

*AUSTRALIANS AND GREEKS: VOLUME III: THE LATER YEARS* BY HUGH GILCHRIST.  
SYDNEY: HALSTEAD PRESS, 2004; PP432 NOTES, APPENDICIES, BIBLIOGRAPHY,  
INDEX; CLOTHBOUND, \$49.95.

**H**ugh Gilchrist's *Australians and Greeks: the Latter Years* is the third and final volume in a remarkable trilogy. The origins of this enormous project can be traced back to Greece. As Australia's Ambassador in Athens in the later 1960s, Gilchrist was told the story of the Greek Countess, Diamantina Roma, wife of Sir George Bowen who was the first Governor of Queensland from 1859 to 1868, after whom the town of Roma and the Diamantina River are named. Fascinated by the links her story signified, he embarked on a research project that literally took over his life. The publication of this handsome volume brings to fruition thirty-five years of research in both countries into thousands of stories that lie behind the long association between Greece and Australia.

Volumes I and II have already earned Hugh Gilchrist critical praise and a special place within Australia's Greek community: he was the recipient of the Niki Award by the Australian Hellenic Council and the Cross of St Andrew from the Greek Orthodox Church of Australia. His success as a writer comes not just from dedication but from a talent for selecting material and a very readable style.

The third and final volume reveals in detail neglected aspects of Australian history. There are the Australian who fought for years in Greece behind Nazi lines; and Australia's leading role in the post-War diplomacy of Southeastern Europe, involving as it did people such as Dr H.V. Evatt and Prime Minister Chifley. Combined with 'official history' are intense and moving personal stories which will mean much to those who remember and to descendants of Greeks and Australians of those times.

Gilchrist's book intersects with a number of different types of history: Australian, Greek and 'official' history – as I've just mentioned – and oral history which has informed many of the stories he relates. But the work also connects strongly with public history.

Everyday forms of history-making have both transformed and challenged the academic discipline of history. The late Raphael Samuel, a founder of the *British History Workshop Journal*, proposed that 'history is not the prerogative of the historian, nor even, as postmodernism contends, a historian's "invention". It is, rather, a social form of knowledge; the work, in any given instance, of a thousand hands.' The writing of books based on thorough research is the most traditional mode of history but it can also constitute public history. And *Australians and Greeks* can certainly be seen as a work of public history. It is clearly the product 'of a thousand hands': there are almost 300 individual acknowledgements in the back of the book. Its engagement with the Greek community also links it to public arenas where history is prized.

*Australians and Greeks* is also an artefact of public history. An artefact is any object created with a view to subsequent use. And Gilchrist most definitely has his eye on the future in writing this and the other volumes.

Its first use relates to history and the community. The past, as we know, is inescapable; it is a vital part of our human existence. From it we derive our cultural identities, collective memories, social authority, mental maps, fond objects and special places. Every social group and movement – ethnic, green, black, nationalist, and so forth – creates its own history. These histories authenticate their stories and legitimate their world views and desires. They give communities a place in the sun. In the process, significant events, people, places and things become woven into individual and collective understandings of the past.

All this is true of this book. *Australians and Greeks* starts in 1939 just prior to the outbreak of World War II and finishes early in 1953 with the establishment of a full Greek diplomatic legation in Australia: there is a photograph on page 370 of Dimitrios Lambros, Minister of Greece, presenting his credentials to the Governor General, William McKell. The image and the time in which it was taken are significant: the resumption of migration from Greece, dealt with in chapter nineteen, and the extension of assisted passage to Greeks in 1952, marked the political and social rise of the Greek community in Australia. This trilogy, indeed, is in one way a product of this ascent.

A second 'use' of *Australians and Greeks* relates to its function as a documentary. It preserves within its pages images, memorabilia, original written sources, maps and other historical evidence for future generations. It also documents the beginnings of the ascent of the Greek community into mainstream society. Much of this involved 'generational change in occupations' which Gilchrist begins to chart in chapter twenty-four. Reflecting a hierarchy of parental aspirations for their children's professional futures, we see the offspring of Greek migrants moving, in small numbers at first, into

1. Medicine, dentistry and pharmacy
2. Law and accounting
3. Science, engineering and architecture (in that order)
4. Teaching and then into
5. Trade and industry.

This is reflected in the chronology at the beginning of the book. For example, in the entry for 1945, Gilchrist notes: 'Australian trade unions press Dr Evatt to urge for political reform in Greece... In Melbourne Anthony Shannos graduates in medicine.'

As an artefact, *Australians and Greeks* has a third use: as a work of reference. In his 'Epilog', Hugh Gilchrist quotes Samuel Johnson:

He who collects is laudably employed; for, though he exerts no great talents in the work, he facilitates the progress of others; and, by making that easy of attainment which is already written, may give some mind, more vigorous or more adventurous than his own, leisure for new thoughts and original designs. (p392)

The extensive appendices, exhaustive notes and sources, meticulous index, chronology and wealth of detail make this a very useful reference book. And Gilchrist has certainly been 'laudably employed' for the past thirty-five years. But he is far more than a collector. *Australians and Greeks* displays keen insights into the shared histories of these two nations and a fine sensibility to antipodean Greek aspirations and to Greek contributions to Australian society.

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