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[Perrakis, Stylianos. The improbable heroine: Lela Karayanni and the British secret services in World War II Greece]

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Lorenzo M. Ciolfi's study, "The Reception of Eustathios of Thessalonike's *Parekbolai* in Arsenios Apostolis' and Erasmus' Paroemiographic Collections" (pp. 360–378), explores two of the most significant paroemiographical collections: Arsenios Apostolis' (c. 1465/69–1535) *Ἰωνιά* and Erasmus' of Rotterdam (1466–1535) *Adagia*. The contribution addresses in particular the numerous Homeric verses and their accompanying exegetical *scholia* that are inserted in the margins of Arsenios Apostolis' autograph *codex Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 3058*. As Ciolfi notes, these materials appear to have been part of an exegetical project on Homeric poetry, in which Arsenios Apostolis intended but finally did not manage, to incorporate *Homeric proverbs* as a fifth section into the already existing four sections in former versions of the *Ἰωνιά*. The study also examines the method according to which Arsenios received and employed Eustathios' explanations of Homeric verses. Finally, it discusses the reception of Eustathios' exegetical work among Renaissance scholars.

To conclude, the chronological frame within which the contributions are assembled makes the book a kind of guide to Byzantine intellectual scholarship during the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods. The book offers readers a comprehensive overview of Byzantine commentary production within its historical and sociocultural contexts, surveying the available exegetical materials and highlighting the challenges researchers may encounter when studying them. Moreover, the volume opens new avenues for future research on the genre of commentaries in the late Byzantine period. Accordingly, every single study in this collective volume is very appreciated. However, a more extensive investigation into Byzantine scientific writings remains an important task for future scholarship. Also, the critical edition of hidden commentaries preserved in Byzantine manuscripts, alongside their thorough analysis within their respective contexts and the revision of outdated editions, remains an essential endeavour.

Stylios Perrakis. *The Improbable Heroine. Lela Karayanni and the British Secret Services in World War II Greece*. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022, xviii + 368 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-077840-3 (e-Book).

Julia Fröhlich | <https://doi.org/10.5817/NGB2024-24-8>

Historical writing should never be one-dimensional, it should abstain from whites and blacks, from simplification that is bound to result in some sense of

distortion. It should strive to enhance pictures dominated by black and white with colour, add strokes to sketches that are only a very abstract representation of the past, and dimensions to seemingly one-dimensional historical accounts. With *The Improbable Heroine*, Stylianos Perrakis impressively succeeds in doing exactly that by adding some extra layers to the historical representation of 'the' Greek resistance. Clearly, 'the' Greek resistance as a homogenous, united entity never existed, and recent scholarship has increasingly zoomed in on the many groups and resistance movements that have been, more often than not, bunched, mixed and jumbled to fit under the umbrella term of an allegedly singular resistance movement – dominated by representations of the largest resistance organisation, EAM and its military branch ELAS.

By placing the limelight on Lela Karayanni, both as a person and the head of the resistance group *Bouboulina*, Stylianos Perrakis presents the reader with a form of resistance that starkly deviates from the common picture of armed ELAS partisans fighting in the mountains – a picture that still serves as a *pars pro toto* for resistance activity in Greece. In Lela Karayanni, we see a very unlikely resistance fighter, a middle-aged, well-situated housewife and mother with no political ties to either KKE or EAM who spontaneously decided to help John Wilsons, an Allied soldier in need (p. 73). Seemingly acting more instinctively than led by ratio, Lela Karayanni sheltered him temporarily, despite her husband's disapproval and the high risk involved. By doing so, she acted without the plans, strategic thinking and networks that would characterise her multi-faceted resistance activity in the later months and years. Indeed, it is this metamorphosis from a well-meaning but ill-equipped individual spontaneously providing support to the head of a diverse network dedicated to intelligence work, sabotage and rescue that is one of the most remarkable aspects unveiled by Perrakis' meticulous research.

While undeniably a detailed, well-researched account of Lela Karayanni's resistance activities, the *Bouboulina*, as well as the contextual framework of Axis-occupied Greece and British intelligence work, Perrakis' monograph is also the product of a commemorative act – the result of the author's clearly phrased wish to forward a biographical account that features Lela Karayanni both as a person and what he calls a 'heroine': Mourning that the two existing biographies have her "portrayed as a solitary figure with dual personalities rather hard to reconcile and, most probably, both caricatures of her true self" (p. 8), he sets out to capture more of the person, including her awkward kick-off in resistance activity, her marital and family life, as well as what could be reconstructed in terms of her feelings, thoughts and objectives, as well as the months spent in prison, once in 1942 and later, prior to her execution, in 1944.

Given the sources available, this is an ambitious, perhaps overly ambitious endeavour whose success is naturally limited by the absence of Lela Karayanni's own voice. As the author rightly states, "the impression that we form about her as a person is drawn from second-hand reports, the few interviews with the people who knew her and who made it to the twenty-first century and the more numerous written accounts of her interactions with her family and her resistance companions in postwar reports" (p. 9). Considering that, the outcome is impressive, as Perrakis succeeds in compensating much of this lack of voice with intricate archival and oral history research, thus providing a relatively round characterisation of the unlikely resistance fighter.

Although personal, affective aspects are nonetheless bound to be hazy, Lela Karayanni's 'career' as a resistance fighter adds much to the structural understanding of resistance activity in Greece. Albeit significantly deviating from the common picture of the young resistance fighter of poor socioeconomic standing, Lela Karayanni and her *Bouboulina* clearly showcase the entanglement of resistance, rescue and relief work – distinctive concepts and fields of activity that are, however, prone to overlaps and fluidity. In the more than three years that she dedicated to resistance activity, Lela Karayanni sheltered soldiers, organised fake papers and safe houses for Jews in the underground and on the run, coordinated the work of her *Bouboulina* network and its collaboration with British intelligence, recruited agents and forwarded information crucial for sabotage and military strategy. As such, she pretty much embodied the core varieties of resistance, rescue and (at least to some extent) relief work. Carefully traced and contextualised by Perrakis, these operations, tasks and endeavours make up a colourful picture of resistance activity infused not only with what is commonly referred to as patriotism but also altruism and notions of humanitarianism. Far from the black and white dichotomy partially prevailing in nowadays discourse, resistance is rightly portrayed as a highly diverse field of activity, with single and collective actors being driven by very different objectives and using a broad array of means and strategies – for various purposes and with various outcomes.

Particular merit lies in the author's ability to keep the balance between structural clarity and comprehensive contextualisation, as well as an in-depth analysis of individual acts and social ties on the micro level. In the course of 17 chapters (not counting the prologue and epilogue), Perrakis switches between concise contextualisation and zoom-ins on single organisations, operations, agents and their respective environments, without ever losing focus on the main character that can always be felt in the background to some extent: as a citizen of occupied Greece, as the friend sending food parcels to famished

persons suffering from famine- and prison-induced malnutrition, as the recruiter coordinating a young agent's work, as a parent, worried about her family's and especially imprisoned children's well-being.

These little acts, some of which are displays of worry and fear, self-doubt, and perhaps even regret, are an invaluable contribution to both this monograph and nowadays discourse, both of which are otherwise liable to reiterating unproductive *topoi* of heroisation. These emotions give us a glimpse at what might have been the 'real' Lela Karayanni, and they are the cause why Perrakis has indeed succeeded in contributing to the remembrance of an outstanding human being such as her: Leaving repetitive instances of glorification aside that sometimes seem to swallow up the human and instead leave 'the heroine' and a 'heroic death' (pp. 5, 317, 346), the portrayed instances of emotional 'weakness' underline Lela Karayanni's courage and serve to truly celebrate her commitment to patriotism, altruism and perhaps humanitarianism. By intertwining these displays of an ambiguous, conflicted and very human nature (in the best sense of the word) with conscientious research and studiously outlined contextualisation, Perrakis has created a remarkable piece of work that, despite occasional debatable word choice and displays of subjective judgement, is a valuable addition to the discourse on resistance in general and Lela Karayanni's commemoration in particular.

Άννα Μαρίνα Κατσιγιάννη. Η σχεδία του λόγου. Μελέτες για την κινητικότητα των λογοτεχνικών έργων. Αθήνα: Gutenberg, 2022, 360 σελ. ISBN 978-960-01-2286-2.

Ioanna Naoum | <https://doi.org/10.5817/NGB2024-24-9>

The syncretic 'raft of discourse' in Anna Katsigianni's collection of studies presupposes that risky moment of unplanned wandering through texts, guided by one's reading sensitivity but also by the confidence of 'sailing' in a solid hull that has to do with philological solidity, research, knowledge. The stakes have been described, in his unsurpassed style, by Roland Barthes: he has called it 'navigation'. This navigation, which seems to lie behind the choice of the word 'raft' in the title, is never unconditional and boundless, but it certainly begins with the crossing of boundaries. It always moves in-between, along the waterline of the reader's horizon, overturning, on occasion, fixed critical or grammatical