

rather, a common vocabulary of formal characteristics and iconographies that could be produced in a variety of places by a variety of hands for a variety of purposes.

Such speculations are among many that follow from this rich introduction to a fascinating and complex field. The author is to be congratulated for producing a readable and coherent account of Byzantine sculpture, which is at the same time well informed, judicious, and illuminating.

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Στέφανος Κακλαμάνης, *Η Κρητική ποίηση στα χρόνια της Αναγέννησης (14^{ος} – 17^{ος} αι.)*, 3 volumes, Athens: Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Έθνικης Τραπέζης, 2019–20.
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Stephanos Kaklamanis' book is devoted to one of the least read periods of Greek literature. David Holton edited a magisterial survey, and earlier Linos Politis, Stylianos Alexiou and Nikos Panagiotakis contributed outstanding work, but, much of the poetry written in Crete between the fourteenth century and the seventeenth is scattered in many specialized editions and therefore inaccessible to a broader readership. This is a crying shame: these are some of the most interesting poems in Greek. K's ambition is to provide a comprehensive guide through the maze, and to offer a generous anthology to boot. He succeeds admirably.

These three volumes, weighing in at 1791 pages, might turn the less dedicated readers weak at the knees. Notwithstanding, the book is an irresistibly good read. The first volume is a skilled and accessible analysis of the phases that gradually led up to the superb peak of the seventeenth century with Kornaros and Chortatsis; their historical background; the gradual weaning from Byzantium and embrace of the Venetian world view; the reception of Cretan literature in other Greek lands, notably the Ionian islands where Greek Romanticism and Dionysios Solomos later emerged. In a dazzling scholarly performance, K. delves into unknown archives, edits texts afresh and raises fascinating issues.

A good example is his definition of the field. Conventionally, we dub it 'the Cretan Renaissance'; although it has been mind-bogglingly difficult so far to identify the characteristics that constitute, respectively, the "Renaissance" and the "Middle Ages". Proponents of the former believe that they have discovered markers, such as *joie de vivre* and secularity, exclusive to their period, while medievalists insist that none of these were unknown to the Middle Ages. As Brian Stock puts it, 'The Renaissance invented the Middle Ages in order to define itself.'

The slippage has made for significant muddle in Greek Studies. Influential Hellenists such as G.P. Savidis have casually assigned to 'early modernity' qualities and genres

which are to be found in Dante, Jean de Meun and Chaucer, to name but a few. K's response is to revise the older scholarship, which firmly dated the Greek Renaissance to the sixteenth century, by discovering Renaissance traits in the fourteenth. This is not conceptually bold, in so far as not everyone agrees what the Renaissance is, but Kaklamanis also sets great store by another more functional definition which moves the conversation forward: he recalls an older definition by Holton which held that 'The Cretan Renaissance is (...) the extraordinary cross-fertilisation of cultures that took place in a society that (...) had developed a homogeneous character of its own, neither Greek nor Italian but Cretan, and, K adds, 'in a language which was the demotic before it adopted the local Cretan idiolect' (reviewer's translation).

It is gratifying to read this composite definition, not least because it brushes aside the facile stereotype of a 'dark Middle Ages' that was sweepingly replaced by a jolly, 'progressive' Renaissance, but also because it centralizes the question of language. Indeed, what seems to have motivated the more innovative literature from the fourteenth century onwards was the urge to write in the newer, vernacular Greek. This was an important novelty, a "modernism", your reviewer would contend, that was employed by medieval writers to articulate typically medieval sensitivities, like Stephanos Sachlikis, whose work the book under review presents excellently.

K. is an historicist, and one of the most gripping chapters is the second where he beautifully portrays Cretan relations with *la Serenissima*, from 1204, when the island officially became a Venetian colony, until 1669 when the Ottoman invasion put an end to all that. In this account, the old Byzantine ruling families come off the worse for being backward and rather too scheming, but things changed in 1299 when one of the local lords, Alexios Kallergis, decided it would be good to work with the Venetians. This gave the Venetians the space they needed. With mild policies they instilled trust in the rule of law. Neat budgets ensured growth, and there followed confidence in the prosperity made possible under the auspices of an economic and mercantile superpower. The two communities became practically bilingual. Greek Cretans could be promoted on merit in Venetian officialdom. Many Venetian women converted to the Greek Orthodox Church, and there is a lot of evidence for mixed rituals.

Social class is never far away from this description. All the writers, without exception, were upper middle-class, residing in towns. (Village life is always presented negatively in literature.) Their peers invested in commerce and education; they travelled abroad to study. (Fully 61% of Padua graduates between 1573–1605 were Cretans, K. has established from the University archives.) Some of these gentlemen met in the renowned *Academiae*, the private clubs where they discussed literature, and organised cultural events. This point is crucial because the forward-looking burghers adopted Venice and its ways, and turned their backs on the old traditions of the countryside, and with it the epic spirit of heroism and Byzantine identity. The brilliant poetry that ensued was fundamentally a reflection of that cosmopolitan mindset, and, it is claimed, a departure from Byzantine norms.

This argument allows the author to take a far-reaching position. Scholars in the past frequently gauged the value of Cretan literature by the extent to which it remained close, intentionally, to Byzantine literature—the closer, the better. Kaklamanis, correctly, disagrees: Cretan literature is not merely a link with Byzantium; it has its own intrinsic value and expresses cogently and powerfully a different experience of the world generated under different circumstances. Very true, and yet one should recall that, albeit not always Byzantine, this new experience quintessentially medieval.¹

The book is replete with a treasure chest of wonderful tales. Like that of the little-known Λεόντιος Πιλάτος, Petrarch's Greek teacher from Crete. Or that of Janus Lascaris buying forty-four manuscripts from Cretan scribes for Lorenzo il Magnifico de'Medici. Or, perhaps uncanniest of all, that of the Swiss theologian Felix Faber, who complained that the sound of the sea made it impossible for him to read when he stayed at the Dominican priory in Herakleion.

Vol. 1 can be read independently, but by so doing readers will squander the opportunity to enjoy the poems. In vols 2 and 3, K. marshals Crete's poetic output to excellent effect. He includes generous excerpts from all fifty-seven poets known today, along with perceptive short commentaries and biographical notes. A glossary guarantees that even readers unfamiliar with the language of the period will not be left flailing. Illustrations, some in colour, are rich.

Over the last two hundred years, Early Modern Greek scholarship has taken some tremendous steps. We have learnt how to edit the vernacular texts, how to glean complicated information from manuscripts, how to write the history of the literature and of the language of the period. K. pushes all these achievements a little further. His book will be an indispensable source for experts and the lay reader alike. It would be hard to imagine a better overall guide to Cretan literature.

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David Holton, Geoffrey Horrocks, Marjolijne Janssen, Tina Lendari, Io Manolessou and Notis Toufexis, *The Cambridge Grammar of Medieval and Early Modern Greek*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2019, 4 vols. Pp. clxx + 2093 (numbered in a single series). DOI:[10.1017/byz.2021.10](https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2021.10)

Until recently, the grammatical study of the Greek language has mostly been confined to the ancient and the present-day stages of its history; with a few exceptions, the medieval period has been left out. As the authors point out, 'the gap in our systematic grammatical knowledge of Greek extends roughly from Late Antiquity until the creation of the

1 See also Panagiotis Agapitos, 'Dangerous Literary Liasons: Byzantium and Neohellenism', *Βυζαντινά* 35 (2017), pp. 33–126.