

Peter C. Moskos and Charles C. Moskos, *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success*. 3rd ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. 2014. Pp. xxii + 234. 9 illustrations. Foreword by Michael Dukakis. Paper \$34.95.

Even though one should not judge a book by its cover, in the case of the third edition of *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success*, the front-cover synthesis depicts the main themes and topics addressed by Peter C. Moskos. In contrast with the plain blue and white geometrics of the second edition, here we have a collage of Greek American life. A church looms in the background while a meander frames two recent photographs: dancers wearing Pontic costumes and a scene from a Greek parade. In the second photograph, lost among Greek and American flags, one can read a question: Πόσο Έλληνας είσαι; (How Greek Are You?). The answer can be found on page 175 in the words of the comedian Basile Katsikis: “We’re more Greek here than they are there [in Greece]. They’re the kosmo. Here we strive. What’s different about us is we strive to keep that piece of Greece alive.”

Peter C. Moskos undertook the work of revising *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success*, a cornerstone of Greek American studies written by his father, the late and honorable Charles C. Moskos. In the 1980s the first, and especially the second edition (1987), of the book charted the landscape of Greek immigrant experience bringing together a historical overview, following a blueprint set by the pioneering work of Theodore Saloutos, with contemporary facts and figures. In this context, Charles C. Moskos offered a snapshot of Greek American life grounded on a historical narrative that evolved around the telling subtitle *Struggle and Success*. Greek immigrants had struggled against the harsh conditions and prevailing mistrust, but had eventually managed to succeed. The celebrated case of Michael Dukakis, “the beneficiary of the good name made by Greek Americans in their home communities” (2nd ed., 184–185), illustrated the notion of success and the “distance that Greek Americans have covered in this country” (2nd ed., 184).

To revise a text almost thirty years since its original publication is not an easy task, but Peter C. Moskos met the challenge and deserves credit for this. This third edition remains faithful to the scope of the original, while being substantially rewritten and restructured. The first two chapters offer a historical narrative of Greek immigration from the turn of the twentieth century to the present. In the first, pivotal to the notion of struggle (“Early Struggles: The Greek Comes to America”), the author demonstrates his ability to revisit the original manuscript and expand themes such as nativism and the everyday life of working-class immigrants. Social mobility and the transformations of ethnicity intertwined with the end of mass migration are the main topics discussed in the second chapter, which serves as an introduction to the following three main topics (and chapters, respectively) of the book: the Greek Orthodox Church, Greek American politics, and Greek American success. The author provides ample statistical data interwoven with exemplary stories and historical background to illustrate “the survival and expansion of Greek identity” (as quoted on the book’s back cover).

This optimism leads to the final chapter of the book that in an interesting, and somewhat ironic, way follows a lengthy tradition in immigrant and ethnic accounts throughout the twentieth century by asking whether there is a future for Greek identity. As the writer accurately points out, the question itself disputes the repetitive pessimistic

predictions of the forthcoming end of Hellenism—an anxiety common across ethnic communities in the United States. For the author, the answer lies in Greekness being a “trump identity,” which surpasses other “biologically equal but culturally ‘lesser’ ethnic heritage” (193). If one has to choose an ethnic background “why not be associated with the people who gave rise to western civilization?” (195).

Arguing with such statements is of limited value. Peter C. Moskos is sincere in his understanding of identity as an issue of choice and his argumentation leaves no room for nuances and critical interpretations of the idea of ethnicity as a manifestation of dominant American values with diverse cultural flavors. The last sentence of the book (in an otherwise extremely interesting account of his own visit, with his father, to distant relatives in post-1989 Albania) epitomizes this notion: “As long as Greek Americans represent the best of the American ideal—the *filotimo* of basic honesty, decency, and a hospitable nature (and delicious food doesn’t hurt)—Greek America will continue to thrive” (216).

What is noteworthy though—aside from the porous acceptance of the static ideals of honesty and delicious food—is the absence of the United States in a narrative that wishes to underscore the integration of Greek immigrants in American life. America serves as a canvas (or more often as a statistical table), but throughout the text one cannot discern links between transformations of Greek American life and the broader transformations of the American society as a whole. The chapter on ideology and politics is an indicative example ending with the defeat of Michael Dukakis in 1988, paying no attention whatsoever to contemporary debates on immigration, to the Greek crisis (with the exception of a passing reference on p. 13 but no questioning of how this could reformulate transnational relations), or even to the new challenges regarding race, ethnicity, and politics after the triumphant success of Barack Obama in 2008.

In conclusion, the third edition of *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success* is a work that highlights the persistence of a narrative in which Greek Americans, despite conflicts and turbulences of the past, continue to succeed. But if in the 1980s this success was defined in a language of social mobility and political status, now their success is measured primarily by the tautology of “Greek American values” and “American values.” This is a critical transformation of perspective and Peter C. Moskos is aware of this. To illustrate it further he proposes that the reception of the film *My Fat Greek Wedding* signifies the “successful completion of the marathon of the Greek American immigrant experience” (200) and compares “Pheidippides’s last *dying* word” to the emerging victory of the twenty-first-century Greek American world. This linear conceptualization of historical time illustrates how Peter C. Moskos addresses the topics of his book and also indicates its inherent limitations. History is seen not as a meeting point of contradictions, complexities, and failures, but as a nirvana of individual will, shared values, and abstract notions of exceptionalism such as the increasingly overemphasized *filotimo*.

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