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COMPTE RENDUS / REVIEWS

The Greeks in Australia. By Anastasios Myrodis Tamis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. x, 205, ISBN 0-521-54743-1)

The Greeks in Australia is a short, general, popular history in the vein of Richard Clogg's *A Concise History of Greece*. It succeeds on the level of being a brief, informative introduction to a diaspora community; there is much excellent general information about the growth of the Greek community in Australia, as well as a number of important and well-preserved historical photographs. Tamis' work is too general to truly contribute anything new, however, and it suffers from an absence of any real scholarly apparatus, a confusion of narratives, stylistic inconsistency, and an authorial voice that occasionally appears to slip into ethnic propaganda.

Tamis is a sociolinguist, and it is in the sections where he discusses the issues surrounding the relationship of the modern Greek language to the diaspora community where he speaks with the most authority. For example, in the penultimate chapter, "The Culture and Civilization," Tamis spends a good deal of time examining the prospects of Greek's survival among the acculturated Greeks. He looks at language education, Greek language media, issues of ritual practice in the Orthodox Church, and Greek-Australian literary figures (albeit without any notes or citations to speak of), and builds a compelling argument that "by the year 2025 Greek will remain a robust medium of communication in the home as well as in the Greek clubs and the Orthodox Church" (Tamis 2005: 142). However, *The Greeks in Australia* is primarily a history, and thus must be examined on those terms. It is as a history, even a brief, general, introductory history, that the limitations of the book are apparent.

From the outset, Tamis places the story of Greek migration to Australia firmly within the standard narrative of Hellenic identity — cultural and scientific superiority in antiquity, preservation of Greek identity through the Byzantine empire and the Orthodox Christian faith, surviving as Ottoman subjects, until their hard-won independence and the establishment of the independent Greek nation-state (1). The

trouble with this narrative, however, is that in recent years scholars such as Anthony Kaldellis have demonstrated that the picture is far more nuanced than its partisans would like it to be, e.g., "...in the 2,000 years that separated the Revolution of 1821 from Alexander the Great, very different versions of Hellenism emerged and took hold" (Kaldellis 2007: 14). Adhering to this concept of absolute cultural continuity as Tamis does, therefore, sets a highly partisan tone from the first page, picked up later by avowals such as this one:

Via [the institutions where Greek language and culture are emphasized and promoted], the ethno-cultural values of Hellenism will become accessible to the broader Australian society and thus they will become the objective of the society rather than the goal of an ethnic community (Tamis 2005: 163).

Tamis is not a historian as such of the various periods he assumes as his background, so perhaps he can be forgiven for not being clear on some of the more obscure scholarly nuances outside his own field. However, even accepting this narrative on its own terms, it is sometimes unclear just what story he wants to tell within its framework. In the discussion of the early settlement of the Greek migrants in the second chapter, "The Greeks Discover Australia," Tamis asserts that "[m]any children became victims of their parents' unyielding desire to repatriate." Thus begins a laundry list of grievances such children may have had with their families:

"[T]heir children had lost contact with Australian education, and with that, much hope for vocational success. The average Greek family stressed the importance for their daughters to marry a boy of their ethnic and religious background. The parents emphasized the advantages of marrying a spouse of the same language and the same faith, alerting their children to the fact that non-Greek girls instead of cooking would serve them for the rest of their lives with 'tin cans'. In agreement with the ancient Greek tragedy, daughters who deviated from the matrimonial norm would often be viewed as outcasts, until at least the arrival of the first grandchild... [Moreover,] the pressure exerted on Australian-born children of Greek immigrants by a society that was often intolerant of new immigrants created tense relations between them and the Greek-born immigrants" (55).

However, on the very next page, Tamis appears to forget this narrative of Old World families limiting their children's prospects by

refusing to acculturate, and in fact congratulates this practice for ensuring the success of future generations:

“The rise of the second and third generation of Australian Greeks to commercial, professional and intellectual prominence is part of the contemporary Australian success story... For the most part, credit could be given by all standards to the parents. Family esteem and responsibility via hard work and discipline are the primary qualities for any child raised within the Greek family. Childhood is normally preoccupied with assigned duties and employment, restricting entertainment and amusement. Greek parents assumed firm discipline over their children, often ignoring teachers and other external mediators, to maintain their cultural distinctiveness and individuality. After all, parents were equally determined to sacrifice their own wellbeing and leisure... in order to invest heavily in their children’s education, thus providing them with better opportunities” (56).

Perhaps if this sharp, unselfconscious reversal is indicative of anything, it is that the Greek Australian’s relationship to their family background is still seen through a lens of self-conscious conflict. It is nonetheless very confusing to encounter in the middle of a history.

There are a number of stylistic issues with the book that suggest more careful copy-editing would have been useful; an example on the very first page is an awkward use of the definite article in his reference to the Orthodox Christian faith as “the Orthodoxy” (1). As well, at times it seems that a lack of more specific historical knowledge leads Tamis to give misleading impressions about certain events; a notable example is his description of a meeting between Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Ezekiel and Pope Paul VI during the 1970 Convention of the World Council of Churches in Sydney: “After the reception, the procession went to the headquarters of the Australian Roman Catholic Archdiocese where the two spiritual leaders met personally at St. Mary’s Cathedral and exchanged Eucharists” (115). If Tamis actually means what the sentence implies, that would be a notable historical event indeed, and the lack of a citation is rather sorely felt.

The Greeks in Australia is ultimately a worthwhile and informative effort, and where Tamis deals with matters more closely related to his own field, he is able to articulate his arguments clearly and with authority. As a treatment of history, however, the book has clear limitations.

References

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Anthropology Through a Double Lens. Public and Personal Worlds in Human Theory. By Daniel Touro Linger. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. Pp. 195, reference notes, index, ISBN 0-8122-3857-5)

Anthropologist Daniel Touro Linger begins his book with the observation that anthropology's current focus on cultural analysis is relegating experienced lives to the margins of scrutiny. The "double lens" of his title refers to the necessity of realigning micro individual with macro inquiry. This challenge to anthropology's predominant way of perceiving experience is overdue, as theoretical trends continue to dominate much of the research. Linger takes direct aim at the overwhelming use of abstractions inherent in the currently prevailing culturalist critique.

In order to frame his analysis of the missing person in present day anthropology, Linger returns us to the chicken and egg dilemma in Durkheim's classical sociology: does the individual control the social or does the social control the individual? He repeatedly refers back to Durkheim's distinction between the two polarities in exploring how it is that the personal experience commands far less attention than the collective one in current anthropological study. It strikes me, however, as perplexing that Linger should establish this argument on a generalization that he describes as "standard social science." As a sociologist I can confirm that not all sociology has been mired in this separation between the individual and social. From its inception sociology has offered diverse theories about "the individual". Perhaps then Linger's perspective says more about anthropology than the "social