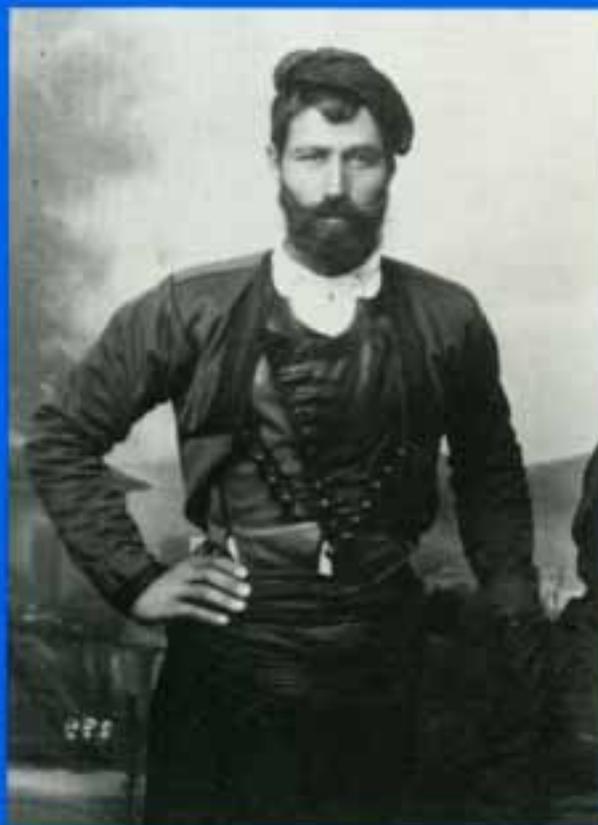


PANDELIS PREVELAKIS



The Cretan

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK
BY ABBOTT RICK AND PETER MACKRIDGE
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY PETER MACKRIDGE

Pandelis Prevelakis (1909–86), a major Greek writer, has produced over forty volumes of poetry, novels, plays, and essays. On the occasion of the American edition of his novel, *The Sun of Death* (1964), Henry Miller greeted the Cretan author as “a writer whose mind and spirit excite me, whose language awakens reverberations of other kindred souls whose work I have adored since early youth....”

Prevelakis has long been in the shadow of his close friend and fellow Cretan, Nikos Kazantzakis. It is time that Prevelakis’s work be made known and independently appraised in the non-Greek world as it has been in the Greek. The English edition of his major work, *The Cretan*, is a step in that direction.

In this Tolstoyan historical novel, Prevelakis offers a masterly presentation of the Cretan myth, with its peculiar Cretan ethos characterized by “piety, austerity, frugality, dourness, sternness, punctuated by sudden outbursts of reckless daring.”

The Cretan is the story of Crete and its people struggling for individual and national liberation from Turkish rule, a struggle symbolized in the two main characters of the novel, the fictional Konstandis and the historical Venizelos, both figures of epic proportions.

The Cretan is three books in one: *The Tree*, *The First Freedom*, and *The State*. And as its author explained, “*The Tree* presents a young man, growing and maturing like a sapling in the local popular culture, which was closed and rudimentary, but self-sufficient. *The First Freedom* describes the struggles of the mature man together with his comrades to achieve national liberation. Lastly, *The State* depicts the national fighters sacrificing themselves for the second precondition of a decent life, in other words, a democratic state.”

The Cretan will delight readers who may have spent some time on Crete. It will, most likely, encourage those who have not been to Crete to plan for a visit there in the near future. In any event, it is absorbing reading, for to quote Miller again, Prevelakis “reveals to us the true nature of wisdom, the true method of education, the true means of implanting faith and love of life....”

Peter Mackridge is university Lecturer in Modern Greek at the University of Oxford and a fellow of St. Cross College. His publications include *The Modern Greek Language* (1985) and *Dionysios Solomos* (1989), as well as several articles on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Greek writers. His published translations from Greek include a novel and a play by Prevelakis, stories by Yorgos Ioannou and Costas Taktsis, and poems by Cavafy, Aris Alexandrou, and Titos Patrikios.

Abbott Rick distinguished himself as a leading American translator of modern Greek literature into English. His published translations include Stratis Myrivilis, *The Mermaid Madonna* (1959), Nelly Theodorou, *Pastorale* (1961), and Pandelis Prevelakis, *The Sun of Death* (1964).