a famous Hollywood scriptwriter of Armenian and Greek heritage. Most of the film is in English and Greek Americans served as consultants. Whether this will develop into one of the trends of Greek cinema or is just an anomaly remains to be seen.