

DR GEORGE KANARAKIS

Citation for the conferral of a Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*)

George Kanarakis was born in Piraeus, the port city neighbouring Athens. As an undergraduate at the University of Athens he studied Greek and English Philology. In 1967 he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study in the USA, completing an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Indiana. He returned to the University of Athens to complete a Doctorate of Philosophy in contrastive linguistics.

Having taught linguistics and English language in tertiary institutions in Greece and the United States, he came to Australia in 1976. He joined the School of Communication and Liberal Studies at the Mitchell College of Advanced Education first as a lecturer and then a senior lecturer, teaching linguistics and Greek language, literature and history. He continued as an academic staff member following the establishment of Charles Sturt University. Students who specialised in Greek studies, linguistics and language teaching have particular reason to value the contribution made by Dr Kanarakis to their education. He will also be remembered by those students who encountered George Kanarakis as part of a broader study of the societal and cultural impact of ethnicity and migration. By introducing them to Greek-Australian literature he movingly exposed them to the tensions and challenges of making a life in a new land.

George Kanarakis has contributed to educational literature on the process of language learning, bilingualism and the teaching of languages. More recently he has been involved, by the Greek Ministry of National Education, in the assessment of course proposals from Greek Universities developed in the context of greater mobility between education systems within the European Union. He has also recently been invited by the President of the Greek Parliament to act as an adviser in recruiting Australian students of Greek background to serve in their Parliament for the Youth.

For the last three years, Dr Kanarakis has been an Academic Associate within the Faculty of Arts. His retirement from teaching has enabled him to devote his time with undiminished energy and enthusiasm to his scholarship and writing. Over the last twenty years George Kanarakis has produced a large volume of work that draws on his knowledge of Greek language and literature to document and analyse the contribution of Greeks to Australian culture: their literature, their press and their history.

His study of the literature of Greeks in Australia was designated a Project of National Significance by the Commonwealth Schools Commission. The work was published first in Greek and then in English in association with the Australian Bicentennial Authority entitled, *Greek Voices in Australia: A Tradition of Prose, Poetry and Drama*. It quickly became a significant text for university Greek courses around Australia. Dr Kanarakis is currently extending this work on the literature of Greeks in Australia with a further project drawing on hitherto untapped and recently discovered sources.

In 1997 he extended our understanding of the role of Greek migration in his book *In the Wake of Odysseus: Portraits of Greek Settlers in Australia*. Recognition of the significance of this work was demonstrated by its launch in both Sydney and Melbourne with addresses from Consuls General and from senior Greek academics. In this book George Kanarakis charts the story of nine of his fellow countrymen who, like him, chose to make Australia their home. From George Tramountanas who was South Australia's first Greek settler in 1842 to Chrys Mantourides who arrived more than a century later, these stories of Greek Australians illuminate the varied contribution of Greek settlers to Australia's economic, social and cultural life. Moreover, through these narratives there emerges a picture of the social and cultural context of the Australia of their times. His most recent book *Approaching Hellenism in Australia: The Literature and the Press* is to be published later this year. In addition Dr Kanarakis has been a prolific writer of book chapters and articles in both English and Greek that extend the analysis of Greek literature, history and the Greek press in Australia.

The contribution of Dr Kanarakis to Greek-Australian scholarship has been recognised both in Australia by the granting of Honorary membership of the Hellenic Writers' and Artists' Association of Australia, and in Greece by the award of the Sophocles Hadzidakis Special Honorary Prize of Letters and Civilisation. His overall contribution to Greek letters was recognised by the International Society of Greek Writers in Athens. He is also an elected member of the International Academy for the Promulgation of Culture in Rome. Recently he was invited to be a scholarly adviser to the Institute of Greek Culture in Europe based in Würzburg, Germany.

Dr Kanarakis has also contributed to spreading an understanding of the Greek contribution to Australian literature and culture more widely both in Australia and in Greece through numerous press, radio and television interviews.

The award of Doctorate of Letters recognises the contribution of George Kanarakis to writing about the culture and literature of the Greek diaspora. His is a body of work characterised both by scholarship and a sensitivity to the human experience of migration. It has not only provided Greek Australians with an important record of their literary, social and cultural contribution to Australian life but has also made accessible to non Greek-speaking Australians an important part of our shared literary inheritance. In so doing the work of George Kanarakis has made a significant contribution to Australia's multicultural heritage.

Dated this Ninth Day of April One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety Nine