

Société internationale des amis de Nikos Kazantzaki

SYNTHESIS

BULLETIN D'INFORMATIONS



Dessin Takis Kalmouchos, 1929

Mon combat consiste en ceci : lutter sans discontinuer pour trouver la synthèse entre la thèse et l'antithèse.

Nikos Kazantzaki, Égine, 12 février 1944

No 67, April 2025

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MAIN ARTICLE

In this issue of "SYNTHESIS" you will read, among others, the following activities: the opening of the SIANK in its new office in Heraklion, Crete; after New York, the promotion of Kazantzakis' work continues in Boston; meetings of literary cafés; events in Austria, the Czech Republic and among other countries; continuation of the "marathon" reading of the *Odyssey*. Finally, you will read three very interesting testimonies.

We wish you good reading.

HERAKLION CRETE : INSTALLATION OF THE DEFNC IN A PRIVATE OFFICE, EVENTS

Thanks to a donation by George Stasinakis, honorary president of SIANK, Ambassador of Hellenism, the Society will have, from next August, a new private office in the centre of Heraklion. There, the archives, audiovisual material, the library and memorabilia will be kept, while the reception of the public and the organization of meetings are planned. Thanks to this event, many events have been planned from 4 to 6 August 2025. The event on August 6 is part of the "Year of Mikis Theodorakis" and will include music, readings, travel narratives, and texts by Kazantzakis about places he loved. It will be entitled: "From Crete to the End of the Earth". We thank the Region of Crete for the sponsorship. You can get exact information by writing to the e-mail:

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MARATHON READING OF KAZANTZAKIS POETRY IN GREEK

The marathon reading of Kazantzakis' *Odyssey* continues successfully - we are in the rhapsody. O - , judging by the participation, mainly of young people, but also of friends living in various cities and countries. At the end of April, 17,866 verses had been read out of 33,333.

The next dates set for this year are: 27 April, 25 May, 25 May, 29 June, 13 July, 28 September, 26 September, 13 July, 28 September and 26 September.

October, 30 November and 21 December.

Recall that this "marathon" will last until May 2026 (except for August). In October 2027, SIANK plans to organise an **international conference**. You will find all the information on how to participate in the readings (via Zoom or YouTube) at the following link <http://amis-kazantzaki.gr/odyssey>, on the SIANK website or by phone secretary.siank.gr@gmail.com



LE REGARDC RETOIS, THE CRETAN GAZE,
THE CRETAN GAZE, LA MIRADA CRETENSE

The annual review has been published without interruption since 1990, in English, Spanish, French and Greek, aiming to keep alive the interest in the work of Nikos Kazantzakis and to enhance its dissemination with unpublished quotations from the author, studies, testimonies and bibliographical sources. Please spread the word about "Cretan Gaze" to your friends, libraries, universities and schools. Contact by e-mail: secretary.siank.gr@gmail.com . and for the digital version: le.regard.cretois.siank@gmail.com.

SIANK's president, Katerina Zographistou, is preparing an index of all the issues of the review. It will be an excellent working tool, both for researchers who will discover often unpublished texts and original studies and for the general public. Thank you, Katerina!

Contents of issue 51 - December 2024

Texts of Nikos Kazantzakis

- A commentary on the *Odyssey* and letters to his sister and his friend, Yannis Angelakis.

Studies on Nikos Kazantzakis

- Françoise Boussard (Nantes) : *Writing Zorba : a portrait of the Kazantzakian creator as a magician* (in French - summary in other languages).
- Evanthia (Vanda) Papaioannou-Voutsas (Komotini) : *Nikos Kazantzakis - Traveling, Spain* (in Greek - summary in other languages).
- Spyros Kokolakis (Manosque): *Nikos Kazantzakis and sport* (in English - summary in other languages).
- Angela Gentile (Buenos Aires): *the infinite gaze of Kazantzakis* (in Spanish - summary in other languages).

Testimony

- Max Tau : *The great never die* (in French, Greek, English and Spanish).

Book Review

- Zacharias Karatarakis, *Vangelis Raptopoulou "It's God's fault for making the world so beautiful"* (in Greek). We thank the Region of Crete for the financial support for the publication of the next issue.

RECENT AND FUTURE EVENTS

World Reading Club of our author's works

(with zoom and YouTube)

- 3 November 2024 : The Kazantzakis Symposium, by Kyriakos Panagiotou, philologist, researcher, member of the IFTNK.
- 9 March 2025 : "Nikos Kazantzakis: from Crete to Greece and the rest of the world" by Angeliki Taligarou, member of the Board of Directors of the Greek Chapter.

Literary cafés (via zoom and YouTube)

- 19 March 2025 : "Unforgettable times : Kazantzakis in Heraklion during the interwar period" by Nikos Chrysos, writer, First Vice President of the IEPFNK and the Greek Branch.
- 7 May 2025 : The "Glossary of the works of Nikos Kazantzakis" by Vassilios Georgios Georgios, philologist and writer.

International book fairs

- *Thessaloniki* , 8-11 May 2025. Honoured country Italy. SIANK participated on 9 May 2025 with lectures: Angeliki Taligarou on "The chronicle of Kazantzakis' acquaintance with the art and culture of Italy" and Elena Avramidou, member of the Board of Directors of SIANK on "Kazantzakis' actual and intellectual travels in Italy".
- *Chania*, 24-29 June 2025. Allain Glykos, member of the French Chapter, will present his book on the life of the great Cretan, published in

French in "graphic novel" format. Translated into Greek by Katerina Zographistou and published by Dioptra.

From one country to another

Germany. The SIANK, in cooperation with Greek associations, will organize lectures in Freiburg im Breisgau and Berlin.

Latin America, 15 March 2025. The Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay Chapters of the ICFNC organized an online event via zoom. We particularly highlight the interventions from Uruguay on

"Women and death in the work of Kazantzakis" and from Argentina on "Literary labyrinths: from Kazantzakis to Borges". Participants in the discussion included ICFNC members from Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay and Colombia.

Armenia, Yerevan, 28 February 2025. In the presence of a large audience - including the Ambassador of Greece and the Rector of the State University, Lisa Karimian, President of the Armenian Branch of the ICEFNK, presented Kazantzakis' work, thoughts and journey in Armenia. Mr. Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, the rector of the above University, underlined the great literary contribution of Nikos Kazantzakis.

Austria, Vienna, 10 May 2025. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Austria, the National Greek School of Vienna and the ICEFNK organized an event on "Nikos Kazantzakis and Vienna". The speakers were Antonios Koliadis, diplomat, on "Kazantzakis' ties with Vienna, his stay in 1922", Katerina Zographistou on "Kazantzakis' stay in Vienna in 1956 and the awarding of the International Peace Prize to the author". A video produced by the N. Kazantzakis Museum entitled 'I am free' was shown.

Belgium. Tasos Papadopoulos, president of the Belgian Branch of the SIANK, informs us about the following events, which will take place in *Brussels: June 4, 2025*, Presentation of the book by Harry Xirouhakis "No struggle without him - Charalambos Siradakis (1886-1970)". The speakers will be: Dionysios Kalavrezos, former Ambassador; Spyros Pappas, lawyer; Maria Aroni, journalist. The evening will be moderated by Panos Grentis, lawyer. The event is organised by "Epikentro" publications, in collaboration with the "Argo" Network of Greeks in Brussels, with the support of the IEPNK and the Association of Cretans in Belgium. *18 June, 2025*, Evening entitled "Nikos Kazantzakis - places of soul", with the participation of professors of the University of Athens, Christina Dounias: "Nikos Kazantzakis on Mount Athos", Olympia Tahopoulou: "Images of the East in the Garden of the Rocks of Nikos Kazantzakis", Dora Mendi: "Kazantzakis' Aegina", Thanasis Agathos: "From Aegina to Paris: Kazantzakis' route in the 1940s-1950s".

Bulgaria, Sofia, 13 October 2024. The film "Alexis Zorbas" was screened at the International Film Festival. Before the screening, Dragomira Valcheva, Associate Professor of Modern Greek Language at the University of Sofia and President of the Bulgarian Branch of the IFFNK, gave a lecture on "Zorba's transformations in the novel, film and censored Bulgarian translation". The event was held under the auspices of the Embassy of Greece.

Cyprus, Nicosia, 23 April 2025. Lecture by Agathis Markatis, university professor and honorary member of the ICEFNK, on "Nature and Kazantzakis". The event is organized by

the Cyprus Branch of the SIANK, the Cyprus Writers' Union, the Municipality of Lefkonoiko and the community of Aigialousa and is held under the auspices of the Deputy Minister of Culture of Cyprus.

United States of America. The SIANK and the non-profit organization "Citizen Tales" are organizing a series of zoom courses on "Nikos Kazantzakis, the world traveller". They will participate: Katerina Zografistou, *March 10, 2025*: "Nikos Kazantzakis. *March 31, 2025*: "Nikos Kazantzakis and the United States of America".

May 19, 2025: "Nikos Kazantzakis' travels in Europe"; Elena Avramidou; *April 28, 2025*: "Kazantzakis in Asia and the Far East"; George Stasinakis; *June 9, 2025*: "Kazantzakis and the Arab-African world". *Boston, May 24-29, 2025*: Malioteio Cultural Center, Hellenic College Holy Cross, 11th International Summer University. Organized by the University of Ioannina (Greece): "Homogenous media: challenges and perspectives for the Greek language and culture". Katerina Zographistou will give a lecture on "Texts and interviews of Nikos Kazantzakis in the media". *New York, 4 June 2025*.

"Kazantzakis and Borges: two men, one labyrinth". *France, Strasbourg, 23 January, 2025*: Lecture-concert on "Albert Schweitzer's friendship with Nikos Kazantzakis", with the participation of Jean-Claude Schwendemann and Thierry Mechler on organ (works by Bach and Mendelssohn); *Nantes - Open University, 28 January, 2025*.

Greece, Corfu, 26 March, 2025. The SIANK, the UNESCO Chair at the Ionian University and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Corfu organized an event dedicated to Kazantzakis' tercina "Agia Teresa". The speakers were: Rev. George Altouvas, Roman Catholic Archbishop, Spyros Gaoutsis, historian, researcher, Charoula Verigou, local manager of the CDFNK and Elena Avramidou. *Thrace, Komotini, 2 April, 2025*, World Children's Book Day, "From Andersen's fairy tales to N. Kazantzakis' children's novels", speech by Vanda Papaioannou-Voutsas, member of the Board of Directors of the Greek Branch of the ICEFNK and discussion at the 1st and 2nd classes of the Intercultural Lyceum of Sapes. *Thessaloniki, 4 May, 2025*: Lecture by Angeliki Taligarou on the topic

"Reference to Greco". *Larissa, May 27, 2025*: The Ascent of Heroes in the Work of Kazantzakis" was organized by the institutions: "Local Association of Friends of Kazantzakis, SIANK, the Municipality of Larissa and the Cultural Center of Larissa Teachers". The legal expert Kostas Tataris referred to the novels *Zorbas* and *The Poor Man of God*.

Italy, Pavia, April 9, 2025. Presentation of the Italian translation of the work *Unfearful* by Gilda Tentorio, President of the Italian Branch of the ICFTU.

Japan, April 26, 2025. Lecture by Kosuke Fukuda, President of the Japan Branch of the ICFTU, on

"Kazantzakis' journey to Japan, Kobe and Osaka" - *Osaka, June 21, 2025*: The Japan Branch of the ICGLR and the academic association "Japan Society of Greek Linguistic and Literature" will present reviews of Kosuke Fukuda's books with special emphasis on his work on Kazantzakis.

Luxembourg, May 6, 2025. European School, Department of Greek: Lecture with video projection by Katerina Zographistou. *Morocco, Casablanca, June 10, 2025*. Mireille Jourdanet, representative of the ICGLR and the Greek Community of Morocco

will organize a lecture by George Stasinakis on "The Thought of Nikos Kazantzakis". It will take place in the framework of the "Philosophical Café" and is under the auspices of the Greek Embassy in Morocco.

Czech Republic, May 12, 2025. With the support of the Greek Embassy the following events took place: Katerina Mairova's "Bohuslav Martinou and the opera "The Greek Passion" and conductor Pantelis Koyami's "Nikos Kazantzakis - Bohuslav Martinou: a rare meeting of two great creators". *May 13, 2025*: visit to Boy-Dar (formerly Gothesgab), where Kazantzakis had stayed. *14 May, 2025* : visit to the Martino Museum in Politska and a lecture by Katerina Zografistou at a high school.

Switzerland, Geneva, May 2, 2025. Invited by the Women's Book Club, chaired by Venice Pitsiladi-Chuard, author, Maria Hadjistavrou and George Stasinakis presented Kazantzakis' work and answered questions from the audience, *October 2, 2025*. The SIANK will present an adaptation of Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *Serpent and lily* with actors Anne-Lise Fritsch and Michel Kühne and musician Raphael Daniel.

TESTIMONIES

Interview with **Jean-Herbert**, an Asianist, father of our friend Yvette, which we published in the last issue of "SYNTHESIS" (Source: Review "Rencontre Orient-Occident", Geneva, October-December, 1967, et ORTF, "Kazantzakis Week", February 1968).

For me, the centre of Kazantzak's work remains a small booklet that has not yet received the dissemination it deserves, but as it seems to me it is the key to all his characters, both in his novels and in his theatre. For Kazantzakis does not merely see his characters; they are an integral part of him, he lives them, all together and each one separately. Their drama is also his own inner drama. In this little book, entitled Asceticism, Kazantzakis strips himself bare, revealing all the undercurrents raging within him, as well as the purpose of his search and the ruthless discipline he imposes on himself. Discipline, that's the key word. It is for him "the highest virtue", even for his own body, for which he writes: "I train my body like a war-steed; I impose restraint and strength on it." Strength, another key word. The phrase that had impressed him most in Vivekananda, whose texts he translated for me into Greek, was, as he often told me : "The only sin is weakness." Kazantzakis did not tolerate in himself, nor did he accept in others, anything weak or petty. The greatest compliment he could say about someone he admired was : "He is a giant". Power manifested itself in his vision. "He looked into the abyss, without illusions, without arrogance, without fear," he writes twice in "Asceticism". It is also manifested in his choice of his course of the "Do not deign to ask whether you will win or be defeated. Fight! Drive away the greatest temptation: hope." And in this cry engraved on his tomb: "I hope for nothing, I fear nothing, I am free". His path is simple: "the rush to the peaks". Not by "the easiest road", but by "the most rugged", where "the ascent is dangerous and secret".

For him, the struggle, the uphill, must be unceasing.

"The greatest sin," he writes again in the Ascetic, "is contentment." "Unfaithful are the satisfied, the satiated,

the sterile". In this "struggle for freedom", which, as he writes, "is the essence of my God", in this hard struggle, which "does not accept limits", which "every moment bids farewell to everything", Kazantzakis does not retreat when confronted with cruelty. Of those Homeric oracles that possessed him in the face of injustice, falsehood or cowardice, he writes : "In your anger, an ancestor thunders with your mouth".

A tireless worker, passionate and persistent, Kazantzakis draws unabashedly from all the greats: Dante, Goethe, Shakespeare and Homer, whom he translates; the Buddha, whom he seeks as far as China and Japan; Lenin and the Indian sages, whom he studies in depth and assimilates.

One day when my daughter [this is Yvette] and I were leaving with him from UNESCO, where, out of discipline, he had been confined to a desk for a year, the conversation came to Hamlet. I asked him : "Did you translate Hamlet?" His face flushed, and, rising to his feet, he answered me with indignation: "Of course !"

The concern for meticulous perfection permeated his entire life. I believe he rewrote his *Odyssey* six or seven times to be satisfied. But even when he was building his house on the cliff of Aegina, where I first saw him in the 1930s, he would go to the quarry himself to choose the stone to be placed on each step of his staircase.

But, in all this fiery quest, fuelled by love for his race, for all of humanity, for his dead ancestors and the generations to come, and for the entire Earth, Kazantzakis remains haunted by the idea of God. That God whom neither the seas nor the mountains can hold, but who fits whole in the heart of man, that God who needs man to win.

"My prayer," he writes, "is not a beggar's dirge, nor is it a confession of love. It's not a commercial account: I gave you so much, give me so much. My prayer is a soldier's report to his general: here is what I did today; here is what I will do tomorrow."

Does one understand why today so many young people find in him the guide they so much need, to this truly accomplished man, who, with all his strength, rigour, consistency, majesty and pride, humbly writes the words, "Teach your children the necessity of surpassing you."

Georgui Gospodinov, Bulgarian writer AND poet (Source: Kyriaki Beyoğlu, "The Journal of the Editors", May 21, 2023). When I was serving my military service, I was sent to the Greek-Bulgarian border. Next to my weapon I had a Greek book, Kazantzakis' "*Zorba*", and it constantly gave me the feeling that I could understand everything.

The countries I was most interested in were those whose books I loved. Kazantzakis, Seferis, Cavafy - this is my Greece. We should read more of their books.

Willem Dafoe, ACTOR. He played Christ in Martin Scorsese's film "The Last Temptation of Christ", 1998 (Source: Athenian newspaper "Eleftherotypia", July 12, 1995). *I have never read words so true and so charming as those of Kazantzakis... Europe is certainly jealous that it does not have writers of Kazantzakis' stature.*

PUBLICATIONS

English

- Konstantinos Paidas: "Capetan Michalis by Nikos Kazantzakis", Grigoris Publications, Athens 202

Basilius (Bert) Groen: "Struggle for Freedom: Nikos Kazantzakis and Greek orthodoxy", Lit Verlag, Berlin, 2025.

- I.E.Stefanis: "Nikos Kazantzakis - Pantelis Prevelakis, Glossary of selected works", Institute of Modern Greek Studies, Thessaloniki 2024.
- Allain Glykos et Antonin : " Kazantzakis, The Cretan Gaze " (1st volume) and " Kazantzakis, The crowded world " (2nd volume), in illustrated. Translation into Greek: Katerina Zographistou, Dioptra Publications, Athens 2025.
- Maria Koutsouna and Margarita Milissi: "Words unknown - incomprehensible - forgotten in Nikos Kazantzakis' *Odyssey*", Ekati Publications, Athens 2024.
- Vanna Katsarou : "The child and the kri-kri", Dioptra Publications, Athens 2024.
- Roula Vouraki : "Temperate readings. Exercises in Criticism", Erisma Publications, Chania, 2025.
- Stavros Tzanis : "Grandfather Nikos' teachings - Kazantzakis whispers", illustrated by Stelios Prinaris. From publication. Funded by Manos Velivasakis. The copyright belongs to SIANK. Thank you, Manolis!

Translations

- Nikos Kazantzakis : *Travelling Russia*, translated into Italian by Gilda Tentorio, Crocetti Publications, Milan 2025.
- Nikos Kazantzakis : *In the Palaces of Knossos*, translation into Georgian, Maia Kakashvili.
- Nikos Kazantzakis : *Life and State of Alexis Zorba*, uncensored Turkish translation, Haroun Omer Tarhan, Can Yayinlari Publications, Istanbul, 2025.

NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS MUSEUM

Mr Andreas Metaxas, a businessman, was elected Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Nikos Kazantzakis Museum, located in Myrtia, near Heraklion. He succeeds Mr Michalis Taroudakis. We express our warmest congratulations and assure him, as well as the Board of Directors and the staff of the Museum, of our appreciation and the continuation of our excellent cooperation with this "Kazantzakis ark"!

IN MEMORY

We were saddened to learn of the death of the members of the ICFNC: Evangelia Tsaroucha-Szabo, specialist in Modern Greek literature, Budapest; Konstantinos Kartsakis, literary artist, Heraklion, Crete; Yannis Economidis, biologist and former European official, Brussels; and Li Chengdui, author and translator of Kazantzakis' works into Chinese, Beijing. We extend our sincere condolences to their families.

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