

The Image of Hellenism and Greekness in Australian Literature at the End of the Second Millennium

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RESUMÉ

Le fait de tracer un portrait des Grecs et de la culture grecque tel que présenté dans la littérature australienne ne constitue pas un phénomène nouveau bien qu'il s'agit principalement d'un phénomène de l'ère de l'après Guerre. Comme nous commençons le nouveau millénaire il est approprié d'examiner de travaux significatifs des auteurs Australiens contemporains afin de nous assurer de la forme que ce portrait revêt aujourd'hui. En laissant de côté des auteurs de la première ère et leurs travaux (cependant dignes de valeur), nous effectuerons une recherche d'un large éventail d'oeuvres récentes écrites par des auteurs Australiens, dans lesquelles la description variée de Grecs et de la culture grecque sera localisée et examinée. Une attention particulière sera donnée à de nouvelles approches et mentalités qui ensemble illustrent un nouveau développement, et qui à leur tour seront examinées dans leur contexte socio-culturel. Après tout, ces images et impressions extériorisées que contient le corpus de la littérature australienne sont celles que cette littérature transportera avec elle dans le siècle prochain, et qui, dans une certaine mesure, influenceront les perceptions et possiblement même les attitudes de ses lecteurs.

ABSTRACT

The portrayal in Australian literature of Greeks and Greek culture is not a new phenomenon, although it is basically one of the post-World War II era. As we begin the new millennium it is appropriate to examine relevant works of current Australian literary writing to ascertain the form which this portrayal takes today. Leaving aside earlier writers and their works (however worthy), an investigation will be made into a wide range of recent works by contemporary Australian writers, while the varying depictions of Greeks and Greek culture will be located and examined. Particular attention will be paid to new approaches and mentalities which together illustrate a new development, and which in turn will be discussed within its socio-cultural context. After all, these externalised images and impressions which the body of Australian literature contains are the ones which this literature will carry with it into the next century, and which, to some extent, will influence the perceptions and possibly even the attitudes of its reading public.

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1. Introduction

As we stand at the beginning of a new millennium, it is appropriate to review the achievements and knowledge of the past, and to assess and evaluate those developments which will be the basis on which our further scientific and intellectual growth will be founded.

Literature, by its very nature, is eminently predisposed to such assessment, for it is on the ideas, mentalities and trends in contemporary writing that the literature of the future arises. So, it is timely to review Australian literature, in this case the image of Greeks and Greek culture in contemporary Australian literary writing¹ as it has appeared from 1980 onwards.

The 1980s and 1990s have seen a change in the composition of the intake of immigrants to Australia as well as in the origins of a large proportion of them. This has contributed to the development of a community which is more accepting of, and more settled with, its immigrants, capable of showing a deeper understanding and tolerance, and which is altogether more cosmopolitan in its attitude and outlook. In turn, this new atmosphere has encouraged a re-reading of Australian culture and a maturing of the approach towards the writing of Australian literature. The outcome of this, which itself has been helped by the addition of many more writers of non-British-Australian backgrounds, has been the viewing and illustration of immigrants through the lens of a new mentality and viewpoint.

This change in mentality towards immigrants—and here towards a Greek immigrant in particular—is touchingly conveyed in the following passage from the short story "Evridiki's Dog" by James McQueen:

"A comic figure to us, of course; how else? We didn't even call them New Australians in those days; reffos, they were, and if their skins were a bit dark, then comical too.

Now, of course—so late—I can feel the enormous weight of her loneliness, the isolation of land and language and distance. A still-raw grief, perhaps, for her dead husband, a silent brooding image somewhere in that dim hot house, and her stoic endurance."²

It is a measure of the maturity of Australia that, notwithstanding the outdated views of small pockets of the population, it has reached this level of cosmopolitan outlook, for it is only a few decades ago that the Sydney newspaper *Daily Mirror* wrote "Australia needs Britons before misfits ... or second and third class human material"³, that immigrants were sometimes abused for speaking their own language in public, and that the official policy of assimilation, extending to the mid-1960s, expected immigrants to abandon their own culture and heritage. The prevalent attitude which influences our literary writers now, at the turn of the century, is markedly different to that of those earlier times.

Literature is a broad field, and, apart from fiction, poetry and drama, this study includes works such as travel accounts, biography, autobiography, and even food writing because they, too, belong to literature, and they also convey attitudes, conceptions and mentalities, but in a non-fictionalised form.

Another group of writings which has been included is that of children's literature, which is often overlooked in literary studies, perhaps because it is not considered "serious" literature.⁴ Writing for children, however, demands a special skill, talent and sensitivity; and, indeed, those writers of adult literature who can also successfully write for children are few. Moreover, this part of literature plays an important role in influencing the developing minds of its readers in their formative years and so in helping to shape the attitudes and mentalities which they will carry with them into their adult life.⁵ Therefore, the way in which Greeks and Greek culture are portrayed in children's literature helps to mould young people's impressions of Greeks, as well as their attitudes towards them as they grow. At the same time these works constitute stories with which Greek children in Australia can identify, and from which they can gain reassurance. For these reasons children's literature is particularly relevant to this investigation.

Conversely, the works of writers of Greek origin, whether immigrants or the children of immigrants, have been excluded, despite the fact that they are an integral part of Australian literature. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how Greeks are portrayed in their

works by Australian writers and writers from other immigrant groups, that is, how Greeks are viewed from the outside. Writers of Greek origin—born in Australia or elsewhere—to whatever degree they have adjusted to and adopted Australian behavioural patterns, perceptions and attitudes, are also influenced, to varying degrees, by the Greek element in their socialisation, and so can rarely place themselves completely on the outside of that group; intentionally or unintentionally, when they write about Greeks and Greek culture they will, to some extent, see with the eyes of the insider, and not with those of the outside Australian community.

2. Greek Characters in Australian Literature in the 1980s and 1990s.

2.1 Overview

A general survey of Australian literature from 1980 onwards⁶ reveals that Greeks and Greek culture feature mainly in prose fiction works, particularly children's books, sometimes in drama, but only occasionally in poetry.

The Greek characters portrayed, whether main or minor, are sometimes the hero, sometimes the villain, may be depicted in a way to elicit our respect, admiration or sympathy, or other times our revulsion. They are not all good—an approach which would be paternalistic—but neither are they all bad—a negative and unrealistic approach. In other words, there is neither idealisation nor condemnation.

The outcome of this is that the Greek community appears as comprising people of a broad spectrum of types (good and bad, clever and rather unintelligent, progressive and old-fashioned, socially integrated or unassimilated, etc.), with a wide range of attributes, personality traits and social backgrounds. Characters include males and females, adults and children, businessmen, policemen, detectives, psychiatrists, academics, shop owners, restaurateurs, factory workers, students, schoolchildren, gambling club owners, lawbreakers and simply family members. Undoubtedly, this is a much broader spectrum of Greeks than in the pre-1980 literary works, and more representative of the Greek community itself.

An exception should be made, however, for younger children's literature where, like people generally in this genre, Greeks are portrayed in a more uncomplicated way than perhaps is the norm in real life. In these works the Greeks are almost invariably nice, and even where one or two are the "villains" of the plot they reform in the end.⁷ Ultimately, almost everyone comes to like the Greeks—especially *yia yia* (grandma) which is significant, considering the educational and moral aspect of children's literature.

2.2 Personal Characteristics

Whatever the social role of the individual characters, certain personal characteristics appear frequently, allowing the proposition that in the Australian community of the 1980s and 1990s these were widely-held views of the Greek mentality. Most prominent of these are the ones which relate to close family bonds, family honour, and the strong sense of parental responsibility and ambition for children.

Marriages are depicted on the whole as strong (though sometimes based on a sense of duty rather than emotional attachment) and almost always, but not exclusively, between two Greeks.⁸ Parents, on the whole, are shown as responsible and caring but sometimes rigid in their views and over-authoritarian, while social ambition is often portrayed as a product not of ego but of responsibility for the family.

Immigration, too, is seen in terms of its anticipated benefits for the family, especially the children. Linked with this, Greeks are almost invariably characterised as working hard and with the family in mind, even if in some cases the work involved is not necessarily legitimate!

For individual family members, a strong pattern emerges. Fathers are presented as hard-working disciplinarians who often have rigid views about what is and what is not appropriate or acceptable for their Greek children and their wives. For example, in the humorous short story "Getting Married" by the Italian immigrant writer Ugo Rotellini, the Greek father objects to his son marrying a non-Greek in the following manner:

"In the Bekas household Yannis's father was yelling. 'These 'makaronades', these spaghetti people. They will not set foot in this house ever...."

This one decides to marry a foreigner. An Italian, by God! She's fat and dark and talks too much. You like fat dark women? There are plenty in Rhodes. I'll pay for your trip back. Stay as long as you like. Go and visit your uncles. I'll write to them and tell them to start looking.'

'She'll have to learn Greek you know. I'm not going to speak Italian to her for the rest of my life. It corrupts the brain.'

Mothers are hard-working too, take good care of the children, even to the extent of being over fussy, and have high ambitions for them. They want them to study hard, get a good job, marry well but to a Greek, and to provide them with grandchildren. Frequently depicted as more religious than the father, the conciliator in the family is often the mother, attempting to temper the husband's rigid views or engender in the children obedience to the father.

Children, in general, are also shown as having strong family bonds, with the sons in particular being very conscious of their responsibilities to the family. In particular in children's literature they are well brought up, polite and essentially nice.

Yiayia, who appears almost exclusively in children's literature, is depicted as an important figure and an important member of the family. She misses her homeland, sometimes to the point of extreme homesickness and feelings of uselessness in a foreign land where her skills and knowledge of such things as herbs and animals seem to have no place. Yet, invariably, she is warm, loving, generous and helpful towards neighbours and friends, as well as the family. Speaking very little English, strongly traditional in her ideas and dressed in black, she may at first appear strange or be a figure of fun to Australian children, but in the end they, too, always come to love her, perhaps because of her all-embracing love for children. In the family, she is a tower of strength, helping with the house and particularly with the children,

and, as the most religious member of the family, being primarily responsible for the maintenance of religious observations and traditions.

These family characters in literary works of the 1980s and 1990s can be compared with pre-1980 works, in some of which there are male characters, including husbands and fathers, who appear as into-lerant, domineering, bad-tempered and even violent (in one case disapproving of the wife working and forbidding her to wear make-up), and exploitative and rude as employers.¹⁰ Wives and mothers in these earlier works are often uneducated, ignorant and sometimes submissive and spineless. In one pre-1980 young adult novel in particular, the son, while being obedient to his parents, nevertheless displays an extremely chauvinistic attitude to women in general, and especially to mothers:

"A mother was someone soft, discreet and quiet; someone who waited at home, cooking and attending to the needs of her menfolk....her true worth lay in her ability to be a faithful and obedient wife and a devoted and hard-working mother."¹¹

Other aspects of personality are related to the homeland, expressed as a nostalgic view of the birthplace and longing for the family members left there, as well as the need to return or to be buried in the native land. Interestingly, this latter topic does not appear frequently, a phenomenon which is also seen in the Greek-language literature in Australia of the last two decades, this being a reflection of the changing mentality of Greek immigrants themselves who, on the whole, are happy to remain in Australia and visit Greece from time to time.

2.3 Social Characteristics

Social characteristics occur in a wide range of works covering both adult and children's fiction as well as biography, autobiography and food accounts.

Frequently encountered characteristics are those of a strong sense of friendship and hospitality, as well as a general atmosphere of joviality, gregariousness, vibrance and exuberance. These latter characteristics

are sometimes manifested in a general noisiness and love for the dramatic, as the following two quotations from a biography and a food account respectively demonstrate:

"The friend's little brother had been playing table-tennis with another small boy.

'It was incredible,' said Victoria. 'Every time he scored a point, he'd jump on the spot, yell, and then run around the room waving his arms wildly.'

'But of course,' I said.

She looked at me. 'All that energy down the drain—and think of how long it takes to finish the game!'

'I know,' I answered, 'but they love the drama of life, and they get the most of every moment.'

'H'm,' was the doubtful comment.

She will probably observe, as her stay in Greece lengthens, the way in which Greeks will create drama to fill a boring gap, to enliven dull routine."¹²

And in a more light-hearted vein:

"I used to go to this restaurant in Elizabeth Street across the road from the park. You'd climb up cement stairs, painted classroom green and scuffed, and on the second floor you'd pass a door that was blue.

It was always open and when you looked in thirty swarthy men looked back. Half of them were playing pool and shouting loudly, and the other half were playing cards and shouting loudly. As you passed they smiled at you and shouted loudly.

It was my first introduction to Greek men. From that day I have believed that Greek men hang around in rooms, drink black coffee and retsina, play pool and cards and shout loudly. It may be a racial stereotype but to me it sounds like a perfect life."¹³

The inclination towards card playing mentioned above appears quite frequently, as do references to gambling and a predisposition towards political debate. Another characteristic which is located frequently enough to conclude that it has made an impression on Australian writers is that of Greek business acumen, while, though appearing less frequently, some Greeks are shown to display poor taste in matters pertaining to dress,¹⁴ decoration of restaurants,¹⁵ etc. Finally, a strong picture emerges of the maintenance of religious and social customs, such as Easter celebrations, red eggs and dancing.

Interestingly, it is not always Greek males who are shown as being the successful ones, for female characters include, for example, a prominent psychiatrist and a tax inspector. The Greek community, on the other hand, can be seen as something of a threat to Greeks themselves. Not only is it tightly knit, which has its negative as well as its positive aspects, but it is regarded as a source of gossip and easy disapproval from which details of personal lives have to be concealed. Perhaps not aware of this side of Greek community life, some Australian characters exhibit a degree of resentment at being excluded from it.

A Greek enclave, however, is seen more humorously, as in the following few lines from the short story "Invitation to a Wedding" by award-winning author Peter Goldsworthy:

"Harry was living in Mile End, Adelaide, at the time. A lone ethnic Australian marooned in a Mediterranean Sea.

'Third largest Greek city in the world!' he told me once, his arm encompassing the street. 'After Athens—and Melbourne!'¹⁶

2.4 Inter-group Attitudes

Some Greek characters are portrayed as seeing Australia as shallow and Australians as unfriendly, bigoted and sometimes narrow-minded, but it is Australian women who come in for the most criticism, particularly from parents with sons.

On the other hand, some of the Australian characters regard Greeks as people who do not appreciate Australia and have not come here as

settlers. Rather, they maintain an attitude of superiority while simultaneously over-glorifying the homeland and being ethnically hypersensitive. Others exhibit a discriminatory attitude towards Greeks and in one case an Australian deputy headmaster is revealed to be a latent racist.¹⁷

In fact, negative images about each other were certainly held by both Greeks and Australians in the 1950s and 1960s, as research by David Cox shows.¹⁸ He found that Australians resented the congregation of Greeks in certain suburbs, their strong ethnic structures and lack of adaptation to Australian ways, while Greeks had strong reservations about Australians and their way of life, especially in relation to family life and relations between the two sexes. Some felt that Australians took advantage of their lack of English, and many held a negative stereotype of the working class, especially its students and adolescents.¹⁹

In most of the post-1980 literary works these stereotyped ideas have largely disappeared, but the fact that they do still appear from time to time strongly suggests that in both the Australian and the Greek communities these ideas, while no longer prevalent, still linger to some extent.

Indeed, research in the 1980s by Rado and Foster²⁰ shows that while there is a general acceptance of multiculturalism, some prejudices still remain between Australians and ethnic groups (at least regarding activities in the public arena), and between members of different ethnic groups, including Greeks.

The question of inter-ethnic prejudice as it relates to Greeks was demonstrated in the earlier quotation from the short story "Getting Married", where the Greek father demonstrated his prejudice against Italians. However, the Italian father in this story, Barone, displays his corresponding prejudice against Greeks and various aspects of Greek culture:

"His first reaction to Anna's declaration of love for a Greek had been an exaggerated and obvious pantomime. He just kept shaking his head, hitting the palm of his hand against his forehead and saying

nothing. After which he got up and walked out of the kitchen, only to return a few minutes later to finish his pasta ...

Barone turned to his wife, sitting opposite him, 'How many times did I say to your daughter, fall in love, okay? Fall in love with someone you like, certainly, but an Italian, preferably with class and definite possibilities. So she brings us Yannis. And what has this little twirp got going for him? This boy Yannis is not even an Australian.... A Greek! We fought them in the war. We kicked them out of Sicily. We spit at each other at soccer. They're not even Catholic.'²¹

It would, however, be erroneous to conclude from the above that negative opinions predominate, for other characters in the literature display positive attitudes such as an appreciation of the classics and the classical period of Athens, or of life in Greece today. Indeed, the general feeling in the majority of the works is one of acceptance of the Greeks and, depending on the story-line, a sincere liking for them and their lifestyle.

2.5 Aspects of Difference

2.5.1 Cultural Differences

The fact that Greek and Australian characters are portrayed, in the main, as possessing some set and almost stereotyped ideas about members of the other group demonstrates a strong awareness of cultural difference. While in some texts the differences are accepted and often appreciated, other texts illustrate that they can lead to misunderstanding.

So, in the children's book *Dim and Dusty* by Joan Dalglish, a *yiyia's* cultural perception of what is an appropriate physical build for a small boy does not cause the child in question any distress, but quite the contrary:

"Yaya brought Dim [Dimitri] to school for the next three mornings. She smiled at Dusty and always had a little surprise for him—first, a cake, then a few biscuits and a bag of home-made chocolate fudge.

‘Gosh, your grandmother is very kind, Dim,’ said Dusty as they shared the sweets.

‘Aha! It’s part of her plan.’

‘Plan?’

‘To fatten you up,’ Dim said between chews. ‘She says you are much too thin for a growing boy.’

‘Huh! I won’t be for much longer at this rate.’²²

Similarly, Gillian Bouras in her autobiography, *A Foreign Wife*, recalls a meeting of the two cultures—Australian and Greek—which brought a breaking-down of a stereotype held by one side and an appreciation of the different culture on the other:

“I was shy and hoped to discourage George by stipulating that he would have to meet my father before we could go to the pictures. He immediately thought that I was a very well-brought up girl.

‘Take me to your father,’ he demanded. ‘I will present myself to him.’

And he did. He was accompanied by his best friend. Both were dressed in their best suits, with white shirt-cuffs showing and cuff-links glittering. There were presents: a folder of picture postcards featuring Athenian scenes, a record of the sound track of *Zorba the Greek*, and a wall plaque of the *Discus Thrower*. My father, lounging about the house in tattered shorts, was stunned but jocular. My grandfather had his hand kissed for the first time in his life, received this mark of respect towards the elderly in lordly fashion, and pronounced both young men ‘gentlemen and scholars’ after five minutes’ acquaintance...

George had had the idea that all Australians were foul-mouthed, hard-drinking gamblers. It was apparently a great relief to meet my family, three generations of quietly-spoken, teetotal, stay-at-homes.”²³

In other cases, a meeting of the two cultures does not go so smoothly, as, for example, in the young adult play *The Heartbreak Kid*. Here,

when the family of a Greek boy, Nicky, wins Lotto, Nicky buys a shirt as a gift for his close friend, Steve, an Australian. But Nicky, expressing his friendship according to his own cultural pattern, does not know that Steve, in accordance with his particular cultural code, would feel that Nicky is being condescending. The end result is name-calling and a break in their friendship.²⁴ Of course, the opposite of this is that cultural difference can have its own attraction, as in Kerry Goldsworthy's short story "Teach Me to Dance":

"I loved him because he was a stranger. He was dark and different; he came from a foreign place, full of passion and history.... He was a man, and a Greek; he was another country."²⁵

2.5.2 Dislocation and Alienation

An outcome of cultural difference experienced by immigrants in the new land is undoubtedly social dislocation and alienation, feelings soon overcome by some, but persisting for years for others. Numerous novels and short stories contain this element as a main or minor theme. It is not a phenomenon experienced only by adults, who sometimes feel bewildered and useless in the alien environment,²⁶ for children, too, suffer. Various children's books relate the problems of settling into an alien education system or of being the strangers in the land which is now their home.²⁷ The young children's book *Yasou Nikki* by Wendy Orr demonstrates this social dislocation through the eyes of a child as she confronts her new surroundings:

"The train station was not like the airport; there were not very many people but all of them were tourists, talking with their sharp chit-chit-chatter....

'Why are there so many tourists here?' Nikoletta asked.

'They're not the tourists,' her mother said. 'This is where they live. In our new country, we're the tourists.'²⁸

2.5.3 Linguistic Problems

Social dislocation is exacerbated by lack of adequate knowledge of a language on all levels of communication (listening, understanding, speaking, reading and writing).

While it would be erroneous to think that all, or even the majority of, the Greek characters in contemporary Australian literature do not speak good English, nevertheless, to serve the writer's purpose, some characters are deliberately portrayed as facing linguistic difficulties.

The degree of difficulty with English ranges from those who do not speak the language at all (and consequently face enormous problems with day-to-day life in Australia) to those who speak a mixture of Greek and English on a lexical and/or morphological and syntactic level, and which naturally leads to problems. These problems can be slight misunderstandings or more serious ones, which result in a breakdown in communication.

In one work, the autobiographical short story "I Watch My Grandsons Grow in Another Language", the problems faced by the Greeks in Australia who do not speak English are met with particular empathy when the writer, Sue Chessbrough, finds herself in an analogous situation:

"As the flight left Sydney carrying me to Greece for Kris's marriage to Niko, the blackgarbed Greek grandmother seated beside me was a source of mild annoyance—prodding me into arranging her luggage.

Why didn't she learn to speak English, I muttered to myself. But my turn was to come. The boot is on the other foot now that I'm a foreign grandmother.... In Greece, I was on the other side, waiting for Kris to interpret conversations, to explain customs and superstitions passed down through the centuries.

'Why don't you learn to speak Greek?' they asked. I grappled with the strange tongue, making hilarious mistakes. I was a hopeless failure, but the people took me into their homes and hearts.... And I thought of the old Greek yiayia on the plane."²⁹

On one occasion a misconception by some Australians concerning Greeks speaking English comes through the words of a child:

"You know, you speak very good Australian for a Greek boy.'

Dim grinned. 'I was born in Australia. Why shouldn't I?'³⁰

Occasionally a Greek has difficulties with Australian names, but more often Australians have difficulty with Greek names, especially the long and, to them, unpronounceable ones ("That's what she called me. Mister Zed. She could never say Zaharopoulos"³¹). Other times the phonological similarity of certain Greek first names sound unusual to Australians ("Occasionally you'll meet Soula, Voula, Roula or Toula on Saturday morning at the delicatessen...."³²), while the continuation of names from Ancient Greek times into the present is a source of gentle humour. This is illustrated in the short story "Yes, Sir!" by the Estonian immigrant Leonid Trett where we find Australian characters with names such as Harry Stottle [Aristotle] and S.O. Crates [Socrates] leading to inevitable confusion. On the other hand, the main Greek character in the same text is called Polycrates Pythagoras, reduced to "Paul" by his workmates.³³

Not only are long Greek names difficult for some Australians to pronounce, but to most of them the Greek script is also completely baffling:

"On the next floor ... there was a restaurant which was called a lot of zeds on their side and some upside down Ns."³⁴

However, while authors intentionally use social situations and linguistic patterns to convey language difficulties on both sides, some of them have, quite unintentionally, and without their realising it, demonstrated in their texts their own lack of familiarity with Greek names. This has resulted in a tendency for phonological progressive assimilation such as Mr Mavropoulou instead of Mr Mavropoulos and Kostos instead of Kostas,³⁵ or has led to phonological interference as in the case of Karintonis instead of Karantonis. In one case, where the authors must have heard something which to them sounded like a Greek name, a young Greek male is called "Neos Kosmos"³⁶, actually the title of a Greek newspaper in Melbourne, which translates into "New World"!

In the linguistic area of signs and symbols, however, a striking image which elevates a Greek product to a status symbol is in a short story where a young Australian man drinks specifically *Andronicus* coffee

rather than any other brand to symbolise that he is a connoisseur with innate good taste!³⁷

3. Concluding Discussion

Based on the evidence provided by a wide range of texts, a comparison of contemporary Australian literary works with works written before 1980 shows that there has been a marked change in the proportion of works in which Greeks appear and also in the way they and their lives and culture are now portrayed.

Certainly Greek characters, whether important or minor ones, were sparse in works of the earlier period and appear much more frequently now. This is particularly noticeable in children's literature. Earlier works in this category which included any immigrant characters were infrequent and the characters themselves were stereotypes or oddities, with Greek characters being very rare. A change in content came in 1961 with the publication of *The Racketty Street Gang* by L.H. Evers.³⁸ Describing the life of a German immigrant family in inner Sydney, it was the first children's book to recognise the changing nature of Australia into a multicultural society.³⁹ Then in 1974 Nance Donkin wrote *A Friend for Petros*,⁴ a story about the social dislocation of a small Greek boy, and this book proved a turning point. From then onwards sympathetically written children's books about immigrants, including Greeks, increased. At the same time, of course, there were books retelling Ancient Greek stories or, especially from the second half of the 1970s, collections of stories from many lands, including Greece.⁴¹

By 1980 several children's works containing Greek characters had been written and today there are numerous such books, ranging through all intended reading age groups, either about Greeks or with Greeks featuring prominently in them.

Regarding the portrayal of Greeks in adult works from the earlier period, clearly there were more stereotypes present, especially negative ones. Even works which were basically sympathetic to Greeks and the problems they faced in Australia were frequently unable to escape this

tendency. One particular work which can be cited here is the novel, *The Young Wife*, by the Hungarian-born and much-travelled Jewish writer, David Martin, published in 1962.⁴² This novel, which was highly acclaimed at the time, makes powerful observations which reveal Martin's close familiarity with the problems of social and geographical dislocation and adjustment, and is certainly sympathetic towards Greeks and Greek Cypriots. Yet even this work does not escape the negative stereotypes of the submissive wife, the domineering, aggressive and even violent husband and the idea of extreme reprisals for perceived slights on the family honour, however unintended his use of stereotypes may have been.

Of course, it must be acknowledged that the pre-1980 Greek community in Australia, especially that of the 1950s and 1960s, was quite different to the Greek community of today. To some extent, the predominant portrayal then of first-generation Greek immigrants as often uneducated and displaying the traditional mentality and ideas of Greek village life, may not have been far from the truth, at least for a part of the community.

However, Australian literature on the whole seems to have missed significant changes in the composition of the Greek community which occurred in the late 1960s and, especially, in the 1970s. Greeks arriving in that period were largely better educated than their predecessors, and far more of them had urban rather than rural or island backgrounds. The much higher proportion of professional people which is a fact of Greek community life today, was already an increasing trend in the late 1960s and 1970s, but it is a trend of which the majority of Australian writers seem to have been unaware, and a large part of their writing conveyed the outdated conditions and ideas of the 1950s and early 1960s. In this respect, Australian literary writing of the late 1960s and especially of the 1970s, therefore, went through a stage of less accurately portraying the reality of the Greek community than in the following decades.

However, a special mention should be made of children's literature for younger readers which, compared with adult literature, appears to have

been more progressive in its outlook. While some story books which reinforced negative stereotypes still appeared in the 1970s, others such as *A Friend for Petros* and *Nini*⁴³, both by Nance Donkin, were ahead of the general trend in transmitting a warm and positive image of Greeks.

From 1980 onwards, a more realistic approach has been followed. There has been a marked waning of negative stereotype images and while the 1950s' conception of Greeks still appears, this is only sporadic and to a much smaller and less pointed degree. This, however, is not a totally inaccurate depiction because, as with all immigrant groups from the largest to the smallest, a proportion of its members has inevitably remained culturally static.

Certainly, the current depiction of Greeks reflects not only Greeks and the Greek community as they exist today, but also the Australian perception of them.

Finally, an important conclusion arising from my research is that while works written before the 1980s gave a reasonably accurate picture of the Greek community (with the exception of a number of works written in the late 1960s and the 1970s), what is missing from the latter works but present in those written in the post-1980 period is the approach that depicts Greeks as being—regardless of their cultural differences—an integral part of the Australian community.

The foibles of the Greeks are tolerated in the same way as the foibles of other Australians, their good qualities and their strengths regarded with a corresponding quiet appreciation. Greeks today primarily appear in a work not because the author wishes to write about something that is different to the general Australian community or to give an air of the "exotic" as before, but because the author wishes to convey in his or her work that Greeks are a natural part of everyday Australian life—one of "us". Indeed, Australian writers now appreciate that in many social situations a picture of the Australian community will only be realistic if it incorporates characters with a non-British-Australian background.

This development in Australian literature largely corresponds to development and change in the attitudes in the Australian communi-

ty itself at large. Prejudice towards Greeks and most other immigrant groups has certainly diminished and a relatively broad-minded and cosmopolitan attitude with a more positive approach towards, and appreciation of, difference is held by the greater part of the population. This development constitutes a welcome trend in twentieth century Australian literature.

Now, at the dawn of the third millennium, we can feel confident that in the majority of Australian literary works Greeks are portrayed with a similar degree of realism to that applied to most other Australians. It is this image of Greeks and their culture, not one of prejudice and negative stereotypes, which will form an excellent basis for the development of this facet of Australian literature in the new millennium.

ENDNOTES

1. I include only literary writing in English, by writers living in Australia or by Australian writers living overseas. Literary writing produced in Australia but in a language other than English is considered to belong to the literature of that particular linguistic community, that is, works in Greek are part of Greek literature, in French of French literature, etc.
2. James McQueen, "Evruidiki's Dog" in **Death of a Ladies' Man and Other Stories**, Ringwood, Vic., Penguin, 1989, p.38.
3. **Daily Mirror**, 21 February 1947 in Michael P. Tsounis, "Greek Communities in Australia" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), University of Adelaide, 1971, p.294.
4. Brenda Niall, "Children's Literature" in Laurie Hergenhan, gen. ed., **The Penguin New Literary History of Australia**, Ringwood, Vic., Penguin, 1988, pp.556-557.
5. See also Marta Rado and Lois Foster, " 'I Am Not Prejudiced But...'" in Andrew Markus and Radha Rasmussen, eds, **Prejudice in the Public Arena: Racism**, Melbourne, Centre for Migrant and Intercultural Studies, Monash University, 1987, p.108.

6. The research for this study extended to over a thousand pre- and post-1980 books, including anthologies, as well as to category and subject searches in Australian literary bibliographies and Thorpe's catalogue of Australian books in print, and thus it can be postulated that the many references to Greeks and Greek culture which were located are quite representative of the depiction of Greeks and Greek life in contemporary Australian literature as a whole.

7. See for example the character known as the Munga in the award-winning story **Dancing in the Anzac Deli** by Nadia Wheatley (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1984, republished together with the also award-winning story **Five Times Dizzy** (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1982) by Hodder Headline, Sydney in 1997, in one volume).

8. One exception to this pattern is found in the young children's book **As the Crow Flies** by Pamela Morrissey (Sydney, Margaret Hamilton, 1997), where the father, Jim Diamantopoulos, comes from Kythera but his wife, Sal, is an Australian.

9. Ugo Rotellini, "Getting Married" in R.F. Holt, ed., **Neighbours: Multicultural Writing of the 1980s**, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1991, pp.76, 77, 79.

10. See for example David Martin, **The Young Wife**, London, Macmillan, 1962, Esta de Fossard, **The Alien**, Melbourne, Nelson, 1977, and Roy Theodore, "The Greek" in Louise E. Rorabacher, ed., **Two Ways Meet: Stories of Migrants in Australia**, Melbourne, Cheshire, 1969, pp.97-105.

11. de Fossard, *ibid.*, p.4.

12. Gillian Bouras, **A Fair Exchange**, Ringwood, Vic., McPhee Gribble, 1991, p. 213.

13. Ziggy Zen, **The Ten Unexpected Greeks Just Arrived for Dinner Cookbook**, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 1998, p.8.

14. See for example Susan Geason, **Dogfish**, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1991, pp.14-15.

15. See for example Steve Wright, **A Break in the Traffic**, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 1992, pp.63-64.

16. Peter Goldsworthy, "Invitation to a Wedding" in **Archipelagos**, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1982, p.23.
17. Richard Barrett, **The Heartbreak Kid**, Sydney, Currency Press, 1988, p.89. This play was first performed by the Griffin Theatre Company at the Stables Theatre, Sydney on 29 July 1987 and in 1992 was made into a highly acclaimed film by producer Ben Gannon and starring Alex Dimitriades.
18. David Cox, "Greek Boys in Melbourne" in Charles Price, ed., **Greeks in Australia**, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975, pp.146-147.
19. Cox, 1975, pp.170, 185.
20. Rado and Foster, 1987.
21. Rotellini, 1991, pp.74-75.
22. Joan Dalgleigh, **Dim and Dusty**, Sydney, Hodder and Stoughton, 1983, pp.13-14.
23. Gillian Bouras, **A Foreign Wife**, Ringwood, Vic., McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1986, pp.96-97.
24. Barrett, 1988, pp.59, 61-62.
25. Kerryn Goldsworthy, "Teach Me to Dance" in Wendy Morgan, ed., **Figures in a Landscape: Writing From Australia**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.28.
26. See for example Maxine Moreland, "Irimi" in Peter Moss, comp., **Voicing the Difference: Stories and Poems by South Australian Writers of Diverse Cultural Backgrounds**, Kent Town, S.A., Multicultural Writers Association and Wakefield Press, 1994, p.178.
27. This occurs either in the form of entire books (e.g. Wendy Orr, **Yasou Nikki**, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1995) or as parts of larger stories (e.g. Jena Woodhouse, **Metis: The Octopus and the Olive Tree**, St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1994, pp.21-28).
28. Orr, 1995, pp.24-25.

29. Sue Chessbrough, "I Watch My Grandsons Grow in Another Language" in Jim Kable, ed., **Made in Australia: An Anthology of Writing**, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1990, p.9.
30. Dalgleigh, 1983, p.13.
31. David Sale, **Hidden Agenda**, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 1996, p.36.
32. Obelia Modjeska, "Observations From Rozelle" in Drusilla Modjeska, ed., **Inner Cities: Australian Women's Memory of Place**, Ringwood, Vic., Penguin, 1989, p.267.
33. Leonid Trett, "Yes, Sir!" in **Tales of Doctor Amber: A Collection of Satires and Humorous Sketches**, Adelaide, Dezserly Ethnic Publications, 1984, pp.49-51.
34. Zen, 1998, p.8.
35. Progressive assimilation occurs when the phoneme which produces this phenomenon (assimilatory phoneme) precedes the assimilated phoneme.
36. Catherine Lewis and Judith Guerin, **Unable by Reason of Death**, Ringwood, Vic., Penguin, 1989.
37. Robin Walton, "A Double Act" in **Glacé Fruits: Stories**, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1987, p.230.
38. L.H. Evers, **The Racketty Street Gang**, Sydney, Hodder and Stoughton, 1961.
39. For children's literature in this period see Maurice Saxby, **The Proof of the Puddin: Australian Children's Literature 1970-1990**, Sydney, Ashton Scholastic, 1993, especially ch.9.
40. Nance Donkin, **A Friend for Petros**, Sydney, Hamilton, 1974.
41. A characteristic example is the book **Folktales From Australia's Children of the World**, published in Sydney by Ure Smith in 1979.
42. David Martin, **The Young Wife**, London, Macmillan, 1962.
43. Nance Donkin, **Nini**, Adelaide, Rigby, 1979.