



# HOMAGE TO BYZANTIUM

*The Life and Work of Nikos Gabriel Pentzakis*

*by George Thaniel*

“Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis is one of the very few fellow Greeks of today who interests me; his writing presents zones of shade which you feel tempted to explore.”

*George Seferis*

Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis, a pioneering and controversial modern Greek writer, was born in 1908 in Thessaloniki, where he still lives and works as a prose writer, poet, critic, and painter. Even though a member of the Greek literary “Generation of the Thirties” (he published his first novel, *Andhreas Dhimakoudhis*, in 1935), he is above all a Thessalonian. His native city, or “Mother” Thessaloniki as he calls it, with its rich cultural heritage, especially the Byzantine component, left its mark on his life and work. In his style and choice of subject matter, Pentzikis is eclectic as well as iconoclastic, with themes and concerns ranging all the way from Byzantium to Joyce and Eliot. His tone is decidedly religious—a blend of Byzantine Orthodoxy, myth and mysticism, and his own unique perception of everyday life and the universe.

George Thaniel’s careful study analyzes Pentzikis’s personality, the influences that shaped his style, and above all his works, large excerpts of which are translated into English for the first time. The volume should be useful to both scholars and general readers interested in modern Greek culture. It should be of special value to neohellenists concentrating on modern Greek literature, to students of comparative literature, and to historians.

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George Thaniel was born and raised in Greece and received his first university degree in literature from the University of Athens. He has been a resident of Canada since 1964 and earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in Classics at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. In 1971 he was assigned the task of organizing and teaching a program of Modern Greek Studies at the University of Toronto, Department of Classics, where he is now associate professor. In 1978-1979 Thaniel was awarded the Norwood travel prize and spent several months in Italy for purposes of research and study. He has written articles on Classical subjects but most of his published work is in the area of modern Greek literature: a book on the Greek-Canadian writer Nikos Kachtitsis, essays, and reviews in many journals. Thaniel is also a poet, published in both Greek and English.