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Controversial Language Issues in Greek Children's Literature and Beyond

The language in Greece was always an issue that caused great controversy. It might be considered the most controversial subject in the history of modern Greece. After Greece regained its independence from Ottoman Empire, the language issue divided the nation into the supporters of the demotic language(from the word “demos”, i.e. community), influenced by the centuries of Turkish occupation, and those in favor of a purist, archaic version based on ancient Greek, which was called *katharevousa* (from the word “katharos”, i.e. pure / “pure language”). Katharevousa became the formal language of the newly established Greek state. However, katharevousa is a language clearly and unequivocally associated with regimes of dictatorship in the history of modern Greece, and hence demotic Greek came to be perceived in terms of an always harsh political opposition. The language issue and the dispute archaic vs demotic speech is further developed when transmitted to the field of children's literature via the long-established and enduring practice of intralingual translation- mostly from katharevousa to demotic language. In my presentation I offer an overview of this controversial language issue as it is portrayed in Greek literature for children. Examples are drawn by classic texts for children and by emblematic cross-over pieces that hold a prominent position in Greek literary school canon. Seen in this light, the debate over the language becomes an issue of endless conflict: of values, ideologies, pedagogical practices, and therefore, translated into educational /reading policy, of *politics*.

Keywords: Greek language, Greek children's literature, Greek poetry, nationalism, school canon, pedagogy

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