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IN ANDONIS DECAVALLES'S POETRY

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BOOK REVIEWS

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ESSAYS

A Cosmopolitan Exile's Nostos: Modernity, Memory, and Myth in Andonis Decavalles's Poetry

by A. STEFANIDOU

I turned back to see and was bewildered.
Fright overtook me. I meant to estimate
the distance I had crossed so painfully,
the expanse of silence, when I noticed
the big calm craters.

Were these my steps or did somebody
traverse the distance for me, left there
those big traces upon the page of snow?
("Recording")¹

Full of existential anxiety and self-questioning, the speaker in the above lines feels awe at how far, both physically and temporally, he has traveled in life, and in his fear he gains a paradoxical sense of confidence and faith in himself and his inner resources. Wondering in what ways he has changed during travelling this vast distance and facing unanticipated obstacles and dangers, he asks himself "If I open my mouth, what voice shall I utter, / what unheard whisper, what unearthly roar?" Obviously, the answer he seeks is not only unattainable but also undesirable, as it would reveal the new person he has become in the process. Lack of familiarity with both one's surroundings and one's transformed self

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breeds doubt, agony, and bewilderment, intensified by the alien and snow-covered images of the landscape in the poem. It is these complex feelings however that Andonis Decavalles undertakes to unearth and comprehend through his poetic nostos, the ultimate return "home." Leaving the security and comfort of his "home," Decavalles's poetic persona travels back and forth in space and time in order to reach a fuller appreciation and final reconciliation with the faces, places, values, habits, and dreams he had left behind when he embarked on the life of the cosmopolitan exile. Referring briefly to the notions of "home" and cosmopolitan exile, which provide a productive theoretical context for my discussion of Decavalles's poetry, I will focus on the particular function of memory, myth, and tradition as these are challenged by modernity and problematized in the work of one of the most significant poets of the Greek diaspora in the United States.

"Home" does not simply designate a physical closed space of family and friends, where common moral values and traditions usually pass from one generation to the next and to which a member is expected to be loyal and truthful. "Home" can also refer to a wider public sphere, such as a community of origin, a nation, a nation-state,² or an ethnic group,³ all of which demand a certain level of allegiance from the one that claims to be a member of them. This demand is felt strongly by the individual who is away from "home" in imposed or self-chosen exile and needs to prove and reinforce his or her loyalty and patriotic devotion to the "home left behind." In both its private and public manifestations, "home" essentially denotes roots. However, the way people are related to these roots and the manner in which they have been cut off from their roots is crucial to the understanding of the practices they adopt in order to participate in their new situation of being away from "home."⁴ Whether roots are willfully "extracted,"⁵ as in the case of cosmopolitan expatriates and transnational migrants, or they are violently cut off, as in the case of refugees or political exiles, what is sadly felt that is left behind and what is always sought after to replace the lost center of belonging is "home." In particular, a person who is away from "home" does not simply yearn for the localizable idea of "home" as a physical shelter. Rather, one craves for the structures and elements of "home" that are thought to guarantee happiness and security and are perceived as immutable and coherent despite the inevitable changes brought

about by the passage of time.⁶ It is the feeling and the structures of the idea of “home”⁷ that are lost and cannot be readily replaced when one experiences homelessness or exile.

In the discussion of exile, an important distinction should be drawn between the political experience of exile and the aesthetic perception and manifestation of it.⁸ The privileged form of exile for professional advancement and personal convenience should be distinguished from the forms of uprooting and diaspora that have been inscribed with dispossession, fear, and pain.⁹ In the literature of exile, on the other hand, the concept of exile is commonly deployed as an apolitical or ahistorical instance of displacement and isolation. This voluntary form of transplantation bears affinities to the Euro-American modernist representation of elitist homelessness where estrangement and separation are thought to enhance the expatriate artist’s insight and facilitate his or her experimentation, originality, aesthetic gain, and, finally, recognition among literary circles.¹⁰

Depending on their individual circumstances and their social, cultural, and political positioning and aspirations, willfully transplanted or coarsely uprooted people may gain a unique “contrapuntal” vision of the world, that is a simultaneous critical awareness of more than one culture, setting, and “home” (Said, “Reflections” 367). Being aware of the provisional qualities of homes, people in exile not only cross borders but, as Said notes, they “break barriers of thought and experience” (365). This way they can reevaluate and potentially reinforce their ties with their “home,” while they can attain a more profound and multifocal insight into both “home” and host cultures and societies. This is especially true for cosmopolitan exiles, who may not have been compelled to leave their homelands but who, nevertheless, choose to offer themselves the opportunity to use the particularities and possible benefits of their exile for their artistic projects.¹¹

Although the term “cosmopolitan” is not a neutral one,¹² as it usually refers to a refusal to conform to local or national authority and it expresses a desire to uphold multiple affiliations, cosmopolitanism should not be regarded as simply a “strictly leisure class dilettantism”¹³ but as the flexible movement in and out of cultures at will.¹⁴ Cosmopolitan exile can be seen as a situation of fertile and enriching cultural productivity based on the values, traditions, myths, experiences, customs, and behaviors that trans-

planted people choose to carry with them to their host "home."¹⁵ There is nothing to prevent cosmopolitans from being rooted in their "home" while they enjoy the privileges of their citizenship abroad. Indeed, cosmopolitans believe that "not everyone will find it best to stay in their natal patria" (Appiah 618).¹⁶ So when exile is voluntary and not coerced, migration or diaspora can be celebrated as cultural flows between different localities and communities (618). Contrary to the common charge of deracination that is expressed by nationalists for whom blood and soil are sacred,¹⁷ cosmopolitans can be patriots caring for both their homeland and the country they live in, as long as patriotism is considered more as a sentiment and less as an ideology and as long as nation and state are not regarded as coterminous (Appiah).¹⁸

Cosmopolitanism does not simply imply that one belongs nowhere or one belongs everywhere, as Bruce Robbins points out. The interest of the term "cosmopolitanism" is located "not in its full theoretical extension, where it becomes a paranoid fantasy of ubiquity and omniscience, but rather (paradoxically) in its local applications" (260). When discussing their homelessness, cosmopolitan exiles often resort to a culture-bound and localizing discourse of ethnic specificity so that they can valorize their filiative ties with their "home" and, at the same time, resist acculturation in the dominant culture and society; belonging to their adopted yet alien sociocultural context is always postponed or undesired.¹⁹

However, the pursuit and cultivation of filiation with "home" could be carried out in such an indomitable or desperate manner that "home" becomes idealized and mythologized in exilic discourse, while the more real and tangible qualities of "home" are nearly not discernible because one chooses to gloss over them.²⁰ In other words, the individual may feel a relational anguish which pertains both to the feeling and the fact that "[t]he home country is not 'real' in its own terms and yet it is real enough to impede Americanization, and the 'present home' is materially real and yet not real enough to feel authentic" (Radhakrishnan 207). To solve this ambiguity and anguish, people in exile may revere their "home" as an unchangeable ideal space, becoming uncritical and nostalgic towards it as well as clinging to half-truths, stereotypes, traditions, and other characteristics or elements that give "home" a certain eternal and sacred identity (211). Indeed, people and writers in exile may tend to dehistoricize and reify "home," imagin-

ing it isolated from everyday happenings and, more significantly, as if these happenings never left their mark on it. In addition, from a social-psychological perspective, the idealization of and passionate devotion to “home” may exceed the limits of mere love and affection and turn into infatuation, which may be a sign of the shame that is caused by the individual’s sense of alienation from one’s “home” or group.²¹ Accordingly, people in exile may feel that by migrating they have disappointed or even insulted not only themselves but also the members of their ethnic or national community, and particularly their family and close friends.

Andonis Decavalles as a Cosmopolitan Writer in Exile

In order to assuage his feelings of existential isolation, to exorcise his insurmountable guilt for abandoning his “home,” and to resist cultural homogenization in America, Andonis Decavalles is deeply committed to constructing a discourse of authentic rootedness in the “home left behind.”²² In self-imposed exile in America, where he has been highly honored and distinguished for his academic and intellectual achievements, Decavalles needs to prove to his fellow natives, to himself, and, by extension, to the members of his adopted culture and society, that his physical dislocation has not affected or corrupted his ethnic identity or patriotic sentiments. He considers that the notion of Greekness as a harmonious combination of the unique features of ancient Hellenic spirit and modern Greek national myth of autochthonous legitimacy and purity is no longer confidently stable and protected within America. So Decavalles needs to cultivate his own idiosyncratic idea of Greekness, while he insistently portrays his self-exiled speaker as the living embodiment of it.

During the process of establishing and validating his ethnic and national identity and culture, Decavalles articulates his original “home” as a natural, essential, and unsullied source of perfection, beauty, innocence, tranquility, and happiness. His Greek “home” is Decavalles’s cultural metropolis from where ideals, traditions, religious and folklore customs, myths, and popular stories emanate. The island of Siphnos—one of the Cyclades islands in the Aegean Sea—becomes the predominant topos in Decavalles’s poetry.²³ Both as a poetic device and a physical place of rootedness,

Siphnos provides him with a particularly bountiful natural imagery as well as a solid and regenerating thematic structure.²⁴ Everything that is meaningful and important to Decavalles is contextualized within this utopic, familiar, and independent Greek site, against which the immigrant's experiences and reality in America are compared, defined, and reviewed. Finally, this island is the destination of the writer's nostos, which is the organizing myth in his poetry. Past, present, and future enter a simultaneous and multidirectional relationship within this imagined literary nostos that ultimately determines the trajectory of the individual's journey into exilic consciousness and existence.

Apart from making a myth out of his ancestral "home," another salient aspect in Decavalles's work which functions as necessary tactics of formidable resistance to Americanization as well as a corroborative live bond between the writer and his fellow-natives, is that he writes poetry in Greek. By writing in Greek and by incorporating many elements of the idiomatic dialect of Siphnos in his poetry, Decavalles makes a cultural and social statement. Not only does he foster and consolidate a quintessential Greek subjectivity in America, but he also authenticates and solidifies his ethnic and national identity more forcefully, compared to Greeks who may have assimilated within the mainstream culture and society in a more active and thorough way. However, the discussion of authenticity necessarily involves "an element of closure and conservation, as though peoples and cultures existed outside the languages of time [. . .] where they are kept in isolation and at a 'critical distance,' as though they do not experience movement [and] transformation" (Chambers 82).

By writing poetry in Greek and having it first published in Greece—there is only one collection of his translated poems in English—Decavalles endorses such a simultaneous enclosure and exclusion, which necessarily impose a boundary between himself and the other Americans, including the other ethnics, as well.²⁵ The enclave he constructs, where only a few "chosen" ones who speak the same language can enter, engenders a reverse discrimination process in which anyone who is not competent in this particular language, and hence culture, is expelled from the privileged community of those who are—as if Othering both the Anglo-American subjects and the ethnically "marginal" Others in America. Decavalles claims that he is a native expatriate who may

have incorporated himself in America professionally, but who, nevertheless, refrains from "translating" himself in linguistic and cultural terms for the Western or non-Western individual who might develop a curiosity for or genuine interest in the writer's culture. In effect, he refuses to explain and reconceptualize his artistic identity along categories that would be contextualized within the American culture and society.

Writing in one's native language does not necessarily preclude a writer's adherence to the American assimilationist rhetoric. No matter how culturally accommodating this writer's discourse is, however, the sheer fact of not employing the language of the majority substantiates his or her repudiation of the dominant culture and society. Unless he or she lives within a multicultural and multilingual context, where the ethnic particularities of his or her work would be acknowledged, the writer who uses a language other than English has little hope of achieving recognition or success in America. Such a context does not yet exist, even in such a multiethnic society as that of the United States.²⁶ Consequently, this writer does not enjoy a wide readership, while his or her chances of being included in any canonical study of ethnic literature(s) in the United States are few, unless his or her work is translated into English by large publishing houses.

Although gaining large-scale recognition and success in America as a poet does not seem to be one of Decavalles's primary concerns, his use of English in most of his scholarly works presents an interesting contradiction that sheds light on the writer's ambivalent position towards his host "home." For Decavalles to protest in poetry written in English about the sadness and loneliness of immigrant life in America might have jeopardized his flourishing career as a university professor and a critically acclaimed scholar of Greek and Anglo-American literature. Decavalles's poetic expression of firm dissent from Americanization articulated in English would have directly interfered with his desire to fully belong and ultimately become accepted within the intellectual circles of American academia and society.

The simultaneous and parallel effort to gain artistic and professional recognition and acceptance on both sides of his "contact zones"²⁷ by manipulating the linguistic medium of expression according to the form of writing he is engaged in indicates not only that Decavalles makes full use of his exile but that he relishes

the limitations and misfortunes of his circumstances by exploiting their cosmopolitan parameters. This double gesture of filiation and affiliation with the “home” and host communities respectively is both empowering and disempowering for Decavalles. His passionate celebration of his “home” and bitter indictment of his host society cancels cultural mediation, negotiation, or hybridization among his personal, professional, artistic, ethnic, and patriotic commitments.

Decavalles's Idiosyncratic Patriotism

Despite the aesthetic benefits of being in exile, Decavalles is preoccupied with the tragic effects of deracination, the uncertainties and dangers in modern Western society, and the temporary and illusory nature of being a member of a non-traditional community. Although he was not forced to move to America, his transplantation has been a substantial source of pain and melancholy. What is also peculiar about Decavalles is that his “home” fantasy consists of a doubly romanticized construct, as his idea of Greekness was primarily developed and nurtured within a diasporic community outside the boundaries of the Greek state.²⁸ Decavalles was born in Alexandria, Egypt, where a dynamic Greek expatriate community tried to maintain a strong and lively Hellenistic cultural tradition.²⁹ Before moving to the United States in 1954, he had already experienced an early form of homelessness when he moved to Athens to study law, and later during World War II, when he joined the Greek navy.

The experience of war was to have a profound impact on Decavalles and bring him, spiritually and emotionally, closer to the writers who shared this experience and published their work during and after World War II and the Greek civil war (1944-49). Although in his poetry he does not often raise sociopolitical issues that relate to his homeland, Decavalles expresses a nostalgic and almost ingenuous patriotic sentiment towards Greece, which he envisions as a homogeneous nation-state. He even personifies Greece as a woman of moral dignity and kindness, who was irrevocably hurt not only by the detrimental consequences of wars, but also by her supposed friends, the Allied Forces. For Decavalles, Greece:

has unceasingly and unavoidably been involved, actively and painfully, in the adventure of the Western World. Greece has placed herself, for the most part, on the side of freedom and democracy with her age-old friends, [. . .]. [However], several of her old trusts were shaken; she has often found herself betrayed, exploited, left alone to her fate. Her sacrifices for the victory of the common causes were highly appreciated and praised but were soon forgotten and ignored. ("Modernity" 11)

Decavalles's patriotism implies that the Western world should revere Greece as the cradle of democracy and as a sanctified model of national integrity and authenticity. However, he makes an assertive, albeit indirect, distinction between an ideal nation-state and its citizens, whose lack of action or wrongful decisions could be deleterious to the sociohistorical survival of the nation-state. He wonders "to what extent the Greek people themselves might have been the culprits or the victims of foreign manipulations and objectives in the long involvement that cost the lives of thousands of innocents" ("Modernity" 12). By attempting to make a myth out of Greece and by his ambivalent attitude towards the nationalist devotion of the Greeks, Decavalles promotes an argument that both reinforces and justifies his patriotism as well as his decision to exercise it along the lines of long-distance nationalism³⁰ rather than with active and direct involvement in the affairs of the nation-state.

To further vindicate his self-chosen exile, Decavalles presents the trials and tribulations that people of his generation had to endure.³¹ In his article "Modernity: The Third Stage, the New Poets," he refers to the literature written during this period, while he avoids placing himself clearly in any subcategory (19). Greek poetry during this time was generally influenced by the literary achievements of George Seferis (1900-1971) and Odysseus Elytis (1911-1996),³² the two Nobel laureates (Seferis in 1963 and Elytis in 1979), whose poetry, according to Decavalles, reflects the historical context of their time as well as wider social and ethical issues (15). Within the post-war generation of younger poets, there was a common sense of alienation as their world was in ruins. There were three major tendencies in this poetry, according to Roderick Beaton: one towards a rather open "social" poetry of the

Left; another characterized by a more “interiorized melancholy” and “respect for traditional poetic forms”; and finally, there was a move away from references to the outside world and towards a more “hermetic, almost secretive poetry” that was influenced by literary modernism (*Modern Greek Literature* 200).

Decavalles feels that he belongs to the generation of post-war poets, which he calls “Poets of Essence” and which includes poets like Zoi Karelli, Takis Sinopoulos, Dinos Christianopoulos, and others (“Modernity” 18-19). He establishes a primarily emotional and spiritual bond with these poets, who, instead of writing “social” poetry and being politically engaged, resorted to “withdrawal and self-exile” (19). Decavalles explains how these poets were robbed of their youth because they “found themselves in an unfriendly, untrustworthy, unpromising world, estranged and estranging, where the old values had been reversed and destroyed.” Beauty and order were lost, together with faith in God, and “[o]nly the internal, the personal world, no matter how deeply disturbed and appalled, was left as the final resort for withdrawal and self-exile” (19).

Similar feelings and concerns are expressed in the poem “Λίγα Λόγια μιας Γενιάς [Few Words of a Generation],”³³ where Decavalles does not use his common singular first-person narrator, who strives to immerse himself deeper into his conscious and subconscious self in search of knowledge and existential truth.³⁴ Instead, a collective pronoun “we” is used to underline the strong sense of solidarity between the speaker and, what he calls, his “strange” generation, characterized by the absence of youthful happiness and free spirit in their souls. Reflecting on the reasons behind their unnatural and untimely maturation, the speaker momentarily dwells on the past:

We always sowed silently
the prickly pears of affection
the camomile of submission
the Saracen plant of endurance
the mandrakes of patience
in passages and transitions
in earthquakes and labyrinths.

We then waited and followed.
We wait no longer
but still follow. We open
doors always with a bow
to let others pass,
those and these,
the before and the after.

From the early we passed to the late
with nothing between but a lasting
night that took from us
the unshaped face,
the unborn child, the self. (*Ransoms* 83-84)

The speaker is sad about his generation's servility and withdrawal from any socially meaningful actions or any other efficient behavior that could upset and potentially overturn the interior or exterior regimes of power. In a covert way, he feels ashamed on behalf of his generation, as it mainly consists of followers and not devoted patriots, who would be willing to sacrifice their lives in order to guarantee the immutable essence and the uninterrupted historical continuity of their nation. While he does not exclude himself from the general inertia and submissiveness, the speaker does not openly name or accuse any Western country or even Greece for the traumatic experiences of the Greek youth. Thus, he finally depoliticizes the particular historical moment of the Greek national history by retreating into the private world of existential loneliness and insecurity.

The above poem and the passage about the betrayal of Greece during the wars show the problematic, yet interdependent, relationship between nationalism and exile and how one perceives them away from "home." Nationalism and exile are not opposite phenomena or situations; they are the extreme points of a single continuum that involves degrees and processes of belonging to a community or a group, and so they cannot be discussed without reference to each other (Said, "Reflections" 359-60).³⁵ Because exile, whether imposed or self-chosen, is resonant with moments of crisis, since people have lost the physical center of their cultural ancestry and national security, their attitude towards their nation may alter significantly. That is, people in exile may become quite

protective of their nation's pure identity by keeping the national myths and traditions alive, as well as by inventing and reinventing them. In this manner, they can guarantee their nation's historical and cultural continuity with the past as well as its survival and prosperity in the future.³⁶ For that reason, people in exile may attribute their sense of dissatisfaction with or embarrassment about their nation to the members of the nation and not the nation per se, especially where nation and state seem to coincide. As a result, the identification with the national politics of "home" becomes a sacred and traditional model of imagined harmonious belonging, which exiles at all costs want to keep safe from external pressures or unpleasant events of history. This discursive practice is also quite common among other Greek immigrant poets in America when they want to promote and take pride in the unadulterated, uninterrupted, and authentic rendition of their national identity and the fervor of their patriotism.

Decavalles's patriotic affection and allegiance to his geographically remote yet psychologically intimate nation are embedded in the site of his native island. Siphnos, which Decavalles has described as the nave of his own land where he is reborn and baptized again in the sun and sea,³⁷ is constantly visited in exile and is held as an imagined, yet powerful, shield against modern America. In a lyrical and romantic voice, Decavalles contrasts his idyllic "home" with urban America and the harmful effects of modernization on the individual's life and identity. This contrast is evident throughout his poetry and not necessarily within single poems. However, Decavalles invalidates any possible resolution to the conflict between his premodern "home" and today's loneliness and fragmentation in America, since, firmly and consistently throughout his poetic work, he employs two totally different spatial and temporal categories in order to discuss, comprehend, and internalize "home" and exile.

Modernity and Tradition in Exile

For Decavalles, "home" and exile are so rigidly removed from each other, both as historical and geographical contexts as well as conceptual entities, that there is no reason to assume that the writer does not intentionally endorse this indubitable distinction.

Indeed, Decavalles wants to construct and maintain an impenetrable boundary between the two different and clearly demarcated temporal and spatial sites that he inhabits in both a physical and an imagined way. In his poetry, America constitutes the contemporary and sorrowful lived reality of the immigrant, while time in America is associated with limitation, incoherence, inevitability, and finality, as it follows a linear and teleological progression. Diasporic time, which is integrated within American time, imposes a tremendous pressure on the individual as it contests the feasibility of *nostos*. Contrarily, pre-migratory “home” time is simultaneously past, present, and future, while it has the power to transcend the inevitability of the passing of generations and the closure of death by the sheer fact of its mythical atemporality and ahistorical stability.

The ambiguity and paradox of Decavalles's nostalgic poetics derive from the counterposition of the imagined utopia of Siphnos with the dystopic tactile reality of America. Both utopic and dystopic worlds reverberate against each other as unresolvable opposites. A characteristic poem where technological progress in America is employed as a symbol and a cause of inhumanity and cruelty is “Υπόγειος [Subway].”³⁸ In the poem, modern time in the form of clocks, enslaves people by pressuring them to be always punctual, careful with the proper allocation of their time, and well-organized so that they will not squander time illogically, such as in plain everyday conversations with other people. A disorienting experience is described and analyzed in the hope of creating some order in the speaker's mind and explaining the new world in which he has found himself.³⁹ The scene on the subway is vivid:

A bare slash away from the soul, there the knife
of the man next to me struck me—a dagger eye, tired,
wretched, impatient, merciless. He too
stood in line there as we descended, with his exact
obol ready, thirty cents. We were pursued
in the semidarkness there by clocks
distributing daggers and brandishing handcuffs.

We were to take the deafening express
from nothing to another nothing. All was
faultless, like absence when something has gone wrong,

the obol somewhat mislaid, and I
seized onto a smile and dared an "excuse me."
But the two seconds were lost, we existed,
and there he stabbed me, right in the back,
for the loss of time, the smile, and the excuse me.

(*Ransoms* 91)

The American doctrine of individual success and relentless competition is dramatized on the subway, the emblematic apotheosis of perfect timing, automated order, and faultless coordination. Although Decavalles does not overtly identify the potentially dangerous man as American, he inscribes on this man his view of modernity, which is nothing else than the extremely rationalistic, profit-oriented, unnatural, restrictive, and homogenizing way of life as it is imposed by Western institutions. The typical American is described as a contradictory, complicated, and even paranoid person, who resorts to violence in order to disguise his anxieties and fears. Although this man and the speaker have to share the same train, the American detests the mere presence of the speaker and ruins the chance of any communication between them. Therefore both men are trapped in "a world where meanings melt into air" as they annihilate experiences like communication and dialogue, which "have taken on a new urgency because they are among the few solid sources of meaning we can count on" (Berman 8-9). Finally, the only contact the men in the poem share is an expression of violence.

Under the approving eyes of the other people who witness the scene described in the poem, the American metaphorically attacks the Greek speaker. The distinction between the legitimate inhabitant of the specific space and the trespasser grows wider due to the denial of meaningful contact:

All the daggers approved, and all the eyes
struck repeatedly along the entire line's length,
and always a bare slash away from the soul. (91)

This collective act of metaphoric injury is also an exercise of hegemony on the part of the Americans, whose ideal social order requires the removal of the one who does not fit in by virtue of his uncontrollable and ambivalent behavior.⁴⁰ At this moment, the

speaker's realization that he is an unwanted foreigner is dramatically intensified. Madan Sarup interestingly points out that the foreigner signifies an intruder who destroys the consensus. In psychological terms, the foreigner is a "symptom" because he or she "signifies the difficulty we have of living as an other and with others" (9). Julia Kristeva asserts that today our universe is becoming more than ever heterogeneous despite its media-inspired superficial unity, and so we are all becoming foreigners (104).

The feeling of Otherness in "Subway" compels the speaker to contemplate on the host culture and society and their paradoxes. One of these ironic paradoxes is that by imposing a dichotomy between himself and the Other/foreigner, the American ignores that he is a victim himself—he is tired and lonely, although he does not care or is too shy to admit it. The American is under the illusion that by punishing the Other, he can revenge his own victimization by his own society, which has made an automaton out of him, and so he misses the single opportunity he may have had to disrupt the perfectly organized flow of time and to establish some rudimentary human communication. Conversely, Decavalles portrays the speaker as endowed with patience, dignity, and moral integrity because he abstains from any sort of retaliation despite ill-treated. Furthermore, he appears determined to keep this incident in his memory not only as a reminder of his bitter experiences in America and the insurmountable sociocultural and emotional distance between him and the other members of the host society. The speaker's symbolic scar is described as an ineffaceable and even precious memento of his growth as a person in exile as well as a forewarning for the future. In a self-congratulatory, albeit acutely sad, tone, the attacked man examines the bitter lesson he has learned:

As for the scar, I have it still.
I water it, and it has taken root
in the curved body of memory.
With its blossom it teaches me
to adapt myself according to
the glorious progress, there in the dark,
of the man I am. (91)⁴¹

Decavalles is resolutely preoccupied with the theme of the transformation of one's identity during transplantation into a new

and unfamiliar Western sociocultural context, which is epitomized in contemporary urban America. Through a severe critique of his new “home,” Decavalles deplores the dismantling and subsequent degeneration of traditional value structures, whose loss leaves people without stability or direction. As modernity and the inevitable technological progress have eroded and shaken people’s belief in universal truths and myths, people have become increasingly unhappy and isolated. This is what those who participate in modernity are united by: “a unity of disunity,” which “pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish” (Berman 15).⁴²

What is more, mass culture has appropriated the symbolic expressions of solid cultural and religious institutions and has converted them into popular commodities. In turn, people invest in these commodities emotionally and spiritually so that they can compensate for the destabilization of tradition. In a paradoxical way, people function as both subjects who control their lives and objects whose life is controlled by modernization. A characteristic poem that raises this issue is “Χριστούγεννα [Christmas],”⁴³ which, as the above poem “Subway,” belongs to the part of *Oceanids* that is entitled “Ωκεανός [Ocean]” and primarily deals with the immigrant’s traumatic experiences of loneliness and insecurity in America. Here the speaker describes the corruption of the foundational Christian tenet, the birth of Jesus, in an ironic and somber voice:

The color of the Birth this year
is egg-plant purple—glossy
on endless plastic spheres
that with profuse glimmerings
it may infinitely multiply
the mystical glory of electric bulbs. (*Ransoms* 84)

The writer suggests that tradition, as it is especially tied with religious beliefs and practices, has to be rediscovered and revived if people are to obtain moral support and spiritual guidance against the fragmenting forces of modernity.

In one of his essays, Decavalles states that although the continuity and usefulness of tradition cannot be taken for granted, since tradition “is frequently encroached upon, mutilated and occasion-

ally totally rejected," people are able to reclaim tradition "through a fresh evaluation and validation within the framework and necessity of time and circumstance. Through such a process, tradition can become a dynamic force and a source for renewal in the midst of the uncertainties of modernity" (*Pandelis* 11). In his poetry, too, Decavalles resorts to tradition and its redemptive quality of re-enacting and appropriately revising the past so that the past can accommodate itself effectively in the present, on a personal and public level. If modernity is a maelstrom, as Marshall Berman describes it, Decavalles uses tradition and myth to find a way out of modernity's fearful complications. Yet in order to establish a more solid bond with the tradition of his own cultural heritage, he has to travel the precarious route of his nostos.

Memory and Myth during Nostos

Decavalles launches into nostos appraising both the physical and the conceptual journey from his native "home" towards his transplantation and by acknowledging the paramount significance of memory. In a disconcerting and melancholic tone, the speaker in the poem "Κατ' εικόνα [In Your Own Image]"⁴⁴ immerses himself in an interior monologue whereby he retreats into his past while he attempts to articulate and evaluate the apparently destructive effects of exile on his identity and his self consciousness.⁴⁵ The indelible marks that his premodern "home" have left on the speaker in the form of history, knowledge, and tradition acquire considerable significance when they are distinguished from the marks caused by his modern host "home." By means of the former marks the speaker will be able to maintain his ethnic authenticity and fight successfully against ethnic dissolution in exile. Accordingly, the arduous experience of resettlement in America is depicted not merely as a distressing and perilous process of adjustment, but as a macabre and progressive descent to the underworld:

Full of precious wounds from the sun and sea,
roof embraces, windows that breathed with light
and presences, open doors where chatter and
mornings

came and went, you once went down to this place.
With the pencil of distance, you painted your face
for the first time to see it alone, complete,
cut off from consolation and roots.

How you went down showed in your wounds, and
that bit of your
voice that was not lost, you had it so it would keep
turning around
completely and crushing you. You bore the whole
weight you were
and you had nowhere to lean it on. You bore
skies without human blue, streets
without steps, trees without roots, and fallen stars
crashed by the wheels.

The granite stones were just too heavy to cover
sleep, too heavy for the morning to push them aside,
to be raised by the awakening to another sun.

*(Oceanids 67, my translation)*⁴⁶

While the speaker's ancestral "home" is associated with light, life, safety, security, and love, his exilic "home" correlates with darkness, danger, loneliness, and death. Like the mythical Odysseus who defies his human weaknesses and ventures into Hades, the speaker's moral strength and eagerness to endure adversity bestow on him the status of a tragic hero. The underworld or any other form of descent in his poetry symbolizes Decavalles's anxiety and awe before the unknown, including the repressed, hidden, and subconscious parts of one's mind and soul. This descent also connotes one's fate in the midst of uncertainty and loneliness. Going beyond the physical and psychological dimensions of immigration to America, Decavalles argues that one of the roughest challenges, and, probably, the most consequential ones that the individual has to deal with in exile, is to keep alive and intact the memory of his or her personal past, ethnic roots, and diasporic experiences. There is no absolute safety even for such a brave person as the speaker of this poem, who ponders:

You were alive and remembering, but even memory, when
too

stretched, becomes a web thinner than the spider's. Even
the wounds gradually forget the knife that cut them.
You feel comfortable, light. And the voices get calm,
and the spears of indignation bend. But to the confused
angel who will come and stand one night
behind the closed window to know you,
to check the identity cards for one last
inventory, with whose voice will you speak?
Have you ever returned from the underworld? (67-68)

In the above lines, a fundamental prerequisite of *nostos* is articulated concisely and effectively. The speaker has to resist chronological time and the decline of memory. His identity must remain unalterable and strongly attached to his community of origins if he is to escape the shackles of Americanization. Hence, the image of the angel in the poem is an appropriate metaphor for the speaker's conscience—the individual's ultimate judge who will evaluate the preservation of one's cultural resilience. The exilic speaker may prove himself worthy of inclusion in the community of the legitimate members of "home," but the myth of "home" cannot be sustained by sheer recollection. The memory that is connected to the exile's Greek "home" must be continuously refreshed so that the motivation behind *nostos* will never dwindle or perish.

To amend the fragmentation and partiality of memory, people may resort to their imagination in order to restore the fractured pieces or to replace them with new or revised ones from their past and present experiences or from their dreams and fantasies. Imagination helps where memory stumbles, as it provides clues to the individual's creative strategies against the psychologically detrimental power of amnesia. In writing, and especially in autobiographical writing, the conflation and mutual stimulation of memory and imagination are particularly evident. No matter how "fictional" a work of literature is, Toni Morrison eloquently notes, the writer's memory always rises to the surface of one's consciousness because memory is primarily emotional—it is "what the nerves and the skin remember" (305).⁴⁷ Unveiling and exhuming the past may lay bare detestable, frightening, and traumatic events or unpalatable truths, but it is a necessary and intrinsic step in the process of attaining self-awareness and invigorating one's filiative

ties with "home." Salman Rushdie parallels the process of excavating the past with that of an archaeological discovery, where "the broken pots of antiquity, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of the most quotidian objects" (12).

Memory is not only important as an accumulation of mental images that have to do with certain places, people, tastes, sounds, traditions, customs, and other sociocultural characteristics of "home" spaces. Memory also pertains to the stories we tell ourselves about our experiences so that we can understand and consolidate our sense of who we are. Noting the social-psychological mechanism of memory, Ben Xu writes that "[o]ur sense of what has happened to us is entailed not in actual happenings but in *meaningful* happenings, and the meanings of our past experience [. . .] are constructs produced in much the same way that narrative is produced" (4, emphasis in the original). What is crucial in memory narrative, though, is the distinction between the life-story and the existential perception of it: "If the life story is marked by a seeming actuality, the existential perception is what transforms the casual daily events into a functioning mentality or an existential concern that is not self-evident" (4). Accordingly, the narrative of memory goes beyond the imagery of the events that actually happened and enters one's past asking what, how, and why a factual event is told as well as its status as an existential situation (5).

Decavalles assembles the exilic subject's life-story by rediscovering and remolding memories, whose evocation and fresh interpretation constitute the most critical, overwhelming, and often hampered stage of nostos. During this stage, ancestors return to life on a metaphysical level that transcends historical time and space.⁴⁸ The imagined encounters with the world of the dead highlight the ironic ambiguity of homecoming, since first one has to go to hell before one goes to heaven. Yet the underworld is not a purgatory but another level of life that is strangely familiar and homey for the exile, since it is largely populated by one's family and relatives. The purpose of these resurrections, through memory flashes and dreams, is to provide the individual with an opportunity not only to retrieve the past but also to appropriate and recompose it positively, albeit provisionally and imaginatively, in order to formulate a personal mythology.

Wolfgang Karrer makes a useful distinction between mem-

ory—the stored content—and remembrance or recall, that is the access to the stored content. While recall can be voluntary or not, and so blocked through repression or released through introspection, memories are always there and stored in traces, obliterated or overwritten (128).⁴⁹ In ethnic literature, there is often a recoding of earlier perceptions or thoughts in the writer's life. Thus retelling the past may displace the present or provide a cure for the future by transforming, enhancing, or valorizing one's memories (129-35).

Decavalles's poetic recall is more than a dramatization of the exile's return to Siphnos, where he spent his idyllic childhood summers. He must declare and defend his inherited rightful belonging to the Greek community at "home." Significantly, Decavalles's recall is a two-directional journey between dynamically interrelated points that are nevertheless dissimilar in terms of time and space. From his present self in America the individual travels backwards to his recollected self at "home" following the thread of his past life; simultaneously, he embarks on a reverse imagined journey from his resurrected and mythologized "home" towards his improved self as it should have been if he had never immigrated. In other words, the individual revisits the personal and the communal past related to his originary "home" in order to conceive of a new, more unified, and less traumatic version of it. He hopes to remedy the damage he has done to the continuity of his family's history, and ultimately project the revised version of his past onto his present and future. This way, the reconstructed past can assist the exile in transforming his diasporic displacement into a more stimulating and less unbearable space and it can nurture his hope that his future will take him back to his ancestral paradise, both on a physical and a metaphysical level.

An important poem about the resuscitation of the past is "Ανάσταση Νεκρού [Resurrection of a Dead Man]."⁵⁰ The speaker is initially disappointed at not being able to resurrect a particular dead man. He compares the effort he makes to accomplish this task with the strength one has to put into breaking a stone. It is a hard task but one that makes you feel powerful afterwards: "The stone does not give you its heart unless it wants to. / It gives you one gift only: your strength" (*Ransoms* 57). The speaker realizes that only with memory can he resurrect this man, can he transcend horizontal time and move into another dimension where both the dead

man and the living speaker can momentarily co-exist and share their experiences:

With memory, I said, perhaps with memory
you may add the firmament to your landscape,
you may add to time the improbable moment, its
nonexistence;
with a morning breeze you may lift the gravestone,
with a swallow you may cut the bands around the shroud,
you may reap a great many colors from the whiteness
beyond a drop of water—and all this because
heaviness here is measured with other weights.
There is no other resistance
than the density of time;
the laws of gravity yield to divination. (57)

By juxtaposing memory with the elements of nature, the speaker ascribes to memory the status of an integral link in the invariable and everlasting order of things. The use of “perhaps” in the first line modifies the speaker’s efficacy and final success in his effort to capture memory; it emphasizes his skepticism about the outcome of his efforts, due to the improbable circumstances with which he is dealing. The most insurmountable difficulty that he has yet to face, however, is the dead man’s memory against which the speaker has to measure up his own—a quite implausible task taking into account the incommensurability of the temporal and spatial parameters of the two men’s totally disparate circumstances and contexts. Moreover, the dead man’s memory overshadows the living presence of the speaker, who complains that:

[. . .] the heavy body of this man weighs me down.
His wider memory annihilates my own.
Life has never harvested so living a dead man.
In the dark cave where his hands
lead the way with ease,
his movement is phosphorescent with knowledge.

I shall not be able to resurrect this dead man
without dying. (57)

The only way for the speaker to attain knowledge is by acquiring not only as much memory as the dead man but, most significantly, the contents of that memory, too. In order to do that, however, he has to bridge present and past by crossing the boundary between life and death. The descent into the underworld, which is Decavalles's extended metaphor for the passage from "home" into exile, will equip the speaker with inexhaustible inner strength and will earn him the status of a hero. The implication is that exile may indeed entail a kind of emotional and cultural death, but beneath its painful and threatening characteristics, a truer, more accurate and complete awareness of one's self is the compensatory reward. Only then will one be properly prepared to enlighten others with his or her memories and remain, thus, immortal in people's minds. However, despite the speaker's realization that his sojourn to the underworld is vital, the abandonment of his efforts towards such a self-effacing and subverting endeavor exposes the dangers and traps that may lurk behind the process of retracing one's memories and roots.

In "Νυν Απολύοις [Now Lettest Thou]"⁵¹, which is dedicated to his grandfather, Decavalles raises again the issue of remembering and recoding personal historical past. The speaker dares to take a step closer to the ancestral ghosts. In a dionysiac atmosphere, in which all the elements of nature take part in a nightly feast of fecundity and regeneration, "the departed have thrust aside their seaside graves / and emerged cheerfully to join the gathered throng" (*Ransoms* 79). The speaker ecstatically stares and describes the scene of resurrection:

The drunken night dances round and round in circles,
and my grandfather, the cherubic heart of night,
plowman, sower, harvester of song,
mellows the fruit to rhyme, and the night
keeps her womb agape to receive the seed. (79)

The speaker's grandfather takes part in a metaphysical ritual of fertility, whereby his labor and recreational capacity are inextricably linked with the eternal natural cycles that are symbolized by the growing of new roots. Yet the speaker cannot perform and vivify his own primordial connection with "home" through his contribution to the metaphorical fertilization and regeneration of the

soil, since he hesitates to take part in this joyful, albeit other-worldly, celebration of tribal continuity. Although he has been blessed by his grandfather, the speaker regards this consecration more as a burden or even a curse, by virtue of the fact that his exile has caused a breach with "home" and so it has prevented him from being culturally prepared to adhere to his role as the tribe's worthy member. Hence he chooses his voluntary exclusion from the gathering and he retreats from the feast:

With the blessing he once bestowed upon my crib,
I approach, a stranger, from the dark night of places
and times.

With what eyes can I bear this departed light?
What form of mine shall I set on the low stone wall?
What heart of mine shall take up the handkerchief
to lead the dance? "Now lettest thou. . . ." (79)

Drawing on the paradoxical contrast between his sterile exilic site and his potently illuminating "home," the speaker questions his ability to carry out his filial duty and provide his own link to the generational chain. Here Decavalles expresses not only his anguish over the detrimental effects of diaspora on one's membership in the group of his or her origins, but he also raises the issue of the native's return "home" as a stranger, as someone who is physically close but culturally remote.

Blurring a boundary line and standing between order and chaos, both inside and outside, strangers often "seem to be suspended in the empty space between a tradition which they have already left and the mode of life which stubbornly denies them the right of entry" (Sarup 10). The stranger is socially and culturally excluded and his otherwise innocuous characteristics are turned into a stigma by the particular dominant society (10-11). On the other hand, the stranger may be defined as an outsider by the "home" community itself, especially when its members feel that the exile's return "home" endangers the community's history and future. Therefore, the native, having gone through the unsettling experience of diaspora, returns "home" as a familiar stranger to the eyes of the members of one's group as well as to his or her own eyes, whose angle of vision has been unavoidably altered by immigration.

In "Now Lettest Thou" the speaker's awareness of being a "stranger" within his own "home" reflects primarily his existential anxiety and feeling of alienation based on his own subjective estimation of the situation. There is no mention in the poem concerning the perceptions of the resurrected ancestors and their welcoming acceptance or bitter rejection of the speaker. Decavalles's "home" imaginings are thus more an individually constructed "tribal fantasy" rather than a number of collectively defined rules and rites of belonging. Furthermore, this "home" fantasy encompasses an ideal of a small-scale and technologically uncomplicated society, where most people relate and communicate with each other on a face-to-face interaction. Apart from sharing a common language, the people in this premodern society "share an understanding of many practices—marriages, funerals, other rites of passage—and will largely share their views about the general workings not only of the social but also of the natural world" (Appiah 626). As a consequence, the embarrassment caused by the native's coming "home" as a familiar stranger denotes his fear that he can no longer understand and so perpetuates the commonly held practices of his pre-migratory community, who, in turn, will disavow his legitimate membership and his historical connection with his roots.

The exile's unfulfilled filial duties towards the group of shared ancestry and cultural tradition and the family left behind is the theme of another poem as well, where redemption and rectification are again sought on a metaphysical level. Here absolution from the sin of disturbing the tribe's historical and cultural continuity is finally, yet only for a brief instant, granted. In "Leyenda (Lake Michigan)"⁵² the speaker describes the lifeless and arid surroundings in America in an unhappy voice. This is in fact one of the few poems where Decavalles explicitly names the location of his exile, while he builds a direct critique of the host culture and society and its members. In the heart of winter, Lake Michigan has "stopped its waves in midcourse and chiseled / frozen monsters upon them" (*Ransoms* 85). The dormant condition of the lake is exacerbated by the local people's total lack of concern towards reviving it. It should be emphasized though that the American people's apathy and resignation regarding their natural surroundings, and hence their "natural home," is embedded in common stereotypical perceptions of them as uncommunicative, distant, reserved, and

unduly immersed in their dogma of individual material success. Supporting such a typical Greek immigrant's view of America and its people, the speaker is talking to the lake and suggesting solutions to reverse the particular upsetting situation:

A living soul is needed for the passage,
a ferry boat and hands at the oars are needed,
a clear road is needed for the crossing, a despair
and a yearning are needed
to wake you from the white torpor. (85)

Although the frozen lake is compared to Acheron, one of the rivers of the underworld of Hades in Greek mythology,⁵³ it is depicted as asleep and not as dead, which suggests a more hopeful outcome:

There are nights more closed and darker still
than the night of death. All have now fallen
into a deep sleep on Acheron's shores. (85)

By his reference to nights darker than death, the speaker implies that his life in exile is in fact more severely tragic, deplorable, and even irreversible, than death itself. Still, his pain may be soothed by some brief comfort, which, significantly, does not derive from a substantial alteration in the condition of the lake, and, by extension, in the condition of the speaker's loneliness and displacement, but from art itself in the form of a particular song. The song pacifies his troubled soul and makes him anticipate that life will return once more and triumph over the present absolute bleakness. Aided by his vivid imagination, he discerns a living soul, who:

builds a ferry boat that craving might travel
on a craft of wood whose entrails have been wounded
by the sun. And in a foreign tongue, the *Leyenda*
once more brings the voice, alien and remote.
The voice says: Do not go, do not leave, *do not go gentle,*

do not yield without resistance to the kindly light. (85)

The above-mentioned voice is an allusion to Dylan Thomas, an exile himself, and his autobiographical poem "Do Not Go Gentle

into *That Good Night*," where a son urges his dying father not to give in to death and, instead, to "[r]age, rage against the dying of the light." The son in Thomas's poem feels guilty for having abandoned his father while the latter was dying. The speaker in Decavalles's poem, which also stems from the writer's personal experience, encounters similar hurt and remorse for not being able to see his father one last time before the elderly man died.⁵⁴ In a highly confessional tone, the speaker addresses both his father and his own conscience, pleading for forgiveness and relief from his moral torment:

His father yielded in a village in Wales.
My own still pines away in my eyes, bedridden
at sunset in the Naval Hospital at Pasalimani,⁵⁵
looking speechlessly, with his last farewell,
at the incomprehensible road I had to travel.
That voice says, *Do not go*,
speaks, then fades away little by little with the
Leyenda. (85)

In addition to the profoundly exilic situation, where one cannot be physically present on the side of one's dying parents, Decavalles also highlights another significant issue in diasporic literature—the lack of understanding on the part of the parents when their child decides to migrate and the ensuing conflict between them that usually remains unresolved, causing grief and distress to both parties. That is why the speaker in the poem implores his father to visit him in a dream so that reconciliation between them can be finally achieved:

[. . .] Now that this light will also expire,
and nothing will become more nothing,
nowhere more nowhere,
and memory more memory—come father,
open the door that it might creak again
in my crippled sleep. Come
to warm yourself in my bitter dream.

And if in my recollection you should be tormented
all night long, I have nothing else,

I know nothing more than loneliness and darkness.
The frozen lake has filled with monsters,
and there is no crossing, there is no road.
I have not been redeemed that I may redeem you.
(85-86)

The desperation and irrevocability of the speaker's paradoxical situation, where warmth and coldness, serenity and desolation alternate, are further accentuated by the son's bitter realization that the recovered memories he has of his father are elliptical and fragmentary. Despite his earnest attempt to use his imagination in order to recode his memories and ultimately correct them, he soon becomes aware that his imagined nostos, which has produced a dialogue with his past and its ghosts, cannot actually maintain a permanent live bond with "home."⁵⁶

Nevertheless, Decavalles never forsakes his nostos. His poetic persona is determined to conquer adversities that prevent him from reassembling and reforming his life, even if this gives rise to long buried or banned emotions and feelings. Added to the resurrection of ancestors, who aid him in recovering his memory and, where possible, remolding his past, the exile envisages both a physical and an imagined return "home." To fortify his endurance and to be able to accomplish his fervent dream, he withdraws to the past again. This time, however, he employs the collective historical as well as fictional past, which is enmeshed in rich traditions and myths.

The epigraph in the poem "Τρισενιαυτός [On the Third Year]"⁵⁷ is from Homer's *Odyssey*. The line "White bones [. . .] in unmixed wine" (Book XXIV) refers to Agamemnon's words spoken to Achilles while the two men meet in Hades. Agamemnon describes to Achilles how the Achaians mourned for the latter's death for a period of seventeen days. On the eighteenth, they burned Achilles's body and they sacrificed animals to honor the great warrior. After the fire consumed the body, they poured oil and unmixed wine on the white bones before storing them into a golden urn. Thus the line from the *Odyssey* already foregrounds Decavalles's determination to enfold within a mystical and mythical aura a common practice of the Greek Church: the disinterment of a dead person's bones after three years of burial in the ground due to the lack of enough burial space in urban areas in Greece.

This particular practice is a common cause of other Greek American poets' indignation towards the Greek Church, too, because it fails to provide the natives with a stable and vital link with "home" by inspiring a sense of sacred and secure belonging to an ethnic and/or national community of common origins, myths, traditions, and history.⁵⁸

Decavalles neither renounces nor condones the apparent disrespect of the Greek Church towards the deceased. Instead, he juxtaposes and fuses the ancient Greek ritual and that of the modern Greek Church in order to promote the unbroken continuity between past, present, and future. The intermingling of the mythical secular custom and the modern religious ritual into a single practice underscores the importance of revering cultural heritage, not only by adhering to it faithfully but also by renewing it according to the specifics of a situation. The speaker in the poem "On the Third Year" esteems tradition and proclaims his ethnic membership and filiative bonds with "home" by cleansing his dead father's bones with "old mandelaria wine." Addressing the ghost of his father, he urges the ghost to entrust him with carrying out this macabre *nostos* until the end:

Come,
for with as much of the little strength I have,
or magic in the fingers touching you with affection,
I shall lift you up to take you away. If your bones
have thirsted, I have intoxication for their lips
and an ablution to cleanse them
of all their discords and their distances,
to join them fittingly into the form of their desire,
and flesh of my flesh for them to wear,
that I may give birth to you in my likeness,
who once gave birth to me,
to take you as a child now by the hand
and lead you in sea steps
far out to the island. (*Ransoms* 99-100)

The speaker believes that he can reverse linear time by resurrecting his father in the hope of reconciling with him and reinstating order at "home," whose interior natural harmony has been destabilized by both the son's and the father's absence. With his death

on foreign land in Athens and away from Siphnos, the father disrupted the order at “home,” where:

A chasm there,
shape of your shape, has remained a void
in the soil, fierce and unfulfilled, that wants me
to place you within it as in a cradle that it may
grow calm with all your memory and all
your wakened dreams, until its filling,
the fulfillment of all your nostalgia, will permit
the spring and the summer to speak. (*Ransoms* 100)

The organic metaphor in the poem sustains and nourishes the speaker's determination to implement his dream of reconnection with “home” successfully. The metaphysical depiction of the relocation of the father's bones indicates the therapeutic value of respecting tradition as it offers consolation and self-affirmation to the one who is able to fulfill his duty. Additionally, the permanent return of the father's body into the native soil and the consequent attainment of harmony in the natural order of things ensures the immutable essence of “home,” while it relates to the commonly held assumptions linking people to place. As Liisa H. Malkki notes, these assumptions are not simply territorializing, but also deeply metaphysical, since they tend to naturalize people's link to that place. The naturalized identity between people and place is reflected in such nondiscursive practices as when a person goes into exile and takes along a handful of soil from his country or again in the transportation of a body from foreign soil to the homeland, where the genealogical tree of one's ancestors grows; “[a]shes to ashes, dust to dust: in death, too, native / national soils are important” (55-56).

Although the problematic disassociation between the native and the inherited soil has been amended by the reburial of the father's bones in the above poem, there is an inherent irony in this unconventional re-establishment of “home” order. One of the two natives who returns “home” is dead, while the alive man's stay is impermanent. The literal and the spiritual nostos of the two men is only partially completed. Decavalles neither forsakes the myth of “home” in his poetry nor does he attempt to deconstruct this myth by making people aware of its illusory characteristics. Quite

the opposite, he supports the myth of “home” passionately and tirelessly. Without this myth, nostos could not remain meaningful and exile could never stop being agonizing for him and so a fertile ground for artistic creativity.

The poem “Ένα Γράμμα απο την Ιθάκη [Letter from Ithaca]”⁵⁹ is replete with allusions to Odysseus’s nostos as well as to Constantine Cavafy’s “Ithaca.” In Cavafy’s poem the speaker urges the reader not to be frightened and run away from all the opportunities for adventure, discovery, self-knowledge, spiritual growth, and moral vigor that will be the rewards of the long journey back “home.” Decavalles, however, does not intend to underscore the benefits of nostos by overshadowing the destination itself. On the contrary, he wants to reinstate and celebrate the mythical qualities of Ithaca without manipulating or adapting the myth to make it fit into his poetic discourse. The poet argues that the obsessive overuse and mistreatment of Ithaca has led to the desecration of the myth of nostos and the outstripping of its symbolic meaning. Indirectly, Decavalles approves of Cavafy’s contribution to the valorization and renewal of the essence of that particular myth. At the same time, by using this myth, Decavalles establishes Cavafy, one of the most important literary figures in modern Greek literature, as his literary ancestor as well.⁶⁰ This literary genealogical connection discloses Decavalles’s intention and wish to transcend his diaspora and claim his place in the Greek literary canon. Additionally, such a cosmopolitan gesture, which crosses geographical and cultural boundaries, validates the writer’s presence in America not as an illiterate immigrant but rather as the worthy transmitter of classical and modern Hellenism, and thus as an exceptional foreigner. Both the American who would read this poem in translation as well as the Greek reader could appreciate the writer’s loyalty and contribution to both his “homes.”

The poem “Letter from Ithaca” begins with the speaker pondering about his past conviction that there would never be again another letter from Ithaca since:

The last news we had from there
satisfied our curiosity for many centuries.
The ship arrived at length
and a dog died into a life sempiternal.
I should add something about the murders

we heard of in rumors.
It was said that those who came
killed a few suitors
“in league” with the captain’s son,
—a drama of honor—
but no one sought to do them justice,
no one dared to spill
blood for blood;
and they would have hushed up the evil
(since indeed it had to do with a king and hero
and the story had come to a happy ending)
had not the writers in prose and rhyme that followed
found it a theme of interest
and in their sterility
had wrung it dry. (*Ransoms* 58)

The speaker laments the tragic demise of the nature and significance of myths by those writers who follow tradition blindly and are not interested in refreshing it in a way that would reveal greater respect towards it. In their feeble and bored minds, these writers believe that the mere imitation of the contents and forms of classical literature is enough to guarantee their secure position within the canon. In this aspect, Decavalles follows T. S. Eliot’s modernist theory in “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” Eliot maintains that tradition is positive as long as it is not limited to pursuing the ways of the preceding generation. Tradition involves a historical sense and the perception “not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.” The historical sense “is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together.” There should be conformity between the old and the new work of art and “the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past” (1202-03). By the same token, the speaker in Decavalles’s poem deplors the sterility of the symbol of Ithaca when he states that no writer undertook the challenge to focus on the suitors’ feelings, for instance, and so expand the myth. Instead, writers have been fascinated by the mythical hero’s exemplary qualities whose insistent recounting prevents any new imaginative possibilities for the myth’s future. As a result, “[w]e remained with the impression since then / that the ship had come and anchored, / and that it always comes and

anchors secretly at every / moment" (58).

Having expressed his anger and exasperation at most writers' insipid imitation of a traditional myth, the speaker in the "Letter from Ithaca" experiences a fortuitous turn of events—he is totally surprised to receive a letter from Ithaca. Although he avoids mentioning the identity of the sender, the letter:

seems as much a miracle
as the Black Swan
who fills up the corridor of such a sky with its wings,
—birds like these,
black swans, never before emerged into this northern
latitude—
improbable,
no matter how much they tried to persuade us
that a leaking rotted vessel
does not secretly glide into the bay with mariners
tattered in their fight with knowledge,
that the dog does not sniff the air,
the suitors are not in their death throes;

and this, that strikes with terror: that in Ithaca
there live such men even as you and I. (58-59)

Assisted by the direct mention of his location in a northern country, that is America, the speaker concludes that physical alienation and detachment from one's "home" should never be considered as an obstacle for the individual who is dedicated to maintaining and vivifying his inherited tradition and its values and myths. Indeed, cultural heritage is treated as having an irresistible and formidable power that can attract people to it, even those in exile. The speaker regards the ineffable letter from Ithaca as an auspicious sign that Ithaca is still alive and it has adequately resisted its demystification and abuse by writers. Added to that, he insists that those who inhabit the island are not ordinary people but heroic and fictional figures who are the proof as well as the future promise that tradition survives. The myth of Ithaca, as a symbol of any mythological system and tradition, has been salvaged, preserving and invigorating people's inspiration and imagination in both their artistic and non-artistic endeavors and struggles.⁶¹

Nostos as a Journey into the Self

In his poetic discourse, Decavalles persists in restoring myths and reassigning them their proper role as emblems of inherited cultural tradition because he needs to cultivate his personal myth of his own Ithaca, which is nothing other than Siphnos. Just like Homer, Decavalles aspires to endow his "home" with ideal and eternal qualities, so that it will always represent the impetus as well as the encouraging and propitious outcome of laudable acts and heroic wanderings. On the other hand, just like Cavafy, Decavalles defines the destination of *nostos* as the formation of the exile's new identity and consciousness, which will compensate for the loss of "home" and will lead one to a fuller life through a deeper understanding of the self and the advancement of new creative prospects.

In his imagined and real wanderings, the persona in Decavalles's poetry encounters unpleasant feelings of remorse and shame for transgressions and sins that are related to his filiative relations and duties. Moreover, he has to confront a distressing and often threatening reality connected to America, which may consume diasporic identity. The exile seeks and finds solace in his revived and reconstructed memory sustained by the myth of "home." In order to fight his emotional isolation, on the level of social and cultural acclimatization, however, he manages to enter the dominant society and become one of its members, albeit a psychologically estranged one.

Therefore, Decavalles's persona embodies the characteristics of the cosmopolitan, who chooses to live within the alien culture and society but all the time knows where the exit is.⁶² The exile's incessant longing for "home" involves disregarding or purposefully forgetting disgraceful or undesirable aspects of it. This discourse also bears similarities to the transnational migrants' treatment of psychological and social dislocation and disorientation, which focuses more extensively and forcefully on the critique of particular elements of the American reality, such as everyday habits, cultural practices, and other socially meaningful concerns. In a transnational diaspora, the individual embraces and sanctifies as well as simultaneously condemns and demystifies both relationships of filiation and affiliation, while the "home left behind" is not always the space of happy belonging and redemptive return. In Decavalles's poetry, however, the transplanted individual is firmly

devoted to carrying out his imagined yet hardly attainable nostos, whose destination will hopefully relieve him of the pain of diaspora and earn him compensatory moral and aesthetic rewards.

In his poetry, Decavalles follows the trajectory of a modern sojourner whose traveling may often lead to a retrograde situation and distressing revelations about the personal and, rarely, the collective historical past, but a sojourner who also achieves a more complete perception and elucidation of self. The traveling self may lose its fixed boundaries yet its destabilized existence can be empowering as it creates, reconstructs, and reveals unknown or hidden parts of one's identity as well as one's relationship to culturally similar and different others.⁶³ These additional and fresh ventures into the self and its consciousness have the potential not only to regulate one's exile to make it tolerable and productive but to reconsider and sustain one's real or imagined connection with the ancestral "home."

Homeric Odysseus appreciated the fundamental principles to which wandering leads and he would not relinquish anything he had gained from his adventures (Perl 18). Odysseus's nostos "is a return to something old but also a new beginning; it is a meeting of oldest and newest, yet it is in addition the seemingly conclusion of an unbroken continuum" (18). In a similar vein, Decavalles's cosmopolitan exile is often paradoxically mournful for "home," as he regrets his transplantation and the inevitable changes and transitions in his life and his environment. Yet the exile's intrinsic doubt about the self, reality, traditions, absolutes, ideologies, and taken-for-granted values of both his originary and his adopted "home"⁶⁴ is conducive to his maturation and progress as an individual and a member of more than one community and society. Being sufficiently away from his roots so as to experience loss and yet close enough in his imagination "to understand the enigma of an always-postponed arrival" (Stuart Hall 490), Decavalles's sojourner converts loss into acute awareness, sensitivity, and appreciation of his unique situation of straddling both his Greek and American identity.

The cosmopolitan exile's unconsummated yearning for the ceaseless rediscovery of "home" through the sanctification of his ethnic roots and national allegiance would not be capable of regenerative effects if the individual had never experienced the unhomely, unpredictable, contingent, and indeterminate site of exile.

Essentially, the nostalgia for an idyllic and idealized past and the dreaming of a future utopic "home" where the individual longs to return permanently could not function as a vital and necessary precondition of nostos were they not to be threatened by the present dystopic America. Nostos, as it is expressed and described in Decavalles's work, is thus the ultimate inspiration and stimulation for a belated yet redemptive dwelling in the past, an efficient and flexible treatment of the present, and an encouraging and self-reassuring vision for the future. In Decavalles's nostos, where past, present, and future come together in disjointed but fertile juxtapositions, carrying different forces and resources each, the destination is as gratifying as the voyage itself. As long as "home" is never reached, nostos transforms exile into an exceptionally challenging site that solidifies ethnic and national roots, creates new prospects for the self and its consciousness, and, finally, enables a cosmopolitan exploration of life and art.

Notes

¹I am grateful to the Friends of the Princeton University Library and the Program in Hellenic Studies at Princeton University for awarding me a research fellowship, enabling my study of the Andonis Decavalles Collection. I would also like to thank Yiorgos Kalogeras for introducing me to the poetry of Decavalles and reading early versions of this essay, Ekaterini Douka Kabitoglou for her insightful remarks, and Dan Georgakas for reading and commenting on my manuscript.

²Kwame Anthony Appiah offers what he calls "a loose and unphilosophical definition" of the nation, drawing on Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation as an "imagined community" (*Imagined Communities*). For Appiah, the nation "is an 'imagined community' of culture or ancestry running beyond the scale of the face-to-face and seeking political expression for itself" (623). Appiah distinguishes the nation from the state on the grounds of morality. He argues that the nation is morally arbitrary, while the state is not because people live in political orders where the questions of public right and wrong are argued and decided and hence it is not morally arbitrary to be a fellow citizen to other citizens within a state. States "matter morally, intrinsically" not because people care about them but because "they regulate our lives through forms of coercion that will always require moral justification. State institutions matter because they are both necessary to so many modern human purposes and because they have so great a potential for abuse." The nation, on the other hand, is arbitrary "but not in the sense that means we can discard it in our moral reflections." Although nations often matter to people more than states, the reason they do so is because they matter to people themselves "as things desired by autonomous agents,

whose autonomous desires we ought to acknowledge and take account of, even if we cannot always accede to them" (623-24).

³An "ethnie" or "ethnic group" is defined as "a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members" (Hutchinson 6). See also Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* 22-31.

⁴The two closely related notions of "transplantation" and "uprootedness" which are employed in theories of "home" are not identical. Liisa H. Malkki aptly observes that the notion of transplantation is less specific than uprootedness, and it "generally evokes live, viable roots. It strongly suggests, for example, the colonial and postcolonial, usually privileged category of 'expatriates' who pick up their roots in an orderly manner from the 'mother country,' the originative culture-bed, and set about their 'acclimatization' in the 'foreign environment' or on 'foreign soil'—again, in an orderly manner" (62). On the other hand, in the notion of uprootedness, which commonly describes refugees, "the orderliness of the transplantation disappears. Instead, broken and dangling roots predominate—roots that threaten to wither, along with the ordinary loyalties of citizenship in a homeland" (62).

⁵For instance, the American expatriate writers who moved to Paris between the two World Wars, such as Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, and others, flew their "homes" in search of adventure and an alternative way of life that would provide them with inspiration and fresh points of view, liberated from tradition and conservative politics and aesthetics at "home." As Caren Kaplan succinctly notes, "[t]he poor might look exotic in foreign settings when the poor at home seem invisible, uninteresting, or threatening" (44). Living their "fantasy of escape," those artists developed two powerful discourses: "the exoticization of the past in another location or country and the exoticization of another gender, race, or culture" (45).

⁶Whether chosen or imposed, localities do remain important and "still govern the lives of most humans, even the rapidly increasing numbers with access to global, regional, national, and local media" (Peters 91).

⁷Mary Douglas writes that home "is located in space, but it is not necessarily a fixed space. It does not need bricks and mortar, it can be a wagon, a caravan, a boat, or a tent. It need not be a large space, but space there must be, for home starts by bringing some space under control. Having shelter is not having a home, nor is having a house, nor is home the same as household. [. . .] So a home is not only a space, it also has some structure in time; and because it is for people who are living in that time and space, it has aesthetic and moral dimensions" (289).

⁸As Edward Said remarks "at most the literature about exile objectifies an anguish and a predicament most people rarely experience at first hand" ("Reflections" 357).

⁹Ahmad 85. Warning against the overgeneralization of such terms as migration and exile, Ahmad argues that exile should not be employed as a "descriptive label for the existential condition of the immigrant as such" and, consequently, become "a condition of the soul, unrelated to facts of material life" (86).

¹⁰See Kaplan 28-36.

¹¹As opposed to exile as an artistic vocation, Trinh T. Minh-ha explains that refugees are people dispossessed of their material belongings, rejected by nation-states, unwanted by people, forced to adjust to a situation of uprootedness and homelessness, and, finally, "a burden on the community" which they move into (11-13). Said remarks that anyone who is prevented from returning home is an exile, but there have to be some distinctions between exiles, refugees, expatriates, and émigrés. As Said explains, the exile is the general term for the outsider, for the one who was banished. Refugees are a political creation of the twentieth-century state. They are innocent people needing assistance, while the term "exile" carries with it "a touch of solitude and spirituality." Here however Said does not offer any further clarification about the distinction between exiles and expatriates. He simply adds that expatriates share the solitude and estrangement of exile, "but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions." Finally, émigrés enjoy an ambitious status and choose to live in an alien country, such as colonial officials, mercenaries, or military advisers ("Reflections" 362-63). Ulf Hannerz is unsure whether cosmopolitanism can be associated with exiles, but he readily connects expatriates with cosmopolitans. He defines expatriates as people "who have chosen to live abroad for some period, and who know when they are there that they can go home when it suits them." Yet he adds that not "all expatriates are the living models of cosmopolitanism" (243).

¹²As Pheng Cheah explains, cosmopolitanism derives from the Greek *kosmo-polites*, a composite of *kosmo* meaning world and *polites* meaning citizens. It primarily suggests "an intellectual ethic, a universal humanism that transcends regional particularism" which is not understood as nationally defined, because in the context of eighteenth century French philosophes the popular term national state did not yet exist. "Cosmopolitanism thus precedes the popular nation-state in history and nationalism in the history of ideas" (22). Scott L. Malcomson informs us that in English, the term *cosmopolite* "came into frequent use only in the seventeenth century, and seems to have been an unobjectionable term. That changed in the early nineteenth century, when the idea of being a citizen of the world became defined as the opposite of patriotism" (233). Amanda Anderson acknowledges the flexibility of the term cosmopolitanism "whose forms of detachment and multiple affiliation can be variously articulated and variously motivated. In general, cosmopolitanism endorses reflective distance from one's cultural affiliations, a broad understanding of other cultures and customs, and a belief in universal humanity" (267).

¹³Posnock 802-03.

¹⁴Cohen 130-31.

¹⁵As Kwame Anthony Appiah supports, "[t]he cosmopolitan ideal—take your roots with you—is one in which people are free to choose the local forms of life within which they will live" (622).

¹⁶Noting its quality as a traveling signifier, which is "always in danger of breaking up into partial equivalences" such as exile, migrancy, diaspora, and tourism, James Clifford points out that cosmopolitanism undermines the naturalness of ethnic absolutisms, recognizes complex and unfinished paths between local and global attachments, and evokes identity as a relationship not only to location and a safe "home" but also and inevitably to identity as dis-

placement and relocation. Hence Clifford coins the term "discrepant cosmopolitanisms" ("Mixed Feelings" 362-69).

¹⁷Posnock 803.

¹⁸Arjun Appadurai raises the issue of the problematic concept of patriotism. He argues that patriotism is an "unstable sentiment, which thrives only at the level of the nation-state. Below that level it is easily supplanted by more intimate loyalties; above that level it gives way to empty slogans rarely backed by the will to sacrifice or kill." Therefore, in order to think of the future of patriotism, Appadurai suggests that we should first look into the health of the nation-state (160).

¹⁹According to Said, filiation refers to the natural bonds and natural forms of authority among people. Filiative bonds are based on generational continuity and can guarantee it. Whereas filiative relationships are those created by birth or nationality and may involve "obedience, fear, love, respect, and instinctual conflict," affiliation is a form of relationship between people and various forms of institutions or communities. Relationships of affiliation compensate for the failure or loss of relationships of filiation and refer to more transpersonal forms of connection with culture and society, "such as guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class, and the hegemony of a dominant culture." Therefore, the "filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and 'life,' whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society" (*The World* 19-20).

²⁰In this case, R. Radhakrishnan cogently argues, both the "home" country and the host one could become "'ghostly' locations" through a process of "double depoliticization" (207).

²¹See Scheff 279-80. Shame "is the most social and reflexive of all emotions. It always involves consciousness of self from the point of view of the other, which depends on the self viewing itself" (287).

²²Decavalles was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1920. After World War II was over, he managed to continue his studies in Athens and practice law, despite the ongoing Greek civil war. He also worked as an interpreter, translator, and legal assistant for the American Economic Mission to Greece. In the meantime, his parents left Alexandria due to unfavorable political circumstances there and moved to their native island of Siphnos. Decavalles did not follow his parents, but instead he moved to the United States on a fellowship that was awarded to him by Northwestern University on account of his Greek translation with notes of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1953), which was published again in 1992. In 1960 Decavalles completed his dissertation with the title "Ezra Pound and the Mediterranean World." Decavalles has taught at Brooklyn College, New York University, and Fairleigh-Dickinson University. Among his numerous prestigious awards is the distinguished Poetry Prize of the Academy of Athens, Greece (1977). Decavalles has also been one of the founding members of the Modern Greek Studies Association in the United States as well as a co-editor of the *Charioteer*, a literary annual review of modern Greek literature and studies. He has been a very active and devoted promoter and translator of modern Greek literature in the United States. Decavalles has written and published extensively about the Greek Nobel laureate Odysseus Elytis, whom he also translated. Among Decavalles's works on Elytis is *Odysseus Elytis: From the Golden to the Sil-*

ver Poem, which was first published in Greek and later in English. For a review of this book, see Leontis, who disagrees with Decavalles's critical approach. For a complete list of Decavalles's works on Elytis, see Stavropoulou "Odysseus" 37-38. Decavalles has also written about the Greek writer and critic Pandelis Prevelakis, whom he also admires. See *Pandelis* and "Kazantzakis."

²³Artemis Leontis proposes a new meaning of "topos," whereby "topos" combines both an ancient rhetorical as well as a general Greek usage. So it designates both a site of learning, to which speakers return repeatedly for reliable rhetorical phrases to impress an audience, as well as a physical location considered worthy of description (*Topographies* 18). What is significant in both meanings of the term is that "topos in Greek marks a physical place of return, a site where the past makes its presence felt" (19).

²⁴A characteristic poem where Decavalles resorts to natural images of his ancestral island is "Gain and Loss in an Aegean Metamorphosis" which, as Kimon Friar notes, was originally written in English, and which is not included in any of the writer's published volumes of poetry. Although Decavalles rarely writes about romantic love, in the poem the speaker celebrates his love for a woman while he laments her leaving him behind. An excerpt of the poem reads:

Swordlike wings of seagulls already cross along the length
of your eyes as they rise warm from a kiss,
wearing the dawn as crown. Your azure irises spread
and scatter their shadows into a vast turquoise.
A young zephyr makes your body shudder as it strides
the milky ridges of your spine.
The sun's fingers in love now entangle poppies
in the cornfields of your hair. Like partridges awakening
among mastic trees, your two breasts quiver like lemons.
They sway in the orchard of wings, they swell
and stir amid the channels of an archipelago. (*Ransoms* 74)

²⁵Although in his early years in America Decavalles wrote poetry in English, he never published any of it in book form (Interview 409).

²⁶A revised multiculturalism instead should start with an "English plus other languages" educational ideal, as Werner Sollors suggests. This way, multilingualism would provide a clearer understanding of the language rights of minorities, would bring about a higher degree of literacy in English, would prepare students better for world citizenship in the age of transnationalism, and would reduce cultural friction (3). In addition, multilingualism would supply the missing part in the multiculturalism debate: "Giving multiculturalism an 'English plus' character is likely to extend the beneficial sides of multiculturalism by helping to correct one of its major blind spots, for how can one talk convincingly about 'cultural diversity' without talking about language? How can one advocate a better understanding of others without learning the others' language?" (4). Following a diametrically opposite line of thought, Peggy Noonan commends the migrants for their ability to become what they could never imagine in their home country. "In return, the newcomers get the possibility of dreams. But these dreams aren't free. There's a price to pay: once you're here, you have to become Americanized" (179). Noonan concludes: "The fact is,

America is an English-speaking country, and it won't help us to communicate with one another if, in the twenty-first century, we become a Tower of Babel" (180). However, she does not go on to support how she thinks the imposition of monolingualism is possible.

²⁷I borrow Mary Louise Pratt's term "contact zones" by which she means the "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4). I would like to extend the term "contact zones" to describe the points, elements, or dimensions of cultural exchange or conflict between one's originary and exilic "homes." This cultural encounter affects the way the individual interprets and behaves towards the different sociocultural contexts where one claims or believes to belong.

²⁸By "fantasy" I describe the individual's wish that hinges on an illusory mental image or idea, serving a particular function in the overall realm of this person's imagination. Also, as Appadurai puts it, fantasy "can dissipate (because its logic is so often autotelic) but the imagination, especially when collective, can become fuel for action" (7).

²⁹The Greek community in Alexandria dates from the early 1800s and it was one of the most wealthy and important Greek diasporic communities until the middle of the 20th century (Kitroeff). For the relations of the Alexandrian Greeks with the modern Greek state, see Kitroeff 239-242.

³⁰Benedict Anderson uses the term "long-distance nationalism" to describe the nationalism which is deeply rooted in the diasporic subject's conviction that one's exile is self-chosen, and which allows one to play the national hero far away from "[t]hat same metropole which marginalizes and stigmatizes" him or her ("Exodus" 326-27).

³¹For a concise discussion of the literature of this period (1929-49), see Beaton, *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature* 128-96. See also Myrsiades and Vittì.

³²See Beaton, *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature* 204-13.

³³The poem is from *Ωκεανίδες* (*Oceanids*) 33-34. In opposition to Decavalles's early poetry that was "crabbed, gnarled, elliptical, elusive and allusive, ambiguous, dense in imagery, compact in thought, experimental in nature," Kimon Friar finds *Oceanids* a collection full of "poems of balance, simplicity, and direction, yet with greater depth of insight and inspiration, all enriched and controlled by a scholarly familiarity with the art of verse" (Review). Prior to *Oceanids*, Decavalles had published *Νιμουλέ-Γοντοκόρο* (*Nimoule-Gontokoro*) (1949) and *Ακίς* (*Akis*) (1950). In 1976 he published *Αρμυί, Καράβια, Λύτρα* (*Joints, Ships, Ransoms*) and in 1992 *Αν μας Πληγώσει ο Ήλιος* (*If The Sun Hurts us*). The book *Ransoms to Time* includes a critical introduction by Kimon Friar and poems by all Decavalles's books except his latest. In general, Decavalles has been praised for his ability to evoke deep feelings and emotions, his concise and magic imagery and symbolism, his devotion to myth and tradition that makes him, according to reviewers, a true Greek, his elegiac tone, and the magnetic and mystic quality of his verse. For reviews of *Oceanids*, see Chrysanthis and Koulouris. For a review of *Joints, Ships, Ransoms*, see Athanassakis. For reviews of *Ransoms to Time*, see Beaton, Bien, Hadas, Raizis, and Taylor. For overall critical reviews of Decav-

alles's life and work, see Bien "Andonis Decavalles's Busy Fingers," Sally G. Hall, Prokos, Raizis "Andonis Decavalles," Rozakos, Thaniel, and Wiggins.

³⁴In the majority of his poems Decavalles uses a narrator who reminisces about his place in the world, philosophizes about life and death, and looks for his "home" inside his personal load of memories. He is not preoccupied with more wide-scale sociopolitical matters, such as the life of other immigrants in America and their economic struggle for survival, issues of "racial" or ethnic discrimination, globalization, ecological problems or other similar topics that may have to do with both Greece and America. Decavalles is fully aware that this attitude of his may cause his condemnation by other writers who are more sociopolitically active (Interview 399).

³⁵Said explains the difference between nationalism and exile based on the number of people who participate in each. Nationalism is an assertion of belonging to a group, a place, and a heritage, and "[i]t affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and customs; and, by so doing, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages." On the other hand, exile is mainly an expression of solitude, of being outside the communal habitation, of being cut off from one's roots, land, and past ("Reflections" 359-60). Moreover, it is important to distinguish between nationalist critical longing from actual nation building, as Clifford insists: "Whatever their ideologies of purity, diasporic cultural forms can never, in practice, be exclusively nationalist. They are deployed in transnational networks built from multiple attachments, and they encode practices of accommodation with, as well as resistance to, host countries and their norms" ("Diasporas" 307). For nationalism and exile, see also Naficy 162.

³⁶Eric Hobsbawm's definition of "invented tradition" is "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1).

³⁷See Stavropoulou, "Odysseus" 42.

³⁸*Oceanids* 105-06. In his interview, Decavalles describes his experience of riding the subway as miserable, violent, and horrible (411).

³⁹Madan Sarup provides an interesting summary of the distinctive features of modernity:

the ability to coordinate human actions on a massive scale; a technology that allows one to act effectively at a large distance from the object of action; a minute division of labor which allows for spectacular progress in expertise on the one hand and the floating of responsibility on the other; the accumulation of knowledge incomprehensible to the lay person and the authority of science which grows with it; and the science-sponsored mental climate of instrumental rationality that allows social-engineering designs to be argued and justified. (51)

⁴⁰See Sarup 9-10.

⁴¹The theme of mechanization, loss of traditional values, and the consequent existential insecurity of people in modern Western society is also dealt with in a number of other poems by Decavalles, such as "Episode" (*Nimoule-Gontokoro*). In the poem, Decavalles gives an ironic account of the importance

that machines have acquired at the expense of human worth. The accident described involves a worker who has lost his finger and who, instead of crying and accusing the machine for cutting off his fingers, faces the whole event with utmost passivity:

"Here's one of the four fingers
that got cut off," he said, "the largest one.
He wasn't really aware of what happened.
Later he counted them.
[.]
And then the days rolled on the same as always,
and the machine was fixed. (*Ransoms* 53)

⁴²For a summary of the social processes of modernization and the three phases of modernity, see Berman 16-36.

⁴³*Oceanids* 73. Representative poems that deal with similar themes are, among others, the poem "Martha's Vineyard," where the sacred vineyard has been replaced by an incubator of lobsters and life is reproduced with the help of machines and not with the help of divine intervention (*Ransoms* 87-88, *Oceanids* 86-87), and the poem "Screw," where, in an ironic and bitter voice, the speaker praises the significance of a screw in today's world and the respective insignificance of nature (*Ransoms* 86-87, *Oceanids* 77-78).

⁴⁴*Oceanids* 67-68.

⁴⁵I use the term "self consciousness" to refer to the consciousness of one's self.

⁴⁶My translation is a literal approximation that attempts to convey the meaning of Decavalles's poem.

⁴⁷Morrison describes the process of the intermingling of memory and imagination in writing, especially autobiographical writing:

You know, they straightened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and livable acreage. Occasionally the river floods these places. "Floods" is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was. Writers are like that: remembering where we were, what valley we ran through, what the banks were like, the light that was there and the route back to our original place. It is emotional memory—what the nerves and the skin remember as well as how it appeared. And a rush of imagination is our "flooding" (305).

⁴⁸In his resurrections, Decavalles makes it explicitly clear that his ghosts are mainly male and the genealogical link with one's ancestry and cultural heritage is a patriarchal one. The gender related dimensions of his work, though, do not concern this essay.

⁴⁹Karrer also points out the process of encoding images and thoughts in memory and then the process of decoding them during recall. When the encoding is rewritten after recall, Karrer calls it recoding. The pattern he suggests is the following: experience—encoding—memory trace—decoding—recall (129-30).

⁵⁰*Akis* 30. This book is dedicated to the writer's father and his mother. As

Decavalles explains, the name Akis is another name for the island of Siphnos.

⁵¹*Oceanids* 43. The title of the poem refers to the words Simeon uttered when he held the infant Jesus in his arms at the Temple of Jerusalem. Simeon expressed his gratitude to God for seeing Jesus and declared that now he could die happily. As Friar notes, the complete words that Simeon said are mentioned in Luke: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the ace of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (*Ransoms* 139n10).

⁵²*Oceanids* 74. As Friar explains in a note, *Leyenda* is the title of a musical composition by the Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz. When Decavalles was a student at Northwestern, he would often listen to the radio performance of that composition, which would accompany the reciting of Dylan's poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" (*Ransoms* 139n13).

⁵³See Leeming 67.

⁵⁴Decavalles mentions that his father had died before the son was able to return to Siphnos after 8 years of absence. During his last days, the father would listen to his son's American radio broadcast and he would cry (Stavropoulou "Kosmas" 59). For the cold and distance relationship between his father and himself, which has troubled Decavalles so much, see his Interview 405.

⁵⁵A port in Piraeus, Athens.

⁵⁶See also the poem "Other Self" (*Oceanids* 47-48) which is dedicated to Decavalles's father. In the poem, the speaker makes a hopeless attempt to be reconciled with his father and bridge the distance between them by carrying and registering his father's experiences and memories. Eventually the father and the son become one person on a metaphysical level:

I wear the word for face that it may confess, may speak.
I mar your face with my song.
You showed me that I might reveal you. (*Ransoms* 80)

⁵⁷*Joints, Ships, Ransoms* 38-39.

⁵⁸For instance, see Olga Broumas's poem "On Earth" (*Perpetua* 27-28) and Joy Manesiotis's "Lament: *Moirología*" (30).

⁵⁹*Akis* 34-35.

⁶⁰*Cavafy* (1863-1933) was born in Alexandria and spent most of his life there. For Cavafy's life and work, see Keeley. An excerpt of Cavafy's poem "Ithaca" reads:

Keep Ithaca always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaca to make you rich.

Ithaca gave you the marvelous journey.

Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.
And if you find her poor, Ithaca won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
You'll have understood by then what these Ithacas mean.
(Keeley 38)

⁶¹See also the poem "A Greek Trireme" (*Nimoule-Gontokoro*) where a few people try to build a Greek trireme according to their detailed plans. The emphasis in the poem is not so much on the outcome of their efforts, as to their desire, persistence, and tirelessness in pursuing their task, affirming that they are people who still value the past and want to keep it alive by participating in "Events so human in the heart of the twentieth century" (*Ransoms* 49).

⁶²See Hannerz 240.

⁶³"The voyage out of the (known) self and back into the (unknown) self sometimes takes the wanderer far away into a motley place where everything safe and sound seems to waver while the essence of language is placed in doubt and profoundly destabilized. Travelling can thus turn out to be a process whereby the self loses its fixed boundaries—a disturbing yet potentially empowering practice of difference" (Minh-ha 23).

⁶⁴See Naficy 9.

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Helen Papanikolas: When Manoli Turned His Coat Inside Out and Called Himself Manolio

by E.D. KARAMPETSOS

Helen Papanikolas's historical work and her fiction about the Greek immigrants who came to Utah at the beginning of the twentieth century and their children is not always easy to read because she contradicts many of the reader's expectations. She has never indulged in easy-to-digest, idealized tales of grateful immigrants falling into the loving embrace of generous Mother America. Born in 1917, Papanikolas experienced too much of the immigrant history she writes about, in particular the mistreatment of her own people, to be satisfied with the prettified tales preferred by Hollywood. She lived through the Carbon County Strike of 1922, in which Greek coal miners sought better work conditions and union representation. That same year she watched from the front of her house as members of the Klu Klux Klan attacked Greek-owned businesses. On the way to school in 1924, after the deadly explosion at Castle Gate Mine Number 2, too young to fully comprehend the enormity of the resulting suffering, she went to school each day in the company of black-garbed Greek children who had lost their fathers. At school her compulsion to excel had to overcome the physical and psychological barriers created by bigoted teachers and administrators.

Papanikolas has also refused to give sentimentalized accounts of the home life of Greek immigrants. Her stories provoke ques-

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tions many would rather ignore. Were our immigrant parents, in particular our mothers, happy in arranged marriages? What was the effect of living in a society that treated Greeks as a decadent, inferior people? Why did the traditional Greek folk culture fail in so many ways to prepare immigrants and their children to respond to the challenges posed by America? As Thomas Doulis has written, "No one seems to give quarter in her stories. The sentimentality that many Greek American writers treasure is an unknown quantity to Helen Papanikolas" (159). Yet, in spite of her sometimes grim realism, there surges an expression of love and concern for the culture of our immigrant forefathers so powerful that it seems to surprise even Papanikolas.

Greek immigrants—and especially their children—were subjected to a variety of complex and conflicting forces that left them uncomfortable and feeling out of place both at home and in their adopted country. One solution, simple yet not always satisfactory, was to reject one identity and embrace the other. In "The Fortress and the Prison," one of Papanikolas's early short stories, Alexandra, her protagonist, looks at her Greek American friends and wonders, "Was her life so out of harmony with her people that she felt nothing for the Greek highland music and for the peasant dances and those who loved them?" (146). It took Papanikolas almost a half-century of research and writing to answer that question. In the meantime she radically changed the nature of Utah history, which was once synonymous with that of the Mormon Church. Under Papanikolas's influence, the scope of Utah history was broadened to take into account the role of the Greeks and other peoples who settled in the state. Papanikolas not only made readers aware of the role immigrant labor played in the development, as Miriam B. Murphy points out, but:

Young scholars encouraged by Helen's pioneering work began writing theses and dissertations on Hispanics, African Americans, South Slavs, and Italians, extending the parameters of American Indian history and shifting the focus of mining history away from discovery and entrepreneurship to a more inclusive view that emphasized development, economic and especially labor. (253)

Papanikolas also called attention to the Greek immigrant

women and their roles in America. Women figure prominently in her work; the most important is Athena, in *The Apple Falls from the Apple Tree*. Her complex personality in some sense contains within itself the contradictory strains of the Greek American experience and gives it an uneasy sense of completion. Dan Georgakas notes that Papanikolas's "characters want desperately to be of the New World without completely rejecting the old" (1). When Athena realizes that she belongs to both worlds, she answers the question raised by Alexandra, a character created almost fifty years before her, by embracing elements of both cultures, for which she feels an intellectual and emotional attachment. When I asked Papanikolas if her personal search had provided her with an answer to this question, she replied that she now feels both more American and more Greek.¹

As I read her work, I often feel Papanikolas and I are carrying on an intimate conversation about people we have both known, about members of my family and myself. I experience the aptness of Frank Bergon's comment, that "the great imaginative truth" of Papanikolas's stories resides in "the places of the soul where we live out our real lives amid memory and longing," in its most literal sense (296).

It takes a kind of spiritual preparation to read Papanikolas's work, a realization that becoming American can be more difficult and painful than we have suspected. I began mine in 1968 when, after the assassination of Martin Luther King, I taught in a Washington, D.C., high school whose students were 90 percent African American. With my students I learned about slavery, racism, poverty, the struggle for dignity and equality. I also learned about the demeaning, frustrating efforts to conform somehow to a society that associated virtue with straight, blond hair and fair skin by employing skin whiteners and hair straighteners. In the process I slowly became more aware of what Greek immigrants and their children went through.

I remembered little things, such as my sister's dissatisfaction with her (very) curly and beautiful black hair. And the story of the Greek American boy who graduated as salutatorian of Great Falls Public High School only to hear from the dean that, unlike the other outstanding graduates, he did not have a brilliant career ahead because he was Greek. Recently President George W. Bush's intemperate outburst directed at NBC News White House corre-

spondent David Gregory, who asked Jacques Chirac, the President of France, a question in French, reminded me of a warning I heard frequently when I was a boy: "Don't speak Greek in public because Americans don't like to hear foreign languages" (Sammon). I needed only to read Papanikolas's work to get a sense of the whole.

Most of Papanikolas's historical writing and early fiction is set in the Greek communities of Utah—Price, Helper, Salt Lake—during the first half of the twentieth century, where newly arrived Greek immigrants struggled to establish themselves in the land claimed as the new Zion by the Mormons:

The extremely nationalistic Greeks, a provincial, insular people, were set down among an equally provincial people, the Mormons. Still close to their violent, persecuted past, well along toward accomplishing their goal of "making the desert blossom as a rose," they viewed the Greeks with defensive animosity. (*Toil* 143)

The Mormon reaction to the Greek immigrants is not unique, but typical of their treatment throughout the United States. The Mormons believe a great battle once took place in the American hemisphere in which dark-skinned savages wiped out their fair-skinned spiritual progenitors. The Greeks, seen as different, perceived as mongrelized non-whites, provoked the racist sensibilities of the Mormon descendents of northern European settlers. Armed Mormon gangs shot up Greek gandy gangs working on railroad tracks in the mountains. The Mormon-dominated city council of Salt Lake City arranged for the Stockade, a brothel, designed by one of its members, to be built in the Greek section of the city. But the recurring image in Papanikolas's work is that of a Mormon aloofness, a lack of hospitality so extreme they were unwilling to offer even a glass of water to their new neighbors.

The popular opinion of Greek immigrants is summed up by an American observer in Papanikolas's story, "The Coffeehouse Election of 1922":

You'd think now that they were in America and making good money in the mines, they'd stop speaking Greek on the streets and stop sending their money back to the old country. They acted like they were still in Greece. Crazy.

Crazy. Here the United Mine Workers were talking about calling a strike, and instead of saving up for God-knows-what's-to-come, those goddam Greeks were acting like wild animals. They'd never be real, red-blooded Americans. They ought to go back where they came from. (*Small* 62)

The Greeks might have been unwelcome, but as a source of cheap labor they were also necessary to the economy of the West. Unfortunately, as part of the "huddled masses," Greeks did not fit into any of the more prestigious immigrant groups: there were no Greek lords with royal grants, no world-renowned religious or political refugees, no fleeing scholars, no escaped slaves—just poor, hungry people desperate for work. The Greeks and other immigrant workers did the jobs white Americans disdained. Exploited mercilessly, they were paid less and worked longer hours, often in extremely dangerous conditions. As Albert Memmi has written, "*The racist gravitates by instinct to the most oppressed*. It is easier to add misfortune to the unfortunate" (135). The Greeks—poor, uneducated and miserable—were ideal targets for those who feared and hated them simply because they were different. It was as though the Greeks provoked an allergic reaction; as Memmi points out, "the word 'allergy' derives from *allas*, the Greek for 'other,' and *ergon*, which means reaction" (26-27).

In the period described by Papanikolas, foreign workers venturing outside the confines of their ethnic neighborhoods had to be prepared for violent expressions of anti-foreign feelings. An extreme example of this is found in "The Kamari of the Village" when Zack experiences such an outburst during World War I while watching a newsreel with reports from the front:

When the newsreel came on showing American soldiers lying dead and wounded in the mud of France, he was suddenly pounced on, dragged by shouting men out of the movie house and down the street to a tree. "Hang the foreigner!" the men shouted, the women screamed, while he yelled, "Look in my pockets! I have Liberty Bonds in my pocket!" Slowly the hands loosened while men pushed and kicked him. "Git out of town and don't step foot here again, you dirty wop dago kike!" (*Small* 113)

Zack is one of Papanikolas's less admirable characters, but the crowd knows only that he is a foreigner. They are not attacking Zack, but Zack as a representative of all foreigners; of everything they cannot understand and fear. Zack represents their horror of miscegenation, the pollution of their northern European purity. They fear Zack and his kind will infect them with foreign ideas—socialism, bolshevism, and insubordination to God's handpicked prophets. They fear he has come to take work away from real Americans, that he has come as a strikebreaker, and, paradoxically, at the same time, a Wobblie.

Racism, as Memmi points out, is not based on biology; rather it is the result of placing a negative valuation on perceived differences. For the racist, those differences define and explain the inferiority of the other. The racist's characteristics justify his superior status. The American experience is filled with examples of people who attempted to escape this antagonism by conforming to what they perceived as an American norm. African-Americans conked their hair and spent fortunes on skin-lighters to blend in. Americans of oriental origin had plastic surgery to make their eyes round. In this paper I refer to the experiences of Americans of African, Jewish, and Asian decent, because they are also those of Greek Americans, only more extreme and more clearly defined, so their implications cannot be ignored.

On a superficial level, it was much easier for the lighter-skinned, Christian Greeks to fit in. Consider the experience of Ioannis Lougaris, an immigrant from Greece, who could not get a job until he realized it was because of the way prospective employers saw him:

One night I couldn't get to sleep and it came to my mind, "I'm in America and I must be like Americans." . . . First, I went to a Greek barbershop and for 10¢ I got a shave and a haircut. I told the barber to shave my mustache and comb my hair in the middle. The next store was a Jewish second-hand shop selling clothes and hats and shoes, so I got a blue suit, derby hat, American shoes, American shirts, a bow tie, and dressed up like a million dollars. Next morning at the Edison Phonograph Company, I was the first one in the space at that door where the man was. And, as soon as he came out, I took my hat and said, "Good morning."

I knew how to speak a few words then. I got the job. He called me first. (4)

Lougaris got the job by discarding all visible evidence of his otherness. However, the process of fitting in is not always a matter of superficial changes, but also provokes profound spiritual traumas. All of the elements that constitute a person's ethnic identity—family, nation, and religion—come under attack under such conditions.

The children of immigrants were particularly susceptible to the demoralizing effects of racism, and efforts to make them over into "white" Americans. American children gave physical and verbal expression to their parents' antipathy to the foreigners. Public school teachers, who saw it as their duty to wipe out all evidence of foreign influence in their charges, Americanized foreign names and punished students who manifested unwelcome differences. Where Papanikolas herself went to school, children who dared identify the Greek flag as their own were sent to the principal's office "for three strokes of the rubber hose" (*Emily* 15). This is an example of what Thandeka calls the process of being "bred white," a recognition that whiteness in America is not necessarily a matter of biology, but the product of a "social process" (33). Greek American children, like the children of many immigrant groups, learned how to be white on the playground and in the classroom. Becoming white included interiorizing the racist attitudes of society at large, and learning to despise any signs of difference in themselves and others. "Whites like to think of themselves as biologically white in order to hide what they'd like to forget: once upon a time they were attacked by whites in their own communities because they weren't yet white." Thandeka cites Norman Podhoretz's feelings of self-contempt for ceding to the pressures to conform in exchange for admittance into white society. Admittance required not only the embrace of whiteness, but also the occasional public expression of "a distaste for the surroundings in which I was bred, and ultimately (God forgive me) even for many of the people I loved" (37).

In America we are constantly reminded of how special it is to be American, that it is necessary to renounce one's old identity and embrace a new one. But what does it mean to become American? Who should serve as a model? Abraham Lincoln? Tom Paine?

Clara Barton? T.S. Eliot? Henry James? Tupac Shakur? (Eliot and James followed the Anglo-Saxon ideal of their time to its most logical end by becoming British subjects.) For the crowd that torments Zack, nothing less than total self-denial is acceptable: a change of appearance, amnesia for one's language and history, for one's most deeply felt identity. One must become an ethnic *tabula rasa* upon which America can write. Invisibility followed by assimilation. Essentially, according to Michele Wucker, "By leaving Americans of European descent without a positive way to define themselves, the old taboo against cultural markings forced us to define ourselves by exclusion: saying who we are not instead of who we are" (17). For many of us, reaping the "privileges of being 'true Americans'" left us unable "to talk about who we really are" (19).

Greek immigrants were not easily assimilated, as Papanikolas reminds us, when she describes the "invisible shell" that protected her mother from the influences of American culture: "Her ideas, old-country culture, her personality had not been touched by the passing years, change of country, the evolution of girl-woman-wife-mother-grandmother-great-grandmother" (*Emily* 317).

When Athena, in *The Apple Falls from the Apple Tree*, accepts the marriage proposal of Rob, a Mormon, it is with the understanding that their children will be raised as Mormons and that she will set aside her ethnic identity. In other words, she agrees to assume a form of ethnic invisibility. At this point, one might argue, she is only one step away from complete assimilation. Ever since the arrival of Brigham Young and his followers, the norm in Utah has been defined by the Mormons, who to this day wield enormous influence in the schools, the press, and state and local government.

Almost twenty years later, after her eldest son has gone abroad as a Mormon missionary, Athena reflects on the shame she once felt because she was Greek. When she married Rob, she was, in part, impelled to submit by the desire to leave behind those laughable ethnic elements that continued to embarrass her on those rare occasions when her American family met with her immigrant relatives:

She had let her children be steeped in Mormon family history and lore and had said little to them about her own parents and their life as despised immigrants. She had been ashamed not too many years back when Tula and Gus had

been around Rob's family. She had made them out to be funny, "characters," because of Gus's heavy accent and blunt honesty. ("What you mean the wine in Bible is grape juice? That's Mormon talk") and of Tula's Greek words mixed in with her poor English and her dark looks. (215)

Her children are raised without learning about their mother's religion, the customs and festivals of her people; anything to do with her Greek background is off limits. As Mormons, Athena's children will be perfectly American (by Utah standards) and, when she dies, any remaining traces of her alien nature will go with her. In the meantime, Athena is expected to efface herself, to suppress any ideas or feelings that might be contrary to the Mormon norm.

The extent of her estrangement from her roots because of her marital arrangement becomes almost tangible when Athena thinks of Effie, an old Greek American friend, who converted to Mormonism before marrying, and she thought of her "as having gone away, as if to a foreign country" (*Apple* 187). Many years after Athena's marriage the two women meet again. "Athena and Effie nodded and made perfunctory remarks . . . It took Athena a long time to recognize their drifting away from each other as shame for straying from the ways of their people" (*Apple* 190). Athena experiences what Thandeka describes as, "survivor shame in Americans who are forced to become white" (38).

The Mormons punish nonconformity severely, so Athena keeps silent to avoid saying anything that might endanger her husband's standing in the community or her children's faith. She becomes the dominant culture's enforcer of conformity and is afflicted with what W.E.B. Du Bois described as "the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (11). For example, when she attends her first Relief Society meeting, some of the women give her "curious glances," and Athena fears "that she looked ethnic to them" (*Apple* 186).

Fitting in was long a sign of patriotism in America. Naturalized citizens felt they were expected to demonstrate their loyalty whenever possible. Zack waves his liberty bonds. Athena effaces herself. But the question remains: how much is enough? Patriotism is a subjective thing, and a precise answer is difficult to come by. In the late sixties and early seventies, while American human

rights groups were asking Congress to oppose the dictatorship in Greece, Greek American organizations argued that their Greek kinsmen needed to be ruled by a pro-American dictatorship. It seems paradoxical that “real” Americans could argue that Greece should be a democracy, while Greek Americans (worried about their lingering differences, their incomplete assimilation?) could not bring themselves to affirm that Greeks are as good as any one else and deserve to elect their own officials. At the same time, it was acceptably patriotic for Greek American leaders to go to Selma to march on behalf of civil rights for African Americans.

In the fifties and sixties, many Greek Americans assumed that if they showed unquestioning loyalty, America would somehow look out for the best interests of Greece and Cyprus. How many Greek Americans reassured themselves of their government’s intentions by repeating, “America won’t let the Turks hurt a Christian country”? Just as the loyalty and bravery of Black soldiers and airmen in the Second World War was not enough to end racism in this country, the loyalty of Greek Americans was not enough to erase the racism that permitted the American government to ignore its commitment to democracy.²

It is significant regarding our status that, in a country where political correctness has resulted in the virtual death of ethnic humor, Greeks are still considered viable objects of humor—e.g., the popular TV character Frasier (Kelsey Grammar) visits his Greek aunt, who throws the audience into spasms of canned laughter because, naturally, she can’t speak below a shout, breaks dishes, and threatens people with a knife.

The current success of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* is in large part based on stereotypes, many from the fifties, of Greek Americans (Canadians? Australians?) which present them as lovable, but primitive, buffoons. I have contradictory feelings about the film, which I enjoyed simply because it is about Greeks and the roles are played mostly by actors of Greek descent from several English-speaking countries. I wonder, is it better to be made fun of than to be ignored, as Greeks normally are? *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* has a big, wide-open, happy ending that ignores the complex reality of the Greek American experience. Without the kind of attention Papanikolas gives to our history and culture as immigrants and descendants of immigrants from Greece, how will we ever understand ourselves more fully? It’s a reality that Athena finds herself

obliged to deal with when her missionary son asks her to give up the last vestige of her identity in order to become a Mormon.

Instead, Athena realizes that she can't stand the life to which she has committed herself. After nearly fifteen years of "testimonial" meetings, Athena is bored stiff, and, after one of the women says "amen," she catches herself daydreaming of earlier times:

"Amen," Athena whispered. Her sisters Tula and Katherine were lighting candles, crossing themselves before the icons while the priest swung the incense burner in front of the icon screen. Vigil flames burned in wine red glasses above the icons. Blue, acrid frankincense ascended to the dome where the great painting of Christ, the Ruler of all, looked down with piercing eyes. (*Apple* 186)

After a lifetime of silence, Athena starts speaking her mind. Contrary to the Mormon insistence on being fruitful and multiplying, Athena suggests that a woman who is obviously not suited for motherhood should stop having children. When she dares contradict a supporter of the death penalty, the room goes silent:

The old farmer said he didn't believe in waiting for the Lord to git around to giving murderers the business and murmurs of assent passed through the room. Then, to Rob's horror, he heard Athena's shaky voice: "I don't believe in capital punishment. It's un-Christian." (*Apple* 212)

The pact of silence unravels as Athena begins a gradual return to her spiritual roots. Whatever weaknesses and faults the culture of her parents possesses, she realizes there are elements without which she cannot be whole.

Athena's decision to revolt is the end of a process that begins with the mob assault on Zack. To understand Athena one must look elsewhere in Papanikolas to discover the experiences and the cultural clash that shaped her. In many ways, Greek immigrants were betrayed by the very customs and values, some reminiscent of Homeric times, that permitted them to survive centuries of foreign occupation, but made it difficult for some, impossible for others, to respond positively to the challenges and opportunities

presented by America. Greece survived centuries of foreign occupation in the folk culture of the mountain villages and islands, from which most of the immigrants came, because the extended family served as the basic unit for survival and resistance. The effect on the Greeks of this narrowing of their culture, while essential to survival, was not necessarily benign. Of these "family values," John Campbell writes, "There was a fundamental division between 'our own people' (*dikoi mas*) and 'strangers' (*xenoi*), marked by attitudes of intense secrecy and distrust which protected the family by an intricate screen of justifications and lies" (135).

Campbell is not describing the society of Socrates and Aristotle, but a pared down, minimalist entity whose main purpose was to protect the family and to ensure the survival of the culture which had been under the sway of colonial powers as far back as the third century BC. The lessening (not the elimination) of this colonizing pressure in the American context revealed the vulnerability of the Greek folk culture. As they set out for the United States, few immigrants had any clearer purpose than to make money as quickly as possible and return home. They possessed little to no understanding of the challenges posed by the New World.

Time was the greatest foe of the Greek immigrant to America: there was rarely enough time to realize all of their dreams. In the short story "The Letter Writer," Papanikolas chronicles the assimilation of some of the immigrants to Utah, while others wither to impotence as they wait to resume their lives in a Greece that exists only in their memories. Yannis, her protagonist, is one of those men who comes to America to pay his parents' debts, dower his sisters and save enough to return to Greece. Unfortunately, time overtakes Yannis, and, almost without noticing that his life has been used up, he finds himself a lonely old man living in a shabby flat in the abandoned Greek Town of Salt Lake City.

As a young man Yannis supports himself by photographing the lives of his compatriots. During the strike at the copper mines, he photographs the striking workers at a coffeehouse. When, during the Balkan Wars, the Greek government calls for men to return to serve in the army, Yannis photographs them. In 1912, when there is a rush of picture brides "coming on every train," he photographs their weddings (*Small* 5). In 1917 there is a rush to join the American Army and all the men need "pictures of themselves in their ill-fitting uniforms to send to their villages" (*Small*

8). By the time the First World War ends, Yannis has paid off the dowry of his second sister. He has also changed his name to John to better fit in:

Then came the repressive immigration laws; strikes; the Klu Klux Klan attacks on immigrants—burning crosses, marches, beatings; a mine explosion that killed 171 miners, 49 of them Greeks. Many of the miners were mangled, unrecognizable, and could not be photographed. John took pictures of the others in their open caskets and, if they were unmarried, with wedding crowns on their heads. (*Small 8*)

Greek Town starts breaking up in the mid-twenties, just as John has saved up enough for his youngest sister's dowry. Just before the wedding is to take place, he learns that the bridegroom has added a last minute demand for a fully furnished house in addition to the dowry, and that his father has taken out a mortgage on his land to pay for it. John's father dies of a stroke the day after the wedding. Outraged by the bridegroom's opportunism, John complains, "They're vultures! They think we shovel gold in America" (*Small 8*). John is learning the lesson taught to many of the immigrants: that their sacrifices were often in vain, that they could not expect gratitude from families that had gone on with their lives, "They conveniently forgot who sent them money for dowries, who helped them open a shop, who made it possible for sons to go to universities" (*Small 17*).

John is only one of the many immigrant men who fall through the cracks, who somehow never manage to establish themselves in America, or find a way to return to Greece young and healthy enough to enjoy the fruits of their labor. How many men shared John's fate? They must have been numerous, perhaps thousands.

Along with the victims of the great migration, Papanikolas describes the scoundrels for whom "the land of opportunity" had a very special connotation, the opportunity to cheat, rob and otherwise exploit their American neighbors as well as fellow Greeks. In the context of Greek village life—and Greek American communities—such self-interested behavior has always been an obstacle to cooperation between families, as well as on the level of the community as a whole. In Greece, at least, the village community

could and did set limits on the damage such behavior might cause through various communal social controls. In America such restrictions were lifted, and several of Papanikolas's characters live lives in which their cunning is given full expression.

Zack (Zacharias), the protagonist of "The Kamari of the Village," is handsome and quick-witted and his mother and sisters, who coddle him, foresee only the best for their little darling. However, in America he discovers his vocation as a con man. At first, however, in 1907, after his arrival in America, the ten-year-old learns about the misery of immigrant life by living with relatives in a West Virginia mining camp:

They lived in a shack; streams of sewage and water for drinking ran parallel down the hill. Lambros, the oldest of the cousins, did the cooking on open fires outside. Lice spread through the shack, on their clothes, on their bodies. Elias and Demetrios washed the clothes in the stream and threw kerosene on the walls of the shack. They were ashamed they had no sisters to take care of them. Dry-eyed at night, Zacharias longed for his mother and sisters' pampering. (*Small* 106)

In his early teens he decides to pursue the easy life and acquires the skills needed to be a gambler, fleecing immigrants of their savings, a pimp and a ne'er-do-well. At fifteen he cons even Skliris,³ the main labor agent in Salt Lake. Zack shows no remorse over the men he cheats. "They're free, white, and twenty-one,' he laughed, an American expression he savored" (*Small* 100).

Cunning does not pave the road to success for Zack, but leads him to make all of the wrong choices. Compared to Papanikolas's other villains, the labor agents, for example, Zack is small stuff. Some of the Greek immigrants who had lived in the United States long enough to learn at least a few words of English served as labor agents, intermediaries between their starving countrymen and labor-starved industrialists. The tens of thousands of Greeks who came to the Rocky Mountains might not otherwise have found their way there if labor agents had not recruited them in Chicago and New York, and even as far away as their own villages.

On the other hand, labor agents are best remembered for their parasitic grip on the immigrant workers. They made fortunes

extorting fees to get work and then monthly fees (bribes) to remain employed. Their power came directly from the companies they represented and for whom they performed services above and beyond merely procuring workers. When Greek workers finally realized how they were being used and joined labor unions, labor agents helped finger active union members so they could be fired and also brought in more Greek workers to break strikes. In addition to the monthly bribes, labor agents were given concessions to open general stores and cafes in company towns— establishments workers were obliged to patronize for fear of losing their jobs.

Thanassis Sampalis, the husband in "A Fine Marriage," is one of these labor agents. Before coming to America Thanassis is a jailer in a provincial Greek town. His prisoners bribe him to free and lead them to the nearest harbor so they can set sail for America. Some of these men become his confederates. They provide muscle when workers get out of line and they manage his interests in prostitution, gambling, and bootleg whiskey (*Small* 49).

"A Fine Marriage," however, is not about Thanassis—whose life serves only as a background to a critical examination of the life of Greek immigrant women in this time—but about his wife, Sophia, a refugee from Asia Minor, who unwittingly marries the illiterate and thoroughly unscrupulous labor agent. Sophia's story provides us with an opportunity here to begin a discussion of Papanikolas's treatment of women. In her 1938 novel about Greek immigrants, *Eternal Greece*, Grace E. Marshall wrote that every Greek girl waited for "a great lover coming from America to take her back to luxury and adventure" (quoted in Karanikas 76). More likely, as Papanikolas shows, many of these women, their hearts full of fear, came to America out of desperation, and much of what they found justified their fears.

Having left their homes before reaching maturity and far from the civilizing constraints of their extended families and villages, Greek immigrant men learned about women in mining camp brothels. The women they brought to America as wives were strange creatures—perhaps as foreign to their new husbands as the Greeks were to the Mormons—whom they often exploited and abused, before they gradually learned to coexist with them. Unfortunately for most of Papanikolas's immigrant couples, self-affirmation (especially of the woman) is not within the realm of possibility. Sophia reconciles herself to her husband's ignorance

and lack of cultivation with the thought that he “had saved her from the ignominy of spinsterhood” (*Small* 44). Because no one dares tell her, Sophia never learns exactly how her husband earns a living.

Convent-educated, Sophia longs for the company of people who discuss poetry and the issues of the day over tea; instead, she is obliged to exchange small talk with the resentful wives of laborers, many of whom have been cheated by her husband. Although Sophia never learns the true nature of her husband’s activities, she picks up just enough of the innuendo to be haunted by the sense that her husband is evil.

It can be argued that Sophia, like many of the Greek women, never leaves Greece. Their homes are outposts of Greek culture whose defenses are breached by death or the Americanization of their children. Her body comes to America because it must have a husband to satisfy society. Her body carries out the duties required of a wife, but the spirit lives only in Greece. Sophia buys expensive clothing, which she never wears but sets aside in preparation for her return to Greece—her daydreams of Greece, coincidentally, never include her husband. When company comes, Sophia cannot wait to show the latest additions to her wardrobe: “She was impatient for her visitors to finish their liqueurs and sweets so that she could bring out the dresses, shoes and hats. Some were already going out of style” (*Small* 54).

While her husband and the other Greek immigrants deal with Americans every day, when they come home from work, they speak Greek, they eat Greek foods and follow Greek customs, as though they have returned to Greece: Sophia, like the other immigrant women, creates the illusion of extraterritoriality. The time spent in America is only a waiting period after which she expects to be restored to her native land. Time eventually destroys those hopes. American-born children bring an alien culture to the dinner table, and they marry non-Greeks who are openly contemptuous of their alien ways. Sophia never learns English and, in the end, is completely alone.

Like most of the other immigrant women, Sophia is the victim of a culture that assigns certain responsibilities to the husband and wife, but love does not necessarily enter into the equation.⁴ As apologists for the arranged marriage argue—their persuasiveness augmented by the universal evidence of the catastrophic results of

romantic marriage (what Germaine Greer contemptuously describes as “the dangerous mythology of falling in love as a basis for marriage [*Eunuch*, 165])—shared values (or compatibility) and a shared commitment are essential to marriage, while love is not. Affection, or even romantic love, are possible by-products of an arranged marriage that works out well.

Papanikolas takes a far less benign view of the arranged marriage, especially as Greek immigrants experienced it. In *The Time of the Little Blackbird*, Marika is standing before the altar being married before she realizes that the groom is not her betrothed, a man she has seen only once before coming to Salt Lake. Later, she learns that her uncle has accepted a bribe to give her to another man. Except for their insistence that their Greek brides be virgins, the men have little regard for them as individuals, but see them as unpaid laborers whose job is to keep house and bear children. The men in Papanikolas’s stories have their work, their coffeehouses and other activities outside the house to fill out their lives. The women are limited to their housework and the care of their children. They cannot always rely on the help of outsiders or even their husbands. In Greece they would have had their families to fall back on—as Papanikolas’s mother reminds her difficult husband, even a man like him might learn to treat his wife better after a visit by her father, brother, or even a cousin (*Emily* 223). Papanikolas is convinced that, as a result of intellectual and physical abuse, many Greek immigrant women were driven to various degrees of madness.

As a good Greek wife, Sophia carries out her responsibilities to her husband and family and protects her family’s honor by not telling outsiders of her problems. As a result, her life is one of misery and regret. It would have been shameful for her to admit her life was anything less than perfect. When these Greek women come to visit they are out not merely for a good time, but also to take measure of the competition, in a sense to reconnoiter behind enemy lines, for as Ernestine Friedl noted, in Greek village life the family is a “combat unit” (89).

Combat goes on even within families, as we see in *The Time of the Little Blackbird*, where Marika’s husband starts a successful business and brings in his less-industrious brother as a partner. Marika’s sister-in-law, a snobbish woman inordinately proud of her background, gradually maneuvers Marika’s children and grand-

children out of their fair share of the family business. The narrow focus on the importance of one's family produces a large number of women with inflated ideas of themselves, "terrible bores, women who put on airs because in America they could wear hats instead of headscarves" (*Apple* 148).

The danger of violating the taboo against airing one's problems in public carries over even to second-generation Greek Americans, and is demonstrated in the uproar at the end of "The First Meeting of the Group." Mary, the president of the Philoptochos Society, with the help of a Greek American woman recently retired from the county social service department, conceives of setting up a discussion group in which the women can air their problems. After much hesitation, the women do open up, but only to vent anger and such poisonous resentment toward one another, their parents and the community that it will be impossible for them to face one another again. Attempts to lead the discussion in new, less painful directions provokes further expressions of anger, leading to attacks against the archbishop and the domination of the church by men.

Unable to rely on the support and understanding of other women and married to men incapable of understanding them, Greek immigrant wives are doomed to disappointment. Sophia's son, Constantine, becomes a con man like his father. He and his American wife visit Sophia once a year on Mother's Day, dragging along "two disgruntled children, who whined because they couldn't understand her when she tried to talk to them" (*Small* 59). Normally, women like Sophia exist only on the margins of the lives of the other members of their families: they are the silent supporters of husbands, the smiling women who serve moussaka when their children visit.

Children born to the Greek immigrants are isolated from their parents and often from themselves because they have one foot in one culture and one in the other. The parents' understanding of their children's situation is woefully incomplete. Failing in their attempts to protect their children from the blandishments and cruelties of American life, parents have no plan for engagement with the wider society, except for embarrassed retreats and surrenders. The process of assimilation can be realized imperfectly, and only after the children leave home to become part of the wider culture. In the meantime, as did Sophia's son, Constantine, many pick

spouses who despise the lifestyle and customs they grew up with.

In "Mother and Son," Tula, whose sons have married American women, mourns the end of family dinners. "The number at the table had begun to dwindle; the grandchildren had other things to do; no one had liked Sam's wives. She had even overheard one of the daughters-in-law say there was too much togetherness" (*Small* 91). Except for Sam, the black sheep of the family, all the other sons, the successful ones, only "drop-in" on their parents (*Small* 98-99). Centrifugal forces tear the Greek family apart and subvert attempts to retain a sense of Greek identity.

The often inflexible adherence to the customs and values of their villages might at first seemed necessary for many of the immigrants to survive life in America, but, as Papanikolas shows in "A Mother's Curse," the results of trying to impose them on their American-born children could be disastrous. Of Mrs. Manolakis's two daughters, the youngest has a "withered arm," which makes her and her two brothers virtually unmarriageable. According to custom, neither the brother nor the younger sister can marry until the eldest sister does. Mrs. Manolakis's misfortune is compounded by the fact that her husband died in America, another son was killed in a railroad accident, and her youngest son, Nikos, is a gambler with a taste for American women.

Mrs. Manolakis's neighbor, Mrs. Hatzimihalis, combines pity for her friend with a sense of superiority because her husband is prosperous and her daughters "pretty and plump" (*Small* 19). However, her daughter, Agape, has a mind of her own and, although her parents intend her to marry someone picked by them, she elopes with Nikos Manolakis. Shamed by her daughter's action, Mrs. Hatzimihalis pronounces a mother's curse against her and Nikos—a curse which recalls the one pronounced by Theseus against his son, Hippolytos—and the young couple dies almost immediately after in a road accident.

Every Greek community in the U.S. has stories of second generation spinsters, the "good" daughters of parents who followed the customs of their homeland and destroyed the lives of their children. Kallie, in "County Hospital, 1939," is infuriated by her mother's attitude toward dating:

Kallie had quarreled . . . with her mother about dating—
when her father was not in the house. "It won't be the man

who pushes the baby buggy," her mother had said ominously and then told her several stories about village girls who had got into trouble and whose brothers had to kill them and the babies.

"It's savage! It's—it's—and you people are supposed to be Christians!"

"Yes, and you're one of us, so don't say 'you people.'" (Apple 27)

At the wedding reception in "A Great Day" the unmarried women have a table of their own. They are "bitter that they had never been asked to marry: 'No, we weren't good enough for the Greek boys. They had to marry American floozies'" (Small 193). The daughters of the immigrants were kept home, while the sons found work, went to college, and served in the military where they became Americanized and found a large selection of potential mates. Daughters who worked, like Dea in "County Hospital, 1939," were expected to give their brothers handouts and, if necessary, help them through college—"Dea was on the honor roll all through high school, but had to work as a cashier for her godfather to put her brother Tom through law school" (Apple 31). Although physically in America, the daughters were expected to behave as though they were in their parents' village.

Greek immigrants attempted to prevent their children from losing their Greek identity by establishing Greek schools, which met in the afternoon after American school was over. The parish priest or a teacher from the old country often taught Greek. In principle, Greek school should have been a means of promoting among the children of immigrants an appreciation of their parents' culture. Taught properly, knowledge of Greek culture might have mitigated their shame at being the children of illiterate immigrants, and would have helped them enter American society more confident of their personal worth. Unfortunately, under the direction of the Greek Archdiocese, the schools taught not the demotic Greek spoken by the parents of the children (and the language of Modern Greek literature), but the puristic Greek advocated by the church and the Greek government until 1973, "the puristic Greek we never heard spoken and never would hear" (Emily 17). In Papanikolas's stories the only memories left of Greek school are of the beatings from the teachers and the regrets for countless after-

noons spent in the confines of the classroom while American children played games and pursued other activities. Greece came to have a very restricted meaning: "Greek school, the robed priests, incense and candles, long-faced saints on icons, screeching mothers in the *sala*, men singing of their ancestors waiting to ambush the Turks: they were what Greekness was" (*Emily* 31).

Of the institutions the Greek immigrants brought with them, the Orthodox Church was the most important. It comforted Greek immigrants by reminding them of their homeland and its presence seemed to assure the continuity and survival of their culture, but, in many ways (in her stories, "Father Gregory and the Stranger" and "The First Meeting of the Group") the church was—and still is—ill-equipped to deal with the needs of the Greek immigrant community. In the midst of American society, which has increasingly extended the rights and privileges of women, the church remains staunchly patriarchal, even misogynist. Conservative to the point of being reactionary, the church is virtually at war with contemporary Greek society, the very culture immigrants wish to preserve. Maria Margaronis succinctly states the source of the church's quarrel with contemporary Greece when she describes it as "an indefensible, patriarchal, theocratic order" (155).⁵

The first priests sent to the new communities were often barely literate, and could neither understand nor respond to the problems of the immigrants and their children. Reprising their roles as defenders of the faith and nation during the Turkish occupation, they could only exhort their parishioners to remember the ancient glories and hold fast until they could return to Greece. At least, one can argue, they spoke the same language as their immigrant congregations. The old priests had to do until the church could train American-born and educated clergymen to replace them, but even the American-born ones are often too poorly educated to deal with the needs of their parishioners, especially, as Papanikolas frequently complains, the women.

To compound the difficulties faced by the church, many of the Greek immigrant men were anticlerical and subverted the mission of the church even though, in principle, they agreed with many of its objectives. In addition, in the early years the immigrant church attracted its share of scoundrels with collars because the lack of proper organization on the national level meant there was no way to check on these men.

In *Emily-George* Papanikolas relates several anecdotes about priests, which explains the widespread distrust of the clergy. In one story, the abbot from her father's village runs off with the monastery treasury after being caught with a young married woman (108, 144). Carbon County, Utah, where the town of Price is located—considered by the immigrant settlers as the “Siberia” of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese—attracted several inferior priests. One, a celibate priest, had an affair with the Greek teacher, who later sued him for breach of promise (*Emily* 18-19). In the following fictionalized passage two Greek American schoolgirls discuss the trial:

Stella had . . . cut classes and attended the court trial of the priest who had been sued for breach of promise by their Greek schoolteacher. In a back bedroom in Anna's house, she had whispered what their teacher wore, how she snapped at the defense attorney, and what the priest had written her—*my dove, my sun, I want you as you are*. They had giggled into hysteria at the thought of the priest with his pince-nez eyeglasses, his curly hair parted in the middle, writing these words to their flushed, overweight teacher. (*Apple* 136)

Another priest left Salt Lake after a local newspaper, the *New Advocate*, complained that he could not speak English (*Emily* 281-282). The problems caused by these priests indelibly tainted the church and the Greek community. (It should not be forgotten that in *Toil and Rage*, Papanikolas also mentions several outstanding clergymen.)

The American-born priests, having been trained by teachers from Greece, were often more out of touch with the reality of America than the uneducated parish priests from Greece; they lacked in particular the knowledge and freedom of thought to cope with the problems they faced. In “Crying Costas,” Amelia, an educated Greek American woman, complains that the parish priest is recycling the nonsense of his uneducated predecessors:

The priest, who should have known better—he had been born in America and had a university degree before entering seminary, began his sermon, repeating that old ridicu-

lous story. She had heard it from immigrant priests from the time she was a girl. Here she was, seventy years old, and she was still hearing it. (*Small* 78)

As a result of their inferior training, the young priests themselves are frustrated and marginalized, and the community further weakened.

In "Father Gregory and the Stranger," Father Gregory's commitment to the church and celibacy (so he could eventually become a bishop, a path now closed to him) has radically limited his life. Even his sister, Penny, is estranged from him, it is implied, because, as a priest, he is obliged to follow the conservative line laid down by the higher clergy. On a visit to her home, he overhears her talking on the phone, "saying something about what men had done to women in this patriarchal Greek culture" (135-136). In his isolation, he daydreams of one of his parishioners. "While writing the sermon on early Greek mystics, he was thinking of impressing Soula Demas," a woman in his congregation who holds a doctorate (*Small* 139).

Whatever peace of mind Father Gregory has left is destroyed when a gay Greek American comes to his office to question the divinity of Christ and attack the church's insistence on an all-male clergy. Before leaving, he asks to have the record of his baptism stricken from the church records because he objects to the church's anti-gay stand (*Small* 143). (Although Papanikolas uses the *deus ex machina* ending to advocate a certain point of view, a more satisfactory one, growing out of the story itself, might have shown Father Gregory resigning, or even eloping with Soula Demas.)

In "My Son, the Monk," the church is a means of resolving the existential questions growing out of the ethnic and cultural conflicts Papanikolas describes. Andy, a third-generation Greek American, over the objections of his father, becomes a monk at the monastery of Saint Catherine in the Sinai Desert. On a visit to his son—a visit he has resisted—Christ Stavros, Andy's father, goes from angrily contemplating his son's wasted life to contemplating the price he himself has paid to fit in as a regular American:

What possessed Andy to want to become a monk? A priest was bad enough. But a priest at least did some good, marrying people, baptizing babies, going to hospitals, and

giving communion. Monks probably didn't do anything like that. What good were they? The whole thing made him feel like he'd lost his confidence. He hadn't had feelings like that for years. He had them often when he was just getting started in business—walking into a bank for a loan, trying to put on a business-like show to cover his uneasiness, all the time knowing the man across the desk thought he was superior to him, the son of a Greek immigrant with a Greek face and a Greek name to go with it. (*Small* 151)

Christ struggles with the impossibility of ever feeling fully American, with the incongruities that remind him he has yet to fit in. As he looks at his son, he comes to understand that Andy has found something he never had in America. "He looked at Andy intently and realized why he looked different. It was dignity. Andy had dignity now" (*Small* 162). Andy's solution will not do for most people, yet it points to basic needs, for dignity, for the sense of belonging to a greater community with cultural and spiritual values that give a sense of completeness to life.

In telling her stories Papanikolas makes the children of Greek immigrants aware of their history in America and of the unfinished business of reconciling their heritage with their American identity. As Michael Ignatieff has written, "Only when difference has its home, when the need for belonging in all its murderous intensity has been assuaged, can our common identity begin to find its voice" (131).

In a sense, when Papanikolas created the character of Athena, she brought closure to a lifetime of study of her own roots. In Athena's reaction to her son's attempt to convert her, thus completely effacing what remains of her Greek identity, Papanikolas locates what is most vital and authentic in the world of the Greek American. Athena's eldest son, on his two-year tour as a missionary, pressures his mother to convert so they can be together in heaven, from which a Mormon God will exclude non-Mormons. He asks in a letter to his father, "How are we going to be together in the Celestial Kingdom if you and Mom don't go through the Temple?" (*Apple* 204). Instead of drawing her into the fold as intended, the letter provokes an atypically strong response from Athena:

Dear Paul,

I'm your mother. What do you mean writing to me as if I were a child? When you were twelve, your church gave you the priesthood, making you think you were superior to your mother and every other female. Well, to me you're my son and you still have a lot to learn. (*Apple* 216)

Athena then withdraws from the activities of the Mormon community and from her family as well. She falls into a silence, refusing to speak to her own family for weeks. Reflecting an American tendency to conceive of unusual behavior in clinical terms, Athena's own sisters suggest she visit a psychiatrist (*Apple* 220, 226), but it is actually a salutary time during which she reconsiders the direction her life must follow. Why speak when for years her words have had no meaning? When she comes out of her silence, it is no longer as some second-class ethnic type, but as her husband's equal. There is no debate when Rob asks her to go to a Mormon ward meeting with the family:

Athena shut the door and stood with her back to Rob. She faced him. "No," she said quietly.

"Why, what do you mean?"

Her voice fell into a whisper. "I gave up who I was."
(*Apple* 235)

One of her first acts is to return to the Greek Orthodox Church:

She crossed herself while deeply inhaling the acrid incense, took a five-dollar bill she had ready in the pocket of her purse and placed it on the silver tray. A bald, smiling man behind the counter said, "Good morning." Athena smiled and picked up a white votive candle for Gus and lighted it from the flame of another. Several burning candles had already been pushed into the boxed, shallow bed of sand: a few people had arrived early while the Orthros was being chanted. Athena crossed herself again at the icon of the Holy Trinity. A rush of joy, of freedom, filled her head: no one was watching, she did not have to hurry. (*Apple* 238)

Athena finds her joy, her freedom, in incense, votive candles, icons,

Byzantine chants and the sign of the cross, the images that give substance to the invisible world of Greek Orthodox culture.⁶

Having reestablished her connection to her faith and culture, Athena writes a follow-up letter to her son in which she asserts her own faith: "You believe we have to go through the Temple to be together in Heaven, but that has never concerned me. If there is life after death, I expect families would naturally be together." (236)

Although Rob finds it difficult to understand why his wife would revoke their ancient agreement and insist on equality, her children appreciate her honesty. From here on they learn about their mother's roots. Over time, though they remain Mormon (and think her eccentric), her family learns to enjoy Greek Easter and to gather in celebration as part of her extended family. Even though the Orthodox Church bans her from taking communion because she is married to a non-Orthodox, she happily participates in the divine liturgy, and with especial joy in the services of Holy Week:

Every evening she would attend the services that followed Christ ever nearer to His Passion, she would be part of the procession that walked behind his flowered tomb singing the Lamentations, and she would stand in the darkened church on Great Saturday midnight, until a lone candle appeared in the altar and moved forward to give light. Soon all the candles would be burning and the joyous song "Christ is arisen" would gain force and grow louder and louder, and more joyful with each repetition. She would be there for His Resurrection. (*Apple* 241)

At the end of *The Apple Falls* Athena has become, not an ethnic Greek, but an individual who has reclaimed her identity. What Athena accomplishes for herself symbolically represents the primary consequence of Papanikolas's concern with the Greek American experience. If Papanikolas has a lesson to teach us, it is that there is no real American identity except the one we forge for ourselves, so we might as well shape it to suit our needs rather than change ourselves just to fit in. She has discovered the positive

aspects of the American “dynamo” that so disturbed Henry Adams: the ability of newcomers, new ideas and methods, to stand up to the reactionary defenders of the status quo and insist that it be reconfigured to make room for them.

Notes

¹I met Helen Papanikolas on March 5, 1995, when she gave a lecture in Las Vegas, and, since then, we have met in person and spoken on the telephone frequently. In this paper I draw on those conversations in my discussion of her work.

²Shortly before the coup d'état that brought down the Papandreou government in 1967, Lyndon Johnson made his opinion of Greeks clear to Alexandros Matsas, the Greek Ambassador, when he said: “America is an elephant. Cyprus is a flea. Greece is a flea. If those two fleas continue itching the elephant, they may just get whacked by the elephant’s trunk, whacked good” (quoted in Deane 113-114).

³“The labor agents [in Utah, Idaho, and Nevada] were henchmen for Leonidas Skliris, whom the Americans called the “Czar of the Greeks.” Besides his labor agency and office for the Austro-Italian steamship lines in the heart of Greek Town, he owned considerable stock in metal mines. Hardly any of the laborers had ever seen him. He had come to Salt Lake City just before the turn of the century; and although he was not much older than the wandering Greeks, he had made pacts with railroads and their coal companies and with copper mines to supply them with immigrant Greek labor” (*Emily* 153).

⁴Juliet Du Boulay describes the requirements of the arranged marriage in a Greek village thus: “Initially, it is plain, when two people get engaged they see each other not as persons but symbols. They embark upon marriage, not as a result of a deep affinity of character, nor because they see in each other any unique personal significance, but in order to form a social and symbolic unit—to set up house together and to procreate children. And the point of marriage is to create a unity in which each one may realize his or her own social personality according to its ideal role. Within this unity each one leads interdependent yet self-contained lives, each looking to the other for no more than the faithful fulfillment of that role—the whole-hearted carrying out of the social contract. Affection grows with the passing of time and the sharing of children, grief, and joy, and this affection can grow into a dynamic relationship. But still the essential nature of the relationship is that it is extroverted, engaged upon by both members for their own ends, connected with their achievement of a certain role and position, and maintained chiefly not through deepening awareness and knowledge of self and other, but by a focus always outwards to the material, social, economic, and religious world within which this relationship is set, and by means of which it is maintained”(90).

⁵In person, Papanikolas complains the church is dominated by men and

unwilling to include women on an equal basis. Many of Papanikolas's female characters are upset by the sexism of the church. She also argues that it must reconsider its hopelessly outdated policy of celibacy for the hierarchy. As Papanikolas's friend Eva Catafygiotu Topping explains in *Holy Mothers of Orthodoxy*, the Orthodox Church's sexist theology imposes upon women "silence, segregation and subjection" (52). The clergy of the Greek Orthodox Church is exclusively male, and all higher clergy is celibate. Attempts to change this situation have been constantly rebuffed even though many parishes in the United States are without clergy. Also, the quality of the celibate higher clergy has been negatively affected by the shrinking number of men willing to forgo marriage. Even though the history of the Greek Orthodox Church records the lives of many remarkable women, like the Empress Theodora, Cassiani, or St. Catherine of Alexandria, who showed themselves superior in every way to bishops, patriarchs, scholars and emperors, there is little chance that the male-dominated church will ever learn anything from the obvious lessons their examples provide. To overcome the resistance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Empress Theodora was forced to use her imperial powers to bring an end to iconoclasm. Even though she defeated fifty of the emperor's best scholars, divine intervention was necessary to rescue the mutilated body of St. Catherine from the emperor's men. Nevertheless, the church will not willingly call upon any female, other than the Virgin, to "cause the scandals in the church to cease and grant her peace" ("παῦσον Ἐκκλησίας τὰ σκάνδαλα, καὶ βράβευσον εἰρήνην, ὡς ἀγαθὴ"—Good Friday Lamentations).

This is the kind of symbolic language, as Suzanne K. Langer notes, that gives direction to one's life. "A life that does not incorporate some degree of ritual, of gesture and attitude, has no mental anchorage. It is prosaic to the point of total indifference, purely casual, devoid of that structure of intellect and feeling that we call 'personality'" (290).

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The Greek American National Anthem¹

by STEVE FRANGOS

The internationally popular hit song *Misirloú* is often jokingly referred to as the Greek American national anthem.² Yet this quintessentially romantic ballad is devoid of Greek themes or characters. Subtitled, on record labels and sheet music, as either "The Egyptian Girl" or "Oriental Serenade," the ongoing popularity of this song points to the wider but largely unexplored influences of Greek nightclubs in North America as well as enduring Euro-American stereotypes about Greek music being "oriental." "Miserable Lou," as the principal character of this song is known among Greek Americans, appears frequently in family record collections (Frangos 1989). The popularity of this song at Greek American weddings and dances has never diminished. *Misirloú* remains a standard.³

Coming to terms with Greek American popular culture is long overdue. The dour Greek peasant, toiling from dawn until dusk without respite in an openly hostile urban America, simply does not comply with the available documentation. By 1940, Greek commercial recordings produced in the United States numbered fifth in overall industry sales (Gronow 1982: 23)—this at a time when Greeks ranked only thirteenth in the overall population. With such a disproportionate output of music, Greek records must have had an impact outside of the community.

Given *rebetika's* current ascendancy in academic circles, virtually all other popular Greek musical forms or styles from 1899 to 1965 are, for all intents and purposes, ignored. In order to understand the documented history of modern Greek music we need to

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begin to ask fundamental questions about which songs and genres were popular with specific Greek audiences. *Misirloú*, as the showcase song chosen and sung by Greek Americans, offers itself as the logical first extended case study.

This song's popularity outside the Greek American community has increased over the years. As the opening theme music for the movie blockbuster *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *Misirloú*'s fame has been enhanced. The version of *Misirloú* used in the movie is by Dick Dale and His Del-Tones.⁴ They are not a Greek American band, which is not surprising, as in 1947 *Misirloú* became an internationally popular song. Since then, literally hundreds of non-Greek bands and orchestras worldwide have recorded it.

Origins

Nikolaos Elias Roubanis composed *Misirloú*. Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Roubanis, a French horn player, came to the United States in the very early 1920s. Roubanis immediately found work as a popular orchestra leader. We can judge Roubanis's popularity with Greek audiences in America based on the fact that between 1925 and 1929 Roubanis recorded a stream of records for companies such as Columbia, Okeh, and Victor Records (Spottswood 1990 3: 1215). Another outlet for Nikolaos Roubanis were the numerous compositions issued as sheet music with his name prominently displaced on their covers.

Trained in western classical music, Roubanis is most remembered in the Greek American community for his compositions of Eastern Orthodox liturgical music. It is logical then, that along with his many other musical accomplishments, Nikolaos Roubanis was for many years the choir director at the Zoödochos Peghe Greek Orthodox Church in New York (Karras 1996: personal communication). Ever the composer, Roubanis's *He theia leitourgia: The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (New York: N. Roubanis, 1931) became very popular throughout Greek Orthodox parishes in North America (Desby 1984: 306). Between 1937 and 1945 Nikolaos Roubanis issued or amended three other Byzantine sacred hymns, all to great success.

Popular American music encyclopedias and reference books all cite Nikolaos Roubanis as the original composer, stating he copy-

righted *Misirloú* in 1934.⁵ Given that this song became an international hit, other names are always listed with Roubanis's. The English lyrics are attributed to Fred Wise, Milton Leeds, and S.K. Russell. The Spanish lyrics are credited to Jose C. Pina, and Chaim Tauber is always cited as having composed the Yiddish lyrics.

For reasons unknown, by 1941 "Misirlou Music, Incorporated" held the copyright for *Misirloú*. According to published sources it was in 1947 that the pianist Jan August (b. 1912), with the percussion ensemble known as the Rhythm Stylists, released an instrumental version of *Misirloú* on the Diamond (2009A) label that made this song a best-selling record (Kinkle 1974 volume 1: 367; Shapiro and Pollock 1985: 1234; Smith 1989: 320).

For a record that was destined to become an international music sensation, *Misirloú* had an incredibly slow start at stardom. The first documented commercial recording of *Misirloú* was in New York City in July 1927 by Tetos Demetriades (Columbia 56073-F). Demetriades was a phenomenally popular baritone, and this song was just one of forty-six he recorded that year.

Next came a version by Makis (Mike) Patrianos, a tenor and *karaghiozis* performer. Patrianos's *Mousoulou* (sic), performed as a *zembekiko*, was recorded in April 1931 (Columbia 56270-F).⁶ This was not only the last record Patrianos is known to have recorded in the United States but also the only one where he does not perform a *karaghiozis* skit. In keeping with the unexpected historical twists and turns to be encountered with this song, Patrianos's version and not Demetriades's was reissued, albeit on a small independent label (cf. Phalirea 22/23). After the Patrianos recording no other Greek commercial release of this song occurred for another ten years.

Nevertheless, after just these two versions, the Greek American community completely identified with this song. Many senior generation Greek American men and women I have spoken with over the years insist that this song was a standard at virtually every Greek music event they attended.⁷ The claims that *Misirloú* was a performance favorite are supported by public documentation.

During the Federal Writer's Project field recordings in Florida at least two versions of *Misirloú* were collected. On August 25, 1939, Alton Chester Morris, then a young FWP contract fieldworker, recorded Mary Graneksis singing "Misirlon" (sic), which is described as "a Greek-Arabian folksong," in Tarpon Springs,

Florida. Later that same year, on October 4 in Jacksonville, Morris recorded Jennie Castrounis's version of *Misirloú*. What is striking about both these recordings is that they were collected as "traditional" songs. Morris, then a graduate student in English literature, did not know the song's commercial origins.⁸

The next release of *Misirloú*, now subtitled an "Oriental Serenade," was by Maria Karelas (nee Rumell) with the Spyros Stamos Orchestra in Chicago, recorded on October 23, 1941 (Columbia 7217-F). Originally from the Detroit Greek community, Karelas's version of *Misirloú* saw much air play for many years on that city's Greek radio programs (Frangos 2003). The last documented Greek 78 rpm recording of this song features, once again, Tetos Demetriades as vocalist, but this time with noted studio musicians of the era, Giulietta Morino on violin, Dave Tarras on clarinet, Harold M. Kirchstein on accordion, Freddy Mendelsohn on the Hammond organ and Demetrios Zattas on piano (Orthophonic S-572). This version was recorded in New York City on January 14, 1942.

In terms of sheer beauty I find this second version by Tetos Demetriades the most compelling interpretation. His precise timing and enunciation are such that Demetriades often sounds physically exhausted, as if his unrequited love for *Misirloú* has left him weak and hollow. He never strains once in his delivery, avoiding the main fault of many a performer of this song.

Omitted on available discographies are the later 78 rpm versions of this song, recorded between 1945 and 1965 by a host of ethnic musicians on smaller independent record labels. The Ladino version by the famed Jack Mayesh, as one example, "Missirlu" (sic), in rendered in both Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish (cf. Mayesh Phonograph Record Company 1367).⁹

The English translation of the Greek lyrics is not what one might expect of an international pop hit song:

My *Misirloú*, your sweet eyes,
Have ignited flames in my heart

Ach! *Gia habibi*, ach *gialeli*, ach!

Your two lips dripping with honey
I will go crazy; I cannot bear it any longer
I will steal you from the midst of Arabia!

Black-eyed Misirloú, my sweet
I'll trade my life for just one kiss from your mouth,
Have mercy!

Greek Americans always contend that the words "Gia habibi" are Arabic for "I love you." This constitutes the full range and type of publicly known ethnic recordings of *Misirloú* from 1927 to 1965. But the historical and cultural complexity of *Misirloú* does not stop here. There is also a dance.

The Misirloú Dance

The creation of the *Misirloú* dance is related in a long note in that now standard reference, *Greek Folk Dances*, by Rickey Holden and Mary Vouras (Newark, New Jersey, Folkraft Press, 1976: 61). But even here there is a hint of uncertainty, dispute and controversy.

Misirloú originated on campus at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, U.S.A. in 1945 and was born as many dances have been created: to fill a need. A Pittsburgh women's musical organization asked Prof. Brunhilde Dorsch to organize a Duquesne dance group in some national dances for a program to honor America's World War II allies. Mrs. Dorsch, after considerable research, finally located a Greek-American pharmacy student, Miss Mercine Nesotas, who taught a *syrtós*, *hasávikos*, and the *Syrtós Haniótikos* (which she simply called *Kritikós*).

The last fascinated them the most, but they had no proper music. A Greek-American music student, Pat Kazalas (née Mandros), suggested that the tune *Misirloú* might fit the dance, since the Pittsburgh-area Greeks did not know Cretan music. The university dancers loved the tune, slowed down the quicker "parent" dance to suit the languorous quality and speed of the new tune.

Prof. Dorsch at first carefully explained the "origin" of *Misirloú* as she taught it in the years following its birth but rarely does so nowadays because, as she puts it, "I do not like to argue, and more importantly, because I am so

delighted to see folk-creativity as a process in action that I feel no more real 'claim' to it than any individual can to something that has moved out into the 'wide, wide world.'"

As *Misirloú*, the dance has become popular among folk dancers throughout the world, and as far away as Japan, Singapore and India. It has recently enjoyed a revival of popularity in the U.S. where many Americans now dance it to the tune of "Never On Sunday." The Pittsburgh "local-Greeks," who first were inclined to shun *Misirloú* as a "step-child," now dance it as happily as everyone else.

I find it especially striking how similar this creation of *Misirloú* as a "traditional dance" is to the invention of the "Zorba Dance" that came with the international popularity of the film *Zorba the Greek* (1964).¹⁰

Legends, Lore and Copyrights

"*Halase to cosmo*," is how the late John K. Gianaros, then one of the last surviving senior generation of musicians, described the impact of *Misirloú*. Gianaros, who knew Roubanis, asserted that rather than an ongoing royalty Nikolaos Roubanis was paid a one-time flat fee of \$45 for the copyright to *Misirloú* by Tetos Demetriades.¹¹

Tetos Demetriades, a Greek immigrant from Constantinople, was a towering figure in the American international music business. Demetriades was an incredibly popular baritone who recorded a steady stream of songs from the 1920s well into the 1960s. Eventually Demetriades became a preeminent music company executive, field agent, and independent producer for RCA Victor Records (Chianis 1988; Greene 1992). Many Greek songs were written and/or purchased by Demetriades during his long and very successful career (Frangos 1996). In the 1920-1940 era, \$45 was an extremely good price for the rights to any song.

Once again, however, we have the one persistent problem with trying to work out the history of the song *Misirloú*, i.e., chronology. It was Demetriades who first recorded *Misirloú* in 1927. Published sources, while always crediting Nikolaos Roubanis as

composer, also state that he did not copyright this song until 1934. Seven years later, published sources report, Misirlou Music, Inc., owns the copyright.

Demetriades's propensity for professional pseudonyms provides some clue in charting the activities and time frame for the Misirlou Music corporation. Tetos Demetriades recorded not only under his own name but a long series of other individual and choral names. The known individual pseudonyms Demetriades recorded under include: Takis Nicolau, Nontas Sgouras, Tetos Demy, and simply Notis. Aside from choral or orchestra names such as the Demetriades Duo or the Demetriades Trio, there were also Teto's Estoudiantina, Trio Mondonistico, Quartetto Mandolinistico (which recorded in Italian), Tetos Mandolinata and perhaps others (cf. Pappas 1983: personal communication; Spottswood 1990: 1150-1162).

All these various personas reflected Demetriades's keen attention to the different substrata of niches within the overall "Greek" market. Aside from the songs he recorded under his own name, Demetriades carefully demarcated which genres of songs were to be recorded under each specific name and group. As others have observed, "Demetriades judiciously catered to the highly varied musical appetites of the Greek immigrants" (Chianis 1988: 41).¹²

Following this line of thought, another listing found in the encyclopedias and reference books on popular American music offers further evidence to consider. The credits for the hit song, "You, You, You Are the One (West Gernan)," cite Fred Wise and Milton Leeds as composers of the English lyrics, with the music by Tetos Demy. Since this song is based on the German folk song, "Du, Du Liegst Mir im Herzen," I am confused as to how Tetos Demy can claim to have written this song. More importantly, however, is the fact that the 1948 copyright on "You, You, You Are the One" belongs to the Misirlou Music corporation. And, as we have already seen, "Tetos Demy" is none other than Tetos Demetriades. It will be recalled that Fred Wise and Milton Leeds, along with S.K. Russell, are also credited with writing the English lyrics to *Misirlou* (cf. Shapiro and Pollock 1985: 2132-2133).¹³

Misirlou's copyright lasted well past the demise of 78 rpm records into the long-playing record album phase of commercial music production. In the spring of 1948, *Bouzouki Party* (Nina L-67), released by the Nina Record Company of New York City,

became the first Greek long-playing 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm album issued in the United States (Frangos 2000).¹⁴ Other Greek American record companies quickly begin to issue their own long-playing albums. Among the various theme albums released by Greek American companies (and those from Greece as well) were the extremely popular singalong albums, which featured an array of songs clearly selected with a Greek American rather than a Greek audience in mind. *Misirloú* was prominently featured among those songs.

Copyright restrictions created an odd situation. "YA'SOO! Sing-Along in Greek," for example, offered *Misirloú* as the first song on the A side (Helios Records 555). On the accompanying bilingual song sheets that were included inside each album, we find under *Misirloú* a disclaimer rather than lyrics. In part we read: "[C]opyright laws do not permit us to print the lyrics to *Misirloú*. Of course, in the privacy of your own home you are perfectly free to write down your version of what you hear." So, whether we take 1927 or 1934 as the year *Misirloú* was first copyrighted, even in the early 1960s and 1970s, when these singalong albums were especially popular, someone was extremely careful to actively retain the rights to, at the very least, the printed lyrics of this song.

If Demetriades recorded *Misirloú* in 1927, did it become an instant hit only among Greek Americans? Why are there, initially, so few Greek commercial records released for what everyone refers to as both a Greek and an American "international popular hit song"? The standard practice among all commercial record companies during this period was that once you had a hit song you either stepped up the volume of production on that record and/or re-recorded other versions of the song as many times as the public would buy it. With *Misirloú* this did not happen. Did Demetriades (or whoever was the legal copyright holder) seek to get more money and so controlled the licensing of this song to the highest bidder? If that were the case, then why does it take until 1947, a full twenty years after its first release, for Jan August to make it a worldwide musical sensation?

In any case, *Misirloú*'s popularity with Greek American audiences took place well before it did with Americans and others.

The supposed Arabian origins of *Misirloú* remains a vital part of Greek American discourse. This is why Helen Graneksis told the young Alton Morris, that hot summer's day in 1939, that *Misirloú* was "a Greek-Arabian song." Greek Americans always offer a number of stories as a means to explain the Arabian aspects to this song. It is often said that Roubanis took the melody of an Egyptian folksong he heard as a boy and used that as the base for his song. Other widely circulated stories have to do with its title. The two most frequently heard versions relate that "Misirloú" is Arabic for "beloved," and alternately that it means "the girl from Misiri, Egypt." While there is an Egyptian town of Misir, just south of Kafrel Sheikh and northeast of El Mahalla el Kübra, this does not mean Roubanis actually wrote his song for a young maiden from that specific town (cf. Shupe 1992).

Even the physical expressions of this song have taken on "oriental" elements. As the late Theodore and Elfedra Petrides observe in their explanation of the *Cretiko Syrto*: "[T]he steps to the *Cretiko Syrto* have been applied to the music of the song, "Misirloú" . . . Actually though, it does resemble an odalisk dance, i.e., a harem dance, though hands or small fingers were not held, and there is a slight difference in the steps" (1972: 50). Many simply point to the inclusion of the Arabic words "Ach! Gia habibi" to make their case for the Arabic influences of the song.

Clearly the one connective link in all these Greek American explanations about *Misirloú* is its exotic and foreign nature. This is especially stressed in what is said about the song in performance. First, much is made of the fact that internationally acclaimed performers such as Xavier Cugat (1900-1990) helped to popularize *Misirloú* in the finest ballrooms and hotel lounges throughout the 1940s. *Misirloú* fit well into Cugat's existing blend of Americanized calypso, flamingo, and Latin music. Then, in distinctly Greek American performance settings the foreignness of the song is stressed not so much by symbolic space, as happens when juxtaposed with music from the Caribbean, Spain or South America, but by time. *Misirloú* is always described as invoking nostalgia among its Greek listeners.

As a standard at Greek American public performances, *Misirloú* was coupled or included with a selection of Greek and Ameri-

can songs that are associated with loss and regret, such as *Yero Demos*, and/or romantic, again with explicit references to lost love themes, of the 1900-1940 era, such as *Yiati, Yiati!* (Why, Why). These songs, inclusive of those said to be “traditional” as well as those acknowledged as commercial or American, were/are never rendered in keeping with Greek folk music vocal styles. Rather a vocal style understood by all as operatic is chosen.

Recollections about public performances of *Misirloú* clearly evoke the social tensions and personal regrets generally felt within the Greek American community. *Misirloú*, in a performative setting, distances those emotions and sets them in a much beloved but other place and time. Obviously I am conflating at least two and perhaps even three generations of Greek Americans in these statements. But even with the children of the 1880 to 1920 massive wave of Greek immigration to the United States, who are now the most senior generation in the community, the central element of nostalgia is always mentioned. So prevalent was/is *Misirloú* at these public events that even to this day just the phrase “play the Greek American National Anthem” will cause the band at a Greek American function to play this song.

Surf's Up

In other hands *Misirloú* has assumed two contrary but constant themes. The first is that this song is “traditional,” and the other is that it is simply a popular standard song. Even the most passing of searches on the internet will find literally hundreds of recordings from around the world that include and present *Misirloú* in just such a fashion. Many of these recordings stress that not only is *Misirloú* their traditional song but also a time-honored dance!

That *Misirloú* is a song that so many different cultures and music traditions actually believe is their very own would seem reason enough to have ethnomusicologists straining to be the first to explore the ongoing impact of this single composition. While I cannot speak for ethnomusicologists everywhere, I do believe once modern Greek scholars break the intellectual chains of *rebetika* they will then be able to examine these sorts of cross-cultural questions.

The second constant theme with *Misirloú* is its colossal impact

as a popular standard song. Here the “claims” of this song belonging to groups other than Greeks does in fact resound with authenticity. Perhaps the most extreme expression of this transformation is in *Misirloú*'s absolute adoption in an instrumental version by California surfers. At the Rendezvous Ballroom in Balboa, California, Dick Dale first introduced *Misirloú* to what became standing-room-only crowds.

To quote from the liner notes of the Rhino anthology, *The Best of Dick Dale and His Del-tones*: “The first recording in which Dale used the Fender reverb (likely the first recorded use of the device at all [!]) was ‘Miserlou,’ released in May 1962. . . . The single version . . . is one of the classic rock instrumental recordings of all time . . . [Dale’s] version of Miserlou, a Greek pop standard of the 1940’s, was testimony to Dale’s family heritage (a Lebanese father and Polish mother) and a fondness for Middle-Eastern melodies” (Rhino B000348H). Dick Dale, known thereafter as the “King of the Surf Guitar,” double-picked *Misirloú* left-handed, on upside-down strings, at blinding speed. Dale learned to speed-pick from his Lebanese uncle, who played an oud with a turkey quill.

California youth, in the very late 1950s, held customized cars in high esteem. This concerns us here because *Misirloú* soon morphed into something of an anthem that included not only the surfers of Dick Dale’s Rendezvous Ballroom days but also those young people who were devoted to hot-rods and racing. California’s surf/hot rod music scene was the local answer to the British musical invasion of the mid 1960s. *Misirloú* became linked to the surf and car scene with groups such as the Beach Boys, the Cor-nells and others adopting it. Today, *Misirloú* is recognized as one of the top ten surf/hot rod songs of all time.

Old Music, New Questions

Misirloú's symbolic movement from a romantic ballad to a song widely recognized within the Greek American community as signaling lost love and so the lost past is not easy to chart in its precise movement from one set of meanings to another. The interesting facet to this song is that such shifts are ongoing: first from romantic ballad to nostalgia ballad, then from immigrant generation to current seniors, who report it is about their youth and their

"lost times." Now the song has spiraled outward and it is virtually everyone's either traditional or nostalgia song.

Yet for all this ongoing popularity, why hasn't *Misirloú* seen more academic attention? I believe the problem arises because *rebetika* studies are taking up all the academic space. The general disregard American and British scholars of modern Greek studies have for the diaspora Greek communities in which they often live is stunning. Future Greek researchers will undoubtedly ask why such highly trained and well-read individuals never bothered to examine the Greeks who lived near them or even gave a passing glance to the music this group so avidly retained far from home.

Popular Greek music in the United States has a more complex history, interconnected with and unique from both Greece and America, than is now currently understood. The examination and discussion of Greek music in North America from 1899 to 1960 cannot be reduced to questions of how much like music in Athens and Piraeus were the commercial recordings of New York City and Chicago (see esp. Smith 1991). Denying Tetos Demetriades and all the other American-based Greek musicians their roles in the preservation of and artistic creativity within modern Greek music is another aspect of the *rebetika* juggernaut. In this same light it needs to be stressed that not one single song from the consciously constructed *rebetika* category has ever achieved the kind of international musical acclaim *Misirloú* continues to enjoy.

Misirloú as a case study in the true complexity and enduring influences of Greek music in North America has much to offer. As we have seen, this song, rather than centered solely within the Greek American community, now has many different musical and dance traditions associated with it. If this is not a case study in musical continuity, then it is most certainly a textbook example of musical transformations across cultures.

This case study offers what is missing in most investigations into the history of modern Greek music: the invigorating power that comes from the recognition of new parameters in the field. Greek music in a North American setting must not be reduced to *rebetika*. Knowing what actually took place outside of the nation state of Greece is fundamental to any endeavor to write the history of modern Greek music. Documented historical evidence and not the trendy flim-flam of *rebetika* studies will best serve the ongoing

research into the events surrounding the international development and continuing influences of modern Greek music.

Footnotes

¹My thanks to Steve Demakopoulos for his extensive and detailed comments on an early draft of this paper. I need also to thank both Neni Panourgia and Stathis Gourgouris for reading over a prior draft and speaking with me at length about the ideas raised in this essay. In like fashion, Dan Georgakas has freely offered me his insights into the issues raised in this essay. He went the extra mile.

²I use this spelling of *Misirloú* since this is the one most commonly found on the actual records and sheet music.

³I would like to thank Charles Kyriakos for taking the time to discuss with me the various historical and regional differences in dancing *Misirloú* that have and continue to see expression in Greek communities around the country. As an avid folk dancer, instructor, and author Mr. Kyriakos has reservations about the current popularity of *Misirloú*. He stresses regional and wave of immigration differences for the appearance and community-based popularity of this song. Nevertheless, I have as yet to meet a Greek American musician, or folk dancer for that matter, who does not include this song into his or her repertoire of music or dance.

⁴See *Music From the Motion Picture Pulp Fiction* (MCAD 11103) MCA Records, 1994.

⁵While I have surveyed a number of the popular American music sources, I limit my bibliography here to only three such reference works. This is due to the fact that all references consulted agreed on the core information concerning *Misirloú*'s composer, year of copyright, the final copyright holder, and then the various versions of this song in other music traditions. All accounts cite 1934 as the year Roubanis first copyrighted *Misirloú*. Yet on the *Misirloú* sheet music at the bottom of the first page is the notice: "copyright 1927 and 1934 by N. Roubanis." Why Roubanis would have to copyright the same song twice is puzzling to say the least. Since only the *Misirloú* sheet music has this notation I have opted to follow the published sources.

I am also intentionally being extremely selective about which version of *Misirloú* I take into consideration. Many references and songbooks list *Misirloú* as a recognized standard for a wide range of different ethnic groups (see Broderick 1974; Havlice 1978 and 1989). Complicating this entire issue, while at the same time confirming the enduring influence of this song, is the fact that the lyrics, in these seemingly endless versions, have undergone minor but significant alterations. The romantic "Arabian nights" aspects of this song have been accentuated with new lyrics, such as "Desert shadows creep across purple sands" (see Havlice 1978; 1989).

⁶Curiously, it is Makis Patrianos's 1931 rendition of *Misirloú* which has

seen continued re-release in Greece, beginning with its inclusion on *To Elliniko Tragoudi stin Ameriki apo 1917 eos 1938* (Lyra CD 0079). Patrianos's version is strained to the point of nearly breaking more than once. Patrianos's performance lacks the musical depth and fundamental sensibilities of interpretation found on either of Tetos Demetriades's masterful performances. Does the word *zembekiko* carry such weight that when it appears on a label that makes it the most authentic version of a song?

⁷This greatly condensed discussion of Greek American public performances draws upon my fieldwork with a number of different communities. Oral history interviews that relate the circumstances and the music at both amateur and professional productions can be principally (but not exclusively) found in my 1980-1981 fieldwork in Grand Rapids, Michigan (see Greek holdings in the Michigan Room Grand Rapids Public Library) and my 1985 interviews in the Calumet County area of Indiana (cf. Indiana University [Bloomington] Archives of Traditional Music ATL #86-003-F).

I also want to thank Constance Callinicos for sharing her memories, experiences and thinking with me concerning Greek American public performances. The clear lack of musical ability and grace many of these aspiring singers, violinists, and pianist's display/ed has not escaped the sharp eyes of Greek Americans themselves. An especially humorous vignette of "entertainment in the home" as performed during the early 1900s can be found in Harry Mark Petrakis's novel *Days of Vengeance* (New York: Doubleday, 1983).

⁸The original Federal Writer's Project Florida field recordings are held at the Archive of Folk Song in the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress. For the *Misirloú* recordings see AFS 3542 6A and 3548 B2. Morris fully intended to use these field recordings of ethnic folk songs in his dissertation, but uniform transcriptions for those songs became an immediate problem. While Morris would ultimately publish his compilation of field collections as *Folksongs of Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1950) it does not contain any of his Greek, Polish, Slovak, or Spanish recorded music.

For more details on Morris's sustained efforts at trying to obtain accurate transcriptions for the Greek folksongs and the long-range problems faced with all the FWP foreign language songs, see the July 9, 1937 to March 18, 1941 correspondence between Morris and George Herzog as well as Herzog and Alan Lomax at Indiana University (Bloomington), Archives of Traditional Music. My thanks to Herzog scholar Carol F. Inman for alerting me to this correspondence. For a fuller understanding of Herzog's role as one of the leading ethnomusicologists during this era, see Carol F. Inman, "George Herzog: Struggles of a Sound Archivist," *Resound* 1:1 (January 1986).

⁹During Anne Rasmussen's reading of "Closets, Attics, and Basements: Discovering a History of Musical Aesthetics in the Personal Archives of the Arab American Community" at the A Century of Field Recording conference she played various musical examples. Mid-lecture, as she began to play one particular musical example, several individuals in the audience called out "*Misirloú!*" Preston Sonders, Philip Solomon and Freddy Elias performed the version Rasmussen presented. While intending to employ this musical example for other purposes, its use immediately sparked a long discussion on the variations of *Misirloú* found in a number of ethnic American popular music traditions. The

composer of the Arabic lyrics for the version presented was Anton Abdel Ahad. Videos of the conference are to be found at Indiana University (Bloomington), Archives of Traditional Music, under ATL #90-032-F.

¹⁰I owe a great debt of thanks to Athan Karras for talking and writing to me at considerable length about a number of related Greek American historical and dance topics. In his discussions with me about the *Misirloú* dance Karras concurs that it is based on the *Haniótiko Syrtó* (see also Karras 1981).

In thinking about the influence of *Misirloú* as a dance, and searching the internet as I have, I now believe the line in the Holden and Vouras account that “[A]s *Misirloú*, the dance has become popular among folk dancers throughout the world,” it has become known in places “as far away as Japan, Singapore and India,” is fact more accurate than can now be reckoned in modern Greek studies. Numerous websites in Japanese- and Chinese- characterized pictographics appear whenever *Misirloú* is entered as a search word.

¹¹John K. Gianaros's interviews are held at Indiana University's Archives of Traditional Music under ATL #89-049-C/F. A fuller treatment of these interviews can be found in my thirteen-part newspaper series, “Greek Music in America: John K. Gianaros Musician and Composer,” *GreekAmerican* (September 14-November 23, 1991).

¹²For a whole series of discussions in 1983 concerning Tetos Demetriades and his Standard Colonial Company I need to thank the late Dino X. Pappas, James Stoyhoff, and Robert Levine. On the Greek archives compact disk, *Agnostes echographeseis Smyrneikon tragoudion*, Demetriades is credited as “Tetos Demetriades” for *Tzivaeri* and as “Takes Nikolaou” on *Meraki*—clearly, all without knowing they are one and the same performer.

¹³There is some evidence that throws into confusion when Demetriades may have purchased the copyright to *Misirloú*. Robert Levine, Demetriades's last business partner, contends that Demetriades already had his own Colonial Music Company long before *Misirloú* became popular (Levine: personal communication, 1983). 1941 is the very first listing, I have found, for the Colonial Music Company. It is true, that sometime in the 1940s, Demetriades bought the Standard Record Company and merged it with his existing Colonial label to form the Standard Colonial Company. It is still perplexing as to why Demetriades would have two incorporated music companies. Different partners may have been involved.

The appearance of songs such as *Misiriotissa-Arabian Serenade*, credited to George Buyukas and Demetrios Zattas, as sheet music for the Apollo Music Company is clearly an effort to profit from Greek American enthusiasm for this song (cf. no. 583).

Roubanis's claim for two copyright dates (1927 and 1934) may be a product of a well-recognized problem that occurs when a folk tradition is finally placed on commercial records. Since variations of a folk song may be well known to a wide range of traditional musicians, fragments of a song or the “same” song may be known by different names or with different sets of lyrics. An example of this common phenomenon, often cited to me by senior musicians, may be heard on the piano roll *Sofaólis* (QRS 8051). This syrtos is cited as being “revised by Markos Sifnaös” and does contain musical elements that certainly do sound like sections of *Misirloú*.

My thanks to Helen Papanikolas for allowing me, in 1986, to make a copy of her *Atlas Genikos Timokatalogos 1927-1928*. The over thirty pages of advertisements and detailed information on Greek music includes an entire page on piano rolls, including Markos Sifnaös's *Sofoulis*.

¹⁴George Valavanis, the man who established Nina Records, and his daughter, Maria Valavanis Bojokian, provided me the information on this company and its history.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Book Reviews

Documenting Greek America

Greek American Studies continues to exist as a virtual discipline. Not a single chair for Greek American Studies is available at any American university, much less a Greek American Studies Center. Only a handful of universities offer courses on Greek America, and the Greek American experience is often regarded as no more than a subcategory of the Greek Diaspora. Nonetheless, the number of essays and books on Greek America continues to increase dramatically. More has been published in the past twenty years than in all the previous years combined.

The quality of the new scholarship, of course, varies, but the general trend is toward higher standards and greater diversity in subject matter. The breakdown between those with a celebrationist approach and those who are theoretical has largely been swept aside by diligent scholars whose theoretical premises are evident in the structure of the work itself rather than as disembodied commentary. A major component of the new scholarship is to document Greek America while the data is still readily attainable. Three recent works attack that problem in three strikingly different approaches.

Founded on Freedom and Virtue: Documents Illustrating the Impact in the United States of the Greek War of Independence, edited by Constantine Hatzidimitriou, uses formal historical texts to cover an important era. *The History of the Greeks in Kentucky: 1900-1950*, vol. 1: *The Early Pioneers of Louisville*, by Marios Stephanides, draws largely upon original interviews backed by local sources. *The Pioneers: 1900-1942*, part one of the three-part film *The Greeks of Southern California—Through the Century*, offers a rich mixture of diverse visual sources. Unlike the two books just cited, which are aimed at scholars, *The Pioneers*, which was produced by the Greek Heritage Society of Southern California, is aimed at a mass audience with a format that does not sacrifice scholarship for entertainment values.

A Period Piece

Founded on Freedom and Virtue looks closely at how various forces in the United States viewed the Greek war of independence. The selections are well chosen and are given an excellent overview in a lead essay by Constantine Hatzidimitriou and Aristide D. Caratzas. Hatzidimitriou also offers a strong concluding essay on scholarship for the period. The introductory essay and a bulk of the supporting documents demonstrate that although the leading figures in American political life were emotionally supportive of the revolution,

they were constrained from significant action by the general US policy of avoiding international entanglements. Hatzidimitriou also shows how American business arrangements with the Ottomans made it impossible for politicians to make support of the Greek revolution an exception to this policy. Another group of documents demonstrates that the American public as a whole was openly and adamantly pro-Greek. Actions taken on behalf of Greece involved public demonstrations, diplomacy behind the scenes, and financial donations. A score of Americans also journeyed across the ocean to fight.

The statements, speeches, and correspondence reproduced are from the most prestigious American political figures. Thomas Jefferson, Albert Gallatin, John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and Daniel Webster are among those whose writing is included. Most fervent of all the phil-Hellenes was Edward Everett, whose work is a centerpiece of this collection. From the European side of the ocean, there are important materials from Adamantios Korais and the Marquis de Lafayette. In addition to this material, Hatzidimitriou offers a rich selection of proclamations from various levels of American government, newspaper articles, and period poetry.

Hatzidimitriou's account of the popular support for Greece makes it clear why cities in America carry the name Ypsilanti and Smyrna well as the more traditional variations on Athens and Sparta. He also underscores how the old Latin/Greek curriculum favored by the privileged classes laid an emotional basis for support of modern Greece. All of the factors so carefully documented here created a bedrock of pro-Greek feeling that ultimately would be accessed by Greek immigrants in the twentieth century.

The collection is further distinguished by the imaginative inclusion of an essay by Steve Frangos on the famous Greek Slave sculpted by Hiram Powers. Frangos shows how the six variations of that work served as a political polemic on behalf of Greece in the manner *Uncle Tom's Cabin* served as a literary polemic against slavery. Abolitionists, in fact, compared the plight of the Greek woman in the sculpture to the fate of African slaves in America. Frangos's analysis sheds light on the earlier discussion by Hatzidimitriou on how free blacks in New York had raised money for the Greek cause and why African American James Williams may have fought in Greece.

Founded on Freedom and Virtue is everything a scholarly work should be. The material is well chosen and presented in a manner that facilitates further research. The exposition is clearly written and sophisticated. This work demonstrates how respect for the best in the scholarly tradition can be fused with imaginative consideration of the impact of the arts.

Keeping it Local

The History of the Greeks in Kentucky is an odd mix of very precise data combined with an inadequate and intellectually lazy contextualization. The title itself is a misnomer, as the entire work is about Louisville, and Stephanides gives no indication of whether or not there will be other volumes. This is all the more troubling as the book is highly dependent upon interviews with a handful of local respondents, documents dealing with the local branch of the American Hellenic Education Progressive Association (AHEPA), local church records,

and commentary in the local press. A more candid title would have been *A History of the Greeks of Louisville*.

In terms of local history, much that Stephanides has done is commendable and will prove invaluable for writers attempting larger studies of Greek America. Of greatest worth are some four score biographies of Louisville Greeks. These are quite detailed in terms of providing even street addresses, relationships between the families, places of employment, and other minutia. Whenever possible Stephanides has backed up his interviews by confirming them through local records of various kinds. A sexist downside to this effort is that although the biographies are full family sagas, the focus is on the lives of Greek males. Women are only cited in relationship to their men. Nor are female societies given much space. What emerges from this data is that the Greeks of Louisville seem very much like other Greeks of their period. They owned or worked at harteries, confectioneries, doughnut shops, billiard parlors, and various food establishments. About a third of the males married Greek, a third out-married, and a third remained bachelors. Assimilation occurred within a generation; the Greek language was not passed on; and the community is slowly disintegrating.

Stephanides often either accepts the celebrationist mode or just refuses to challenge it. Louis Maniatis is quoted as saying more than once that all the early Greeks were successful and well liked by their neighbors. Louisville apparently had no Klansmen, and apparently there was not a single gambler, drinker, loafer, or just bad-humored Greek in town. This is belied in the text, which records one instance of a Greek leaving AHEPA because he refused to speak English when among Greeks and lists a number of Greeks simply as laborers. Stephanides also notes that there were two major schisms in the church but offers few details. There is some discussion of a deposed priest who was culturally very traditional. If that orientation is what led to his ouster, it would tell a lot about the political and social sensibilities of the Louisville community. On the other hand the ouster could just have been a personality clash with prominent members of the parish. Stephanides, unfortunately, does not probe very deeply into this or similar incidents in parish life.

Even more annoying is the failure to follow up two very interesting statements regarding Jews. George Angelo states, "Greek children played mostly with Greeks and a few Jewish friends." There is no followup to explore if that was a matter of choice or if the Greeks and Jews were viewed as Others by their neighbors. If a matter of choice, why Jews and not some other group? Stephanides also includes the amazing story of Moses L. Sosnin, an Orthodox Jew from Poland who joined the local AHEPA in January of 1927 and remained a member through 1929. No discussion is offered of why Sosnin wanted to join AHEPA and why the local Greeks felt comfortable in having him as a fraternal brother or why he left AHEPA. Stephanides notes that AHEPA later made Christianity a condition for membership, but there is no footnote discussion of the whys and whens of that decision.

The attempts by Stephanides to put his very interesting and detailed accounts into a broader context are marked by what can only be termed intellectual laziness. Most of the expository literature he cites is almost twenty years old, often involving tentative assertions that have since been established.

Stephanides either doesn't know about this subsequent work or chooses to ignore it. Whole sections of his contextualizing seem to be lifted unamended from his previous essays. He notes for example that Greeks have come of political age since World War II, as demonstrated by having elected two senators and eight congresspeople. That passage must have been written before the election of Olympia Snowe and a half dozen congresspeople. One would also expect a political passage to speak of Michael Dukakis and George Stephanopoulos at some length.

Despite the faults just noted, *The History of the Greeks in Kentucky* is extremely useful in its particulars. It deals with a region not often covered and is incredibly detailed in its mini-bios. Getting the respondents to speak about the intimate details of their lives is never easy. The problem is compounded by the shame culture characteristic of Greeks. In that regard, the work Stephanides has done is extraordinary. However much may be missing in the accounts, what has been captured has the feel of authenticity and is the kind of data that can only be obtained through direct oral histories. Stephanides has done a particularly good job in showing the familial and business relationships of the Louisville Greeks.

Portraying a Regional

The Pioneers is the first segment to be realized of a film project designed to record the history of the Greeks of Southern California. Approaching such a work is far different than addressing the contents of a written text. Film is much more powerful as an emotional medium than as a medium of ideas. Films, however, can reach many times the number of readers of any given book. Costa Gavras has noted that one of the duties of socially oriented films is to arouse so much interest in a topic that it inspires the viewers "to enter the historian's chambers." Documentary filmmakers have another burden. Given the costs of filmmaking compared to the costs of book publishing, there is usually only one chance every generation to make films on any given ethnic topic. If the film is successful, funds for films on similar topics or further elaboration of the topic are forthcoming. If the project is unsuccessful, funding for related topics dries up.

Ann Giannotis, the writer/producer/director of *The Pioneers*, has noted to me that she was anxious to hit a much higher level of seriousness than media fare like the PBS films about Greeks in America. She has largely succeeded. *The Pioneers* is engaging social history. It is particularly strong in three visual areas: reproduction of personal photos, historic film footage, and oral histories. It is less strong in terms of its scripting, often opting for "feel good" language and images.

Just the family photographs gathered for the film make a viewing worthwhile. These present a diverse view of the community and are offered on the screen in a creative fashion rather than as photos in an album. The historic footage, always difficult to find, also is well woven into the tale. Adding considerable emotional power are oral histories that are mainly comprised of interesting anecdotes that evoke one or another aspect of the Greek experience in California.

Weakening the overall presentation is a script that is somewhat flabby and the occasional inclination of the filmmakers to generalize the Southern California experience as equivalent to Greek experiences nationwide. The absence of a historical consultant is notable, less by historical errors than by simplification of complex issues and choice of focus. The biggest script weakness is to emphasize the positive and to offer some simplistic motivations for group behavior. The viewer is told, for example, that the Greeks went to California because of the weather. While this may have been a factor, the major impulse was the same that brought others to the west (or to cold Maine and even colder Minnesota)—jobs. Many of the jobs in California involved laying railroad track and other manual labor. One need only turn to the fiction of A.I. Bezzerides, who also wrote films with Greek characters, to learn about such experiences in the Los Angeles area. *The Pioneers*, like almost all regional histories other than those by Helen Papanikolas, just skims over this topic. This extends to neglecting to mention any Greek trade union activity, which was considerable.

While not crudely celebrationist in any degree, *The Pioneers* tends to avoid unpleasant details. Thus, the early pioneer Camel George is mentioned, but we do not learn that he was involved with outlaws and was the model for the main character in *One-Eyed Jacks*, the only film ever directed by Marlon Brando. In fact, the considerable Greek participation in the film industry is barely explored. For example, one thinks immediately of the Hermes Pan choreography for all the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers films. Hollywood, however, may get more visibility in future segments.

One section of *The Pioneers* that I spoke about with Giannotis is a comment early on that all the Greeks believed that Christopher Columbus was a Greek. I thought that an odd statement for a film about pioneers in California and I questioned whether that was really a prevalent view among Greek Americans. Giannotis assured me that in the Greek schools of Southern California that assertion was emphasized and insisted on with a pointer that could be used to smack the hand of any disagreeable student. That being the case, the script would have been stronger if the California context had been noted rather than trying to make it a general statement about how Greeks in America think of Columbus. Statements about Greek reaction to World War II raised similar reservations in my mind.

I also think it would have been appropriate to deal with the Greek reaction to the tumultuous 1934 race for governor by Upton Sinclair. In my own research, I have found that there was considerable Greek support for Sinclair in San Francisco. It would have been interesting to know the feeling of Greeks in Los Angeles, where the Hollywood moguls launched a major anti-Sinclair campaign, threatening to take their industry out of the state if the socialist-minded Sinclair, then running as the candidate of the Democrat Party, were elected.

Colleagues of mine who know more about music than I do have noted that some of the Greek music used with specific photos is not correct in the sense of the time the music was composed or the region involved. Similarly, posting the dates when the oral histories were made, which clearly was not recently, also would have been helpful. Although mass audiences are relatively indifferent to such historical and cultural precision, achieving that kind of accuracy would have further enhanced the documentary value of *The Pioneers*.

The emotional impact of *The Pioneers* rests primarily on the visuals and oral histories, which are very strong. Further enhancing the film's aesthetic power are the narrations and voice-overs provided by two of the best Greek American actors, John Kapelos and Olympia Dukakis. Moreover, the editing of the film is absolutely first-rate, reflecting the assistance given to the project by Greek producers at 20th Century Fox. Two of the leading historians of Greek America have offered strong endorsements of the film. Charles Moskos states *The Pioneers* is "deeply moving," and Helen Papanikolas rates the film "a treasure." I am hopeful that many of the viewers of *The Pioneers* will indeed be drawn into the historian's chambers.

—Dan Georgakas

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HELEN PAPANIKOLAS, *An Amulet of Greek Earth: Generations of Immigrant Folk Culture*. Athens: Ohio University Press, Swallow Press, 2002.

Helen Papanikolas is, after the late Theodore Saloutos, the premier historian of Greek American social history. That she is not an academic is to her advantage, since her interests take her far from the minute and careful analyses of demographic and statistical facts, and spare the reader the jargon that places a distance between the subject-matter and the layman. After a lifetime of productivity, which began with monographs on the Greeks of the Inter-Mountain West, with studies of midwives and large-scale works like *Toil and Rage in a New Land: The Greek Immigrants in Utah*, Mrs. Papanikolas has recently branched out into fiction, producing careful and well-honed stories of Greeks as they assimilated, or not assimilated, into a mainstream American society. Then there are the major works, like the biography of her parents, *Emily-George*, which I believe will be considered a classic of ethnic history and her fiction, *Small Bird, Tell Me*, *The Apple Falls from the Apple Tree* (stories) and her most recent novel, *The Time of the Little Black Bird*.

The present book has other objectives. It is clear that *An Amulet of Greek Earth: Generations of Immigrant Folk Culture* is geared to people who, though they want to learn about Greek American culture, know little of it. A specialist's

first impression is that Mrs. Papanikolas is uncertain of her audience's familiarity with basic facts of Greek Americana. Simple words and concepts like *iconostasis*, *filotimo*, *yiayia*, and *foustanella* are explained in the text and repeated in a glossary at the end of the book. If she is correct in her uncertainty, then we are confronted with a dispiriting ignorance among the younger generations of their immediate heritage, an ignorance that is perhaps equivalent to the lack of fluency or interest in the Greek language among the young.

But Mrs. Papanikolas knows what she is about in this book, since *An Amulet of Greek Earth* is intended as a guide and an explanation of a culture, by now perhaps exotic, of grandparents and great-grandparents to children of the fourth and fifth generation, whose own families neglected to tell them of the suffering and achievements of their near ancestors.

What sets *An Amulet* apart from many books is the desire to stress the darker aspects of the Greek American experience, the repression of girls and women, the narrow-mindedness of old country parents who, because they were confused in this land, turned rigid with fear of losing their ethnic identity in a land that superficially seemed welcoming. Many Greeks Americans have conveniently forgotten, or tended not to remember, the hostility with which they or their parents were initially greeted in the "melting pot" of America before the days of our current celebration of diversity. Mrs. Papanikolas has provided many anecdotes that will tend to disabuse the readers of these illusions.

Although I knew of her earlier work on the Greeks in Utah, I was unprepared for Mrs. Papanikolas's authority as a labor historian until I read *The Great Coal Field War* (1972) by George McGovern and L.F. Guttridge and found scores of references to her writing about the Ludlow labor strife, about which her son, Zeese Papanikolas has written a major work, *Buried Unsung: Louis Tikas and the Ludlow Massacre* (1982).

Greek Americans, by now affluent and comfortably assimilated, tend to avoid thinking about the struggles their penniless and uneducated immigrant fathers waged in the ranks of unions, but these are important memories that must not be allowed to fade from our consciousness.

Arranged in three parts, the book achieves greater importance as the reader goes from "Part One: Ancient Lore and Lost Greatness" and "Part Two: Nationhood and Exile." As she proceeds into "Part Three: Americanization," the lives of immigrant Greeks and their struggles in America, their marriages, and families, the book becomes an indispensable guide to the Hellenic presence in America.

My own favorites are the well-chosen narratives gathered over a lifetime of questions asked of sons and daughters of immigrants who confess their ambivalent feelings toward their heritage and of growing up in America. The present reviewer cannot claim to have read all the sociological literature available on the current feelings of Greek Americans, but *An Amulet of Greek Earth* has given me much to ponder about the Hellenic continuity in the United States.

—Thomas Doulis



PAVLOS KALLIGAS, *Thanos Vlekas*, a novel. Translated from the Greek and with an introduction by Thomas Doulis. Northwestern University Press, 2001. 211 pp.

After the popular classic *Candide* was published in 1759, author Voltaire mischievously claimed to have had nothing to do with the "schoolboy trifling," a satire on optimism and the "best of all possible worlds" starring the naive *Candide*.

When *Thanos Vlekas*, Greece's first "realistic" novel, was published in 1855, author Pavlos Kalligas similarly disowned his brilliant brainchild, a satire that follows the misadventures of a good-hearted, trusting naïf. Asked for permission to reprint the book, the university professor denied that he had written it and underscored his disdain for the frivolous literary art of the novel (poetry and theological tracts were held in higher esteem) by never writing fiction again.

Fortunately for us, Thomas Doulis has translated this literary treasure with wit and erudition, making available an important work that could be regarded as the Greek *Candide*. An anomalous ground-breaker, *Thanos Vlekas* illuminates the Greek psyche and spirit of post-revolutionary Greece. It is a satire, a romance, an allegory, a tragic/comedy, and a morality tale. Its style ranges from earnest and scholarly to Aristophanes-like humor and irony as the author presents a lively tale set in a country with morality gone askew, where no good deed seems to go unpunished.

Like *Candide*, innocent, trusting Thanos endures exile and misadventures in what appears to be the "worst of all possible worlds." Post-revolutionary Greece is a place where values have turned topsy-turvy: where the brigand succeeds and the hard-working peasant fails; where romantic love does not conquer but goes unacknowledged; where a mother derides goodness and applauds chicanery; where government is in cahoots with nefarious evil-doers rather than "the people"; where the worst sin appears to be virtue itself.

Thanos, a hard-working farmer who toils over his acres and struggles to acquire a few goats, strives always to "do the right thing." He's the hero as "loser" in a system that still regards the brigand and klept as romantic. Rebellion against authority and the "system," willingness to act autonomously if illegally, traits that helped break the Turkish yoke, continue to earn admiration. Brigands and neer-do-wells thrive as part of the social and political structure.

Thanos's brother, Tassos, is an exemplar of the brigand. "Tassos, despite long service in the military, had never been promoted beyond lieutenant because of his disorderly life, and was virtually always in the inactive reserve. His mother loved Tassos all the more." His mother, Barbara, champions rapsallion Tassos, while dismissing diligent Thanos as a "frugal ant" who is "not worthy of bearing arms." Painted with the broad strokes of a caricature, Barbara defies the stereotype of the all-loving, nurturing Greek mother.

As the story opens, "the fatal epidemic of brigandage was cresting, and roused from its lethargy, the government had dispatched a captain of the *gendarmes* to stamp out this scourge by vigorous pursuit."

While chasing down criminals, the captain, a "Satan pure and simple," pursues the relatives of brigands until they are forced to reveal the whereabouts of their rebellious kin. Tassos leads an insurrection against the captain, and in

retaliation, Thanos's farm and cabin are burned to the ground. Despite being at opposite ends of the ethical spectrum, Thanos and his brother function almost like co-joined twins; when Tassos does wrong, Thanos is punished. Thanos loses everything, while Tassos receives the highest accolade, a song written about him that elevates him to folk-hero status and thrills his mother, who waxes ecstatic, "kissing him with joy and repeating the last couplet, which she particularly liked."

Exiled in Thessaly, Thanos goes to work for the wealthy and benevolent farmer, Nikos Ayfantis, who loves Thanos like a son. "Ayfantis could not understand the way one brother, a brigand, went unpunished and was even rewarded, while the other, who suffered from brigandage and lost his possessions, was hunted down as a brigand and could not even go to trial."

But in Thessaly, Thanos experiences a brief period of serenity with Ephrosyne, the beautiful and virtuous daughter of Ayfantis. Thanos tends her silk worms and brings her wild flowers. Although Ephrosyne and Thanos fall in love, neither is able to express feelings for the other.

Thanos and Ephrosyne are soon parted, with Thanos going on to further physical and spiritual tests, including imprisonment, barely missing having his head lopped off (because he resembles his brother, his head on a platter would be highly desirable), and ultimately meeting a tragic end at his brother's hand.

Although Tassos has amassed a fortune in stolen goods, he wants more. His villainous friend, the poseur Iapetos, who knows all the Athens' scuttlebutt, and "with whom he had formed a silent and anonymous partnership," tells him about the best available land, located in Trivae, a village in the Peloponnesus.

For centuries the villagers have been farming the land without owning it, turning over their major profits to the archons, "honorable gift devourers." Tassos travels to Trivae and ingratiates himself with the villagers, presenting himself as their savior and hero. He insists: "You must petition the government, according to our plan, saying that you are poor people and without resources, that you fear the village lands may be granted to strangers, to people capable of harming you, that you know me and have known me for many years, that we have many and various ties, and that you would consider it a great boon if the government approved the land grant in my name, since as a favor I gave in to your tearful pleas. You must believe that I have absolutely no intention of keeping these lands."

After gaining the land, Tassos, considered a messiah by the villagers, gleefully celebrates his success. He has no intention to "ply the plow" and sends his wicked cohort Skias to supervise the serfs. "But you must also send a trustworthy agriculturist. You have your brother for this," says Iapetos. Promising Thanos half the land for his own, Tassos dispatches him to Trivae.

The good Thanos, when he arrives on the scene, quickly grasps the situation. He vows to help the people by returning them at least half of their property, the half promised to him by Tassos, and demands a deed to his land. Meanwhile, Skias has been beating the peasants and abusing them. Thanos, trying to appease everyone, does not fight Skias, to his own detriment.

"To Skias, who believed that once strictness ceased, so would submission, Thanos appeared childish and ludicrous, while to the peasants he appeared, like his brother before him, to be a fraud and deceiver, or as a worthless and runaway

horse or—to use their expression—a fifth wheel on their wrecked carriage.”

Pale and silent, Thanos retreats from the peasants' rage. Skias tortures one of the Trivians beyond endurance, and they rise up against him. When Thanos pleads with them to withdraw, they open fire and Thanos is “the first to fall.” Ayfantis and Ephrosyne arrive. Seeing her beloved destroyed, Ephrosyne drops dead on the spot and couple are buried together, “far from the defiled village, along the banks of the Alphaeus, under the forest shade.”

If Thanos is the Greek “everyman,” he demonstrates a fatal flaw. Paralyzed by virtue, he's rendered unable to take action or fight for survival in a ruthless world ruled by brigands, poseurs, and carpetbaggers. Rather than winning admiration, he earns derision. He's the scapegoat, suffering for the sins of others. “Seeing that the mild and meek ways of Thanos had led to nothing and that his benevolent arrangements were in vain, the peasants began to hold him in contempt. Thanos suffered what happens to those who believe they can reconcile the irreconcilable.”

While the reader empathizes with Thanos and his travails, we want to nudge him and move him to be more aggressive in his own behalf. Tassos, on the other hand, displays all the wiles essential to survival. The basic plot follows the epic pattern of the hero exiled and struggling to return home, the path of Odysseus and other journey takers. Unlike the clever Odysseus, Thanos never schemes. His brother, with his skewed intelligence, functions like an anti-Odysseus.

Satirical and astringent, the author skewers with skill. One of his best-realized creations is the fop and villain Iapetos, a friend of Tassos, a clever but uneducated poseur who uses an office worker's job in the ministry to wield power.

“The foustanella was the rage at the time, and Iapetos surpassed all in the wearing of it. His blouse was of the finest embroidered linen, while the tassel of his fez dangled gracefully over his right shoulder. Sometimes he tapped the foustanella with his slender riding crop, sometimes he held the gold handle at his lips while humming a tune, but he kept his bright yellow gloves on to hide his swarthy hands.”

In love with Ephrosyne but ignored by her, he takes up an affair with an older woman, “the juicy olive.” When her husband arrives during a tryst, he's discovered hiding under the bed when the husband's slippers catch in the pleats of his fancy foustanella.

Other characters enlivening this tale including Hephestidis, the schoolmaster, and Papa Jonas, the parish priest, “contemporaries and ardent lovers of ancient letters” who enjoy exchanging views. Hephestidis observes: “What else are today's laws and system of government but a maze of public authorities multiplied deliberately to feed the swarm of insatiable machinators who are nourished by the sweat of the people whom they impoverish and drive to brigandage and crime. The current system exhausts or provokes the citizens to murder.”

Pavlos Kalligos. [Earlier spelled *Kalligas*] Undoubtedly, author Kalligos's education and early years abroad gave him a unique perspective on post-revolutionary Greece. Pavlos Kalligos (1814-1896) was born into the merchant class in Smyrna. At the outbreak of the revolution, his family moved to Trieste to avoid Ottoman persecutions, and Pavlos received his early education in Trieste, Venice, and at the famous Lyceum Heyer of Geneva. He enrolled at the Uni-

versity of Berlin, studying law, and then at Heidelberg, graduating cum laude.

In Greece, he taught law at the newly established University of Athens, became dean of the law school and fought against the encroachment of the state on academic freedom, and for a more generous view of religious freedom. During an illustrious public career, he served on the Supreme Court of Greece.

Thanos Vlekas was his only work of fiction, but he was known for his impressive studies of Byzantine history and his five-volume study of Roman Law.

Thomas Doulis, translator. Thomas Doulis provides an introduction that places the novel in both literary and historical perspective. "Kalligas, a polymath representative of his era, was certainly familiar with the folk adage that expresses the ambivalence of the modern Greek soul that 'God loves the householder, but He also loves the brigand,'" Doulis writes.

"The problem of brigandage, therefore, though denounced as shameful by its society, was rooted deep in the psyche of the people themselves, as can be seen in the differing meanings of *klephtis* and *listis*, the connotations of the first being patriotic, of the second, criminal. Kalligas, fully aware of this cultural ambiguity, structured *Thanos Vlekas* to deal with the national issue most pressing during his time and placed the source of Greece's dilemma precisely in those virtues, heroism and resistance to authority, that were responsible for the attainment of freedom and independent statehood."

Doulis, professor emeritus at Portland State University, went through more than five translation drafts to arrive at this highly readable novel. He also provides chapter-by-chapter historical notes, and translator's notes as well, both excellent aids in probing the rich material encompassed in *Thanos Vlekos*.

—Penelope Karageorge

