

The View from Down Under: Perspectives on the Literary Achievements of Hellenism in Australia and the Attitude of Greece

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RÉSUMÉ

La production littéraire des Grecs d'Australie révèle une histoire de presque un siècle, une grande série de genres, divers thèmes, styles et structures linguistiques et une quantité significative de créations littéraires de qualité variée tant en grec qu'en anglais, la deuxième catégorie se trouvant en constante augmentation. Malgré le fait que cette littérature forme un corps qui peut être évalué selon ses propres mérites, parce qu'elle est écrite en deux langues et s'adresse à des publics différents, elle ne constitue pas un corps littéraire en soi. Le critère déterminant de son identité nationale et le plus compétitif, reste la langue. Par ailleurs, l'attitude de la Grèce face aux réalisations de Grecs d'Australie et en particulier face aux réalisations des écrivains Grecs est caractérisée par l'ignorance et l'indifférence, attitude qui est d'ailleurs la même pour l'ensemble de la littérature de la diaspora. C'est ainsi que la littérature grecque de la diaspora est pratiquement exclue du corpus national de la littérature hellénique.

ABSTRACT

The literary production of the Greeks in Australia reveals a history of almost one hundred years, a wide range of genres, diverse themes, styles and linguistic structures, as well as a significant quantity and varying levels of quality, in both Greek and English language works with the latter increasing steadily. Although this literature forms a corpus which can be evaluated on its own merit, it is not an independent literary body in itself because of the two languages in which it finds expression and the two linguistically different readerships it addresses. The determining criterion of its national identity and the best contender, among other criteria, seems to be language. Regarding Greece's attitude towards the literary achievements of Australia's Greeks and of the Greek writers of the diaspora in general, this paper reaches the conclusion that Greece is characterized by a lack of familiarization with the literary works of the diaspora Greeks and indifference concerning the inclusion of this Greek-language literature into Modern Greek literature hand in hand with the works produced in Greece itself.

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1. Introduction

Australia, apart from its indigenous people, is a country of immigrants. The presence of Greeks in Australia is the result of emigration not only from Greece itself but also from other lands where flourishing Greek communities such as Asia Minor, Roumania, South Africa and Egypt, had long ago been established.

In today's multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural Australia of 20,200,000 people¹ who derive from more than 200 different ancestries² and speak more than 214 languages, including at least 55 indigenous languages,³ Greeks have not only a noteworthy position quantitatively⁴ but have also made a significant contribution to the economic, social, political and intellectual life of their adopted homeland. Furthermore, the Greeks of Australia also brought with them their age-old tradition of literary expression (oral and written), as well as their love for literature, a genuine cultural and intellectual element of the Greek identity. It must be noted here that the literary creation of the Australian Greeks, despite shared origins and elements of Modern Greek literature, reflects a different character and tone than the literature of mainland Greece, thereby naturally exhibiting an identity of its own.

2. A historical overview

Over the past 100 years, the Greeks have developed a vibrant literary presence in Australia.⁵ Indeed, from a historical perspective the oldest evidence located thus far dates back to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. It consists of oral poetic compositions. The primary reason for this literary manifestation was that most of the early versifiers came from Greek areas with a long-established oral tradition, as happened with the two first versifiers, Nikos Kallinikos and Nikos Paizis, both from the island of Ithaca.

In the first decade of this literature (1910-1920), oral poetry in Greek dominated, and while this decreased in the following decades, it did not die, especially if one considers the improvised compositions of immigrants of modern times, such as the Ithacan Stathis Raftopoulos, the Cypriot Haralambos Azinos and the Cretan Kostas Tsourdalakis.

The main characteristic of these early oral improvisations is that they were born and developed not in the isolation of the creator's room but out in the community, such as at family celebrations, public social gatherings and in the coffee-houses.

This poetry, of course, for the most part was neither pioneering nor especially demanding. It was unpretentious versification, the technical achievement of which was limited to the traditional rhyming line. Overall, it reflected little lyricism. Apart from any historical and any kind of literary interest, these improvisations have additional significance because of the social role they played in the Greek communities of the time, given the spontaneity, sincerity and enthusiasm of their creators to entertain their audiences or even to make social commentary rather than to pen lasting poetic works. After all, these were the very characteristics that made this literary genre very popular.

This oral poetry also has merit from a philological aspect as it provides the first expression of personal style and signifies the beginnings of the Greek literary presence in this continent of the South.

Correspondingly, in the written form the earliest published works were prose pieces (Greek-language short stories) by the Cypriot George Nicolaides,⁶ which appeared in 1913, two or three years after the first oral versifications and just twenty-eight days after the circulation of the newspaper *Afstralia*, the first Greek newspaper in the Antipodes.⁷

The year 1913 was a turning point for the literature of the Greeks in Australia because of the following four significant events: a) the first evidence of written literature, b) the first known prose pieces, c) the first published literary works, and d) the appearance of the Greek press which also provided a venue for the publication of poetry and prose works.

Two years later the first written although not yet published poetry would be added to the early literary tapestry of the Greeks in Australia. Its pioneer was the Ithacan lyrical poet and man of the theatre, George Paizis. Although his first poems go back to 1915, he started publishing several years later in 1922, in the Sydney newspaper *To Ethniko Vima* (The National Tribune), usually under the pseudonym "Thiakos". Many of his poems remind us of the Romantic School of Athens at the beginning of the twentieth century.

From 1922 the literary body expanded not only because of the increase in Greek immigration caused by the arrival of refugees from Asia Minor but also because of the dramatic events which occurred among the Greek population there at that time. There was also the new cultural atmosphere and dynamic spirit they brought with them. These new immigrants, often educated in the Greek schools of Smyrna and Constantinople, enriched the social, cultural and political life of the Greek communities in Australia with new energy and also introduced new subjects to this literature (the Asia Minor catastrophe, the destruction of Smyrna, the tragedy of the Greek refugees, etc.). It is from among these Asia Minor refugees and other Greek immigrants uprooted because of poverty and political upheaval that a new generation of writers appeared who conveyed new messages and expressed the feelings of the changing times. As a result, the late 1920s and 1930s witnessed the development of this literature in both quantity and quality, especially in prose which expanded from short stories all the way to autobiographies and travelogues.

By this time, a number of writers were consciously investigating, sometimes with impressive sensitivity, broader subjects beyond the confines of the Greek community. In addition, these writers frequently published their texts in the Greek-language press, while some of them forged ahead with publishing works in book form.

In sum, these years saw significant literary events: a) the publication in Australia of the first Greek-language literary book (the short story collection *Istories tis xenitias* [Stories of the Foreign Land] (1932) by the Athenian Homer Rigas, published in Sydney by the publishing arm, “Intellectual Beacon of Hellenism in Australia”, of the newspaper *To Ethniko Vima*, b) the development and stabilization of the Greek-language press, a fact which encouraged the further writing of literary works, and c) the appearance of a few writers who for the first time wrote in both languages (Greek and English). Actually, some English-language texts even appeared in Australian publications, such as short stories by Anargyros Fatseas of Kythera in the Sydney periodicals *Woman’s Weekly* and *Woman’s Day*,⁸ as well as the earliest translation in Australia of Dionysios Solomos’ “Hymn to Liberty” published in the Sydney newspaper *Sun* (5 March 1941) and poems by Costas Malaxos-Alexander of Phoenikas, Asia Minor, in *Black Swan*, the Western Australian periodical and in *Pelican*, the newspaper of the University of Western Australia.

In parallel with the traditional themes (*xenitia*, odysseic dream of return to the native land, love for the home country, community characters and life in the new environment, etc.) new subjects appeared.

Similarly, while many writers continued to use traditional forms, new endeavours were made in search of poetic forms not used in the past, such as the sonnet, with the main exponents Theodore Georgantopoulos from Akrata, who composed Greek-language sonnets, and the previously mentioned Asia Minor refugee Costas Malaxos-Alexander, who composed sonnets in English.

The outbreak of World War II had a very strong impact upon the Greek communities of the diaspora, including that of Australia. The heroic struggle of the Greek army against the Axis powers invigorated the patriotic feelings of the Greek writers in Australia and generated new subjects including the united struggle of Greek and Australian soldiers against the common enemy, the fall of Australian soldiers on Greek soil, and the resistance movement against the enemy occupation.

The literary production of the war and early post-war years includes poetry, prose (mainly short stories, travelogues, feature articles in literary style) and some literary translations, mainly short stories and poems from Greek into English and poems from English into Greek. Most noteworthy was the first poetry collection by poet Stathis Raftopoulos, *Eleftherias Apantagma* [Anthology on Liberty] published in 1943, which circulated in Melbourne.

An interesting characteristic of the first post-war years is the appearance of prose writing for children in the Greek press, especially from 1950 onwards. In 1954 the first school text prepared especially for Greek children in Australia was published in Sydney. Entitled *Didaktika anagnosmata kai diigimata* [Educational Readings and Short Stories] it was written by Anargyros Fatseas, a Sydney resident since 1924, and contained poems and prose pieces written by him on historical, geographical, social and other subjects about Greece and Australia. It also included poems by eminent writers of Greece in the original, accompanied by his own English translation.

In general, during these years, many other works appeared in the pages of Greek newspapers. A general observation regarding the literary efforts of this period is that some interesting and impressive pieces (especially short stories) did make their appearance, but most continued being of traditional form and style and did not succeed in bringing about the much-needed revival.

The year 1952 became a turning point in the history of Greek immigration to Australia because of an agreement signed between Australia and Greece, according to which Australia would assist Greeks who wished to immigrate to this country. The result was a massive exodus of Greeks from all over Greece in the years which followed,⁹ a demographic event which, in parallel, on the one hand generated new vitality for the marked development of Greek literary production in Australia and, on the other hand, significantly increased the reading audience. In general, the writers appear more dynamic and more productive, and, for the first time, we have a broad spectrum of literary genres. The works (poetic and prose) vary from those of traditional form all the way to the purely experimental. In 1954 we also have the first novel, *Daphne Miller*, which was published in Greek in Melbourne by the Cypriot Costas Athanassiadis, who later settled in the USA.

In terms of poetry and prose in the English language, the last few decades have witnessed an exceptional increase and maturity. It is interesting that these works are written mainly by Australian-born individuals of Greek origin who write only in English, rather than by bilingual writers as happened in the past. Some notable contemporary exceptions are Dimitris Tsaloumas and the multilingual Aristides Paradissis, both of Melbourne, and Vasso Kalamaras of Perth. Furthermore, quite a large number of these poetry and prose works (Greek-and English-language) have been published by well known Greek, Australian and international publishing houses.

As mentioned earlier, the first initiatives in children's literature were made in 1950. However this field started shaping into a literary genre during the decade of the 1980s and a small but cohesive number of works in both Greek and English language has appeared ever since.

Thematically, the picture projected has become increasingly multidimensional. With the passing years, the themes of earlier times which derived from the traumatic experiences of immigration, have diminished dramatically, and more Greeks feel socially and psychologically more at ease;

hence they begin to feel themselves to be an inseparable part of mainstream Australian society. As a result, their subjects have broadened impressively, thus moving not only on an Australian level but also on a far-ranging international one.

Despite all this, it must be acknowledged that the flowering of the literature of the Greeks in Australia, especially since the 1970s, owes much to the encouragement and financial support of the official Australian policy of multiculturalism, as well as to the general multicultural climate that it sparked in the entire country.

In conclusion, viewing the literary creation of the Greeks in Australia from its first hesitant steps at the beginning of the twentieth century until today, we see it has expanded from a one-dimensional body of oral poetry of exclusively community content to a multidimensional Greek-and English-language literary presence, which is increasing steadily and significantly. In addition, this literature is constantly enriched by the influences and the literary vitality of Australia and by the unbreakable ties with the literary tradition of Greece, but also by international events and movements. It thus finds expression in a variety of genres within a broad spectrum of themes, styles, linguistic structures and ideologies. Moreover, it is more and more appreciated in Greece, in Australia and in other countries of the Greek diaspora, appealing to an increasingly international audience, as well.

3. The national identity of the literature

An overview of the literature produced by Greek immigrants and their descendants in Australia, in the past as well as in the present, leads us to an understanding of its historicity (almost one hundred years of active presence), quantity, range in genres, and diversity in themes and styles, and, obviously, different levels of quality, including works of acknowledged merit.¹⁰

In addition, this overview has revealed that this literature constitutes a corpus with its own idiosyncratic characteristics,¹¹ and one which sustains research, independent study and analysis.¹²

Following this conclusion, the issue which naturally arises is the determining criterion or criteria of national identity for this corpus of literature.

For this, a preliminary but essential point is that any literary text is written essentially for communication purposes – since the conscious or subconscious intention of a writer is to convey a message to his readers – and that communication is achieved only by the establishment of a direct link between the writer himself and the reader, that is the literary text which, in reality, becomes the act of communication between these two poles.¹³ In the same way, a body of literature can achieve its purpose only when the messages infused by the writer into his text are received and comprehended by the reader through this communication link. Therefore, the determining criterion of the national identity of a literature cannot be other than the medium which interlinks these three components – the writer, the literary text and the reader.

Since “literature is made of language”¹⁴ and communicated through language, addressing only those readers who share that same linguistic code,¹⁵ we are inevitably led to the realisation that it can only be *language* which establishes the necessary communication channel and which ultimately defines the national identity of the literature itself.

Indeed, the power of language is such that not only is it a shaping force of every literary text but it also shapes the creator of these texts himself. All writers, as individuals, are shaped linguistically, as well as culturally and psychologically, by the language of their social environment, because language becomes an integral part of one’s psychosynthesis and underlie emotions, attitudes and actions, thus helping to shape the whole, as well as a view of life and of the world as a whole.¹⁶ Language also interlocks writers with the linguistic and cultural roots and heritage of their people, binding them thus with the people who share that same language.

Any other criteria, such as themes or settings of the works, the writer’s place of origin, emotional ties with a country, the environment or the period of time in which he/she lives and writes, etc., cannot link the writer directly with readers because they are not a main communication medium in themselves. Therefore, although contributing, these cannot be considered as determining criteria of the national identity for the above mentioned purpose.

Furthermore, themes and settings are in no way the exclusive domain of any writer or of any national body of literature. On the contrary, anyone, of any nationality, can choose to write on any subject which may appeal to him and set his work in any part of the globe (as for example Patrick White, the Australian Nobel Prize-winning author, who wrote in Australia but set a number of his works in Greece), of the universe or, indeed, even in a non-existent fantasy land. Therefore, it is obvious that themes and settings alone cannot possibly determine the national identity of a literature.

In the same way, the writer's place of origin, environment, length of time he resided at a certain place, or even emotional ties with any country add to the richness of the texts by providing themes and a wealth of experience on which the writer can draw, but they function merely as stimuli and influences, remaining unvoiced ideas unless they find expression through a particular language, and are able to be communicated to the reader.

From the above we can conclude that the most satisfactory criterion by which we can identify a literary work and also the national body of literature to which it belongs, is language.

Finally, in this age of expanding globalisation one last aspect relevant to this discussion also merits consideration. With the increasing awareness and acceptance of the role of the «world languages» (with English the main contender)¹⁷, perhaps future studies of the world literatures will see a much larger and encompassing framework of classification based not on the limitations of geography, nation, ethnicity, culture, themes, etc., but on the linguistic code.

The future may well see literatures grouped according to the languages in which they are written, i.e. English-language literature, French-language literature, Greek-language literature, etc. These groupings would be based on the linguistic codes used by the writers, and they would indicate the reader's accessibility to the writings in that language, because of the knowledge of that language rather than because of national, cultural, geographical and historical criteria. This is not to say that the latter criteria do not deserve recognition. Such a classification could be diachronic and would override factors such as culture change, altered national boundaries, dramatic historical events, etc. It would also bypass the need to distinguish between

literatures as being metropolitan, mainstream, colonial, diasporic, immigrant, hyphenated (e.g. Greek-Australian, Canadian-French, Mexican-Spanish), etc.

4. The case of the literature of the Greeks in Australia

The next point logically arising in this discussion is the national identity of the literature created by Greek immigrants and their descendants in Australia. One of its characteristics, as has already been stated, is its dual linguistic identity (Greek and English). Indeed, a part of this literature — up to now the larger — written in the Greek language, and the other part increasingly in English. It is worth noting that the first part seems to be the domain of the first generation Greeks educated in Greece and the second part mostly by their children who are mainly Australian educated, although there are a few cases who have given us literary works in both languages.

Therefore, in spite of the fact that this corpus of literature can be examined on its own merit — just as, say Marxist or feminist writing can — it is not and must not be seen as an independent body of literature. On the contrary, because this literature appears in two languages, and also because the most determining criterion of its national identity is language, the national identity of a work is unavoidably determined by the language in which it is written. So, the writer who chooses to express himself in the Greek language, and as a result addresses exclusively the Greek readership, definitely binds his works to the literature of that language, i.e. he is doing Greek literature.¹⁷ This is ratified by a number of leading scholars in Greece. For example, among others, Professor P.D. Mastrodimitris, in his definition of the object of Modern Greek philology, states that Modern Greek works are “the literary works of Modern Hellenism written in the Modern Greek language”.¹⁸ Similarly, the eminent critic and historian of Modern Greek literature Professor Alexander Argyriou points out emphatically: “[...] a prose piece of creative imagination written in Greek does not need an additional argument to prove its (Modern) Greekness. Its identity is secured by the language in which it is written”.¹⁹ In the same spirit (referring particularly to the literary production of the Greeks in Australia) the philologist and linguist Nicholas Contossopoulos, former Director of the Centre for the Compilation of the Modern Greek Language Historical Dictionary (Academy of Athens), in one

of his articles wrote categorically: “It is, logically, unimaginable a Greek-language piece of literature written by a Greek immigrant in Brazil to be studied by the history of Portuguese-language written literature. This work belongs to the Greek-language production...”²⁰

Moreover, not only do these works in Greek, and those of the Greek diaspora in general, belong to Greek-language literature, but they also exhibit an expression and a tone, and introduce new settings and themes. Together they bring a new dimension to and enrich the literature of Greece itself with the intellectual and cultural mosaic of global Hellenism.

Following the same line of reasoning, the works written in English unquestionably contribute to Australian literature. Australian writers, both of Greek and non-Greek origin, concur with this. For example, the award-winning writer Angelo Loukakis has written: “My contention is that Australian Literature means – or ought to mean – anything written in English in the way of prose or poetry by any persons who care to call themselves Australian, whether they are in residence or expatriated. It does not matter whether they have exotic surnames. Nor does it matter what they choose to write ‘about’.”²¹ Similarly, the literary editor and noted poet Robert Adamson wrote: “When I say Australian literature [...] I mean literature written by people who live here and write in English.”²²

As with the contribution of the Greek-language writers to Greek-language literature, similarly the English-language works by people of Greek origin bring a new tone and a new dimension to the mainstream Australian literature.

An apt example which illustrates the above taxonomy is the case of the Greek poet Ioannis Papadiamantopoulos who was born and raised in Greece where he published his first and only Greek poetry collection *Trygones kai Ehidnai* [Doves and Serpents] (1878), which garnered him his place in Greek letters and, accordingly, he is represented in Greek anthologies and histories of literature. After this lone Greek-language collection of poems, according to the noted scholar K. Dimaras, “Papadiamantopoulos is getting ready to become Moréas, and soon will be lost for the Greek Letters”.²³ Settling in France, for the rest of his life Papadiamantopoulos wrote in French, under the nom-de-plume Jean Moréas, achieving a place as a poet in French literature. Here, it is also worth mentioning the two independent

excellent monographs by Robert Jouanny, Professor at the Sorbonne on the work of Ioannis Papadiamantopoulos – Jean Moréas, dedicated to him one as “*écrivain grec*” and the other as “*écrivain français*”.

In the case of those bilingual writers of Greek origin, it is obvious that they contribute to both literatures. In other words, the Greek-language works belong to Greek literature and the English-language ones to Australian literature. With reference to this particular subject, Nicholaos Contossopoulos states briefly and clearly: “When a literary person writes in more than one language (like Solomos who wrote in Greek and in Italian), his works belong to the corresponding language of each work”.²⁴

However, there is a trend in Australia, regardless of whether it is in agreement with the principles of philology or not, to name any literary works written (whether in Greek or in English) by a person of Greek origin living in Australia “Greek-Australian” literature. By assigning such a label, we do this body of literature a disservice, as in effect we assign it a peripheral existence – neither Greek nor Australian – and thus imply that this literature so designated does not fully belong to either the Greek or the Australian national body of literature, and so is of marginal importance.

By this criterion, for example, Constantine Cavafy, one of the most renowned and influential poets in Modern Greek literature, who was born and lived in Alexandria, Egypt and wrote in Greek, should be considered as having done “Greek-Egyptian” literature, something which is unheard of! Similarly, the Russian-born Vladimir Nabokov, who lived and wrote (in English) in the United States, should be considered as having written “Russian-American” literature, or the Polish-born Joseph Conrad who lived in England and wrote in English, should be considered as having written “Polish-British” literature. Accordingly, Michael Pieris, Professor at the University of Cyprus, expresses courageously his antithesis to “combinations of the type Greek-American, Greek-Australian, Greek-German, Greek-Canadian, Greek-Russian, etc. literature” pointing out that “this did not happen even in the nineteenth century when even more valid historical reasons existed which one could adduce, but also there were more powerful peripheral writing personalities”.²⁵

However, there is an additional reason why the term “Greek-Australian literature” is not valid, both from a philological and a logical point of view and that it carries in itself the seed of its own destruction.

The term “Greek-Australian literature” presupposes the existence of Greek-Australian writers, but the matter is for how many generations can we consider these writers Greek Australians and at which point do they become Australians of Greek origin? Unquestionably, observing that in the last two decades Greek immigration to Australia has diminished to an insignificant level,²⁶ it is easy to understand that the term “Greek-Australian” has an expiration date. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that the literary writing of people of Greek origin will not continue, or that in the future it will not even increase, although, thinking logically, the time will come when this literature will not be known any more as Greek-Australian literature, since it will be a term not used for its writers any longer, while, on the other hand, the bodies both of Greek and Australian literature will carry on as long as these nations and people continue to exist.

5. The attitude of Greece

One final but not less important point regards Greece’s attitude towards the literary efforts and achievements of Australia’s Greeks. There is no doubt that the literature of the Greeks in Australia – like any literature of Greeks in the diaspora – does not develop in a vacuum. In the particular case of the Greeks in this country, this has developed under the constant geographical, socio-cultural, intellectual, historical, literary, linguistic and other influences, on the one hand, of Australia – the environment where the writers of Greek origin (especially the English-language ones) live and work, and on the other hand, of Greece – the place of origin from where the writers (Greek-language ones) carry with them all the characteristics mentioned above or with which they are endowed by their parents (regarding the Australian-born ones).

Of course, there is no doubt that the less assimilated the immigrant writer is to the new society, the more attached in sentiment and in memory he is to his native land, while the more assimilated he is to his new social environment, the more his subjects and even his style approach the new literary creative reality.

Regarding Greek-language literature in particular (not only of Australia but of the diaspora as well), what is noticed is that it has preserved all the main qualities of the neohellenic literature of Greece, while the writers themselves always have tried to maintain close contact with the literature and trends of the metropolis.

However, in this hard struggle the Greek-language writers of Australia and of the diaspora in general, have been engaged and at the same time they make tremendous efforts so that their endeavours and their talent are evaluated and recognised by the intellectuals in Greece, and their works to be published or to be included in anthologies in Greece. Unfortunately Greece itself pays little, or no attention at all, to works written beyond the boundaries of the metropolis! The surprising point here is that this lack of interest, evaluation and recognition of the literary works written by Greeks in Australia, or in other countries as well, is due not to their lack of quality but basically to the indifferent or condescending attitude of Greece itself towards the endeavours of the Greeks of the diaspora in general.²⁷ After all this is also strongly implied in the frequent subcategorisation of these works under labels, such as “immigrant literature”, “literature of the diaspora” (“diasporic literature”), etc., a clear suggestion that it is not considered as having status and value equal to the metropolitan Greek literature, something not found in Australia towards its writers living abroad.²⁸ Admittedly, this unfortunate mentality of Greece is partially due, in Manolis Yialourakis’ words, to the fact (especially when judging a work belonging to the past) that “[...] it is not enough for one to place it in its period and to evaluate it according to aesthetic criteria. He must identify himself with this”.²⁹ Of course, there have been a few, comparatively rare, cases of diaspora writers, such as Constantine Cavafy of Egypt, Nikos Kahtitsis of Canada and Nikos Calas of the USA who have gained a place in Modern Greek Letters, with their works included in school anthologies in Greece,³⁰ but these are exceptions to the canon.

This disheartening attitude of Greece towards the Greek writers of the diaspora and their works most probably derives from a general attitude towards Greek immigration, a subject which is today officially considered *passé*. After all Greece, in particular for the past few years, is seen as a country which receives immigrants and refugees, something admitted, even

reluctantly, by the Greeks of Greece itself. Finally, no matter what the influencing reasons, some scholars, such as Professor Ioannis Hassiotis, even argue that “[the literary production of the Greeks abroad] is a chapter of the history of contemporary Greek literature which has not been paid attention to by our philologists to the degree it deserves”.³¹

The above discussion leads us to the obvious conclusion that Greece needs to change its attitude towards the writers of Greek origin who live and work outside Greece. Actually on at least two key points:

- a) complete familiarization with the literary works written by Greeks abroad, and
- b) complete and equal integration of the Greek-language part of this literature into Modern Greek literature hand in hand with the works produced in Greece itself.

After all, thanks to its particular, idiosyncratic characteristics and qualities the literature of Hellenism in Australia, like that of the diaspora not only enriches the literature of Metropolitan Greece by making it more robust and multi-leveled, but also constitutes an integral element of the main trunk of the Greek-language literature to which it rightfully belongs, contributing notably in its turn to the latter’s international prominence and prestige.

NOTES

1. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (*Population Clock*, Canberra [<http://www.abs.gov.au>]), the estimated resident population of Australia on 30 January 2005 was 20,254,585.

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2015.0 2001 Census Reveals Australians’ Cultural Diversity*, Canberra, 17/6/2002 [<http://www.abs.gov.au>].

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *1996 Census Dictionary, Section One: 1996 Census Classifications (Language Spoken at Home – LANP)*, Canberra, 3/7/1996 (updated 9/3/2001) [<http://www.abs.gov.au>] and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia 2003: Population Languages*, [Canberra], 24/1/2003 [<http://www.abs.gov.au>].

4. According to the Australian census of 2001, there are 375,703 people of Greek origin in Australia, that is about 2% of the total population, or about 400,000-460,000 if we add first, the Greek Cypriots and second, the Greeks who emigrated to Australia from countries other than Greece.

5. For a diachronic study of this literature (Greek-and English-language) from its first appearance early in the twentieth century, as well as biographical information on the writers and an anthology of their works, see George Kanarakis, *I logotechniki parousia ton Ellinon stin Afstralia* [The Literary Presence of the Greeks in Australia], (Series: Studies, No.1), Athens: Institute of Modern Greek Studies, 1985 and by the same author *Greek Voices in Australia: A Tradition of Prose, Poetry and Drama*, Sydney: Australian National University Press, 1987 (rpt. 1991), and *Opsis tis logotechnias ton Ellinon tis Afstralias kai Neas Zilandias* [Aspects of the Literature of the Greeks in Australia and New Zealand], (Series: O Ellinismos tis diasporas, No.2), Athens: Grigoris Publications, 2003, ch.1.

6. George Kanarakis, *George Nicolaidis: A Cypriot Page in Australian Hellenism*, (Series: Library of the Cypriot Diaspora, No.2), Nicosia: Presidential Commissioner's Office, 2003 [Bilingual].

7. Nicolaidis' short stories appeared in the Melbourne newspaper *Afstralia* (Australia) his first story ("The aeroplane") published in the fifth issue on 4 July 1913. Also, for more information about the newspaper *Afstralia*, as well as its editor Efstratios Venlis, the father of the Greek press in Australia, see George Kanarakis, *In the Wake of Odysseus: Portraits of Greek Settlers in Australia*, (Series: Greek-Australian Studies Publications, No.5), Melbourne: RMIT University, 1997, p.62-83 and *O ellinikos typos stous Antipodes: Afstralia and Nea Zilandia* [The Greek Press in the Antipodes: Australia and New Zealand, (Series: Hellenism of the Diaspora, No.1), Athens: Grigoris Publications, 2000, p.25, 53-57 and passim.

8. Anargyros Fatseas also had English-language poems and short stories published in Greek newspapers and magazines of Sydney and Melbourne.

9. While in the period June 1952-July 1953 1,979 Greeks emigrated to Australia, in 1953-1954 they increased to 5,361, in 1954-1955 to 12,885 and in 1964-1965 to 17,896 (Department of Immigration, *Australian Immigration: Consolidated Statistics No.3, 1969*, Canberra: Government Printing Office, 1969, p.36). Although from 1971 the number of new Greek arrivals declined significantly, it is estimated that from 1950 until now they reached 250.000 persons (Kanarakis, 2000, p.46).

10. In the run of the years, there have been a number of English-and Greek-language writers (Australian-born and immigrants) who have been awarded prestigious prizes, the former in Australia and the latter in Greece, while several of their books have been published by Australian and Greek companies.

11. However, mainly because of lack of familiarity, sometimes there have been opinions expressed to the contrary from some sources in Greece. For example, the anthologist Renos Apostolides states in a letter to this writer dated 29 January 1986, "Of course, I don't see how a Modern Greek literature with a character of its own could develop there. Moreover, in-depth Modern Greek education does not function on our people there, and Australian life seems that either it does not inspire them or it does not have essential elements".

12. For a more detailed examination of this matter, see George Kanarakis, "The Literature of the Greeks in Australia: A Study of Its Identity and Development", in A. Kapardis and A. Tamis, eds., *Afstraliotes Helenes: Greeks in Australia*, Melbourne: River Seine Press, 1988, p.41-51.

13. See, among others, Michel Riffaterre's works *Essais de stylistique structurale*, Paris: Flammarion 1971 and *La production du texte*, Paris: Seuil, 1979.

14. M.A.K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, London: Edward Arnold, 1978, p.11.

15. Michel Riffaterre, "Criteria for Style Analysis", *Word (USA)*, 15 (1959): 157.

16. This finds most apt expression in Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical principle "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (*Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (transl. Thanasis Kitsopoulos), (Series: Philosophy – Sources, No.20), Athens: Papazissis Publications, 1978, p.110 [principle 5.6]) [In Greek]. Following the same train of thought the Australian Professor Sneja Gunew, now at the University of Vancouver, writes indicatively: "The way we think is entirely produced by the *language* in which we think. [...] Paradoxically, it is *languages* that speak us." ("Discourses of Otherness: Migrants in Literature", in Radha Rasmussen and Henning Rasmussen, eds., *Prejudice in Print: The Treatment of Ethnic Minorities in Published Works*, Melbourne: Centre for Migrant Studies, Monash University, 1982, p.49 [Conference proceedings, 20-22 November 1981]).

17. The subject of the national identity of literary works, unavoidably leads to the interlinked subject of the literary identity of the writers themselves. On this, the well known Greek-born writer Theodore Kallifatides, who has lived in Sweden for years now and writes in Swedish, in a interview he gave to Antonis Fostieris and Thanassis Niarchos for the Athenian journal *I lexi* [The Word] stated indicatively: “I believe that the writer’s identity is, finally, language. [...] Therefore, the immigrant writer who stopped writing in Greek, without being cut off from the Greek society and language, certainly he cannot be placed completely in the main trunk of the Greek literature. [...] A Greek, yes, but not a Greek writer” (“Ta provlimata tis glossas kai i elliniki logotechnia tis diasporas” [The Problems of Language and the Greek Literature of the Diaspora], *I lexi*, No.110 (July-August 1992): 451, 452, 454).
18. P. D. Mastrodimitris, *Isagogi sti neoelliniki philologia* [Introduction to Modern Greek Philology], Athens: Papazissis Publications, 19762, p.23.
19. A. Argyriou, “To thema tis ellinikotitas stin pezographia mas” [The Subject of Greekness in Our Prose Writing], in D.G. Tsaoussis, *Ellinismos – Ellinikotita: Ideologikoi kai viomatiki axones tis neoellinikis koinonias* [Greeks – Greekness: Ideological and Experiential Axes of Modern Greek Society], Athens: Bookshop of “Hestia”, I.D. Kollaros and Co., 1983, p.192.
20. N.G. Contossopoulos, “Problimata logotechnikis kai glossikis patrotitas” [Problems of Literary and Language Paternity], *Social Incisions* (Koinonikes Tomes) (Athens), Vol.6, No.60 (December 1994): 453.
21. Angelo Loukakis, “A National Literature”, *The Bulletin Literary Supplement* (Sydney), Vol.104, No.5372 (5 July 1983): 60.
22. Manfred Jurgensen and Robert Adamson, *Australian Writing 1988*, Ringwood: Penguin, 1988, p. xi.
23. K. Th. Dimaras, *Istoria tis neoellinikis logotechnias: Apo tis protes rizες os tin epochi mas* [History of Modern Greek Literature: From the First Roots to Our Time], [Athens], Ikaros, 19756, p.350.
24. Contossopoulos, 1994, p.453-454.
25. Michael Pieris, *Apo to mertikon tis Kyprou (1979-1990)* [From the Share of Cyprus (1978-1990)], Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 1981, p.402.

26. As mentioned previously (fn. 9) Greek immigration to Australia started declining since 1971. In the period 1970-1975 25,040 Greek arrivals were registered, while in 1985-1990 3,740 (Bureau of Immigration Research, *Australian Immigration: Consolidated Statistics No. 16, 1989-1990*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991, p. 21, Table 10), only 280 in 1993-1994, 187 in 1995-1996, 155 in 1996-1997, 111 in 1997-1998, 142 in 1998-1999 and just 99 (for the first time after World War II below 100!) in 2003-2004 (Kanarakis, 2000, p. 141 fn. 38; Kanarakis, 2003, p. 72 fn. 31; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 November 2004, p. 1).

27. Regarding this point see also George Kanarakis, "Migrant Writing in Multicultural Australia: The Case of the Greeks", *Études Helléniques/Hellenic Studies* (Montreal), Vol.3, No.2 (1995): 19.

28. It is a fact that Australia does not segregate its writers who reside and work in other countries from the main body of its national literature. Examples which come to mind are, from past decades, George Johnston and Charmian Clift (both lived for several years on Greek islands where they also wrote some of their works) and from contemporary times, Lily Brett and Shirley Hazzard (both have lived in the USA), David Malouf (he has lived for a number of years in Italy) and others.

29. Manolis Yialourakis, *O Kritikos N. Kazantzakis* [N. Kazantzakis the Critic], Athens: Diodos, 1981, p.9-10.

30. For the first time prose pieces and poems of Greek-language writers of Australia and Germany were included in the 1996 anthology-reader *Ta helidonia* [The Swallows] (Part III) for the elementary school students in Greece of Years Five and Six, published in Athens by the State Organisation for the Publication of Textbooks.

31. Ioannis Hassiotis, *Episkopisi tis istorias tis neoellinikis diasporas* [Review of the History of Modern Greek Diaspora], Thessaloniki: Vaniis, 1993, p.185-186.

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