

Introduction

This issue of the *Journal of Modern Hellenism* is distinguished in two ways. We are announcing a new phase in our publishing history and our subject, the Greeks of Hollywood, is one that has been neglected in the ongoing scholarly canon.

The *Journal of Modern Hellenism* was launched in 1984 by Harry Psomiades of the Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of Queens College (City University of New York) and Nomikos Michael Vapori of Hellenic College. Each institution bore editorial responsibility for a journal that was “to reflect activities of both institutions in promoting scholarly work on the history, language, and institutions of the Greek people from the late Byzantine period to the present.” With various changing partners the journal remained under the editorial direction of Psomiades until his retirement in 2001. A new format was introduced with Number 19-20 (Winter 2002-2003) by Queens College and its two co-publishers at the time: Simon Fraser University (Canada) and the University of Missouri, St. Louis. With Number 27, the journal became an online publication which allowed it to become gratis while facilitating easy access by international readers. With our next issue, the *Journal of Modern Hellenism* will become a formal peer-review journal published by a consortium of Queens College, Simon Fraser University, and the California State University-Sacramento. The new, greatly expanded editorial board includes considerable international participation.

A major theme of the Greeks of Hollywood special issue now at hand is that Greek Americans have had an impact on American cinema out of proportion to their numbers, a phenomenon rarely noted. To better understand the Greek impact we have indicated some thematic parameters for future scholars to consider. To that end, we have asked our contributors to include as many mini-biographies and related data to their endnotes as possible to provide

springboards for future research. Finally, of course, we believe the essays in this issue offer new insights and contexts to films and filmmakers usually discussed separately, if at all.

A number of scholars have worked for a decade on establishing a filmography of all Hollywood films with Greek American characters and subject matter. In the first essay of this issue, Barbara Saltz discusses the merits of that project and its nature. My own use of that filmography follows as I trace the transformation of the Greek American image from negative to positive in the films of 1940-1963.

Three essays deal with Greek actors negotiating a place in Hollywood. Gerasimus Katsan writes of how Hollywood was never able to fully utilize the talents of Irene Papas. Stathis Giallelis offers a memoir of his own experiences of facing casting decisions plagued by ethnic stereotyping. Elaine Thomopoulos writes of the special road taken by Olympia Dukakis that has made her a mainstay of American cinema and theater.

Many behind-the-scenes filmmakers remain unheralded and barely known to people not engaged in film studies. Yiorgos Kalogeras provides an analysis of the novels and films of A. I. Bezzerides, which often have Greek American characters. Besserides's script for *Kiss Me Deadly* has been lauded by international critics and is generally considered a classic of its genre. Vicki James Yiannias reviews the work of Jack Pierce, Hermes Pan, Dean Tavoularis, Theoni Aldredge, Patricia Field, and Mary Zophres who have won a collective basketful of Oscars for makeup, set design, choreography, and costume design. Taso Lagos puts a spotlight on Alexander Pantages who invented the concept of the movie palace. The details of his life indicate how little we know about the significant number of Greeks who were and are film producers and theater owners.

Our final two essays spotlight two of America's most illustrious film directors: John Cassavetes and Elia Kazan. Vras Keralis starts with a personal encounter with Cassavetes, compares his work with that of Kazan, and focuses on what has distinguished Cassavetes as an outsider/insider Hollywood filmmaker. Geoffrey Jacques examines ongoing themes in the work of Kazan. His essay is distinguished with insights regarding films such as *Pinky* and *Gentleman's Agreement* which are now critically snubbed but were sensational thematic breakthroughs in their day.

With this issue, we have had tried to indicate a spectrum of issues and personalities relating to Greeks in Hollywood that have not been given their due. We, of course, are aware of the many filmmakers and films that also are deserving of greater attention. We look forward to a future definitive work that would include them all.

Dan Georgakas
Center for Byzantine
and Modern Greek Studies
Queens College, CUNY