

At the core of this initiative lies memory, as a living act of awareness. The jewellery made of silver confetti, worn by the participants, draws its symbolism from a narrative in which violence and loss are transformed, insisting on remembrance.

The story behind the silver confetti

An excerpt from the forthcoming work of fiction by Christina Tzialla, “OUI – Tropaea ApoTropaea” (Aparsis Editions), drawing on collective memory and mythic narrative, illuminating the transformation of violence into symbol.

“ApoTropaea” is a Greek wordplay carrying a dual meaning: it refers both to “trophies derived from trophies” and to the notion of the “atrocious” or “abhorrent”, revealing the layered nature of the narrative.

[...] In the end, as dawn began to break, and while the strands of their hair were still damp at the roots, the executioners seized them eagerly, as if they had become feathers. Perhaps their conscience felt lighter at the thought of how worthwhile their effort would prove, when they would return to claim their trophies.

Some were bound hand and foot and thrown into the lake, along with a few cats — creatures for whom they felt no sorrow at all. They said that, just like the women who “polluted” the place with their immorality, the strays did the same. Others, the last of them, were hurriedly pushed in without even being tied, in the hope that the weight of their garments alone would be enough to drown them. They gave no chance that any might survive by swimming. And they decided to scatter them here and there, so that even in death they would not have one another for company.

Only Kyra-Frosyni they could not tear away from her nurse, Chrysi, for the nurse herself refused to let her be taken from Kyra-Frosyni’s body. Not only over her body, but side by side, embraced, they left them. For even if you were to place a blade between them, you might easily be deceived into thinking they shared a single heart. And there was something else: it seemed the nurse had never intended to marry or to have a family of her own... Who knows if she ever had. And so she went as she was, without a single piece of jewellery, for she had none of her own to drown with.

“Throw her in,” the executioners said among themselves, and they placed them together in the sack — without any cat this time...

“They’ll tear each other apart,” they shouted, laughing.

But their laughter was abruptly cut short when Kyra-Frosyni’s nurse, Chrysi, began to sing softly, with a muted, aching sorrow.

The executioners went on joking among themselves. Some of the women, unable to bear their sickening laughter, began to hum softly, with whatever strength they had left, speaking the last words they could still utter. Among the whispered voices, names could be heard: Fotini, Argyro, Garoufalia, Lenio... the names of the Selekopoulou sisters. Four sisters, seamstresses, who sewed garments — and were themselves sewn into their fate.

Mama Loutsia... the woman whose house had been open to men, but not to salvation. Frosso... cousin of Efrosyni Vasileiou, Kyra-Frosyni. Marousio... the woman who still carried in her womb a “burden” greater than her own.

When they threw them, one by one, into the lake, curses began to erupt. They had grown tired, and they themselves had been soaked. Their own lives, too, had been put at risk — just like those of the women. But they had done what was “right”. They had done their job.

And they returned to the nearby church, where they had hidden their spoils. But first, they crossed themselves and lit a candle — so that the “forgiven” might be forgiven, and to appease God, whom, whether they believed in Him or not, they had begun to fear, sensing punishment, even if they would not admit it.

So they set about dividing the soaked loot. And what did they see, astonished?

Only fragments in their hands — rods of gold ground down. The silver and the gold reduced to beads, like marbles, like tears. These were the very ornaments they had hidden before. Identical, yet now without value.

One of them, as men bite gold to test its truth, bit into his share — and the ornament broke between his teeth. And such sweetness poured out!

As the women were being lost, whatever jewellery had been left behind was destined to adorn memorial wheat. And the metal turned into sweet confection — for weddings and for those dark “celebrations” to which they had all been sent, to meet Death. And the metal was sweetened, and so was the lake.

And if anyone remembered a name among them, let water be drunk in her name. For in their terror, the executioners cried out “oui!” — and choked on their own saliva. The lake swallowed them without its will. And its waters fell still, for it had no other choice, nor was it ever its own.

All these women, brought from different lands, holding different beliefs — as not all belonged to the Orthodox Christian faith — were, after their death, all recognised by the Church, without exception, as *Kallimartyrs*: martyrs of beauty.

It is said that their bodies were cast ashore in the area of Limnopoula, near the church of Saint Nicholas of Kopanoi, where they were buried. Others say the lake does not return what it takes.

And here I would add: bodies may not be returned, but its myths simmer for centuries — and whether as mist or as wave, from time to time they escape its surface and drift through the air, above the city of Ioannina, in those narrow streets where History was written...

One need only fall silent — and listen.