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ΠΕΡΙΟΔΙΚΟ ΤΗΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΗΣ
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Obituary: Elias C. Papadimitrakopoulos

Lambros Vazaios¹

Elias C. Papadimitrakopoulos, Retired Brigadier Military Medical Officer, passed away on 29 November 2024. He had reached a venerable age - 94 - and was among the last, if not the very last, of his generation in the field of military medicine. His final days at the Army Pension Fund Nursing Foundation (NIMTS) were difficult, yet to the end he remained lucid. Our final telephone conversation took place just two days before his passing.

In the wake of his death, tributes poured in from colleagues, friends, the literary world and beyond. The press and digital media carried reflections on his life and work - tributes marked by a tone of restraint and dignity, just as he might have wished. Thoughtful accounts of his legacy appeared alongside concise and respectful biographical notes, free of excess.

Our acquaintance, some 45 years ago, and the friendship that since unfolded - like a finely wrought tapestry of shared emotion - remain one of the most cherished journeys of my life. In our own circle - the world of military physicians - Elias held a place quite apart. To those less familiar with him, he was simply "the writer". But to those of us who knew him well, he was the Elias who wrote, who lovingly preserved the polytonic script, who championed the hand-crafted elegance of traditional typography and the compositors' case. I shall not dwell, my friend, on the oft-repeated observation that you wrote sparingly, as if that were some rare eccentricity. It was simply your way: the deliberate, distinctive quality of your prose, which you left to us as a precious trace of your journey through life.

Many, I believe, were waiting for you on the other side. I imagine you now sharing the latest news. Synopoulos, Giorgis Pavlopoulos and Christoforos Milionis must have spotted your arrival from afar, a little im-

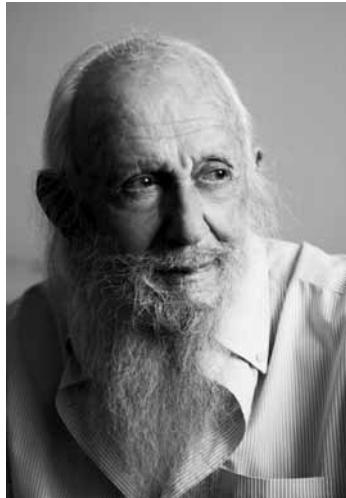


Figure: The late Elias C. Papadimitrakopoulos in his old age.

patiently. Pentzikis has likely already sketched your portrait, annotated with his trademark allusive comments. Kavvadias murmurs the final 5 lines of his poem about the Old Man who needs only two metres of sailcloth. Tsirkas and Karagatsis have fallen into a soft, familiar conversation. And there are many others with whom you once walked. I trust they will forgive me for not naming them all.

Permit me now to say a few words on behalf of myself and other colleagues - those of us who, when attempting to give voice to our sensibilities, turned to you for guidance. We approached,

shyly, with awkward first drafts in hand to ask you. You were never indulgent, but nor were you distant. You spoke frankly of weaknesses, and never hesitated to question whether we were right to call ourselves writers at all. Yet in the professional sphere - in the vast arena of military life - you were well known and widely respected.

The years passed and much happened. From you we learned of Elias Petropoulos, who must surely be content that you ensured his unique archive now rests in the Gennadius Library. We explored Pentzikis with you, discovered Kahtitsis, and lit candles in quiet chapels for Papadiamantis.

With gentle Niovi always by your side, you embraced sensibility where others perceived only aversion and oppression. The years in Kavala, where you founded the local film club and introduced Buñuel, and the years in Veria, where you donated your personal library, were luminous. Under your stewardship, the Medical Review of the Armed Forces became a respected scientific journal. Tsiveriotis, the master printer, laboured with you to bring to life the journal's beautifully crafted editions.

¹Private researcher

In retirement, you settled in Paros - a place that embraced and honoured you. Your estate became your pride and joy, the fruit of your labour and constant care. That television interview in which you spoke so openly remains unforgettable.

But inevitably, the years came when we were no longer tall and strong, no longer travelling. You stayed in Kypseli, quietly and permanently, with Niovi beside you, as we all gradually withdrew. Our long phone conversations became a source of deep pleasure - frequent and full of meaning. I miss them terribly, Elias. I miss, too, the act of sending you by post the pieces I published online. You never compromised; you refused to touch a keyboard to the end. The rest of us struck uneasy pacts with our computers. Some of us held firm against social media, insisting only on open correspondence. You never reproached us for this. The postal service was our ally; The postman in

Kypseli and the Poste Restante in Naoussa, Paros, were frequent and familiar intermediaries.

And now, dear friend, it is time to say goodbye. I have not written the “fine” obituary I had intended at first. But I know you will not mind - you always liked my slightly tangled prose.

So here ends the first piece I shall not post to you—alas, the first you will never read.

Go well, fellow traveller - *errōso parodita*, as you taught us to say.

And why not simply say... Farewell!

Νεκρολογία για τον Ηλία Χ. Παπαδημητρακόπουλο, στρατιωτικό ιατρό και συγγραφέα, που έφυγε στις 29 Νοεμβρίου 2024 σε ηλικία 94 ετών.

Βαζαίος Λ.

Biographical Note

Elias C. Papadimitrakopoulos

Born: Pyrgos, Ilia – 23 August 1930

Died: Athens – 29 November 2024

Elias Ch. Papadimitrakopoulos studied at the Hellenic Military Medical School and pursued a career as an internist and public health specialist.

He made his literary debut in 1964, under a pseudonym, with the short story “*Oi Frakasánes*”. He contributed regularly to numerous literary journals and for many years served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Medical Review of the Armed Forces*.

He was a founding member of the Association of Friends of the Museum of Greek Medicine.

He retired from military service in 1983 with the rank of Senior General Medical Inspector.

His literary work is classified within the post-war generation and is distinguished by its economy of

language, subtle - at times imperceptible - irony, and a tender nostalgia for the difficult years of youth shared by his generation.

He wrote for *Kathimerini* and *Eleftherotypia*, offered film criticism, and oversaw the publication of major works, including *Ulysses* by James Joyce.

Several of his works have been translated into French and English.

After his retirement, he spent most of the year at his estate on the island of Paros.

In 2007, the documentary “*A House by the Sea*”, directed by Lefteris Xanthopoulos, was filmed there and focused on his life and work.

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