

Mapping Greek-Australian Literature: a re-evaluation in the context of the literature of the Greek diaspora

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RÉSUMÉ

La présente étude se propose (a) d'examiner les plus importants problèmes théoriques et pratiques ainsi que les problématiques rencontrées lors de l'étude de la littérature grecque moderne de la diaspora (LGMD) et (b) de tracer un bref portrait de la littérature gréco-australienne.

La présente étude soutient que la LGMD n'a pas été étudiée adéquatement en raison de la nature complexe de ce phénomène et du désaccord parmi les universitaires sur une définition communément admise de la LGMD. Aussi longtemps que de telles disputes sur des termes et des concepts clés (tels "Hellénisme", "Grecité", "tradition" etc.) continuent d'exister, une définition satisfaisante de la LGMD va également continuer de rester pendante.

Pour ce qui est de la littérature gréco-australienne, la présente étude avance que la littérature helléphone a été une de plus dynamiques parmi les littératures minoritaires de l'Australie. Cependant, malgré cette floraison, l'arrêt de la migration massive quelques 20 années auparavant et du décès des immigrants Grecs de la première génération, la littérature gréco-australienne a subi un retrecissement continu. Dans quelques années il est probable qu'il n'y ait plus beaucoup d'auteurs écrivant en langue grecque, les Grecs de la deuxième et de la troisième générations écrivant uniquement en anglais. Cependant, ces écrivains d'origine grecque écrivant en anglais jouent un rôle de premier plan dans le développement de la littérature australienne locale et beaucoup d'entre eux figurent parmi les meilleurs auteurs Australiens.

L'étude conclut avec l'observation que les problèmes et problématiques ci-haut mentionnés, aussi bien que la particularité de la LGMD, constituent une raison additionnelle pour que le chercheur se lance à l'étude de ce domaine encore inexploité.

ABSTRACT

This essay attempts (a) to examine the most essential theoretical and practical problems and problematizations which arise in the study of Modern Greek Literature of the Diaspora (MGLD) and (b) to give a concise profile of Greek-Australian Literature.

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The essay argues that MGLD has not been researched adequately due to the complex nature of this phenomenon and to the disagreement among scholars on a commonly satisfactory definition of MGLD. As long as such disputes over key terms and concepts (such as "hellenism", "Greekness", "tradition" etc.) continue, a satisfactory definition of MGLD will also continue to be pending.

With regards to Greek-Australian literature, this essay argues that Greek-speaking literature has been one of the most dynamic minority literatures of Australia. However, despite its boom, the cessation of large-scale migration some 20 years ago and the passing away of first generation Greek migrants, Greek-Australian literature has been shrinking continuously. In a few years there may not be many Greek-speaking writers left as the second and third generation Greeks write only in English. However, these English-speaking writers of Greek origin play a leading role in the development of mainstream Australian literature and many of them are in the forefront of the Australian literary scene.

The essay concludes with the observation that these problems and problematizations, as well as the peculiarity of MGLD, constitute an additional, motive for the researcher of this hitherto unexplored field.

The aim of this essay is to briefly examine the most essential theoretical and practical problems and problematizations that arise in the study of Modern Greek Literature of the Diaspora (MGLD) as an overall autonomous phenomenon, and give a concise profile of Greek-Australian Literature.

The term MGLD refers to that literature which is written exclusively in the Greek language, by people usually of Greek origin who, for a long period of time, have lived or live permanently outside of Greece and whose works thematically revolve mainly, if not exclusively, around the life of migrants.¹

However, a commonly accepted and satisfactory definition of MGLD is very difficult to derive because neither the phenomenon of the Greek "diaspora"² overall nor its "literature"³ has been researched adequately. This may be attributed to the complex nature of the phenomenon itself. MGLD is difficult to define due to its particular features and unevenness (i.e. it is not homogeneous), which impede the study of this literature as a unified, overall autonomous phenomenon. Thus, although it is generally accepted that because of its common linguistic and cultural origins with the literature of Greece, MGLD constitutes a branch of that literature (see Vasilakakos 1995:8 and

Kanarakis 1985:109), its inherent peculiarities and attendant theoretical problems, in conjunction with certain expediencies, discourage such a study.

Secondly, in the last few years, the concept of "hellenism" has been disputed more than ever, as have, consequently, the concept of the Greek "diaspora" and its "literature", too. For how is it possible for the Modern Greek diaspora to be satisfactorily researched, much more so its literature, when the well-known dispute between the intellectuals of Greece and those of the Greek diaspora (mainly Greek-Americans) rages on, with regards to the meaning of the term "hellenism" or to whether, for example, "hellenism" is Greece-centred or universal,⁴ and when concepts such as "nation", "Greekness", "tradition"⁵ etc. are being disputed as well? If there is no agreement upon such key terms, what hope is there in defining the identity of the literature of "hellenism" and indeed of the "diaspora"?

As long as such disputes over key terms and concepts continue, a satisfactory definition of MGLD will continue to be pending. Especially since such definitions will always rely on subjective criteria as to what is "nation", "hellenism", etc. and what these terms represent for their various users. The determination will depend, as Hasiotis (1993:15) argues, on "the partiality of their point of view" or, according to Lambropoulos (1994:32), on the "interests" that form the terms and their meanings every time.

One of the most serious theoretical problems which characterizes the MGLD is its very peculiarity, the fact that, as Hasiotis (1993:186) accurately observes, the literature of the Diaspora moves among three philological poles: the intellectual climate of Greece, the social framework of the Greek Community and the cultural environment of the guest-countries. The phenomenon presents special interest because it concerns the gradual formation of peculiar literatures in various countries (Greek-American, Greek-Australian, Greek-German, Greek-Russian, etc.), in which elements and experiences of different societies and cultural traditions are creatively recast. [my translation, here and elsewhere]

This triangular relationship, inevitably creates a series of more general problems for the researcher, which are related to the peculiar hybrid nature of the said literature. That is, they are related to the fact that this literature exists in a *de facto* situation of semi-independence

both from the linguistic and, more generally, literary and cultural background of the birth-country, as well as from the counterpart background of the social reality of the guest-country. At the same time, this literature has not been able to achieve a satisfactory freedom from one or the other dependence, or an absolute autonomy. Consequently, it is characterized by its duality, by the fact that it is neither absolutely Greek, nor let us say, Australian, but a fusion of both: Greek-Australian.⁶ That is, Greek in language but diasporic in thematic orientation⁷ and in its overall temperament, ethos and style. On the one hand, as far as its ethos is concerned, the psychology of the displaced individual is usually obvious and is expressed by the bitterness and suffering in the foreign land. In essence, it is about a cry of protest against the cutting off of the uprooted from the umbilical cord of the mother-land and whatever that entails. On the other hand, the style testifies to the various disturbances within the displaced person as natural consequences of this psychosomatic mutilation and the schizophrenic situation of the expatriates who are experiencing a double (linguistic and cultural) reality.⁸ That is why we have linguistic types or hellenized words in such literature which have been formed by words and expressions borrowed from the English language or translation loans from other languages. The result of this frequent intrusion of anglicisms and diglossia is to create a linguistic and stylistic hybridity with the use, for example, of Greeklish, etc.⁹

This hybridity inevitably makes MGLD a separate entity¹⁰ that is literally and metaphorically, peripheral, since it is outside the mainstream literatures of the home-country and the guest-country. Hence the ignorance and indifference to it on the part of the literary establishments of both the birthcountry and guest-country.¹¹

Despite the occasional highsounding pronouncements and promises of officials, the lukewarm reception of MGLD by Greece can also be attributed to other factors (apart from the peculiarities already mentioned), such as the communication difficulty arising from the huge geographical distance between Greece and countries like Australia and America. Thus, the expatriate Greek writers are deprived of an immediate access to mechanisms such as publishers, the media, reviewers

etc., which project and promote a new literary work. Besides, the competitiveness and satiety which exists in the book industry as well as in the literary societies of the metropolis, usually constitute a factor working against the promotion of MGLD.¹² As I wrote some years ago, "if the Greek writers of the metropolis 'are eating away their flesh', then there couldn't be any worse cannibals than the Greek writers of the diaspora..." (Vasilakakos, 1985:32).

The distinction and official grammatological reference of individual cases of expatriate Greek writers, from Cavafy's time to date, without an equivalent reference to the overall phenomenon of the literature of the diaspora, as well as the adoption of these literatures by the official mainstream literatures of the home-country and/or the guest-countries,¹³ confirm, to a certain degree, the theoretical impasse we face in relation to the MGLD. More than anything, however, it implicitly, but clearly, reveals the prejudices and deliberate strategies of scholars (with the carefully orchestrated absence of any reference to the overall phenomenon of the MGLD) who essentially define the identity of the official/mainstream literature of hellenism.¹⁴

It is natural that these theoretical problems in relation to the MGLD have a direct impact on the literary practice itself.

The Greek-speaking writers of the diaspora, to a varying degree — depending on the country in which they live and work — face a series of practical problems which are primarily related to the minority character of the language in which they create.¹⁵ If we exclude the student population which, by necessity, dwell upon it, the Greek literature produced outside Greece has a very small readership and the MGLD has an even smaller one. That is why it is almost impossible for a Greek writer of the diaspora to earn a living from his/her books.

In the case of Australia, of course, things are undoubtedly somewhat better for writers who write in Greek, in comparison to those of other countries, since all minority writers are entitled to certain government literary grants in order to write in their own tongue. Furthermore, due to the large size of the Greek Community, which numbers several

hundred thousand Greek-speaking people, some writers, mainly playwrights and perhaps prose writers, whose work has been translated into English, can, under certain conditions, make a living out of their works.

However, in order for a writer of the Greek diaspora to survive in the long term, he/she is forced to make some choices which are not at all painless: either to return to his/her home-country, to translate his/her work in the language of the country he/she lives in, or, in one of the major languages, or to adopt the language of his/her adopted country. The cost, psychological or otherwise, of any such decision is obvious. As far as I know, most of the Greek writers of the diaspora choose the lesser of these evils: their survival¹⁶ through the translation of their works, attempting, thus, to win over two readerships.

In relation to Australia, this tactic of translating literary works is gaining more and more ground, not only among writers who work in minority languages, but also among writers who write in English and wish to see their works translated into other languages. For this reason a Federal Government program in the form of grants for literary translation, was instituted some years ago which aims mainly at promoting Anglophone Australian literature overseas and, to a lesser degree, at translating into English and promoting literary works written in other languages in the Australian market.¹⁷ That is why, in the case of Greek-Australian literature, but perhaps of MGLD in general, translation does not constitute a marginal manifestation, but an integral and, as Castan (1992:61) correctly remarks, "a central activity of Greek-Australian literature" and all these peculiar literatures. Babiniotis also argues along these lines: "A major defence mechanism of national/ethnic languages against the linguistic [imperialism/expansionism] of the major languages is the translation of foreign [...] texts into the mother national/ethnic tongue of every people."

Translation, of course, much as it seems the ideal solution, is not a panacea, nor does it solve magically all the problems of the writers of the Greek diaspora. On the contrary, sometimes it can create more problems than it hopes to solve. This is because, apart from the fact

that translation is a time-consuming and difficult task, as all those involved in the field know, if the translator is unable to be on the same wave length as the spirit of the specific work and its creator and does not have an excellent knowledge of the language, the psychology and culture of the target audience of the translated work, then it is likely that the results, instead of benefiting, will harm the Greek writer. In the final analysis, translation, according to Babiniotis, "is not anybody's work, nor a simple passage from words into words [but] linguistic creation."

Besides, no matter how good the translation of any Greek literary work may be, it does not necessarily mean an automatic guarantee that the work will be warmly received by the English-speaking readership of a given country. Often, the appreciation of a literary work does not necessarily depend on the quality of the original work nor on the quality of the translation, but on purely cultural, idiosyncratic and other factors that are related to the trend of the times, etc. That explains, for example, why English translations of works by Papadiamantis and Elytis left the English-speaking readership coldly indifferent, something which never happened, let us say, with Kazantzakis who has remained the most popular Greek writer outside of Greece for decades.¹⁸

But even translated literary works still create theoretical impasses for the scholar of MGLD. The novel *Epsilon* — the mother tongue (1995) by the well-known writer of the Greek diaspora, Vassilis Alexakis, was first written in Greek and was subsequently translated by the author in French. It was first published in French and afterwards in Greek. Now, does this novel belong to French Literature, Greek Literature or the MGLD?

Before attempting to give a concise profile of Greek-Australian Literature, I should make clear that the term ("Greek-Australian Literature") usually refers to the literary works produced in the Greek language, mainly, but not always, by people of Greek descent who are engaged with Greek-Australian or other migrant themes.¹⁹ Although the term "Australian-Greek Literature"²⁰ is not very common, it refers

to the Australian literature which is written, of course, in the English language by people of mainly Greek and also people of non-Greek descent who have some connection with the Greek culture.²¹ The works of these writers who are engaged with multicultural themes have one characteristic in common: thematically they refer to experiences of Greek migrants in Australia but also experiences of Australian migrants in Greece.

The official multicultural policy of Australia after 1975 was a catalyst for the upgrading of migrant artistic and literary creation which, as Hergenhan (1988:335) argues, had begun before 1964. The Australian authorities as well as the public realized that the contribution of migrant minorities was cultural as much as it was economic, given that migrants, as bearers and inheritors of a whole range of cultures, had all the necessary prerequisites to become ideal creators of new currents in art and inject new life into the existing culture. The official government recognition of migrants as equal to Australian citizens, also presupposed the recognition of their intellectual and artistic entity and their peculiarities. This meant practical encouragement, projection and promotion of their hitherto repressed and, therefore, hidden and unknown talents.²² Thus with the establishment of the Australian Council for the Arts in 1973 and, specifically, with the encouragement and promotion of multicultural arts and literature,²³ we have the materialization of government pronouncements regarding the cultural upgrading of minorities. As for multicultural literature, the establishment of the Australia Council was an economic and moral shot in the arm, which marked a revival in the arts.²⁴

Greek-speaking literature in Australia has been one of the most dynamic and vibrant minority literatures and has contributed significantly to the multicultural literature of this country. But, despite its boom and the fact that it has produced a few hundred books (most of them self-published) and some remarkable writers such as Dimitris Tsaloumas, S.S. Charkianakis, Dimitris Tzoumakas and John Vasilakakos who have received prestigious literary prizes, distinctions, grants and other recognitions both in Australia and Greece, Greek-Australian literature overall has never had a huge impact on the wider

literary scene either in Australia or in Greece. This is attributed to the fact that of the earlier writers, very few had a higher education and the luxury to devote themselves to writing and distinguish themselves in this field. With the cessation of large-scale migration to Australia some twenty years ago, there was no longer "new blood" being injected from Greece. According to Vasilakakos (1997:8), with the passing away of the first generation of Greek migrants, Greek-Australian literature has been shrinking continuously, so that in a few years there may not be any Greek-speaking writers left as the second and third generation Greek migrants write almost exclusively in English.

However, in the last twenty years or so, in the English-speaking countries, one is witness to a strange phenomenon: more and more ethnic writers of non-English-speaking origins, who write and publish their works in English, are playing a leading role in literary developments by winning major literary prizes, government grants and by seeing their books becoming best sellers.²⁵ The same phenomenon can also be seen in Australia where English-speaking writers of Greek origin are often in the forefront of literary scene.²⁶ Such writers are, for example, Angelo Loukakis, George Papaellinas, Spiro Zavos, Tony Maniaty, Zeny Giles, Antigone Kefala, Jim Sakkas, Fotini Epanomitis, Christos Tsiolkas, Eugenia Tsoulis and others. Sakkas and Epanomitis have won the major Australian literary prize for young, unpublished writers, the Australian Vogel Award.²⁷ Such prizes awarded to Australian writers of Greek descent are of decisive importance because they bring out and establish new talents and new currents in Australian literature.

The paradox in the case of Australia is not only that all these writers are of Greek descent, but also that their themes are almost always influenced by their Greek experiences and have as their epicentre their personal experiences. Furthermore, one observes a turn in the attitudes of these writers. Their origin has ceased being an object of embarrassment as was the case in the past.²⁸ Now their Greekness has become an object of pride and celebration as well as a source of inspiration.²⁹ Hence their works often have an autobiographical character, focusing on their linguistically and culturally split identity. Even the

English language they use is strongly influenced by the Greek, embellished by Greek words or sentences. In that sense and in comparison to earlier migrant writers of non-English origin, we have a complete turnaround in the overall technique. The experimentation with language and narrative means becomes obviously more daring and radical. This radicalism in recent migrant literature can also be detected in the seeking of an oral or as Gelder & Salman (1989, p.202) characterize it, a "demotic language" the best examples of which are Epanomitis' novel *The Mule's Foal* (1993) winner of the 1993 Australian Vogel Award and also Papaellinas' novel *No* (1997).³⁰

We could claim then that in the last twenty years, the Greeks of Australia are taking revenge through their second generation writers who are stealing the show in the area of Australian multicultural literature. The irony here lies in the fact that Australian literature was, to a degree, conquered not so much superficially, through the folklore of Greek thematics, but mainly from the inside, grafting, that is, the English-speaking literary mentality and expressive means with Greek words and expressions and lending them a peculiar — verbal and narrative — 'exoticism.' This 'exoticism' emanates from the strong colours, the unusual smells, the strange sounds, the new tastes, etc., whereas the language is distinguished by a deep innovation which is largely due to its catalytic transformation by the dynamics, the sounds and rhythms of the "foreign" musicality. It therefore would not be an exaggeration to claim that in the case of Australia, the English language has been besieged and conquered through the Wooden Horse of a culture which emanates from the Greek-Australian minority.³¹

The exploitation of the quality of being a "foreigner" provides these writers with the possibility of freeing the content and forms of English-speaking literature from certain traditional models, old stylistic and conventional techniques and other hereditary rigidities and of renewing it. Through the glance of the "foreigner", the known is transformed into the strange, the familiar becomes mysterious, the every day becomes different and original.

In this sense, the Australian writers of Greek origin have the inherent privilege of transforming the alleged "disadvantage" of their ori-

gin and marginality into an "advantage" and by exploiting it appropriately, of moving from the margins into the mainstream of Australian literature.

All the aforementioned theoretical and practical problems and problematizations arising out of the peculiarity of MGLD constitute an additional motive for the researcher of this almost virgin field which continues to remain unexplored. The systematic research of MGLD, as an integral part of Modern Greek Literature in general, does not constitute an undertaking of just a literary interest, but an undertaking of national duty, if we reflect on my earlier remark (Vasilakakos, 1985:32) that Calvos, Solomos, Cavafy [...] are the living denial of the myth that the nucleus of Greek artistic and literary creation is to be found within the walls of the Metropolitan centre."

NOTES

1. See Vasilakakos (1995:8). This view of mine is not always found to be agreeable by some scholars who claim that literatures such as the Greek-American, Greek-Australian etc., should also include writers of Greek origin (and not only) whose themes are Greek, although the language of this literature is not Greek. Generally, as Spilias (1992:420) observes, "the term Greek-Australian literature [...] is used today widely and has, more or less, been 'legitimized', despite the objections which have at times been expressed as to the suitability of the term and despite the fact that the field has not been absolutely defined. Discussions and suggestions concerning the said questions have been published in journals of the Greek Community and Greece and surely the debate will not stop here." Corkhill (1994:1), for example, considers Australian literature to be that which is also written in the minority languages, that is, by non-English speaking migrants. See also Castan (1992:55) about the appearance of the Greek spirit in the English-speaking literature. Castan (1992:388) also claims that "Greek-Australian Literature is written neither in the Greek language nor in English and sometimes in both." See also Castan (1988:5-6). Even those scholars such as Kanarakis (1985:86), who consider the Greek language to be a basic criterion of MGLD, eventually include English-speaking writers in their anthologies: see,

for example, *The Literary Presence of Greeks in Australia* (1985:538). The same tactic has been adopted by Spiliadis and Messinis (1988) in their bilingual anthology, *Reflections*, and by Mantzouranis (1995) in his anthology, *Greek Writers in Germany*. In relation to Greek-American literature, things are even more fluid, where some scholars (see Karanikas, 1985:204) are not clear on what they mean exactly by the term "Greek-American authors." Apparently, according to Giannaris (1985: 8-7), "it is about works written in English and published in the USA, which reflect and reveal the typical procedures in the initiation of new arrivals into the American reality." See also Moskos (1985:197). For my response see Vasilakakos (1987:21 & 1995:14).

2. According to Hasiotis (1993:15), "Despite the large number of individual studies, the overall historic development of Modern Greek Diaspora from the 15th century until the end of Second World War has preoccupied very little the Greek and foreign historiography. Exceptions do exist. However, most (and perhaps the most remarkable) of them do not hide either their fragmentation and occasional character or the one-sidedness of their point of view."

3. As Hasiotis (1993:185-186) points out correctly, "the literary output of expatriates presents special interest, with considerable achievements presents special interest in poetry, prose and theatre. It is about a history chapter of Modern Greek literature which has not yet been noticed as it should have by our philologists." See also Kanarakis (1985:109) and Giannaris (1985:17).

4. Tzousdanis (1996:5), for example, sees hellenism as an "international culture [and] universal system."

5. Greek-Americans, in general, believe categorically that hellenism is universal. According to Lambropoulos (1994:32), "hellenism has never been a national, racial or geographic (that is national) entity, but a cultural and pedagogic (and hence, a concocted and changeable) category." That is why Lambropoulos insists on emphasizing hellenism "as [mainly] cultural phenomenon and model [which has no] centre or owners [...]." Furthermore, Litsas (1985:11) claims that the study of Modern Greek Letters should not be limited exclusively to the territory of Greece but beyond that, that is, in the diaspora, since

"Modern Greek is a cultural and intellectual continuity of ancient Greece." This Greek-American stance can perhaps be explained by the fact that, as Giannaris (1985:14) claims, "Hellenism of the Diaspora (Middle East, Asia Minor, Eastern Countries, Africa, Western Europe etc.), irrespective of the generations, presents a more genuine Greekness as far as the Greek knowledge and the maintenance, in particular, of Modern culture is concerned, than the Hellenism of Africa. The same more or less applies to Canada and Australia." Also, according to a Neos Kosmos (1996:9) report, "The Greek-American Community is concerned with the dramatic reduction of marriages between Greeks. [...] The answer that Mr Ioannidis himself (director of the Vryonis Centre for the study of Hellenism) gave was that, 'To a large extent the fight will be judged on the field of ideas, education and culture.'"

6. For a more thorough examination see Vasilakakos (1986:38-39 & 1995:12-14).

7. See Vasilakakos (1995:8) and Karanikas (1985:204). Giannaris classifies the Greek-American novel as "migrant and ethnic."

8. Giannaris (1985:9) speaks of a "double consciousness" which "results in some kind of schizophrenic paralysis." Veis (1992: 566) claims that "diaspora causes the big, catalytic split of the writer. Literature attempts, usually in vain, to reconcile the chronic contradictions and inherent difficulties, which are entailed in a permanent residence abroad, at the same time when the expatriate creator continues to live in his/her imagination in the land of the forefathers."

9. See also Kanarakis (1985:54) and Giannaris (1985:15).

10. Giannaris (1985: 9 & 16) considers the migrant novel and the ethnic novel as an "autonomous cultural element" and certain Greek-Australian literary works as "self-existent philological entities within the body of American literature and as 'another' of Hellenism."

11. Kanarakis (1985:109) is of the same opinion: "we should remark with sadness that, despite its significance and contribution, the literature of the expatriate Greeks has not only not been recognized and appreciated by the countries abroad, due to the different languages in which it has been written but, even worse, apart from some excep-

tions, it has neither been systematically studied nor methodically anthologized by the intellectuals of metropolitan Greece, as it deserves." Koumidis (1996:66) also claims that "the feeling of an unjust lack of recognition and abandonment, does not afflict only Cypriot writers, but other parts of Hellenism outside of Greece. [...] I have the impression that there is generally a frightening indifference and that something must be done."

12. For a more detailed discussion see Vasilakakos (1995:16-17).

13. For a detailed discussion, see Vasilakakos (1995:14-15) and Koumidis (1996:66).

14. Of all the histories of Modern Greek Literature, the one by Kostellenos (1977:235-237) devotes a short subchapter to MGLD entitled: "The Literature of the Expatriates." But apart from being very brief and general, it stops at 1922. Furthermore, whereas all the Modern Greek Literature historians make reference to the Greek diaspora of 1669, none of them touches upon the Greek diaspora of modern times, especially when they refer with certain praise to some of its more notable representatives such as Cavafy, Kahtitsis and others. This inconsistency and omission could be attributed to the serious inadequacy of the historiography of Modern Greek Literature and its inability to follow the developments and, possibly, to a certain degree of prejudice against the literature of the expatriates. Indicative of this mentality is, for example, the way Linos Politis (1980:227) expresses his puzzlement about the fact that a poet of the diaspora like Cavafy, managed to play a leading role in modern Greek literature: "It is curious. While in Athens of 1880 almost a unique intellectual centre of hellenism, Palamas is at his peak and influences dynastically poetry and intellectual life, at that period, in an isolated region of hellenism, Alexandria, a poet who in the later years was to take over the central position in modern Greek poetry and influence decisively its whole modern development until our days creates his work." Also, it may not be by accident at all that an equivalent overall study of the minority literatures of multicultural Australia is absent, as Corkhill (1994:1) remarks. For a more general discussion on the subject see Vasilakakos (1995:7-30).

15. In Giannaris' book (1985:29), Dalla Dami claims that, "Of all the fields of activity of the Greek-Americans, that of the writer was the last which was recognized, both by Greek-Americans and the American readership."

16. According to Babiniotis, "translation, from a 'necessary evil' within the linguistic differentiation which characterizes the people as national/ethnic communities, it is developed into a means of linguistic meeting of people and at the same time into a weapon for the survival of national/ethnic languages."

17. In relation to the Australian literary grants to non-English speaking writers, see Vasilakakos (1995:17-19 & 1996:14).

18. The irony is that Kazantzakis should have been translated and become known first abroad in order to make it in Greece! The other irony is that while Elytis, thanks to the translation of his *Axion Esti* by Kimon Friar (according to a confession of the latter to Vasilakakos), won world recognition with the Nobel prize for literature, he had little appeal to the English - speaking readership. Regarding this subject, see the interesting article by Tziouvas (1995:41).

19. See previously the comment by Hasiotis (1993:186).

20. Or as Gelder & Salzman (1989:186) calls it "migrant or multicultural writing."

21. Australian literature has, for a long time, generally been considered a migrant literature. Gelder & Salzman (1989:187) give the following explanation: "It is now a cliché to point out that all Australian literature, other than Aboriginal literature, has in a sense been immigrant literature. In the nineteenth century writers themselves, as well as their works, drifted between the reassurance of England and the challenges of a strange new world. But by the mid-twentieth century, there was an Anglo-Saxon Australian culture against which the wave of post World War Two migrants were forced to define themselves. In the 1950s, a considerable body of literature about European migration appeared, produced by writers like David Martin or Judah Waten. But since the 1970s, a different social perspective on immigration has had its effect on the literature, which now

tends to be by migrants, as well as about them. The voice of the migrant now speaks through new forms of fiction."

According to Castan (1992:60), "multiculturalism entails the use of the term 'Australian literature' in both the singular and the plural. In the singular it applies to the literary work of all Australians, regardless of the languages it is written in, the place of birth of the writers, or their cultural ideology. In the plural it refers to such parts of Australian literary work as Greek-Australian literature. These are understood as both distinctive within Australian literature and essential to it: distinctive in that each one has its own qualities and characteristics deriving from its own inheritance; essential in the name of both social justice and the common core of experiences which inform all Australian literatures [...]."

22. Let us not forget, as Hasiotis (1993:157) remarks that: "Until the beginning of the 1970s, the tendencies for repatriation were encouraged by the assimilation policy which the Federal and State Australian governments tried to implement on the migrants who were not of 'Anglo-Celtic' origin."

23. As Willbanks (1992:6) states: "The Literature Board was established by the Australian Government in 1973 to support writers through direct subsistence grants and through subsidies to publishers to bring more Australian writing into print. Between 1973 and 1974, the Literature Board supported the publication of fifty-four works of fiction: by 1986 the number had grown to over two hundred. Writers themselves will argue the mixed blessing of this government patronage, but the Literature Board has been an important factor in stimulating and disseminating creative writing in Australia. It has also provided funds for critical research and subsidized literary journals [...]."

24. For a detailed discussion see Vasilakakos (1997:42-43).

25. According to Iyer (1993:54), "The Booker prize for fiction is London's way of formally commemorating and coronating literary tradition [...]. In 1981 the Booker went to Salman Rushdie's tumultuous, mani-headed myth of modern India, *Midnight's Children*. In the 11 years since, it has been given to two Australians, a part Maori, a South

African, a woman of Polish descent, a Nigerian and an exile from Japan. Runners-up have featured such redoubtably English names as Mo and Mistry and Achebe; when a traditional English name takes the prize — A.S. Byatt, say, or Kingsley Amis — it seems almost anomalous. Last year the \$30 000 award was shared by Barry Unsworth, an Englishman married to a Finn and living in Italy (for his novel *Sacred Hunger*); and Michael Ondaatje, a Sri Lankan of Indian, Dutch and English ancestry, educated in Britain, long resident in Canada, with siblings on four continents (for *The English Patient*). Five days earlier, the Nobel prize for Literature had been awarded to Derek Walcott, a poet of African, Dutch and English descent, born in St. Lucia and commuting these days between Boston and Trinidad — a ‘divided child’, in his own words [...].”

As Hasiotis (1993:186) observes, "Apart from the Greek-speaking literary output, the expatriates, mainly of the second and third generations, have also presented remarkable works in the languages of their new countries, participating in this way in the development of these countries' literatures.

27. This award is accompanied by the sum of \$15 000 000 and is given to the best unpublished novel by a young writer who has been selected following an Australia-wide competition. The publisher who funds this award also undertakes to publish the manuscript.

28. See for example, the scene in the work of Papaellinas (1988:156) where the Greek migrant kid is embarrassed to be picked up from school by his grandmother in black.

29. As Gelder & Salzman (1989:187) argue, "In this literature there is now a new sense of the integrity of the migrant experience, a rejection of the pressure to abandon one's old identity under the compulsion to assimilate. Ethnicity is shifting towards becoming a badge of pride, rather than shame."

30. This experimentation and radicalism are also confirmed by the following remark in Gelder & Salzman (1989:191): The growth of migrant writing during the last twenty years or so also reveals the constant slippage between a radical expression of a new voice and the silences that remain beneath new cultural expression."

31. My argument is also strengthened by Iyer's (1993:54) following views: "There could hardly have been a more vivid illustration of how the Empire has struck back, as Britain's former colonies have begun to capture the very heart of English literature, while transforming the language with bright colors and strange cadences and foreign eyes. As Vikram Seth, a leading Indian novelist whose books have been set in Tibet and San Francisco, says, 'The English language has been taken over, or taken to heart, or taken to tongue, by people whose original language historically it was not.'

The conquering of this mainstream Australian literature by writers of non-Anglo-Saxon descent and the relevant developments is testified by Elizabeth Webby in her article in *Meanjin* in 1983 entitled "Short Fiction in the Eighties: White Anglo-Celtic Male no more?" As Hergenhan (1988:543) says, "Webby traces the trend in Australian writing — and publishing — away from the dominance of people called John, Peter, Alan, Patrick, Hal and Frank and towards a more equitable representation of people with names like Serge and Angelo and Ania, and Marian and Elizabeth and Kate. There is a growing taste for 'migrant writing', and there are increasing numbers of people [...] who are writing, now that there is a market for their work; this is to some extent a self-perpetuating phenomenon."

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