

Yorghis Manousakis, *‘Η Κρήτη στο λογοτεχνικό έργο του Πρεβελάκη* [Crete in the literary work of Prevelakis]. Athens, 1968. 139 pages.

In dealing with Crete in the literary work of Pandelis Prevelakis, Mr. Manousakis deals in fact with what has been the most central theme in the work of the distinguished Cretan poet, novelist and art historian. Not only in his novels, chronicles and plays, but in his three studies on Dhominikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) and his two books on Kazantzakis as well, Crete is still hauntingly present.

Much has been said about the role of this island in the mind and work of Kazantzakis, Prevelakis's fellow-countryman, old friend and "tutor," but if Kazantzakis in his philosophic quest through the world culture and intellect, went eventually beyond Crete, Prevelakis has remained the faithful and passionate, though not unrealistic, lover and chronicler of his native land. His creative gifts have mostly gone into re-creating its natural beauty, native culture, heroic tradition, human types, historical adventures of the last hundred years, as well as its decline.

In *To Khroniko mias politias* (*The Chronicle of a City*, 1938) he gave us a lyrically, "mythically," affectionately and nostalgically drawn picture of his native Rethemno as he knew it in his childhood and early youth, a picture approximating an idealistic Platonic republic. In *Pandermi Kriti* (*All Destitute Crete*, 1945) and in the *Kritikos* (*The Cretan*, 1948-50) trilogy, in historically and imaginatively re-creating the period of Crete's rising against its Turkish tyrant, he undertook the conscious effort of projecting all the elements that compose the living Cretan soul and of raising these elements into universal cultural virtues. The tone of both these works has an epic grandeur, yet whereas *Pandermi Kriti* is tightly knit and austere, *Kritikos* is long and expansive in its detailed panoramic view of a people and its culture in heroic action.

A new trilogy, entitled *I Dhromi tis dhimiourghias* (*The Roads of Creation*), was to move from the epic to the tragic, from the people as a whole to the individual, and from the idealistic to the realistic view of things. The central figure and narrator in it, Yorghakis is obviously the author himself in his emotional and intellectual adventure through life, yet in connection with Crete. *O Ilios tou thanatou* (*The Sun of Death*, 1959), *I Kefali tis Medhousas* (*The Head of Medusa*, 1963), and *O Artos ton angelon* (*The Bread of the Angels*, 1966), are stages in his development. Death in its multiple meanings is perhaps the supreme hero throughout, since its knowledge and brave acceptance, especially for a Cretan, de-

feats fear and stands as the highest test for man. As Yorghakis grows from childhood to youth and to middle age, the beautiful, balanced, harmonious, yet powerful, simplicity of a traditional, earthy, rural world gradually succumbs to the fatal blows of two World Wars, modern technology, decline of values, and the ensuing helpless alienation of man. The painful polarity in Yorghakis is wonderfully symbolized by his aunt Roussaki, the very spirit of traditional Crete, with her unlettered, intuitive, fresh and endless wisdom, who brought him up as a child, and by his "tutor" Loizos Dhamolinos, an exile of remote Western origin, a highly educated and sceptical bourgeois searching desperately for the absolute freedom of the individual, hence nihilistic and deprived of all solacing faiths except the faith in humanism and art.

Prevelakis's hymn to Crete reached its solemn peak in his play *To Ifestio* (*The Volcano*, 1962) dealing with a group of Cretans who, when besieged by the Turks at Arkadhi in 1866, rather than yielding, set their gunpowder afire and perished most of them in the explosion.

Love for his native Crete as well as love and admiration for Prevelakis's genius is what inspires Mr. Manousakis's very perceptive and well written study.

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