

A Contemporary Mural Portraying the Destruction of Smyrna and a Poem Concerning a Survivor

Sophia Xeros-Constantinides

DETAILS ABOUT ΥΙΑΥΙΑ ΕΥΔΟΚΙΑ ΧΕΡΟΣ'S SMYRNA PRINT:

Sotiris Chrizidis, ΤΟ ΤΡΑΓΙΚΟΝ ΠΑΝΟΡΑΜΑ ΤΩΝ ΣΦΑΓΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΕΜΠΡΗΣΜΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΣΜΥΡΝΗΣ (*The Tragic Panorama of the Slaughter and Incineration of the Smyrna People*), post-September 13, 1922, colour lithographic family heirloom print on paper, printed in Athens by Ekthotis K. Alikiotis, 45(h) x 61(w) cm unframed, 61(h) x 76 (w) cm framed, in the possession of the artist.

(A reproduction archival digital print on Hahnemule photorag paper resides in the Cunningham Dax Collection, Melbourne, Australia.)



DETAILS ABOUT SOPHIA XEROS-CONSTANTINIDES' POEM FOR HER UNCLE NICK:

Sophia Xeros-Constantinides, POEM entitled *The Intergenerational Legacy: My Grandmother Yiayía's Asylum-Seeker Baby*, 2010, composed in Monotype Garamond and printed on paper by hand at the Ancora Press, Monash University Caulfield, on an 1857 Super Royal Albion flat-bed press by Brian McMullin in September 2010, 40(h) x 25(w) cm unframed, 60(h) x 44(w) cm framed, in the possession of the artist. A print on paper of this poem is also in the possession of the Cunningham Dax Collection in Melbourne, Australia.

THE INTERGENERATIONAL LEGACY
MY GRANDMOTHER YIAYIAS ASYLUM-SEEKER BABY

DEAR little Nicholas...
Would that I'd been able to touch him then
It didn't manifest 'til later in life
I came to glimpse it after my visit to Birmingham when I took him a plant in a pot
as a present
and he told me I had to take it away
He wasn't resourced to look after another living thing
Allergic to the responsibility of it
And he'd recoiled
He had his reasons
beyond his control.

WISE Marx his hero knew:
*People make their own history
but they do not make it as they please
They do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves
but under circumstances directly encountered
given and transmitted from the past
The tradition of all the dead generations
weighs like a nightmare
on the brains of the living.¹
A Ghosts in the Nursery² thing
You see she was replete with grief herself,
his mother*

MY maternal grandmother
managing her own nightmare losses
after first-born *Elephtheria*

Liberty
died of pneumonia as a baby when they fled
the sacking of the Greeks in Smyrna
1922

She showed me the print of the slaughter when I was four or five
Used to take it out of the old *baoolo* chest at the bottom of the stairs
where she secreted it away from sight
but not from mind

I saw the red blotches of blood spurts and the way the Turkish soldiers were holding the
babies upside-down by one leg as they sliced through their tender bodies with
cutlasses
It looked bad to my little eyes.

I realised
he was imprinted from way-back when an infant himself in the arms of my *yiayia*
ever vigilant
he couldn't help it and I forgive him, my surrogate father,
a baby
in emotional terms himself

FOR hurting me so.

In memoriam Uncle Nick from his loving niece Sophia Xeros-Constantinides Melbourne July 2010

1. Karl Marx [1852]
2. Selma Fraiberg, Edna Adelson & Vivian Shapiro [1975] in *Ghosts in the Nursery: a psychoanalytic approach to the problems of impaired infant-mother relationships* in Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, 14, 387-421

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