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Theodora D. Patrona

**Retracing the Footsteps of an Extraordinary Woman of Greek-American Letters:
the Case of Iphigenia Copadis**

What happens when a junior researcher receives a prestigious fellowship to look into unprocessed and uncatalogued material based on a hypothesis? Assisted by a curious and passionate curator, she may be lucky enough and discover hidden gems amid crumbling newspapers and mouldy volumes.

This presentation retraces a fascinating research (or two) in the Tsakopoulos Hellenic Collection at the California State University, Sacramento thanks to the generous fellowship of the Helios Society. It sheds light on the obscure figure of Iphigenia Copadis (1893-1985), a first generation immigrant who relocated in the east coast US in the early 20th century. In a temporal setting and ethnic culture where female domesticity was the norm, this woman's extraordinariness stems from her overall intellectual, educational and public work. Copadis managed to publish three novels in the 1920s, one of them on the migratory experience titled *Gia to Psomi* (1924), an obscure volume for most scholars of Greek Diaspora studies. As an active GAPA member she was passionately involved in the mission to preserve language and customs in the community for the American born children. A milestone in her career was the publication of an influential periodical for Greek American women, the sole of its kind, titled *Ellinis* (1949-1959) which Copadis owned, edited and wrote for until 1956. All the above, gave Copadis the characterization "the only true female scholar of her times" (Ziogas). Retracing Copadis' footsteps we will read and comment on parts of her unique novel and articles of her periodical while we reflect on their importance in the shaping of Greek American womanhood.



Theodora D. Patrona received her Ph.D. from the School of English at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2011. She has received the Tsakopoulos Hellenic Research Fellowship twice (2013, 2022) and was CHS Harvard Visiting Scholar in Comparative Studies for 2022-23. Dr. Patrona has published extensively on Greek American and Italian American literature. She is the author of *Return Narratives: Ethnic Space in Late Twentieth Century Greek American and Italian American Literature*. Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2017, and coeditor of *Redirecting Ethnic Singularity: Italian Americans and Greek Americans in Conversation* (Fordham UP 2022, winner of the Vassiliki Karagiannaki MGSA award for originality). She has taught at the Aristotle University and the Hellenic Mediterranean University at Heraklion, Crete (ELMEPA) and she is interested in diaspora and identity issues in the Anglophone world. https://www.enl.auth.gr/instructor_en.asp?id=103