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In Memoriam Eugenia Drakopoulou (1959–2021)

HISTORICAL REVIEW

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EUGENIA DRAKOPOULOU
(1959–2021)

In Memoriam

EUGENIA DRAKOPOULOU

(1959–2021)

“Research of this rare quality, which requires tracking and verifying thousands of footnotes, a constant vigilance when it comes to recent scholarly publications, as well as the ability to clearly formulate conclusions, calls for sharp tools of academic method and a sharp judgment, resilience in the quest for detail, and those rare qualities we attribute to a lucid mind,” wrote Manolis Hatzidakis in 1986, when recommending Eugenia Drakopoulou as a member of staff of the National Hellenic Research Foundation.

At the time Eugenia held a postgraduate degree from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris and had already begun work, towards the end of 1984, on the research project “Greek painters after the Fall of Constantinople”, one of the research programmes of the Centre for Neohellenic Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation being supervised by Hatzidakis. At the same time, Eugenia worked on her doctoral dissertation, which was submitted to the University of Athens. The thesis addresses the history of Kastoria from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries based on inscriptions from the city’s churches. Kastoria remained for Eugenia a very dear place.

As a research associate at the Centre for Neohellenic Research, Eugenia began work – parallel to her main research on Greek painters – on the research programme “Travel literature on south-eastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, 15th–19th centuries” under the supervision of Loukia Droulia, the then director. Eugenia was responsible for making a registry of illustrations (that is, woodcuts) contained in the travelogues. Within the framework of that programme, in 1990 Eugenia directed a special project dealing with the digital storing of illustrations and, separately, dealt with illustrations concerning the island of Chios. She also took part in the research project “Mani: A cultural itinerary”, which dealt with travellers in Mani from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries. She contributed data concerning the history and art of Kastoria from the twelfth to eighteenth centuries to

the research programme “Thracian e-treasure” and was responsible for documenting and publishing inscriptions from Kastoria within the framework of a research programme run by the Centre for Byzantine Research and the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts under the supervision of Nikos Oikonomides. In all cases, Eugenia’s research led to significant publications. In the meantime, after the successful completion of her PhD in 1992, she joined the research staff of the NHRF as a junior researcher. She thus devoted herself to the study of Greek painters after the Fall of Constantinople.

From 1996 onwards, Eugenia served as the supervisor of the programme “Religious Art, 15th–19th centuries”, expanding its scope. The aim of this research programme was “to recreate the Neohellenic and Orthodox art environment in the period from the Fall of Constantinople (1453) up to the emergence of the Greek state (1830)”. This meant placing not only the corpus of Greek painters under scrutiny, but also undertaking “the comparative study of Orthodox and Western artist workshops, and the study of the network of Greek artist workshops in Europe and its relation to the centres of migratory, ecclesiastical and economic policy”. Eugenia assumed diverse roles in order to promote the aims of the programme: she undertook the supervision and academic advice of research fellows, edited books and created digital databases (such as the collection “Greek painters after the Fall of Constantinople”, which forms part of the Pandektis database), attracted funding, organised conferences and participated in Greek and international programmes, often in collaboration with external academic institutions.

Eugenia took an active part in the life of our Institute and spoke with *parrhesia* and clarity concerning the various issues that arose, her criticism being robust and often harsh. As a member of the editorial board of *Historical Review/Revue Historique*, she contributed to journal’s international appeal. In the meantime, her career evolved steadily, and she was promoted to Associate Researcher in 2001 and to the position of Director of Studies in 2014.

An enquiring mind but also a restless spirit, Eugenia did not confine herself to the completion of her academic tasks. Open to the call of our times, an avid reader of literature and devoted listener of classical music, Eugenia adapted to contemporary debates and was eager to take advantage of what technology had to offer. Convinced that the work of a researcher should not solely address one’s particular interests but should rather communicate with developments in the social body and assume a role of national and social

significance, Eugenia often took the initiative to that end. Apart from her publications in the media that expressed her academic expertise, there were other initiatives: in September 2007 she organised the annual “Researchers’ Night” on “Arts and professions of the past through researchers’ eyes” and she contributed to a documentary entitled “Researchers retrieving, studying and saving works of art”. The books *Sailing in the Aegean with History at the Helm* and *Sailing in the Ionian with History at the Helm*, which she co-edited with Dimitris Dimitropoulos in 2015, brought together texts that oscillated between history and fiction. “In any case, the ultimate objective of our effort was not so much for readers to enrich their encyclopaedic knowledge as it was for them to catch a whiff of vibrant moments from the past, to absorb something of an era’s atmospheric quality.” In the same vein, Eugenia gladly participated in the NHRF’s educational activities, either as academic advisor or as a speaker contributing not only through the channel of her erudition but also by means of her imagination.

Eugenia’s last monograph, *Εικόνες του αγώνα των Ελλήνων στην ιστορική ζωγραφική της Ευρώπης* (*Images of the Greek struggle in European history painting*), which appeared in the new series of the Institute for Historical Research titled “1821: Historical Library of the 1821 Greek Revolution”, testifies to her constant and vivid interest in art, that is, in art in all its manifestations. All of Eugenia’s colleagues benefited from her acute judgment when it came to choosing a cover or illustrations for a book. And we shall always remember her musical sensibility at an evening in 2014 devoted to the revolutionary movements in modern Europe, which took place within the framework of the NHRF’s educational activities.

Eugenia worked for 36 years in the premises of the National Hellenic Research Foundation, from 1984 to 2021, during which she developed and solidified her personality as a researcher, built friendships and interacted with her colleagues. We will cherish the memory of her elegant presence as well as her positive or critical comments directed towards us, the characteristic sound of her footsteps in the corridor when she returned to her office from the library, the lively discussions she engaged in on topics of academic and general interest and, of course, the spirit of collegiality and genuine humanism that she exemplified when some of us were going through our own difficulties.

This is why when passing by her office we find it so hard to look inside.

