

Tzina Kalogirou

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece)

### **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

#### **Selected Bibliography:**

Konstantina Georganta(2012 ).*Conversing Identities: Encounters Between British, Irish and Greek Poetry, 1922-1952*, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

Tziovas, Dimitris(1986). *The nationalism of the demoticists and its impact on their literary theory (1888-1930): an analysis based on their literary criticism and essays*, Amsterdam : A.M. Hakkert.

Tziovas, Dimitris(2014). *Re-imagining the Past: Antiquity and Modern Greek Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Tzina Kalogirou** is Professor of *Modern Greek Literature and Literature Teaching* in the School of Education/ Department of Primary Education at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece, and Director of the Postgraduate Programme of “Rhetoric, Humanities, and Education”. She is the author, editor or co-editor of 16 academic books (in Greek and English) and numerous chapters/papers (in Greek, English and French) in edited volumes, international and national refereed journals, and conference proceedings. She is a member of the steering committee of The Child and the Book International Conference and the co-editor of the international academic *Journal of Literary Education*. She is also an official partner of the international research project TALIS and member of the Scientific Committee of the editorial series ‘Laboratorio Children’s Books’, for Anicia Edizioni – Rome, and “Niata” for the University of Palermo. One of her latest publications is: «Playful Encounters in the Garden of Poetry: Children’s Poetry and Play» for the international academic journal *Filoteknos*,vol.9/2019, 82-104.