

Thomas Doulis, *George Theotokas*, Boston, Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1975, pp. 185, [Twayne World Authors Series].

Attorney George Theotokas (1905-66) achieved considerable stature as a novelist, playwright, essayist, editor of cultural magazines and theatre administrator in Greece. Born to a well-educated and affluent family in the Greek community of Constantinople, Theotokas followed his parents' forced migration to Greece, after the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922, and started studying law at the University of Athens.

As a student first, as a young lawyer later, and as a mature intellectual in post-1945 Greece Theotokas succeeded in becoming an outspoken member of the so-called «Generation of the Thirties»—the group of creative writers and intellectuals (like the poets George Seferis and Odysseus Elytis) whose formative years coincided with the traumatic late 1920s and the ominous 1930s.

The rise of totalitarian socio-political ideologies and regimes at that time in Europe made many Greek intellectuals take sides and express support for fascism or communism. Theotokas became involved in controversial political and other issues in his early twenties. Before long, however, he showed himself to be a progressive intellectual and artist whose socio-political persuasions were not unaffected by some healthy innovations advocated by the Left. At the same time, being fully conscious of the so-called «Greek reality», and of the impact of the historical and cultural tradition on the modern Greek psyche, Theotokas expressed reverence for certain traditional elements of the Greek past and experience—the classical *paideia*, the Christian ethos, the love for dignity, freedom, moderation etc.—which eventually «colored» him as a middle-of-the-road bourgeois intellectual who often became the target of combined attacks by fanatical exponents of the Right and the Left—as happens almost invariably in contemporary Greece, where polemic arguments are a national pastime.

The Theotokas bibliography of secondary sources in Greek consists exclusively of short items: chapters in books, articles, reviews, and interviews with him. Thomas Doulis's Twayne book *George Theotokas* is the first book-length, extensive monograph on the life, times, and works of this interesting writer and admirable man. Theotokas is not unknown to the English-speaking world: his novel *Argo* and the plays *Alcibiades* and *The Game of Folly vs. Virtue (or Wisdom)* appeared in English in 1951, 1966, and 1969 respectively. Moreover, Professor Doulis—following the usual Twayne formula—provides excellent summaries of all Theotokas texts, thus enabling the Greekless reader to follow his skillful discussions and analyses of novels, stories, dramas, and essays without feeling lost.

Dr. Doulis has organized his material into eight chapters, with adequate documentation, and a bibliography (complete for primary works, and selective for secondary ones and translations). What makes *George Theotokas* a first-rate scholarly study of a foreign author from a small country is Professor Doulis's brief but incisive historical survey of the momentous events of the 1920s and 30s, and his insightful and accurate analysis of their impact on the thought and art of Theotokas and his contemporaries in Greece.

Writing with the flair of a consummate cultural historian and literary critic Dr. Doulis adroitly interweaves in his chapters presentations of, and critical commentaries on, the texts that Theotokas produced in each phase of his career before, dur-

ing, and after the Second World War, the communist insurrection (1944-49), and the political anomalies that ensued, culminating with King Constantine's political blunders in 1965, a year before the author's untimely death.

Several chapters discuss Theotokas's fiction—stories, novellas, novels—in chronological order. Dr Doulis's comments on the artistic merits, or weaknesses, of these works are quite sound, and compare favorably with what Greek scholars have written on the subject. Theotokas's works in that genre—*Argo* (1933-6), *Euripides Pendozalis and Other Stories* (1937), *The Deamon* (1939), *Leonis* (1940), *The Sacred Road* (1950), and *Invalids and Wayfarers* (1964)—can be characterized as graceful, most readable, and interesting in terms of ideas. Their overall realism is convincing, their naturalistic motivation is expressed with gentility rather than passion, their characters are recognizable. Their weaknesses—by today's standards—are found in the rather old-fashioned narrative technique, and, occasionally, in the rather amateurish, if not flawed, handling of some colorful, or intriguing, characters whose full potential is never materialized as the plots unfold.

The first four fiction books deal with events that occurred during the First World War and its aftermath. *The Sacred Road* and the two volumes of *Invalids and Wayfarers* (which contain the former as Part One) deal with impressions from the Second World War and its bloody aftermath, the civil war in post-war Greece.

The best adjective to describe these interesting novels is «panoramic». They make up large canvasses depicting major and minor characters, men and women, Greek and foreign, caught up in historical happenings beyond their control, or even beyond their comprehension. The Greek reading public has always enjoyed and patronized Theotokas's fiction. Its strict topicality, local color, and conventional craftsmanship, however, making them less palatable to non-Greek readers who normally expect more in terms of form and artistry, in general, in modern fiction.

Other chapters cover Theotokas's essays expressing his views on culture, aesthetics, criticism, and politics. These may sound less interesting to the foreign reader. Nonetheless they are extremely useful for the understanding of Theotokas as an artist and thinker, and they do dramatize the «war» of ideas that was going on in Greece during four crucial decades.

Theotokas's contribution to Greek dramaturgy and theatre arts, in general, is discussed at length in Chapter 5: «The Man of the Theater» (pp. 86-109), and *passim* in most of the other chapters.

His first play, *The Bridge of Arta*, appeared in the prestigious periodical *Nea Hestia* during the German Occupation, in 1943. Though most of Theotokas's dramas appeared singly first, the author published collections of his plays in two series of two volumes each, under the following titles: *Theater I* (1944), containing the texts of *Nights Falls*, *Revolt at Anapli*, *The Bridge of Arta*, and *The Dream of the Twelfth Night*. *Theater II* (1947) consists of *The Game of Folly vs. Virtue* and *The Castle of the Beauty*. Also, *Theatrical Works I* (1965) with the following old and new dramas: *Revolt at Anapli*, *The Bridge of Arta*, *The Dream of the Twelfth Night*, *The Castle of the Beauty*, *The Game of Folly vs. Virtue*, *Encounter on Pendeli* and *The Price of Freedom*. To this collection Theotokas gave the subtitle «Neo-Hellenic Folk Theater», which is quite indicative of the criteria he used in classifying, or describing, his work. *The Theatrical Works II* (1966), subtitled «Various Plays», contains the early *Night Falls*, plus the later *Alcibiades*, *The Last War*, *The Lacedaemonian Woman*, *Hard Roots*, and *The End of the Road*.

Professor Doulis has judiciously classified Theotokas's thirteen plays into appropriate categories of his own. This helps the reader prepare his state of mind and adjust his expectations as he moves from play to play. Under the heading «Historical Plays», Dr. Doulis groups *Night Falls*, *Revolt at Anapli*, and *Byzantine Night* (latter called *The Lacedaemonian Woman*). The second category, «Folk Dramas» consists of four pieces. The first one, *The Bridge of Arta* (1942), uses the same legend and folkloric material (theme of human sacrifice) that had inspired Nikos Kazantzakis's play *The Master Builder* (1910) as well as Manolis Kalomoiris's eponymous folk opera based on its text as libretto (1916). The second one, *The Dream of the Twelfth Night* (1943), is a pleasant comedy utilizing folk material such as the *kallikantzaroi* (mischievous creatures, remnants of pagan culture) and the Archangel who scourges them and saves a poor mother and her two daughters. *The Castle of the Beauty* (1944) is a folk comedy whose plot comes from a demotic song (ballad); and finally *The Game of Folly vs. Virtue* (1944) which utilizes a Byzantine setting and historical characters and shows that the Party of Virtue triumphs, and Areté (meaning Virtue) rescues Emperor Andronikos who had been under the influence of Folly.

Theotokas's third group of dramas, according to Dr. Doulis, has been inspired by the technique, motifs, and themes of the *karaghiozi* art (shadow puppetry), the hellenized oriental farcical entertainment for the masses; as well as by some popular «comic idylls», that is, romantic comedies with a country setting. *Encounter on Pendeli* (1947) and *The Price of Freedom* (1948) make up this group which betrays quite an honest attempt on the part of the dramatist to create a purely Greek drama with local color and flavor.

A traditionalist in the technical aspects of his art, either as a playwright or a novelist, Theotokas, like so many Greek dramatists before and after him, ignored modernist tendencies on the international theatre scene and concentrated his efforts on almost conventional, representational dramaturgy, unaffected by novelties such as the Brechtian «Epic» or the idiom of the Absurd—despite his fluency in foreign languages and his impressive erudition in world literature. Though this practice probably made his plays easily accessible to tradition-bound Athenian audiences, it can only be viewed as a weakness by more sophisticated theatre-goers in European and American cities, where the theatre «idioms» and avant-garde art forms are considered as necessary as the philosophical and profound themes that often tend to turn Greek dramas into static and esoteric documents with limited stage qualities. Thus, as was the case with his fiction, it is doubtful that Theotokas's drama will ever become adequately known outside Greece—exactly like Kazantzakis's profound plays, in verse and prose, which are still treated as closet dramas fit only for reading.

Professor Doulis places all of Theotokas's later plays—*Hard Roots* (1956), *Alcibiades* (1957), *The End of the Road* (1960), and *The Final War* (1964)—under the rubric «Realistic Drama», thus clearly implying a quality comment as well. Indeed, the development of Theotokas's mastery of the conventional genre can be seen in any of these pieces, which still utilize material from the Greek experience (i.e., the 1905 Macedonian struggle for freedom from Turk and Bulgar in *The End of the Road*, and Euripides' *The Trojan Women* in the anti-war play *The Final War*) without being unduly unoriginal or imitative in theatrical technique and dramatization of themes.

The reader may wish to take issue with Dr. Doulis's classification of these dramas into the aforementioned categories. For one, all groups include plays that are

«historical» or «folkloric» on one or more ways. Also, most of Theotokas's pieces have «realistic» settings and characters, and do present serious or crucial problems, either social or personal. Nearly all Theotokas' characters—including the complicated and intriguing protagonist in *Alcibiades*—have been delineated with care; and their psychological motivations, drives, and complexes are brought to the surface with sophistication—though often by means of rather long speeches.

What Professor Doulis achieves with his separation of these plays into four groups should actually be considered a «reader's guide» of sorts, an orderly and detailed chart which helps the audience/readership follow the chronological evolution of Theotokas's theatre from one stage to the next. Certainly, other combinations of headings are possible. Thomas Doulis's categories, however, are both meaningful and descriptive.

The reader of *George Theotokas* will learn much about a turbulent era in Greece's recent social and intellectual history, and become familiar with «the life and opinions» of an honest and talented man who was admired by the American, English, and European intellectuals who knew him. Professor Doulis—himself a published creative writer—has written a most enjoyable and useful book, which is an important addition to the Twayne World Authors Series, and a substantial contribution to modern Greek literary scholarship in either Greek or English.

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Juliet Du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village*, [Oxford Monographs on Social Anthropology], Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974, pp. viii + 296.

One reviewer of this book has said that it should become an anthropological classic and another has said that it is one of the two best books written about Greece in this century. This is to place Dr du Boulay's book in a rare category of excellence. Yet when one reads it one can understand why it is acclaimed in this manner. First, there is the quality of the writing itself. Whether Dr du Boulay is describing the significance of a meal in a Greek village house or the attitude of the villagers to money, her language is always alive, lucid, clean, with its own rhythm and cadence. Then there is the sharp sensuous response to all those details and particulars—smells, colours, sounds, sights, images—that make up the actual texture of village life: a tangible yet subtle recreation of an atmosphere in which real people breed, suffer, hate, love, laugh, kill and die. One is not allowed to forget the personal humanity of these people; they are not exploited to serve simply as ciphers illustrating yet another thesis about social relationships, honour and shame and so on.

Thirdly, there is the remarkable grasp of the perspective within which these people live, of the interweaving within them of levels of reality that gives their life a richness and a drama which are eliminated when the sense of the real is reduced to the surface dimensions of ordinary space and ordinary time. Dr du Boulay's vil-