

# INTRODUCTION

## "NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS: RE-reading the writer in the second decade of 21<sup>th</sup> century"

Sixty years have already passed since Nikos Kazantzakis' death (1957); the long years until this publication, devoted to him (2017), gives us the chance to study his work with a clear mind. It is well known, Kazantzakis, his work as well, are confronted with a special passion guiding either to an absolute admiration or a complete rejection. Nowadays, rereading Nikos Kazantzakis' whole work, we illuminate its underestimated sides, confirming Gadamer's term for the classic author; according to Gadamer the classic author says to the next generations something different as if it is addressed only to them.

Within these sixty years our way of reading and interpreting a text has been changed completely. The system of values is different, as well as the way of translation and its theory, and, most importantly, our criticism and evaluation have lost their absolutism. Reception's theories have pointed out in a persuasive way that all we, writers and researchers, have a close relationship with our time. Our readings usually reflect what we understand and interested in.

In this special issue one can feel our reflection on Kazantzakis's works; the contributors have a lively interest in education and consider Kazantzakis has a respectable place in the Greek and International Letters and in Education of young people.

By the way, let's continue with a question: Why Nikos Kazantzakis is worthy of having a honorable place in the magazine *Education Sciences (Epistimes Agogis)*? Our experience, coming from the reaction of our students during the courses, devoted to the Cretan writer, explains the positive answer. The young people, actually, read his novels and autobiography *Report to Greco* not only as a literature work, evoking the enjoyment, but also as an "essay" as a "spiritual guide"; Kazantzakis speaks for the great problems of the life and death, the human struggle, the corrupt governments, the oppositions between religion and church, between spirit and material, for the starving and isolated refugees, the violence in the cities etc.

Last year, 2017, was called «Έτος Καζαντζάκη», sixty years after his death. Our Department suggested to us to undertake the edition of a special issue in the magazine *Epistimes Agogis*. So, we asked the contributions of Scholars and researchers, who in their studies and research deal with his works. Of course their approach, aspects and point of view present variety. So, we have the opportunity to read how Nikos Kazantzakis succeeded the *continuity* and the *evolution* of his themes from work to work (Michael Paschalis); how he translated either the ancient Greek, European and American writers,

how he understood them, how he read the Bible, how he developed a conversation with them; even more how he introduced their themes or passages in his poetry and narrative; always changing meanings or renewing their concepts (Michael Paschalis, Alexandra Zervou, N.E. Papadogiannakis, Elpiniki Nikoloudaki, Kleio Papaderou). It is well known Kazantzakis' action, penetrated in many levels of his contemporary literal, political, cultural life in Greece, in Europe, as well. Scholars or young researchers present their studies concerning Kazantzakis as translator and adaptator of children's books (Viky Patsiou & Christina Drakou, Jannis Mitrofanis), as an intellectual, interested in linguistic question and relationships with some Modern Greek writers (Anna Maria Georgoussi), Kazantzakis as a political person expressing his view for the Cretan question and Crete's union with Greece (Manos Halkiadakis). Even though Kazantzakis considered himself as an educator, the teachers of Modern Greek Literature are skeptic if they can teach his works in the Primary or Secondary Schools. Two approaches are included here, which encourage us to "jump" – like the flying fish in Knossos' mural - over our conservative way of thinking and try to enter in Kazantzakis' fictional and magical world (Giorgos Koumakis & Anastassia Oikonomou, Eleutheria Havaki).

Last but not least, Fanis Kakridis, Emeritus Professor of the University of Ioannina - he left us lately - gives us a magnificent personal narrative about his friendship's development with Nikos Kazantzakis; established by the reading of the childrens' book *Megas Alexandros* and grown up during the official journey of the Committee, who investigated the atrocities of the German occupation forces; tortures, executions and holocaust of the Cretan villages. Members of the Committee were Nikos Kazantzakis, Ioannis Kalitsounakis and Ioannis Kakridis. The great classic Professor Ioannis Kakridis had with him his twelve years old son, Fanis.

We are grateful to all authors who responded readily to our call. They help us to come in the writer's laboratory, to know how he interpretes and uses the literal myths, their persons as his self portraits; either as Ulysses or as Minos, Theseus, or both, Theseus and Minotaur. Kazantzakis is always a challenge for a neverending journey in his work.

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