

### 3 “A parade of home”

## Representations of home in Greek American community albums

*Maria Kaliambou*

#### “A brilliant book”

“In our albums *our home parades* with its patriotic soul, with its local lyric poetry, with its beautiful landscapes, with its heroic children, and in general with its customs and traditions”, writes one of the editors of a commemorative album of 1947 (album 1947, no page number, emphasis my own). This album was jointly published by the Greek American Society Homer together with the Greek South-African Society Episkopi in honor of their home, a small village in the remote Greek island of Karpathos. The members of the editorial committee wanted to “take the opportunity to express their gratitude and appreciation to all those who have not spared of labor and sacrifice in order to *make this Book a brilliant one* as it has now appeared” (album 1947, no page number, emphasis my own).<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed “brilliant” that immediately after the end of World War II, two Greek diasporic communities, one in the United States and one in Southern Rhodesia, Africa, collaborated to produce a commemorative album together in which their small home of origin “parades.” In fact, they wanted to celebrate a significant historical moment: the independence of their home island and its annexation to Greece. Through their collaboration, the societies advocated for the unity of their members as indicated by the motto printed on the back cover of the publication, “United We Stand”, a virtue of paramount importance emphasizing their continued support to the village they left.<sup>2</sup>

This “brilliant book”, however, is not a unique or a rarity as the editors might have wished. Commemorative albums belong to a standard publication genre by Greek American communities.<sup>3</sup> Albums are produced either by local churches or regional associations, with both types of albums sharing the same characteristics. The only difference between these albums is that the latter are connecting Greeks from the same place of origin (a village, an island, and a region), whereas the former connect parish members from several locations in Greece. Albums are published when a community celebrates an anniversary or commemorates a historical moment or simply as a part of the annual festivities of the community.

The main task of albums is to transmit “the culture, history, folklore, literature” of the original homeland (album 1978: XII), without failing to represent the new American home in the same publication. Precious memories of the original Greek homeland are enlivened while experiences of the new American home are incorporated as well. Albums become a tool that unites the past community with the present community. By creating a linkage between homelands, albums fulfill the immigrants’ dual need of staying connected with their home of birth while building their new life in the host country. The chapter examines the role of albums as mediators of home culture. In what way do albums create a connection or an antithesis between the two homes? More specifically, what types of homes do they really represent?

All albums follow a standard format. They start with greetings by the authorities followed by historical and literary texts written by members of the community. Albums open with a textual portion followed by their main and the largest portion depicting visual evidence of the community, mostly personal photographs and advertisements.<sup>4</sup> Sharing personal material such as literature and/or photographs contributes to making deeper connections among the members of the community. The members’ participation in the album’s production strengthens their feelings of belonging to the community.

This chapter examines a characteristic sample of 34 albums produced by churches and associations. Eighteen of the albums are produced by local churches that are located in several different states in the United States of America (California, Nebraska, Utah, Illinois, Maryland, and Connecticut). Sixteen of the albums are printed by regional societies mostly located in New York, with the exception of one society in New Jersey and one society in Montreal, Canada. The local differences between albums of churches and albums of associations can be explained by the fact that the Greek Orthodox churches examined were spread throughout the country, whereas the associations were mainly founded in large urban areas.

The sample spans the years from 1931 to 2019 with every decade equally represented. The genre very likely begins in the 1930s with the first and second generations of Greek immigrants in America. Thus, the material covers at least a very long period of album-production in Greek America. Moreover, the sample demonstrates the resilience of the genre album. For instance, the Andros Society in New York has published an album every year since 1931 for their annual meeting and dance.<sup>5</sup>

The material in albums ranges from simple prints to elaborate publications.<sup>6</sup> On one side of the spectrum, albums produced under the constraints of a low budget consisted of a few bounded pages of photocopies with an irregular layout and an inconsistent mix of black and white and colored pages, filled almost entirely with advertisements, thus functioning mostly as advertisement books (album 2018a). On the opposite side of the spectrum, albums considered thoughtful publications consisted of hardbound books designed to aesthetically please the readers and display detailed and reflective content. This elevated layout and design became especially evident

in the albums printed to celebrate a milestone of the community, particularly its centennial anniversary (albums 2004, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2019a, Skedros). All the above albums had an editorial committee responsible for their publication. Only two albums of the sampling are written by one author, thus acquiring copyright status (Prevas 1982 and Skedros 2005).<sup>7</sup>

Book ethnography, meaning the "documentation of personal, family and community heritage attached to books and other printed or manuscript materials" (Heimo and Salmi-Niklander 2019: 560), provides the methodological framework for the study of the albums of Greek Americans. A mixed methodological apparatus is applied: fieldwork (participant observation and interviewing<sup>8</sup>) along with close reading of texts and visual documentation. Chasing this material requires a deeply extensive search and good fortune as only a few university libraries in the United States include albums in their collections.<sup>9</sup> Libraries from Greek American associations and parishes serve as reliable sources, and local libraries in Greece occasionally collect printed material of Greeks in the diaspora.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, individuals provided albums from their personal collections to supplement the sample.<sup>11</sup>

### **The community celebrates**

Albums celebrate community events. These events are the moments where the community comes together and enjoys building connection, unity, and longevity in the new homeland, while still honoring the old homeland. An enduring characteristic across all albums of the sample is this juxtaposition between the concept of the community's old home versus their new home. Even if several years had passed after the establishment of the community, the idea of both homes keeps maintaining the identity of the following generations. This is particularly evident in the albums which celebrate temporal milestones of the community, such as 50, 80, or 100 years of their community.

The first Greek immigrants arrived in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century trying to escape the dire financial circumstances at home.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of the painful reasons which compelled the immigrants to leave their homeland, they still wished strongly to keep close ties with Greece and the Greek communities they left behind. Thus, they created local religious or cultural communities which offered social opportunities for meeting friends from their community in Greece and collected money to support their ancestral homes (Saloutos 1967: 9).

Besides their social role, the immigrant communities made an important contribution in ethnic book production too. Local parishes or organizations are active in publishing a variety of mostly ephemeral publications: calendars, yearbooks, albums, journals, advertisements, church pamphlets, printed dinner programs, annual dance invitations, and many more. The album is the most elaborate and emblematic publication of the community's publications. The album distinguishes itself because it is associated with a significant event of the community; thus, it functions as the editorial crowning of the community's celebration.

The album differentiates itself from other community publication genres because it requires a coordinated effort and community planning. The whole community has to be involved in the publication process of the book, a contribution which is acknowledged by the editors of the albums. In a 1949 album, the secretary took the opportunity to express the society's "sincere appreciation to those who, whether by their advertisements or literary contributions, have so generously co-operated in making the publication of this book possible" (album 1949: 3).

The following characteristic example offers further insight into the participatory role of the community in the production, distribution, and reception of the albums. On Saturday and Sunday, September 28 and 29, 2019, the Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church in Orange, Connecticut, gloriously celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the origination of their Greek American community. The planned events included a banquet on Saturday evening and a divine liturgy with the Archbishop on Sunday, followed by lunch. The community deemed the publication of an album to be imperative for this landmark anniversary. Indeed, a lavish hardbound album of 492 pages was published thanks to the efforts of the parish priest, Father Peter Orfanakos, and a small editorial team he assembled. Father Orfanakos explained his tireless work on this book project for more than five years in a subsequent interview.<sup>13</sup> Parish members shared their photos and purchased advertisements to support the fruition of this endeavor. The centennial album became a community experience of collaboration and reflection (Figure 3.1).

In terms of distribution, albums reach the majority of the community members. Some albums travel overseas to their families back in Greece.<sup>14</sup> St. Barbara printed 285 copies of the aforementioned album at a local printing shop and distributed them to its community members during the festivities for the centennial. Given the fact that the community has around 500 family members, the album must have reached more than half of them. It was sold for 100 dollars or given for free to those members who paid for an advertisement.

Regarding the reception of the album, from my participatory observation during the festivities in the church hall, I discovered that the album was received in a communicative and interactive way. The celebratory album fostered social interaction among the members of the community. St. Barbara parish members sat in groups and perused the pages of the centennial album together, commenting on and laughing about the contents and the photographs. The album sparked comments regarding the intricate visuals and the ads, prompted warm admiration for community members, and evoked familial and cultural pride. Reading the album was a social act (see the essays in the volume by Jonathan Boyarin 1993). As Gernes has showed that several ephemerals (scrapbooks or commonplace books) require different reading methods such as a "tactile reading practice" (Gernes 2001), similarly albums employ a social communal practice of reading. Dalbello, working on Croatian almanacs in America, argues that we should see the act of reading in a broader sense, so that all physical interactions and social exchanges with and through the text will be included (Dalbello 1999: 209).

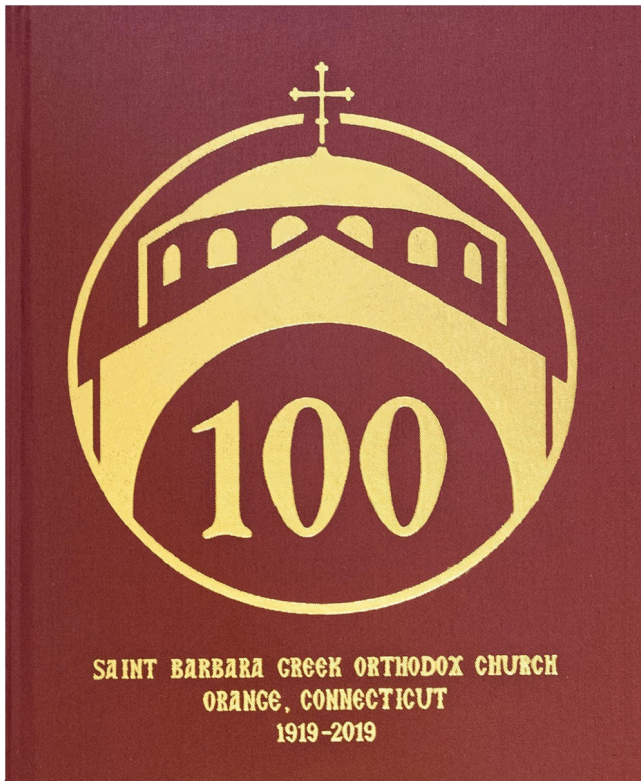


Figure 3.1 Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Orange, Connecticut, 1919–2019.

Such an approach frees us from the notion of the individual reader and leads us to understand the genre of the album “as an arena for the social interactions of a textual community, a notion that separates textuality from literacy” (Dalbello 1999: 210).

### Greetings from both homes

The albums always start with greetings by the authorities. The album opens with the welcoming words by the presidents and the boards of the communities. The opening provides the leadership with the best opportunity to express their vision about the role of the community in supporting Greece while loving America, too:

Without forgetting their special home [Andros, the island of origin] and in general Mother Greece, the societies always fulfilled all their responsibilities toward the stepmother home, the powerful democracy of the United States, towards which they actively show always their love and devotion.

(Album 1931, no page number)

The editors use this maternal metaphor of “Mother” and “Stepmother” to demonstrate that both homes, Greece and America respectively, are equally important to the hierarchies of their communities. This unique idiom for both homes in the albums represents the powerful role familial relations have within Greek American communities. In other Greek American publications, most notably in schoolbooks, there is a similar metaphor of a “Mother-Daughter” relationship, where Greece is the Mother, and America is her daughter (Kaliambou 2020: 42).

The church albums always provide brief greetings by religious authorities (a bishop, the Archbishop, the Patriarch, and of course the local priests of the community). In the 40-year anniversary album of the Holy Trinity Church of Chicago in 1937, the editors asked the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople, Veniamin I, and the Archbishop Chrysostom in Athens, Greece, to send their greetings. The Archbishop warmly congratulates the community for its longevity. He also emphasizes the importance of the correct representation of the old home’s culture into the new one. The proper transmission of the Greek culture into the new American home was a source of pride for the Archbishop.<sup>15</sup>

Besides religious leaders, political personalities offer their appreciation and acknowledgments to the communities as well. An ambassador or a consul, a mayor, a governor, a congressman, or even the president of the United States sends their greetings or photographs. With their engaging words, leaders affirm that they support the community, acknowledge its efforts, and co-celebrate their anniversaries with its members. Greek authorities represent the old home, Greece, whereas Americans speak for the new home in America. Greeks praise the community “for its contribution to the retention and dissemination of traditions and customs of mother Land”,<sup>16</sup> whereas Americans greet the community as an integral part of America and its values. Preservation versus integration are respectively the messages of Greek and American authorities toward the Greek communities. Greeks enforce keeping the Greek home culture, whereas Americans argue for the new integrated life in the new American home.

Two centennial albums, the 2018 album by Saint Spyridon Hellenic Orthodox Church in Palos Heights, Illinois, and the 2019 publication by St. Barbara in Orange, Connecticut, include a message by the President of the United States, Donald Trump. The message is the same in both albums, obviously a standard thank you letter by the Office of the President for congregations:

Melania and I [...] are grateful for the many years your congregation has served its people and neighbors. Our Nation has a long history of drawing strength from faith, and I commend your efforts to instill the sacred values our country holds dear. [...] As you reflect on the many memories you have made together, may you continue to uplift all who enter and remain a place of service to God and country.

(albums 2018b: 9 and 2019: 17)

The printed letters by the authorities, particularly by the President, besides emphasizing the importance of the celebratory event, offer an emblematic character to the publications. The inclusion of such letters is not political positioning; it is rather a demonstration that the Greek American communities respect American institutions and organizations, among them the President's Office.

In the same manner, letters by American politicians commend the strong connection Greek American communities hold with their “step-mother” America and challenge Greek American communities to contemplate what role they want to play and what impact they wish to make in their new home. Father Peter Orfanakos explains the request for letters of politicians for the centennial album of his parish as follows:

The album is a snapshot in history. It is important to understand, regarding the church, that the church isn't necessarily insular. [...] When our parishioners come to participate in the liturgy, [they think] this is where we come to be armed and empowered with the tools to go into the world, to change the world. The politicians, on the national level may not know us, but all of the local ones know us. And so, it provides an opportunity, for us even, to recognize, this is the imprint that our parish is having on society.<sup>17</sup>

According to Father Orfanakos, the presence of a hierarch or a politician through their messages in celebrations of Greek American communities offers more visibility to the community. Father Orfanakos is very ambitious for his community. He wants his parish to not stay isolated but rather “having an imprint on society” and even more radical “to change the world.” The genre album incorporates all these efforts by the editor-priest to bestow a sociopolitical role to his parish.

The editors of all the albums throughout the almost 90 years of the sample show a neutrality in terms of politics and did not express any personal or political views. Albums are not the venues to express such statements. They have a celebratory character aiming to unite all members of different political affiliations. They focus mostly on local ethnic memory, while also respecting the current political situation they live in. They formally honor the American presidents and politicians with the same respect in which they honor their Greek counterparts. Thus, the ads from American politicians come from both parties. For example, the album printed in 1936 on the occasion of the ninth annual dinner dance of the St. Spyridon society at the Trianon Ballroom in Palos Heights, Illinois, has personal greetings from both Republican and Democrat politicians. These greetings must be correlated with the timing of the album's release, which occurred one week before the US Presidential elections; thus, they may have seen it as an immediate avenue to talk to potential voters (album 1936).<sup>18</sup>

## Narrating small histories

“Putting together this *small history* of our parish took a great deal of time and dedication. Our History Committee spent many hours interviewing people, translating, discussing what we should include, finding and collecting artifacts, and, literally, ‘basement diving.’” With these words, the History Committee, which was especially appointed for the centennial album at St. Spyridon in Palos Heights, Illinois, in 2018, explains the laborious multi-method research they conducted in order to represent in a “visual narrative” the 100-year-long historical facts of their parish (album 2018b: 89, emphasis my own).<sup>19</sup>

Community albums are undervalued sources of local histories. Moreover, they are testimonies of popular historiography on a small scale. Kostis Kourelis, in analyzing the Arcadia series of community books in America, argues that community books “fill an important gap in the relatively small production of local Greek American histories”, and they offer “local scholarship that has not been fully realized” (Kourelis 2019). Albums produced by churches include essays which proudly present the history of their Greek parish on American soil, whereas albums by regional associations include historical narratives about their village or island in Greece. Today, several of those groups keep websites on the internet with historical information and archival records. The historical texts in the albums differ in use of language. The language (Greek, English, or bilingual) varies, some are copied from previous publications (Kaliambou 2016: 434–38). With few exceptions written by scholars (Prevas 1982, Skedros 2005), the majority of the historical documentation is prepared by members of the communities, often anonymous.

The “small history” (as album editors baptize it) refers either to the old home of origin or to the newly established community. The larger historical context related to Greece and/or America, to which these small histories belong, is absent. This type of segmented historiography correlates with the “segmented identities” immigrants experience in the diaspora. Diasporic communities do not have one identity but are instead subject to “segmented identities” such as regional, national, and ethnic identities (see Chryssanthopoulou 2018: 139). They first associate themselves with their small region of origin, then understand themselves as citizens of Greece, and finally identify themselves as belonging to their ethnic group in America. In some cases, the small history, however, becomes exceptional; authors use rhetorical techniques by calling on the exceptional and unique character of their home of origin. For instance, superlatives such as “Syme [our island] is considered to be one of the most beautiful islands in Greece” (album 2015: 9), strengthen the pride of the immigrants. Though their first homeland is small, they deem their island to be the best island in all of Greece.

Besides historical essays, albums include registers, another underestimated source of useful historical information. Creating a register requires meticulous research by the editors. A list is a type of discourse, which resembles orality. Marija Dalbello in her research on Croatian almanacs in the diaspora argues that lists are more than simple lists, rather that they belong not only



to cognitive patterns (such as mnemonic techniques), but also are modes of communication, as they transform orality into writing (Dalbello 1999: 134 f.). Names are important. Lists in chronological or alphabetical order with names of priests, teachers, board members, presidents of the parish etc. aim to make known to the younger generation the role their ancestors had in the society and strengthen their belonging to the group.

The activities of the societies are also listed in chronological order. According to Dalbello, writing history in chronologies offers “a precept of history that is memorable” and “less open to dispute” (Dalbello 1999: 137–38). To mention one characteristic example, in the 2010 album for the centennial anniversary of the Telian society in America, a comprehensive appendix is printed with its most important activities since its establishment in 1910. The editors take the opportunity to explain the reasoning behind those listed activities:

The Society has a benevolent, philanthropic and patriotic character. Its main and primary objective is to help the island of birth Telos. At the same time [the society] is concerned about the compatriots and the wider problems related to Greece and the Greeks of the diaspora, and most particularly the problems that relate to the Dodecanese [the place of origin]. It occupies itself with the Youth and especially the *conservation of our cultural heritage in America*.

(album 2010, no page number, emphasis my own)

With this list, the editors advertise the activities of the society, inform the younger members about the vibrant actions and ideology of their forefathers, and aim to ignite this passion amongst the younger generation to keep the traditions alive. This fragmentary historical knowledge put into the new context of the community’s album provides stability for the members and promotes continuity for the future (see Pelz and Windsperger 2015).

Historical essays are an indispensable part of the community albums because, according to the intentions of the producers, albums are essential tools not only to educate their members about their history but more importantly to convince the younger generations to continue immersing themselves in their communities.

Let our albums serve for the younger generations *as a source of our initial aims*, so that when they will take over, they will continue the work of our societies. ... You [new generation] are asked to take the steer of our Societies and drive them to the safe haven in order to fulfill the aim based on which we founded them.

(album 1947, no page number, emphasis my own)

With these words, the board members of the 1947 album recognize that their publication had the power of a historical backdrop, which serves as an important component for the perpetuation of the community. The album becomes the medium for indoctrination of the younger generations and

their preparation to take the lead in order to continue the existence of the community. As Yiorgos Anagnostou demonstrated, ethnic communities use those specific historical narratives that support their ethnic identity. According to Anagnostou, Greek America makes selective choices of “usable pasts” (Anagnostou 2009) which support the coherence of the community and the resilient keeping of year-long traditions and memories.

Albums published by Greek Orthodox churches narrate the history of their parishes while also acknowledging the importance the church has to the personal lives of the community members. “The church became, for the new arrivals from Greece, not only a place of worship, but also a place of fellowship for the families” (album 2018b: 216), testifies one parishioner. It is the place where immigrants can speak their mother language while socializing with other Greeks. Patrinos believes that the liturgical services support immigrants from “emotional deprivation and mental derangement” (Patrinos 1982: 124f.). Moreover, churches overtook the important role of teaching Greek language and culture to the children, an important task to preserve the Greek national identity in America (see Kitroeff 2020: 24–6, 44–6). The community around the church functions as a surrogate of the old home.

Additionally, the historical accounts in the albums venerate the significance Greek churches had for the first settlers, as the example of the 2004 centennial album of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in the Bay Area of California clearly demonstrates:

It brings to you much of the 100-year history of the Holy Trinity community. It refreshes the memory of the older and informs the middle and the younger generation of *the real meaning and the value of this particular church to the early Greek American settlers* in the Bay Area.  
(album 2004: 4, emphasis my own)

The albums try to keep these memories alive, while teaching and indoctrinating the young generations to honor their ancestors and love their new church home. It is important for the historical self-awareness of the younger generation to know that their church community has “meaning and value” not only for the first Greek immigrants in the area but for them as well. As the first settlers found their new home in the parish, similarly the young generations can continue this tradition of being active members of the community.

### **Illustrating the American Dream**

Albums offer a venue for the members of the community to express their creativity. Since the first decades of the twentieth century, Greek immigrants, despite the fact that the majority of them had received a meager education, experimented with literature and art to narrate their hardships in the new home and express nostalgia toward their old home. Albums serve as an open floor for immigrants to publish their creative writings and feature short stories, personal narratives, or poems written by their community

members. The authors of those texts often remain anonymous; even if their names are printed, there is no further information about them.

Folklore was one of the standard items in the albums. With one of the main objectives of the albums being to teach and preserve the heritage of the old home of origin, folklore became an indispensable and helpful tool to keep their ethnicity connected with its traditions. “Disappearing Customs” is the characteristic title of an essay included in the 1931 album by the Andros society in New York (album 1931: 8–10). The committee of the album announced as honorary president of the society a prolific scholar of the island of Andros, Dimitrios P. Paschalis. From all the extensive written work by the honoree, the committee decided to print one essay about folklife at home and the customs and superstitions that are threatened to disappear from the island. Paschalis, the author, moved by this honor, in his acceptance letter to the community wishes that the members “hold the flag of the ideals high” (album 1931: 6) (Figure 3.2).

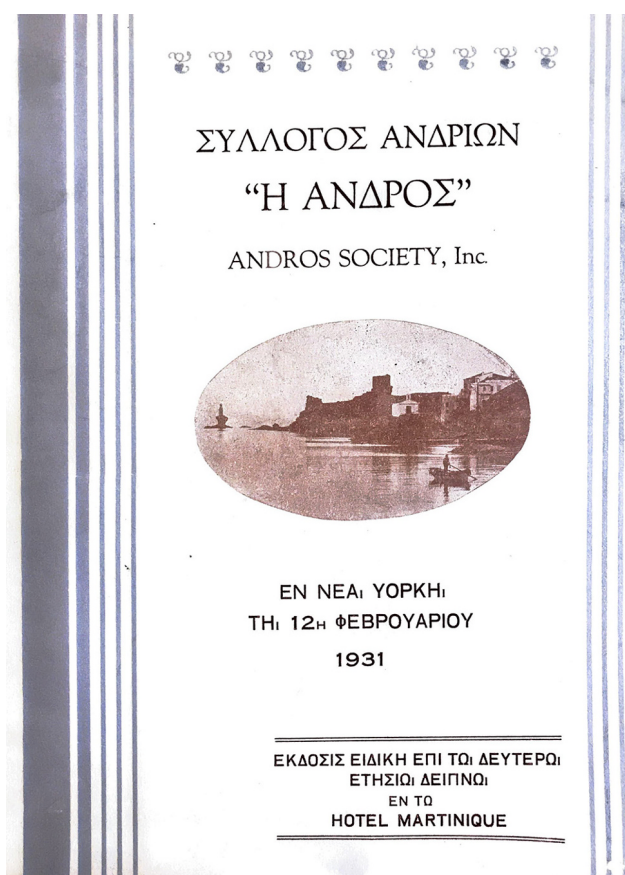


Figure 3.2 Andros Society, New York 1931.

Source: Kaireios Library, Andros, Greece.

Oral genres, such as folksongs, (particularly those referring to the pain of leaving the original home behind), improvised rhymes, proverbs, and folk stories find their place in the albums. Interestingly, there are folk texts that satirize everyday life in America and that challenge the myth of the successful immigrant. For example, the two-line improvised folk rime by the immigrant Yiannis Roussetos, who returned back to his island in Greece, Nisyros, describes his disappointment and frustration in America: “I went to America which was praised to me, / They gave me beans to eat and those were stinking” (album 1988a: 49). These examples which satirize the dream of the promised well-being constitute only one small minority among the other texts, thus, consequently do not bear any weight in the publications. As mentioned earlier, albums have a celebratory character, and these entries would not fit into the bigger picture of a well-functioning community.

The vast majority of the printed texts in all albums praise the struggles followed by successes Greek Americans had in their new home. A distinct literature genre in the albums, which helped to support this narrative of the success, is the short biographies of community members. Laliotou argues that “life story-telling itself is an essential part of the experience of being a migrant, a practice of migration. In an effort to preserve memory, migrants produce many of these stories, either in written or in oral form” (Laliotou 2004: 147). Biographies distinguish themselves from the other narratives in the albums because they offer a more personal literary touch, describing the experiences of the transition from the first home to the new one. These personal narratives are always embellished with one or more family photos. The combination of the visuals with the textual elements is crucial in order to complement the narration of these personal stories.<sup>20</sup>

One typical category of short biographical notes is the category with the dedication “in loving memory” (as their title states) for departed beloved people. These memorial pages serve as another way to honor the dead family member.<sup>21</sup> In one page, they include a photograph, a customary greeting, and in several cases information about the life of the departed. Photographs of the departed unite their community in grieving loved ones. Naguib, who manifested the emotional sorrow Armenian family albums have on their diaspora, agrees that “photography manifests bereavement as an activity, ‘a performance’ of grief” (Naguib 2008: 243). These memorial pages are direct sources of information about the personal lives in their first home in Greece, their difficult journey to America, their adjustment to the new home, and their contributions to the community. The album of 2015 Stella Economou, remembering and honoring her mother Sevasti, narrates the dire childhood of her mother in Greece during World War II in the small island Syme, followed by her trip to America to wed her husband. She talks about the hardships and tragedies of her mother with her children and her struggles to survive in America. She concludes her biographical notice by adding that she was “incredibly resilient, courageous and [of] noble spirit” (album 2015: 69). With this accompanied information, relatives find their own emotional way to speak enthusiastically about their families, share

their honor of their heritage, praise the accomplishments of the departed, and set an example for the future generations. These short biographies serve simultaneously as an alternative community archive.

Autobiographies written directly by the members are to be found sporadically. However, the centennial album of the Saint Spyridon Hellenic Orthodox Church is a unique example, which includes approximately 100 stories of community families.<sup>22</sup> The editor of the volume, Kathy Korbakes, whom I had the opportunity to interview, had a catalytic role in creating this special community archive of individual stories. She intentionally rejected the idea of including advertisements in the album. She did not want “flashy ads”, because, she argued, “ads are passe” and there are other ways to advertise something in a more subtle and professional manner. “I wanted the restaurant to tell us a story, not their ad” (personal interview, August 20, 2020). Her vision was to have a coffee table book, which will stay for the next generations, so that the younger will read and learn the stories of their families. She and the rest of the editorial committee “had to sell” this idea to the parishioners who expressed some skepticism. However, at the end, the community embraced this endeavor and sent their stories and personal photographs, resulting in the well-documented album that was produced. Both old members of the community as well as new parishioners contributed their stories and images. The stories in this centennial album narrate the move between the two homes. Besides providing information about their family tree, parishioners talk about their journey from the original home in Greece to the new one in America, their establishment in the new environment, and their involvement with the community (Figure 3.3).

The biographies particularly of older members of the parish showcase the industrious immigrant who moves upward socially, who struggles but succeeds because his labor and hard work are rewarded. These stories perpetuate the myth of the American dream:

The American Dream became a reality for Pete and Sophia as they saved up enough money to help send both of their sons to gain a college education. ... From the beginning as they struggled and succeeded to build a new life in America, the Kolyvas Family kept their church and faith in God at the center in their lives

(album 2018b: 197)

writes one of the parish members. Their new American home could fulfill their dreams of a better life. The same stereotypical fixation to the American Dream shows through in other albums as well: “Both worked hard and succeeded to live to the fullest the American Dream and they gave the opportunity to their children to have a remarkable professional career” (album 2019b: 19). Achievements carry meaning not for one single person but for all members of the community. These individual successful stories belong to the larger social network of the whole community. Individual success becomes communal success.<sup>23</sup> This representation of established immigrants in the



Figure 3.3 Saint Spyridon Hellenic Orthodox Church 1917–2017. Generations of Faith and Tradition. Palos Heights, Illinois, 2018.

albums belongs to the “wider collective narrative, namely the formation of a *Greek American* identity as family-centered morality, labor intensity, entrepreneurialism, and model American citizenship” (Anagnostou forthcoming).

The dream of a better life in the new home is also visually captured in the albums. The centennial album of the Symean society in 2015 offers a captivating example where photographs from both homes are starkly contrasted next to each other. On the left page, ten old black and white photos from the Greek island Syme are collaged together evoking a romantic yet difficult life. The reader is confronted with reminiscences of an old life: views from the island, young men toasting their glasses in front of the camera, women and families posing in front of the lens, scenes of religious customs, and the small narrow port crowded with people. In a striking contrast, on the right side of the album, colored photos of the island’s community in America depict their joyful moments in the new home. Photographs are taken in celebratory events, dinner dances of the community, where people sit together while drinking and laughing, or dancing in traditional costumes. A blissful community life is visually implied in the images of the new home. The caption itself “From Syme to America” (album 2015: 26, 27) functions not only as an indicator of the journey from the old to the new home, but also and more importantly, it implies the strikingly different lives in those homes. These photographs mediate

visually the existential paradox of the immigrants: the first home remains the beloved one, yet, the second proves to be better since it provides the dreamed happiness.

### **Family photographs**

Besides portraits of deceased or individual persons, albums also include family photographs. These are a valuable source for the documentation of the lives of immigrants. Steve Frangos argues that “the precise role and social function of photography in Greek-American life has never been systematically studied” (Frangos 2004: 40). Frangos, in his research about Greeks in the Michigan area, explains that the photographs held in households by Greek Americans demonstrate family unity, the adjustments Greek families had to go through in their new environment, the unknown habits and customs of the new home, and the conflicts between older and younger generations. According to Frangos, family photographs are a medium to remember and narrate (Frangos 2001).<sup>24</sup> Families can sit together for hours and recall moments of their history. Similarly, Musleh-Motut notes that album photographs by Palestinian immigrants to Canada are “an instrument of social and oral performance” (Musleh-Motut 2015: 308).

Albums are abundant with photographic portraits of immigrants. Kroes, in his work on immigrant’s photography in America, notes that these photographs serve as a substitute for portraits; they are for poor people who could not afford painted portraits. They could have this relative luxury of having their picture taken, but also enjoyed the technical amenities of modern America (Kroes 2015: 79). Additionally, immigrants send their personal photos to their families back home. Almost every Greek household has photographs of beloved immigrants. According to Meraklis, Greek Americans taught the Greeks in Greece the love for photographs. “The albums and photo archives in Greek families till the second world war, consisted mostly of photos by relatives in America, photographed inside or outside their homes in front of their cars, at their holidays etc.” (Meraklis 2003: 410). Their captions vary from simple naming the individuals to longer comments.<sup>25</sup>

The style of the photographs changes throughout the decades from formal photographs to spontaneous images. Photographs from early albums (from the 1930s until the 1950s) are being captured in studios and depict family members sitting or standing next to each other in formal settings. They respond to stereotypical images of the family particularly in America. As Marianne Hirsch argues, “When we photograph ourselves in a familial setting, we do not do so in a vacuum; we respond to dominant mythologies of family life, to conceptions we have inherited, to images we see on television, in advertising, in film” (Hirsch 1999: xvi). Photographs from albums in the 1960s through the last album of the sample in 2019 demonstrate informality and spontaneity. Characteristically, a recurring pattern particularly in the recent albums of the last decade, are photographs with cheerful moments: young couples, parents, grandparents, or children look at the photographic

lens smiling and laughing. There are also few images picturing members in folk costumes while performing traditional dances. Meraklis observes that Greek Americans usually smile in the pictures, while the Greeks at the same time stand serious in front of the photographic lens (Meraklis 2003: 410). Yiorgos Anagnostou suggests that there should be more research about the laughing Greek America (Anagnostou forthcoming). Indeed, what are these cheerful moments mediating about the actual life of those people in their new home if not only one snapshot of one particular moment? These newer photographic accompaniments reproduce the idea of a happy life in the American home. In fact, they create an imagined community of celebratory characters in print. As Dalbello commented on the Croatian almanacs in the diaspora, these community prints create “a vision of the community which is literally ‘imagined’ in print because these individuals may not know each other from face-to-face interaction” (Dalbello 1999: 214).

All albums (except one) include advertisements.<sup>26</sup> The revenues of the advertisements cover the costs of the albums and function as fundraiser for the community. They are one-page (or smaller) entries with a standardized simple message, such as “Congratulations and Best Wishes.” An example of a longer ad text demonstrates the collaborative attitude of the members and their happiness about the success of their community, while honoring the previous generations who worked tirelessly for the longevity of the community:

We wish our association to become one thousand years old, and all the Telians in America to be united, prosperous and happy. Congratulations to all who have contributed to the preservation of the one hundred years of our historic association. Be all well.

(album 2010, no page number)

The advertisements are a source of socioeconomic information of the greater community. The contributors (individuals, businesses, or societies) encompass a huge variety of professionals: attorneys, physicians, pharmacists, dentists, travel agents, investors, bankers, restaurant owners, plumbers, spa salons, and many others offered their ads. All of those constitute a “community of supporters” which also promotes and demonstrates the spread of the album into the greater community (Dalbello 1999: 195, 203). Often, these advertisement pages bear personal photos of the advertiser’s family or company. Kalogeras argues that “the photographs are indicators of the bourgeois upward mobility of the ethnic community. Such photographs argue for an idealized state of wish fulfillment of the immigrant” (Kalogeras 2011: 159). Similarly, these glossy ad pages with images imply the well-being of the Greek communities, the breadth of occupations, and the industriousness of Greek Americans.

## Conclusions

The chapter examined the genre of the albums published by Greek American communities spread out in the United States. The material, spanning almost 90



years (1931–2019), shows its resilience throughout the twentieth century and continues to be one standard publication by local parishes or regional associations.

Albums highlight the celebratory moments of the community life, such as anniversaries or annual festivities, where the whole community comes together to celebrate. The album genre is distinguished by the fact that it constitutes a community production. Albums are testimonies of the coherence, teamwork, and networking of the community members, who, by writing texts, short biographies, or sending advertisements demonstrate their commitment and their direct support to their community. The community offers to the new members a surrogate home: “As an immigrant myself, I am so proud to be part of this great community and find a new home at Holy Trinity”, writes George Mourizakis, the Parish Council President of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut (album 2014: 27). Albums become therefore the vehicle for the members to show their personal attachment and express their gratitude to the community.

The notion of home is integral to all albums. Both homes, Greece and America, are textually and visually represented in them. Images of homes parade in their pages, thus, creating a virtual connection between the new and old home. Whereas the first Greek home is described with nostalgia, its counterpart new American home is illustrated as a place of euphoria. According to the grand narrative of the American Dream, the new home in the albums is the place where hard workers but successful immigrants live.

Albums, even if many of them are destined to be ephemeral, are a neglected source for the history and cultural life of the communities. With historical texts written mostly by community members, albums enliven memories and strengthen the feeling of belonging. Additionally, they want to instill to the younger generations the love for their Greek heritage. Albums function as an heirloom for the next generations and are a source of collective pride for the community, which needs to be perpetuated.

“Let the community live hundred more years” is the standard wish in the centennial albums expressed by the community members. Together, with the community, let’s wish that the albums also continue to be printed to accompany the lives of the immigrants and remind them of and preserve the connection between their two homes.

## Notes

- 1 This album was the second album of this Greek American society. Their first album was published a few years earlier in 1943.
- 2 “All Otheitai [people from the same Greek village] from America and Africa are called to offer their strong material and moral powers for the fastest and safest fulfillment of our holy ideals of our Societies”, namely to provide financial support to their village (Album 1947, no page number).
- 3 This type of publication is also known in other ethnic groups in America, as well as in Greek associations within Greece.
- 4 Only the centennial album 2018b by the St. Spyridon Parish in Palos Heights, Illinois, after a conscious decision by the editor differentiates in the structure by not printing any personal advertisements at all.

- 5 In my sample the Andros Society is represented by the albums of the years 1931, 1951, 1979, and 2019a.
- 6 Steve Frangos who examined the Greeks in the Michigan area found similar types of church albums (Frangos 2004: 67).
- 7 The *Karpathian Heritage* album, released in 1978 by the Karpathian Federation, is also registered at the Library of Congress with a Library of Congress Catalog Card Number. It is a multipage album (total 452 pages) with a hard cover and shiny glossy pages. It consists of four parts including the history of the community in America, the history and literature of the community's home island, biographies of various donors, and honorable mentions of deceased members (album 1978a).
- 8 I had the opportunity to interview two editors (Father Peter Orfanakos for the album 2019a and Ms. Kathy Korbakes for the album 2018b) in order to understand the process of the production and dissemination of the publications. I also participated in the ceremonial festival dinners of two parishes in Connecticut where the albums were delivered.
- 9 More than 50 albums are catalogued in the Tsakopoulos Hellenic collection at California State University at Sacramento. Also, the Graduate Theological Union library in Berkeley, California, contains around 50 church albums by Greek Orthodox communities. I would like to thank George Paganelis, curator of the Tsakopoulos Hellenic collection, for his help in locating those albums.
- 10 A characteristic example is the Kaireios library on the island Andros which holds a considerable number of albums of their immigrant communities in America. This library demonstrates the circulation of the albums from the hands of the Greek Americans back to their ancestral home. From Kaireios library, I was able to source six albums (albums 1931, which is the oldest of the sample, 1951, 1979, 1989, 1991a, and 2019b).
- 11 I would like to thank the following individuals who generously offered me their material: Manolis Cassotis, Terry Kastanis, Kathy Korbakes, Vasileia Kourti-Kazoulis, Nikolaos Sfakianos, and Angeliki Tsiotinou.
- 12 Between the years 1870–1924, around one half million Greeks entered the United States (Moskos & Moskos, 2014: 13).
- 13 Father Orfanakos invested a huge amount of personal labor for this outstanding album: he wrote several texts; he chose old photos after having checked more than 20,000 pictures from previous albums and personal archives; he did the layout; he was responsible for the fundraising to support the cost of the album and for the completion of the project. Basically, he conducted an excellent research job for the community of St. Barbara, Connecticut (personal interview with Fr. Peter Orfanakos).
- 14 As mentioned earlier, the albums of the Andros Society in New York are sent to the Kaireios library to their island of origin in Greece.
- 15 The Archbishop Chrysostom in Athens congratulates “those who conceived the idea of this anniversary, because it should not be unnoticed the fact of the completion of forty years from the foundation of the community in Chicago. This community was the pioneer in the development of the Greek Hellenism in the welcoming country of the United States, was a paradigm for the other communities, and supported all the Greeks very much who searched shelter in the big city of Chicago. Moreover, the Greek community in Chicago always represented worthily the Greek name in front of the civilized world of the United States of America and was among them a bright corner of the Greek culture” (album 1937: 5).
- 16 Comments by George Iliopoulos, General Consul of Greece in New York (album 2015: 4).
- 17 Personal interview with Fr. Peter Orfanakos, priest at St. Barbara, Orange, Connecticut.

- 18 See comments by Peter Korbakes about the presentation of all political parties (album 2018b: 55).
- 19 In this album, the Chair of the History Committee, Peter Korbakes, has the training on how to conduct historical research, may not be the case for the majority of the other albums.
- 20 The concept "imagetext" by Marianne Hirsch is useful to help understand the complementary role of visuals and texts. Hirsch suggests bypassing the binary opposition text versus image. She argues that "all family photographs are composite, heterogeneous media, 'imagetexts': visual texts, that is, whose readings are narrative and contextual but which also, in some ways, resist and circumvent narration" (Hirsch 1997: 271).
- 21 According to Greek Orthodox tradition, people remember the departed by conducting several memorial services throughout the years, followed by customary traditions such as food, dressing code, laments, etc.
- 22 The actual celebration of the centennial anniversary was in November 2017; however, the album was published later in October 2018, because the editors wanted to include the visual testimonies from their milestone celebration of their community in the album.
- 23 Similarly, Chryssanthopoulou in her ethnographic work on the religious ritual of the Epiphany by Greek Americans in Tarpon Spring, Florida, has shown that young men, who participate in the diving competition, perceive their victory as communal rather than individual. Young men are embedded in familial relationships through which they perceive their heritage as unique (2018: 134, 135).
- 24 Frangos has conducted ethnographic work in collecting narratives by immigrants who talked about their past by looking at old photographs.
- 25 Kroes, working mostly on photographs of Dutch immigrants in America, notices that captions of the individual photos (such as "in front of the house we built") can be telling for their achievements and acquiring of higher status (Kroes 2015: 86).
- 26 As mentioned earlier, the editor of the 2018b centennial album of St. Spyridon intentionally rejected advertisements in order to include personal stories by the community members.

## References

### *Primary sources*

(Albums are listed in chronological order. The two authored publications follow in alphabetical order.)

- 1931 Andros Society, Inc. New York, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1931. Special edition for the second annual dinner in Hotel Martinique. New York City: Press Parthenon.
- 1936 Souvenir Program of the 9th Annual Dance Given by the St. Spyridon Educational Society for the Benefit of St. Spyridon Community Church. Wednesday, October 28, 1936, at the Trianon Ballroom: Roy F. Roberts, Printing. [Palos Heights, Illinois].
- 1937 Forty Years of Greek Life in Chicago. 1897-1937. Souvenir Album printed on the occasion of the celebrations of the forty years of Holy Trinity 1897-1937.
- 1947 Souvenir Album. Published Jointly by the Karpathian Otheton Educational Society of America "Homer" and the Otheton Association "Episkopi" of S. Rhodesia, Africa. Youngstown, Ohio: Sun Printing Company.
- 1949 22nd Annual Convention of the Pan-Rhodian Society of America "Apollon" under the auspices of Lodge No. 4 Baltimore, MD. July 1-2-3-4, 1949, Lord Baltimore Hotel.

- 1951 Andros Society. Sunday, March 11, 1951. Hotel Astor New York. [New York]
- 1956 Greek Orthodox Community, 600-614 Alhambra Blvd, Sacramento, California. The Consecration of the Church and the First Clergy-Laity Congress of the IV Diocesan District, May 9 to 13, 1956.
- 1958 Thirtieth Anniversary 1928-1958. St. Spiridon's Orthodox Church. [Palos Heights, Illinois].
- 1965 Golden, 50th Anniversary Album 1915-1965. St. George Greek Orthodox Church, New Britain, Connecticut.
- 1969 A History... Greek Orthodox Community of Saint Barbara, New Haven, Connecticut, 1919-1969.
- 1978a Karpathian Heritage. Federation of Karpathian Societies of America, Inc. New York.
- 1978b Fifty Years of Greek Orthodox Life 1928-1978. Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church, Palos Heights, Illinois.
- 1979 Andros Society Inc. 1929-1979. 50th Anniversary. Saturday, March 24, 1979. Crystal Palace, Astoria, New York. [New York].
- 1982a The First Fifty Years. "Saints Anargyroi" Voladians of Karpathos. Fiftieth Anniversary 1982.
- 1982b 1932-1982. November 7, 1982, Westmount Country Club, W. Paterson, N.J. Karpathian Society of Aperitans Omonoia - 50th anniversary dance.
- 1983 80 Years of Nisyrian Community Activities "Omiros, Porfyris, Gnomagoras", 1903-1983. New York: Hellenic Printing Company, Astoria.
- 1988a 85 Years of Nissyrian Community Activities "Homer, Porfyris, Gnomagoras" 1903-1988. New York: Hellenic Printing Company, Astoria.
- 1988b St. Spyridon Celebrating Its Sixtieth Anniversary 1928-1988. [Palos Heights, Illinois]
- 1989 Andros Society of Massachusetts. 14th Annual Entertainment Dance. Saturday, October 21, 1989. Greek Orthodox Church Taxiarchae, 25 Bigelow Avenue, Watertown, Massachusetts.
- 1991a Andros Society of Montreal. 23rd Annual Dance. Saturday November 9th, 1991. Greek Community Center. 5757 Wilderton Avenue, Montreal, Quebec.
- 1991b The Potidaion of Karpathos Island. A Historical and Cultural Visitation. New York: Poseidon Benevolent Society of Karpathos Inc.
- 1994 Diamond Jubilee. The Community of Saint Barbara 1919-1994. Consecration of the Church October 8-9, 1994.
- 1995 75th Anniversary 1920-1995. Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation Sacramento, California.
- 2001 Consecration and 75th Anniversary Album. Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption. Bayard, Nebraska.
- 2004 100th Anniversary Celebration. Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. Commemorative Album [Bay Area, California].
- 2010 Progress Society of Telos. 100th Anniversary (1910-2010). Annual Dinner Dance. Saturday February 27, 2010. New York.
- 2014 A Century of Faith: The First 100 Years of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church of Bridgeport, CT. Connecticut, USA: Vicky Andriotis.
- 2015 Symean Benevolent Society of New York. 100 Years celebration. Saturday, October 31, 2015. New York.
- 2018a Saint Basil Greek Orthodox Church. Our New Home in New Haven, 2018.
- 2018b Saint Spyridon Hellenic Orthodox Church 1917-2017 [Palos Heights, Illinois]. Dallas, TX: Balfour Publishing.

- 2019a Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Orange, Connecticut, 1919–2019. [Plus, a booklet of 36 pages which was published as addendum for the weekend of the celebrations, on September 28 and 29, 2019].
- 2019b Andros Society of USA, Inc. Est. 1929. The 89th Annual Dinner Dance. Saturday, April 6th, 2019. Terrace on the Park. Flushing Meadows, New York.
- Prevas, Nicholas (1982), *History of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Annunciation*. Baltimore, Maryland: John D. Lucas Printing Company.
- Skedros, Constantine J., and Greek Orthodox Church of Greater Salt Lake (2005), *100 Years of Faith and Fervor: A History of the Greek Orthodox Church Community of Greater Salt Lake City, Utah, 1905–2005*. 1st ed. Salt Lake City, Utah: Greek Orthodox Church of Greater Salt Lake.

### Secondary sources

- Anagnostou, Y. (2009), *Contours of white ethnicity: popular ethnography and the making of usable pasts in Greek America*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- Anagnostou, Y. (forthcoming), “Inclusions and Exclusions in Life Stories: Little Narratives, Grand Narratives, and Migrant Pasts”, *Modern Greek Studies* (Australia & New Zealand).
- Boyarin, J. ed, (1993), *The Ethnography of Reading*, Berkeley, California; London: University of California Press.
- Chryssanthopoulou, V. (2018), “Adolescent Initiation and Community Regeneration Celebrating the Epiphany among Greek-Americans in Tarpon Springs, Florida”, *Ethnologia Balkanica (Balkan Life Courses. Part 2. Kinship, Religion and Memory, Mobility and Identities)* 21: 119–41.
- Dalbello, M. (1999), *Croatian Diaspora Almanacs: A Historical and Cultural Analysis*, Dissertation Thesis, University of Toronto.
- Frangos, S. (2001), “Snapshots of Family and Friends”, *Greek American Review. A National Monthly Magazine* 52 (643):19–25.
- Frangos, S. (2004), *Greeks in Michigan, Discovering the peoples of Michigan*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.
- Gernes, T. S. (2001), “Recasting the Culture of Ephemeria”, in J. Trimbur (ed), *Popular Literacy. Studies in Cultural Practices and Poetics*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 107–27.
- Heimo, A. and K. Salmi-Niklander (2019), “Everyday Reading Cultures of Finnish Immigrant Communities”, *Participations Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 16 (1): 582–604.
- Hirsch, M., ed (1999), *The Familial Gaze*, Hanover and London: Dartmouth College. University Press of New England.
- Kaliambou, M. (2016), “Publications by Karpathian immigrants in America [in Greek]”, in M. Alexiadis, *Karpathos and Folklore. Fourth International Congress of Karpathian Folklore (Karpathos, May 8-12, 2013)*, *Proceedings*, Athens, 425–42.
- Kaliambou, M. (2020), “The First Schoolbooks for Greek American Children”, in F. Soumakis and T. Zervas (eds), *Educating Greek Americans. Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Pathways*, Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 41–70. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-39827-9
- Kalogeras, Y. (2011), “Retrieval and Invention: The Adaptation of Texts and the Narrativization of Photographs in Films on Immigration”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 29 (2):153–70.

- Kitroeff, A. (2020), *The Greek Orthodox Church in America. A Modern History*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kourelis, K. (2019), "Greek America in the *Images of America* Series", *Ergon: Greek American Arts and Letters*. <https://ergon.scienzine.com/article/books/greek-america-in-the-images-of-america-series> [Accessed November 2, 2019.]
- Kroes, R. (2015), "Virtual Communities of Intimacy. Photography and Immigration", in Z. Ban and H. Turai (eds), *Exposed Memories. Family Pictures in Private and Collective Memory*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 77–87.
- Laliotou, I. (2004), *Transatlantic Subjects: Acts of Migration and Cultures of Transnationalism Between Greece and America*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Meraklis, M. (2003), 'Albums of Karpathian Immigrants [in Greek]', in M. Alexiadis (ed), *Karpathos and Folklore. B' International Conference on Karpathian Folklore (Karpathos, September 26-29, 2001), Proceedings*, Athens, 405–14.
- Moskos, P. C. and C. C. Moskos (2014), *Greek Americans. Struggle and Success*, Third Edition, New Brunswick and London (UK): Transaction Publishers.
- Musleh-Motut, N. (2015), "From Palestine to the Canadian Diaspora", *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 8: 307–26.
- Naguib, N. (2008), "Storytelling: Armenian Family Albums in the Diaspora", *Visual Anthropology* 21: 231–44.
- Patrinacos, N. D. (1982), "The Role of the Church in the Evolving Greek American Community", in H.J. Psomiades and A. Scourby (eds), *The Greek American Community in Transition*, New York: Pella, 123–36.
- Pelz, A. and M. Windsperger (2015), "Constituting Transareal Convivence via Portable Collection Books: Home and Belonging in Times of Uprootedness and Increased Mobility", in F. Kläger and K. Stierstorfer (eds), *Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 265–78.
- Saloutos, T. (1967), *The Greeks in America; a students' guide to localized history*, New York: Teachers College Press.