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Kunapipi refers to the Australian Aboriginal myth of the Rainbow Serpent which is the symbol of both creativity and regeneration. The journal’s emblem is to be found on an Aboriginal shield from the Roper River area of the Northern Territory of Australia.

Front Cover:
Based on *The Little Land Fish*, 2010. Digital video, 1 min loop by Lia Lapithi, with permission of the artist.
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EDITORIAL

‘I worshipped too many gods, but /After long winters in the North I know now/ Sun, you are the most real!’ writes Cypriot poet, Gür Genc (‘I Worshipped Too Many Gods’ 33). As an Australian who spent almost ten years in the dark, damp, cold of English winters, I understand what he means — my skin, my eyes, my very bones, my soul understands what he means. Here in Cyprus the stones on the beach are white white; the sea is the clearest aqua I have ever seen. This is my first glimpse of the Mediterranean and I discover it to be very different to the dark blue of ocean and yellow sands of the South Pacific. But I feel at home in the dry air and the hot sun and the bright light. I float pink oleander out to Aphrodite’s rock. I walk into the ruins of an ancient theatre and through the cool dark of tombs. The museum is filled with broken statues, fragments of stonework, pots of all sizes, colours and shapes, delicate gold earrings, ancient coins, patterned peacocks and dolphins. There are so many saints, golden and earthen. A church is wound about with string. I see ancient mosaic tile floors that I could have sworn were textile — how is this effect of softness and depth achieved? It is a mystery to me. They are the luxury of a rich man’s carpet in a hot land. This is a wondrous world.

I made my first trip to Cyprus in June 2010 for the 15th triennial conference of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Languages Studies, hosted by the University of Nicosia. It was here that I attended a panel on ‘Cypriot Writing in English’ and heard readings of work by Aydn Mehmet Ali, Miranda Hoplaros, Nora Nadjarian and Andriana Ierodiaconou. I also listened to poetry read by Niki Marangou, Stephanos Stephanides and Gür Genc. I heard young scholars speak about the history of Cyprus and Cypriot literature. A new world opened to me. I had never read any work by contemporary Cypriot writers and in that I am sure I was not alone among my colleagues who attended the conference. This issue of Kunapipi was born out of my delight in the discovery of a rich and various literary and cultural world that has grown out of a long history of cultural layering and mixing. The history of Cyprus is dark and violent, a history in which many have suffered and continue to suffer; but it has also given birth to beauty — phoenix-like from the ashes — again and again. As Gür Genc remarks, ‘For such a small island so much poetry’: he might despair of a Cyprus riven by difference, a Cyprus in which the heat of battle has melted even the stones, a Cyprus that cries out for ‘trees/or water!’ not more words (‘Not Poetry … Water’ 30); but he keeps writing poetry. Art is the fire that burns and the water that soothes. Art is the first and the last resort. Like Niki Marangou and the Byzantine Emperor, ‘I await the usual miracle’ (‘Returning’ 69).

I wish here to thank Stephanos Stephanides without whose help this issue would not have happened, and I hope that you enjoy this collection of creative and scholarly work as much I enjoyed bringing it to fruition.

Anne Collett
At a time when I write in light on an electrified screen, this is a story about writing in stone. Inscriptions, not only in Cypriot archaeology, embed understanding intellectually through the interpretation of texts and also through eye and touch in the subtlety of their petrified materiality. Watching inscriptions emerge from the earth and documenting them has a poetic resonance for both scholars and artists. This essay teases out that poetic resonance, showing how the significant inscriptions associated with the theatre relate to great imperial forces and also to an emotional and private individuality.

Inscribing text in resistant stone is laborious, so that ancient inscriptions are by their nature succinct, although I have seen heaped piles of closely written slabs at a forgotten city near Antalya in Turkey, as if stone were as easy to write on as paper. Reading almost erased letters in often broken stones is slower than reading paper and because the reader has to bend or climb around the stone, rather than holding the text in the hand, the force of the text seems stronger when it is eventually deciphered.

First, the context: Cyprus has a venerable history of reading and writing. Some of the earliest inscriptions in the eastern Mediterranean world (1600–1400 BC) are found in Cyprus. Phoenicians, Persians, Egyptians and Greeks colonised the coast and settled on the island, so close to the arc of early settlements in Anatolia and Syria in the eastern Mediterranean, and also to Egypt. Decoding these arrivals is helped by fragmentary texts in clay and stone. ‘The science of epigraphy (concerned with the interpretation and classification of inscriptions) has a fundamental value. Inscriptions together with literary sources form the richest and most accurate sources for the knowledge of ancient life, civilisation and history’ wrote the Cypriot scholar Ino Nicolaou (1971 1).

Nicolaou summarised the complexities of language for an epigrapher in her book *Cypriot Inscribed Stones*. Cypro-Minoan texts inscribed into baked clay, and related to a stage in writing between Linear A and B1 were found in Kourion, Katydata and Enkomi and have still not been completely deciphered. Greeks settled in Cyprus around the eleventh century BC and at this time the syllabic Cypriot script appeared. Because of similar phonetic values it contributed to the famous decipherment of Linear B by Michael Ventris in 1954. The language used in Cypriot syllabic texts was an Arcadian Cypriot dialect of Greek, as well as an indigenous Cypriot language called Eteocyprian. Greek letters first appeared on
coins — for example, those of Nikokles King of Paphos in 325 BC — and the two scripts were used together all through the time of the independent Cypriot kingdoms until the abolition of the kings under Ptolemy I in 312 BC. The Egyptian Ptolemy was one of the successors of Alexander the Great, and the Paphos theatre was built around 300 BC, parallel to the building of Alexandria in Egypt. The Cypriot syllabic script was abandoned at this time, as it was overtaken by the Greek ‘koine’, the language of the Hellenistic rulers. Rome governed Cyprus after 58 BC and the long allegiance to Roman emperors continued until the Byzantine era emerged in the sixth and seventh centuries AD. Greek continued to be a principal language, with some Latin inscriptions evident as well (Nicolaou 1971 1–3). As Cornelius Vermeule has pointed out, Cyprus became a prosperous part of a vast imperial as well as local metropolitan organisation (86).

Since 1995 I have participated in the University of Sydney excavation of the theatre in Paphos, in western Cyprus, directed by Professor Richard Green and Dr Craig Barker. Season after season the team gradually uncovered first the cavea, or seating, then the orchestra, stage building and entrances of the Greco-Roman theatre on the edge of Fabrika Hill. Slowly they lifted the chaotic tumble of collapsed walls caused by earthquakes, as well as thick layers of earth and rubble that had built up after more than a millennium of farming and small industry. The
inimitable semi-circular structure emerged into the light, with its stepped seating focused around the central orchestral floor, and fragments of a stage building among scattered column drums (some spirally fluted) and battered capitals. A few shards of statues had escaped the lime-kilns of later times; a marble hand bent as if holding an apple or a bird; half a foot in a sandal; a columnar altar. Even though so fragmentary, these glimpses had an imperious authority, indicative of a wider pattern of thought. Every year more trenches yielded densely packed potsherds and finds of metal and glass, even painted plaster, showing a continuous habitation of the site from the fourth century BC. And yet the archaeologists longed for the authority of inscriptions.

The theatre was a place for speech, for declamation and rhetoric and even for the roaring of gladiatorial games with wild animals brought from Africa in its changing history of use over more than six hundred years. It seemed no word remained out of all the words that must have resounded there. In that shape like a great amplifier set into the hill, poetry and music reverberated and ricocheted from the smooth plaster and marble surfaces so that every one of a possible eight thousand people in the theatre could hear.

A few engraved letters — omega, iota, delta — appeared in sequence; then pi and omicron cut into the limestone bedrock of the seating offered clues to the date of the theatre but only a twitter of meaning. In the saturated light of midday even these letters tend to vanish, while the low raking light of dawn and dusk revealed the shadowed hollows of the letter forms engraved in the surface, amongst odd dimples, scratches and tiny plants. An epigrapher, Michael Osborne, visited from Melbourne but left shaking his head over the scattered letters, though he was able to clarify their forms; particularly the distinctive pi (π) with one short leg and the open form of the high-set omega, as characteristic of a time around 300 BC (Green and Stennett 183 and 185).

Near the western area of the orchestra lay a quite beautiful ‘threshold’ stone of smooth marble more than two and a half metres long, which seemed to have been placed in an entrance as part of a later overbuilding of the theatre. I had walked over it for several seasons, but when I arrived on the site in 2001 a breathtaking discovery had just been made. Brush, the team geologist and marble specialist, had been thinking about the distinctiveness of this stone lying there. Proconnessian marble, slightly streaked with grey, is rare in the limestone environment of the theatre. The top surface of the marble was smooth with wear, but its underside? He scraped away earth from underneath it, and felt ridges and indentations with his fingers in the narrow hole without being able to see anything. With great excitement the stone was carefully lifted and proved to be the first substantial inscription found on the site. It recorded the dedication and rebuilding of the theatre by the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius and his son Marcus Aurelius Antoninus between 139 and 161 AD. By a marvellous chance, the other half of the inscription was in the storerooms of the Paphos Museum. This block had
been found in the early 1900s, a hundred years earlier, in the yard of the house of Ioannis Tseneris on Fabrika Hill, the site of the theatre (Nicolaou 2003 306).

Richard Green the director of the theatre excavation and Ino Nicolaou have reconstructed the full text, which belonged to the façade of the proscenium, the scaenae frons of the theatre. The serificed Greek letters of the two long lines of text vary in height, and the words are not spaced but form a continuous line, with some abbreviations for titles. The omicron, (the short O), the phi φ (the F) and the omega (the long O) are classically rounded circular forms, with the upper line of letters slightly larger (11 cm) than the lower line (9 cm).

The translation reads:

To God Zeus Capetolius and to Emperor Caesar T Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius and his son M Aurelius Antoninus Caesar for benefactions (rendered to her) Augusta, Claudia, Flavia Paphos, the Sacred Metropolis of the cities of Cyprus, the proscenium, the statues and the approaches to the parodoi constructed from her own funds. (Nicolaou 2003 308; Green and Stennett 2002 188.)

The text refers to the help that the Emperor Antoninus Pius and his son, the future emperor Marcus Aurelius gave to the reconstruction of the theatre after a severe earthquake. The city of Paphos, with all its honorific titles named after great imperial women Augusta, Claudia and Flavia (a city is feminine) and indeed the ‘mother city’ of Cyprus expressed her gratitude for ‘the proscenium, the statues and the approaches’ of the theatre. The great deity of Rome, called here ‘Zeus Kapetolios’, was Jupiter Capitolineus, whose ancient temple was on the Capitol in Rome. These ‘approaches’ would have included the painted western entrance, the parodos, with its vivid images of fillets and architectural ornament.5

Rubbing the inscription gently with soft graphite over a light rice paper documents every inflection of the carving, the flecked and slightly rippled surface made by the chisel and the hollow of the letters rendered in reverse tone, white rather than shadow, like a photographic negative. The rubbing does not show the elegant moulding along the length of the stones above the inscription, but clearly delineates the horns of the serifs at the edges of the letters. The transient paper simulacrum gives a precise sense of the touch of the ancient hand tool over the surface of the marble.

To have the name of Marcus Aurelius inscribed on a central part of the theatre architecture seemed like a direct, tangible connection between that renowned and
reflective emperor, always writing from a military tent on the edges of Empire, and my trajectory between Australia and Cyprus as part of a reverse kind of movement of empire, in the postcolonial wake of the British in Cyprus. Marcus Aurelius’s private journal which became famous as the ‘Meditations’, explored rules for living within the vagaries of existence. His philosophy has been described as ‘Platonic stoicism’ — discovering what is the ‘good’ life and accepting whatever comes with fortitude. The book now known as 'Meditations' was originally called ‘To himself” and it is an introverted, almost autobiographical text for a ruler who must maintain forceful control across a vast geographical area, encompassing people of many affiliations and languages (Staniforth 7). The ‘we’ and ‘us’ in the quotes below refer to the educated Roman aristocratic class, well read in Plato, Epicurus, Epictetus and the Greek dramatists of Athens whose works continued to be played in theatres across the span of the provinces. His imperial sensibility asserted the primacy of reason but he was also aware of unpredictable fortune and the mystery of the gods. Like any archaeologist, Marcus Aurelius was acutely conscious of time and space, and the shortness of life, accentuated by the loss of four of his children. (The only one of his five children who did survive became the detested Emperor Commodus.)

The volume of the ‘Meditations’ published in 1558 became enormously popular throughout Europe as a work of ‘comfort and instruction’ (Meredith 712). Shakespeare might have read these extracts, which are taken from Maxwell Staniforth’s 1964 translation in Penguin Classics:

Fig. 3. Diana Wood Conroy, 2009, ‘Traces of the Ancient City: The Sacred Metropolis’. Detail. Graphite on rice paper. Approx. 80 cm x 45 cm. (Photo: Tom Williams)
Book 1:9. My debt to (my tutor) Sextus include kindliness, how to rule a household with paternal authority, the real meaning of the Natural Life, an unselfconscious dignity, an intuitive concern for the interests of one’s friends, and a good natured patience with amateurs and visionaries. (37)

4:3: Keep before your eyes the swift onset of oblivion and the abysses of eternity before us and behind… For the entire earth is but a point, and the place of our own habitation but a minute corner of it. (63)

9:3 Like other natural processes that life’s seasons bring us, so is our dissolution. (138)

9:7 Erase fancy, curb impulse, quench desire, let sovereign reason have the mastery. (139)

9:12 Desire one thing alone that your actions or inactions should be worthy of a reasoning citizen. (141)

9:28 Soon earth will cover us all. Then in time earth too will change; what issues from this change will itself incessantly change. (144)

9:36 The substance of us all is doomed to decay; the moisture and the bones and the fetor. Our precious marble is but a callosity of the earth, our gold and silver her sediments, our raiment shreds of hair, our purple, fish’s gore. (146)

10:27 Reflect often how all the life of today is a repetition of the past and observe that it also presages what is to come. The performance is the same – only the actors change. (159)

The Meditations were informed by a deep reading of the Greeks: Homer (Odyssey in bk 5:31, 11:31, Iliad in bk 10:34); Hesiod (Works and Days v. 197 in bk 5 33, 11:32); Empedocles (bk 8:41, bk 11:12); Plato (the Republic in bk 7:35, the Apology and Georgias in bk 7: 44–46), the Sceptics (bk 5:10), the Cynics (bk 4: 30); and the Roman Stoic Epictetus (bk 11:32–36). Among the classical Greek poets he mentioned the tragedians Sophocles (Oedipus Rex in bk 11:6), Euripides (Chrysippus and Suppliants; bk 7: 38–42), as well as the comic playwright Aristophanes, with the work of Cratinus and Eupolis, now lost (bk 11:6). He discussed New Comedy and Mime (bk 11:6).

In an interesting connection, the school of philosophy that primarily influenced Marcus Aurelius, Stoicism, was founded by Zeno about 300 BC in Kitium, now Larnaca in Cyprus, at exactly the same time as the Paphos theatre was built. The name stoa indicated the colonnade in Athens where Zeno discoursed (Staniforth 9). The Pax Romana that Marcus Aurelius inherited in the second century was often under threat with “barbarian invasions, bloody civil wars, recurrent epidemics, galloping inflation and extreme personal insecurity” (Dodds 3). The Stoic tenet of dealing with constant change and the passions of the soul through rational control and calm underpinned the Meditations (Dodds 3, 4). Marcus Aurelius himself died of an infectious disease at the age of fifty-nine.

The names of the two emperors Marcus Aurelius and his father Antoninus Pius are part of the canon of European history and art, enmeshed in the glorious conquest and terror of Empire, inscribed on public monuments celebrating victory over the ‘barbarians’ who were always pushing at the boundaries. The principles of the ‘Meditations’ such as forbearance, justice and endurance in the struggle to
maintain and enlarge provinces carried on into the British Empire. I can imagine Marcus Aurelius’ little book, written on campaign, accompanying civil servants and military personnel to Calcutta or Madras (now Kolkata and Chennai).

The symbolic terms and regal proclamation of the Antonine inscription above the theatre stage evoked the public realm for the theatre audience. But what of writing by or for women? Rome had no female generals or administrators. The city of Paphos is referred to as ‘mother’ (metropoleos), and ‘nature’ in Marcus Aurelius is feminine. The dominant deity in Paphos was Aphrodite, Venus to the Romans, who was understood to be the ancestor of Aeneas, the founder of Rome, so that all the Roman emperors could claim descent from the goddess, as Virgil had proclaimed in his foundation epic, *The Aeneid*. The key to understanding gender roles at the time is to comprehend not only the genealogical role of the mother but also the encompassing and engrained rituals of religion.

An image of the Aphrodite sanctuary of Palaepaphos on a coin of Emperor Carracalla was found by the archaeologists in the soil beneath the marble Antonine inscription (Green and Stennett 188). This open air, walled sanctuary seventeen kilometres from the theatre, in ‘Old Paphos’, had been in existence since the Bronze Age and is mentioned by the geographer Strabo (born a Greek in 64 BC in the Pontus in Asia Minor). ‘Palaepaphos situated about ten stadia above the sea, has a mooring place and an ancient temple of the Paphian Aphrodite. Then one comes to Paphos, which was founded by Agapenor and has both a harbour and well-built temples. It is sixty stadia distant from Palaepaphos by land; and on this road, men together with women, who also assemble here from other cities, hold an annual procession to Palaepaphos’ (Strabo bk 14.6.3).

In the centre of the open *temenos* of the temple where the pilgrims gathered, the coin shows an aniconic (without representation) shape, a pyramidal stone. This remarkable stone, 1.22 metres high, still exists in the Museum at Palaepaphos, and is rubbed smooth by generations of offerings of olive oil; it is an abstract, unwritten and uninscribed stone redolent with the endless desire for fertility. The stone is dark green gabbro, a rock from the magma usually found in the Troodos Mountains of central Cyprus and was the focus for the extensive homage to Aphrodite throughout the time of the theatre. The conical Aphrodite stone, ‘venerated under the shape of an omphalos (a navel)’ probably dates from the Chalcolithic period, the ‘age of stone’, about 2400 BC (Servius *Ad Aeniedem* 1.274 qtd in Karageorghis 30). Another famous *omphalos* or navel stone was central to the cult of Apollo in Delphi. Apollo Hylates was his representative in Cyprus, with a sanctuary not far from the Paphos theatre described by F.G. Maier and V. Karageorghis in 1984 (232). Paphos was said by Hesychius, writing a lexicon in the first century, to have been another navel of the world parallel to that of Delphi in Greece, the centre of the earth (Młnarczyk 25).

The mute, chthonic power of the aniconic stone contrasts to the *dignitas* and authority in the graven letters of the theatre inscription. Both have a strong aesthetic
impact. The evidence of imagery on coins and statuettes shows that the devotion to resourceful feminine deities underpinned the public realm, but individual women are not named in the archaeology of the theatre. The activities of women had to have another kind of emphasis. Richard Sennett, in his exploration of the binary associations of flesh and stone, body and city noted that the Greeks thought that cold, wetness and passivity indicated the female, even from the earliest moments of conception. If the developing embryo was warm in the womb it became male, otherwise it became female ‘more soft, more liquid, more clammy-cold’. Male qualities were heat, dryness and light, but both male and female represented ‘two poles of a bodily continuum’ (Sennett 42). The monuments of the public spaces were bright, the place of male activity, while dark private houses were the domestic feminine realm.

How intriguing to imagine both ‘phallic’ and ‘omphalic’ sensibilities intersecting and interacting in the long time span of the Greco-Roman theatre. Each letter is inscribed into the bedrock of the seating. The sign of the omega is curved, turning in on itself and looks like a navel, or like a wreath of string. The shape of \( \omega \), \textit{omega} reflects the plan of the theatre. It does not have the one-point perspective, the direct upward movement of the ‘I’, but is part of a wider pattern where self is not differentiated from the community. Always part of a binary with \textit{alpha}, the first letter, \textit{omega} is at the end of the Greek alphabet, belonging to the tomb and the earth rather than the bright light of every day.

Orality, the sung and spoken word, must have been the milieu of most ancient women. A culture of speech, as Marcel Detienne has observed, has more to do with ear and memory than it does with letters and writing (21). Orality was the essential counterpoint to written texts in tragedy, comedy and even mime. The great literature of Greek women, said the poet Peter Levi, was embodied in the lament for the dead, that female chorus that also draws out and comments on the momentum of the drama.\(^6\) \textit{Rembetica} or \textit{zeimbekiko} music that sings of larrikin and outcast may have its roots in ancient tragedy, and it is still heard in the bars of Paphos in haunting contralto and soprano voices. Patrick Leigh Fermor, scholar and traveller, wrote about the remote region of the Mani in Greece in the mid-twentieth century — parallel in many ways to Cyprus in the continuance of ancient dialects — and described the long rhyming couplet sung as a dirge by graves specifically by women. These laments were called μοιρολόι, literally in Greek ‘the words of fate’. He noted ‘the similarity of these \textit{miroloydia} with the themes of ancient Greek literature, most notably with the lament of Andromache over the grave of Hector’ (Fermor 58).

The series of stone writings to emerge from the last phase of the theatre in the sixth century AD seem to find a place between these polarities, between the public formality of the Antonine inscription and the unwritten rituals of the private domains of Paphos. A remarkable sequence of significant inscriptions came to light in 2006, when a cluster of recycled stones that formed a perimeter
The wall of the theatre orchestra were finally unearthed. This wall was built in the Antonine period (139 – 198 AD) to make a containing barrier so that water events could be held in the orchestra. Richard Green and Eric Handley (2010) have situated the three inscriptions within their archaeological and historical context, through the detailed grammatical scrutiny of each word (showing the primacy of epigraphy, not only to archaeology but also to exegetical analysis at the heart of literary scholarship). Green and Handley describe how the three texts were carved into re-used stones probably about 542 AD, that is, four hundred years later than the Antonine inscription. The theatre was devastated by a catastrophic earthquake about 365 AD that affected the whole west coast of Cyprus and after this it became a great abandoned ruin and a prime resource for building materials. The archaeological evidence suggests it was still a place where people might assemble and squat in makeshift dwellings with their animals and even small workshops (203).

The two inscriptions in the theatre, one on a granite column and one on a red limestone base (the stone is found in the mountains in SW Cyprus) include the same name ‘Eustorgis’. The one on the column reads ‘Eustorgis of Cyprus rebuilds…’. The base had already been used before, and the erased letters below the Eustorgis text are visible but not legible. Once there must have been a bronze statue inserted into the holes. This time Eustorgis is in the vocative case ‘Eustorgis, lover of building’ from the verb κτίζω (ktizo) (Green & Handley 204–205).

Building or ‘Creation’ appears as the bust of an allegorical female figure in a fifth-century mosaic in the House of Eustolius at Kourion, another important Early Christian complex 30 km from Paphos. As in the earlier phases of the
theatre, the individual woman is not identified, but her dignified femininity is named as KTISIS (Creation personified, again from the verb ktiso, to build) holding a standard measuring tool for the Roman foot.

Unlike the order and balance of the classical rounded letters with serifs, the engraving of the narrow letters of the Eustorgis inscriptions is irregular and wavering with something of the quality of an individual’s handwriting. The lettering is a mixture of capitals and handwriting; the lambda (L) lower case, the rho (R) curiously narrow. There is no straight base line of text; the letters vary in height between 5 and 6 cm.

The third Eustorgis inscription was found by Richard Green in 2006 high up on another granite column, similar to the one in the orchestra wall, but this time it was not in the theatre itself but in the nearby Early Christian Chryssopolitissa basilica, the largest basilica on Cyprus, where numerous acanthus-leaved column capitals and column shafts from the theatre were re-used in the late fourth century. Because it is not on eye level the inscription disappeared into the flicker of uneven stone. Only the eagle eye of the archaeologist could discern what was already actually open to sight, if one knew what to look for. The distinguishing character of each kind of stone, its colour, shape and surface, alerts the mind
The conversion of Cyprus to Christianity was widespread by the end of the fourth century, although some remarkable pagan mosaics, such as those of Ariadne and Theseus in the late fourth (renovated in the fifth) century House of Theseus, less than a kilometre from the Paphos theatre, testify to the continuing strength of the old stories. Yet the artist who made the labyrinth mosaic made Theseus almost womanly (in contrast to the heroic ferocity of the early myths), beardless with long curly hair and large dreamy eyes which appear to look inwards as well as outwards. The bust of Ariadne watches the killing of the Minotaur, and each entity has the name picked out in the marble tesserae. In the fifth century, when the mosaic of Theseus’ head had been restored after an earthquake to its present form, pagan beliefs were in competition with Christian ideas (Michaelides 6). The labyrinth, according to Wikto Daszewski who excavated it in the 1960s, had become an allegory, a symbol of the difficulty of life, of the long and painful road to truth, a symbolic place of transformation, of initiation, final victory and the end of desire. The victory of the hero over the monster foreshadows St George and the dragon, where spirit triumphs over material values (Daszewski 59–63).

There is a blurring between pagan and Christian in the stylistic continuity of mosaics and architecture. Other buildings in the city such as the Odeon and the Agora as well as the theatre were never rebuilt after the cataclysmic earthquake. ‘The city, celebrated by the poets, destroyed by frequent earthquakes, has now
only its ruins to show what once it was’ wrote St Jerome about Paphos in 391 AD (Maier and Karageorghis 285).

Despite the damage of earthquakes, the Paphiot Bishopric was able to build the huge basilica, which had seven aisles to hold the congregation. The theatre’s architectural elements lived again, recycled in the new dramatic fervour of Christian ritual. Built at exactly the time the theatre was ending its life, the basilica was remodelled in the sixth century only to be destroyed in 653 AD by Arabs. Arab inscriptions show they had a continued presence here (Maier and Karageorghis 301). The small fifteenth century church of Ayia Kyriaki perches on the northern aisle of the once vast basilica or cathedral, and outside it the granite column with Eustorgis’ name overlooks a carpet of floor mosaics of twining rosettes and ribbons, inset with Biblical texts.

I wanted to re-present the Eustorgis inscriptions as contemporary prints to highlight the mystery of the obliteration of the past, except for almost unreadable fragments of heart-rending brevity.

It’s most likely that Eustorgis himself belonged to the new faith, and was possibly an influential man in the church, write Green and Handley in their detailed examination of the text. His name means ‘loving well’ from the verb
stergo to love in the Christian sense of ‘natural affection, the mutual love of parents and children’ (Classic Greek Dictionary 1949). The basilica inscription reads ‘Eustorgis may he never thirst’. The references evoked by this phrase bring the text right out of the context of Marcus Aurelius’s Stoic Platonism and into the ambit of St John’s Gospel, as the thirst is a spiritual thirst, using the verb ‘dipsao’. The authors point to St John’s Gospel 4:13–16, where Jesus at Jacob’s Well says to the woman of Samaria: ‘Whosoever drinketh of the water I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up into eternal life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw’. The connection to thirst is heightened too because not far from the Eustorgis column inscription is a damaged floor-mosaic image of a deer bending to drink. The fragmentary text above the animal refers to Psalm 42: ‘As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
so panteth my soul after thee (O God)’ (Green & Handley 207). It’s just possible to read the last phrase ‘psyche mou pros se’.

The Eustorgis inscriptions speak of a different kind of individual emerging, where the power of the state so evident in the Antonine inscriptions is replaced
by an emotional and personal agency. Peter Brown has traced the changing nature of ‘divine power’ (14) between 200 and 400 AD through the idea that divinity could be represented on earth through individual human agents who had a stable relationship to it, sometimes sorcerers, sometimes saints. He posits that the ‘Christian church was the impresario of a wider change’ (15), with individual holy men who were believed to be the tangible links between heaven and earth, and who could speak directly with the oracular power of healing. ‘The individual leaps into focus’ after the third century (Brown 26). Eustorgis inherited the legacy of the writing saints — Augustine (born Thagaste now Algeria 354, died 430), Anthony (born Egypt 251, died 356), and Jerome (born Stridon on the Adriatic coast 347, died 420) — who were informed by, but moved away from, classical philosophers like the Stoics loved by Marcus Aurelius. Perhaps Eustorgis was just such a charismatic leader, encouraging and supporting Cyprus, rebuilding not only physical structures but also tending to the new longings of the soul.

In this overview of the inscriptions in stone and their discovery in the Paphos theatre and nearby monuments, the fragmentary evidence shows Rome as an implicitly imperial power and brings home forcefully how the immensity of the
past can mirror the (colonial and postcolonial) present over the six hundred year life of the theatre. The inscribed names of the Antonine emperors and the poetic resonance of the name of Eustorgis are points of focus, a tangible visual presence in what Susan Sontag has called ‘time’s relentless melt’ (qtd in Gilbert 420).
Influences of writers from all over the Roman Empire came together in Paphos, through the common language of Greek.

The past can reflect the present: in a postcolonial mirroring of displacement of autochthonous cultures there was, for example, the disappearance of Eteo-Cypriot languages in Cyprus. Invasions from the east and west, (from Persia, Phoenicia, Egypt, Greece, Rome to mention a few of the ancient invasions) must have caused diaspora and an assimilation of original peoples just visible in the archaeological record with the interweaving of languages and writing systems. The Ptolemaic conquest overwhelmed the Cypriot kingdoms yet led to the building of the Paphos theatre. Earthquakes caused famine and disease, countered by the fact that the colossal Roman peace did restore and maintain prosperity and stability, with a unifying language and government shown clearly in the Antonine inscription.

The very rare Early Christian inscriptions from the theatre indicate a new trajectory of belief. Travellers came from the edges of the Empire, like Strabo (who studied with the Peripatetic philosophers). Even though Strabo’s map of the world never conceived of such a remote geography, the Australians coming from the Antipodes and excavating the material evidence of the Paphos theatre are successors to a long trajectory of travellers, artists and scholars drawn to Cyprus. I am not sure that the electronic writing of this point in time will outperform the stone writing.

NOTES

1 Linear A and B are the names given to the Bronze Age scripts discovered by Arthur Evans in Knossos, Crete. Linear A has not been fully deciphered, but Linear B was interpreted by Michael Ventris in 1952 as Mycenaean Greek

2 I would like to express my great appreciation for the generous scholarship of Professor Richard Green, University of Sydney Director of the Paphos Theatre Excavation since 1995, who has consistently linked archaeology and art. Many thanks are due to Associate Director Dr Craig Barker, and to my longstanding colleagues on the team for their support and advice. Faculty of Creative Arts Research and Study Leave Grants, as well as a Vice-Chancellor’s Challenge Grant from the University of Wollongong, Australia immensely helped in travelling to the Cyprus excavation and the making of artwork. My book explores the context further: The Fabric of the Ancient Theatre: Excavation Journals from Cyprus.

3 Prokonnesus = Προκόννησος, an island in the Propontis, off Turkey, gives its name to marble exported from the island of Cyprus.

4 ‘Traces of the Ancient City’ was exhibited in Breathing Space: Liz Jeneid and Diana Wood Conroy, Wollongong City Gallery, 2010. The installation was reviewed by Belinda von Mengerson ‘Breathing Space: Liz Jeneid, Stephen Ingham and Diana Wood Conroy’.

5 The western parados decoration is described in Diana Wood Conroy, ‘Roman Wall Paintings in the Pa fores Theatre’, 275–300.

6 I knew Peter Levi at the British School of Archaeology in Athens in 1966, before he became Merton Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. His obsession at that time
was to understand the shadows of antiquity in the language and customs he found travelling all over Greece in the footsteps of Pausanias.


Ariadne used a thread to help Theseus through the labyrinth of Crete to kill her brother the Minotaur. After being abandoned by Theseus in Naxos, Dionysos carried Ariadne off as his bride. Dionysos was the god associated with all the rituals of theatre, and the theatre plan is like a labyrinth. This piece was a reflection on the mosaic labyrinth in the late Roman House of Theseus not far from the Paphos theatre excavation, grounded in the earth of the Illawarra region in Wollongong, Australia.

8 The two lithographs *Eustorgis 1* and *Eustorgis 11* were exhibited in the Faculty of Creative Arts Print Exhibition, University of Wollongong July, 2009.

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I wasn’t sure I could walk that far to be honest — 17 km seemed quite a long way for a day’s walk. It had been in my mind for years to make the walk from new Paphos to old Paphos along the pilgrim’s way mentioned by the geographer Strabo in the first century. He wrote that every year ‘men and women came from other cities to celebrate all along the road’ from the port at new Paphos to the sanctuary of Aphrodite on the hill high above the coast. I tried to research the route by looking for the old ways through Yeroskippou, tracing the path through shrines as Stathis had suggested.

Finally, it was decided, on Easter Saturday we would go — a small group gathered in the grey light just before dawn at 6.15 a.m. The morning star still hung over the tangled spreading trees around the Apollo hotel, sparrows beginning to softly cheep, a dove. I felt energised but nervous, not sure my feet and legs, still aching from the hard stones of the excavation, would manage.

Five of us gathered — Anthea, Cypriot English and bi-lingual; Di tiny and determined, bristling with eagerness; the potter Julie, just arrived from Geneva with open eyed warmth; and Pam, an archaeologist from Derbyshire who had surveyed northern England for sites, and had lost both her husband and mother in the same year.

It was beautiful walking in the first glimmer of light. The ruined theatre still caught the shadows of night as we turned into the ancient road, Ikaros St. We looked at the dim arc of seats, the pale stones of Fabrika Hill and the old gap of the North East gate at the point where Strabo had said, ‘thousands gathered to walk to the Temple of Aphrodite at palaepaphos’.

Kyria Athina was sweeping the street, amazed that we would walk 17 kilometres to Palaepaphos. Where would that road have been? We walked down Ikaros St, tombs beneath all the modern concrete houses, to an area called Elleniki, where another cluster of Greco-Roman tombs had been found. We passed the tiny chapel of Phaneromeni, where a sturdy woman in faded layers of blue was sweeping and picking up rubbish. We went in, lit a candle, laid a fresh red geranium for the icon of the Panayia, descendant of Aphrodite, crowded with smaller saints. ‘There’s a bit of an ancient column near that small church’, Stathis had said, indicating distant origins.

On the outskirts of the new town of Paphos were villas built by developers, named after deities, in remorseless repetition, set in dead end streets without shops or gathering places. Beside this bright but desolate suburb was a scrubby field where an old grey villa loomed among rocks, its concrete scabby and
deteriorating. From this building came a terrible howling — it was inhabited entirely by dogs, with many animals confined in every room. In the early light it sounded foreboding, even anguished. The dogs’ home and the new suburb obscured an ancient hypogeum, a cave shrine to Apollo Hylates, the Apollo of a vanished forest.

Once you steadily walk, space is covered, the road stretches behind and you move forward.

Now the developments thinned and golden grain stretched to the sea, heavy carobs and pines marking a dry watercourse. Trying to find the old route, we first went by the main road, lined with orange and walnut orchards, thickets of bamboo and cypress. The women exclaimed and chattered as we walked. Golden giant fennel towered above us, with stems light and strong, once used as a thyrsus, a kind of wand, by maenads in the wild. Poppies and asphodels flowered among field marigolds and blue flax. We went too far — the limestone ridge of Yeroskippou was visible from the flat fertile plain but the path was hidden. Turning back, we struck out between cypresses across a potato field and found beneath our feet an old and solid surface, much used, though not recently.

I had read in a study of the ancient routes of Cyprus that a fit man was expected to walk 35 kilometres a day, a woman or child 30. A different sense of
time emerged as each step became necessary, important. Each person met took on
significance, as the day lengthened.

We joined the traffic road through small villages. Anarita appeared as a
taverna beside the road, and Anthea asked an older man walking outside ‘is there
another road? Can we avoid the main road? He considered her question carefully
but before answering asked her about her family. She said her grandmother had
been a weaver at Anarita. His face lit up and he claimed her as a relative; soon
they were exchanging genealogies. But there is no longer any knowledge of the
old route to the sanctuary — it may be closer to the sea; this he said was the sure
path, any other direction was uncertain, just a shepherd’s track wandering along
the limestone hills.

The grey metallic road stretched ahead. Watching my feet I stepped over a
litany of things thrown from cars, pressed plastic water bottles and metal drink
cans flattened by wheels, with sometimes a snakeskin, a dead hedgehog. The
journey to the sanctuary of Aphrodite ‘who holds in her hands the fate of all things’
is full of incident and a wealth of detail, but in any era, the path is unpredictable.

(‘Towards Aphrodite’ was originally titled ‘Predictable Paths’ written by Diana Wood Conroy
and adapted for performance on night 454 [17th September 2006] by Barbara Campbell for
1001 Nights cast, a durational performance by Barbara Campbell [http://1001.net.au]).
NOT POETRY…WATER

To Cypriot Poets

Since Aphrodite this island has turned into a rubbish dump of love.
Our feet tangled in the roots of invaders
bone piles crack as we move
under our weight.

The earth so over-saturated with death syrup
the only escape
    is not poetry…
        water!

Due to excessive heat even the stones have melted
and flowed in streams to the sea
Foreign tongues like melted copper burnt
our mouths opened with sexual invasion.

For such a small island so much poetry
do not write anymore
    plant trees
    or water!

(trans. Aydin Mehmet Ali)

(from Yolyutma, Isik Yay, Nicosia, 2000)
NICOSIA

Nicosia you tricked me to stay on one side
Of your divided backyards sitting under sacred date-palms
With those who speak badly and
Who got me hooked on hash;
Instead of in a house I slept in the Armenian graveyard
And dreamt of Isabel d’Ibelin herself;
With a spring mattress dumped from the shut-down brothel and
A second-hand 28-inch bicycle frame, I exchanged my pride
Although the old may still smell jasmine
I smell only the military scent of sweat
And wounds in your streets
In your rotten rivers
Even if I were to try, I could not bring down to land a V-necked heron
Whiter than your spinster girls

Nicosia, You’ve had my name in your mouth for too long
Spit it out…

(trans. Oya Akın, Stephanos Stephanides and the poet)

(from Kelebek Tekmelemek, B/6, Yay, Nicosia, 2011)
THE PULL OF THE MOON

From the moon to the sea flows the River of Silence
From the sea fish run away to the moon,
Swimming swiftly against the current
—Sparkling scales fall on the shores of the island facing the moon—

I have no feet
Or instead of shoes
I wear the night on my feet

No matter how late I am
With dreams I always arrive early at my destination.

From the moon to the forest flows the River of Silence
From the forest birds run away to the moon
Swirling up against the current
—White feathers fall on the mountain slopes facing the moon—

I have no body
Or instead I am stretched
Between the past and the pull of the moon

No matter how far I go
Instantly I return to the beginning of the light.

(trans. Aydin Mehmet Ali)

(from Yolyutma, Işık Yay, Nicosia, 2000)
I WORSHIPPED TOO MANY GODS

i.
I worshipped too many gods, but
After long winters in the North I know now
Sun, you are the most real!

Ganged up with the Sea, in this
Arid paradise, what have you done
To the lost pieces of porcelain childhoods?
I’m back, and have little time, so tell me.

ii.
The land, which gives seven, and takes nine
I’m back — against the proverbs
Its arthritis accumulating in my joints
I’m asking you about those who hide in oblivion
And what hides buried inside you
And others dumped in the bottom of the well
Crossing over the limits of conditions
Overturning the towers of light onto thorny Mesaoria plains
And with the feeling of guilt
I’m back, and have little time, so tell me.

(trans. the poet with Stephanos Stephanides)

(from Augur, B/6, Yay, Nicosia, 2005)
I am twelve years of age. I was twelve years of age. I live on an island. I know this because the land is completely surrounded by water: wherever you start from, if you keep going long enough, you will get to the sea. When I grow up I will write a poem about it. When I grew up I wrote a poem about it, the poem was called ‘Island’. Here is the poem, not the completely true poem, which was written in Greek, but the truth the poem contains, translated into English:

Beyond the lies
ours yours the lies of others
there remain: one wide plain
two mountain ranges a beautiful peninsula
and the truth of the sea
completely surrounding us, fatal and salty.

This was the truth at twelve years of age. It is the truth now. It is the truth.

The truth is, I am not English, but I am twelve years of age and go to an English school and I speak English in perfect imitation of the English teachers who teach me how to speak it. I went to an English school. When I speak English I sound English but it is not true. When I went to study at university in England, people asked, was I English, but I told them, no. My parents are not English. The island I come from is not England. It was owned by England and so was English for a time, but it is not England, even though some parts of the island were kept by England to use, after it stopped owning the whole island. There are English soldiers there, and streets with neat English houses and English names, as if it is England. It isn’t the truth, but it is made to look like the truth.

I want to tell the story of being twelve years of age, but I want it to be the truth, not something that isn’t the truth made to look like the truth. Children know the difference. I knew the difference. I am awake, I am twelve years of age and it is a school-day. I live on an island which isn’t England but I go to an English school and the school has a uniform and after I wash my face I put it on: a grey pleated skirt, a white shirt, a dark green-and-crimson striped tie, a crimson cardigan in the same shade as the stripes on the tie, and black button-strap shoes with white ankle-socks. I like this uniform because the uniform says the world is orderly and there are grown-ups who know what to do and if one does good work one gets good marks and life is a clear case of knowing. I don’t like this uniform because I am not sure it is telling the truth. I wasn’t sure the uniform was telling the truth.

I go down to breakfast with my stomach in a knot. I always went down to breakfast with my stomach in a knot. Because it is too early for eating, half-past
six in the morning, too early for the day, which is still not open, and too early for my body, which also is still not open and wants to stay closed in sleep. Also because it is mid-December, and today instead of lessons in the afternoon we will have a dress-rehearsal of this year’s Christmas play: ‘The Sacrifice of Abraham’, in preparation for the performance the next day. It is a horrible play, I think, but all the teachers and parents seem to think it is a very good play for school and Christmas. God tells Abraham to kill his son, and Abraham is going to do it. He only gets stopped at the last minute by God, who tells him it was just a test. What kind of a god is a god who tests by telling a father to kill his son? And what kind of a father is a father who is willing to kill his son because God tells him to? And shouldn’t it be called ‘The Sacrifice of Isaac’? It is Isaac’s throat that is in danger of being cut.

I saw a throat cut once, or rather I heard it done. Not the throat of a boy, the throat of a kid goat. It was on August 15, Assumption Day, the feast of the Virgin Mary. The kid goat was white as white. I was seven years of age and the kid goat was my friend, on weekends at my grandmother’s house in the country I played with it: it stood up on its hind legs and danced with me, its little white comma of a tail aloft and happy. On Assumption Day they took it away and my great-aunt cut its throat so that we could eat it. I heard it bleating in fright as they took it away, then a scream as the knife — or did I hear a scream? Did I not run away to some place where I couldn’t hear it scream? Did I eat some of the dark, fragrant barbecued meat afterwards? I don’t know. I can’t say the truth is yes and I can’t say the truth is no, I can’t say. Why does God need the cutting of throats? Isaac was saved at the last minute, but the kid goat wasn’t saved.

In the play ‘The Sacrifice of Abraham’ I play Abraham’s wife Sarah. My mother has made a costume for me, a light blue cotton robe fashioned out of old curtain material, and a gauzy white veil for my head. I will dust my hair, which is plaited into two long plaits almost down to my waist, with talcum powder so that through the veil it will look like the white hair of an old woman, for as everyone knows Sarah was ninety when she gave birth to Isaac. Could this be the truth? It is in the Bible and everyone knows it, it is supposed to be the truth, but is it the truth? I am only twelve years of age, Sarah was ninety, there is no one I can ask. There was no one I could ask.

I will dust my hair with baby talc because in a play it is allowed for something not to be the truth but to be made to look like the truth, so that the people watching can believe the story, and in the story Sarah is ninety and must have white hair. I know that my parents will not be among the people watching. They will not come to the play because it is about a son and dying, and this reminds them of my baby brother Louis who died. He died before he was one year old. He could crawl but not walk yet. His name was really Vassilis but in the dialect Vassiloui is a diminutive and from that came Louis, and we always called him Louis. While he was alive. Now that he is dead we always say ‘the baby’. After he died we
always said, ‘the baby’. When the time comes for the yearly memorial service at the end of August, my mother always says to my father: ‘We have to arrange for the baby’s memorial service’.

Now my mother says, ‘Mary, finish your breakfast or you’ll be late’. What she says is partly the truth, and partly not the truth. It’s true that if I dawdle over my toast and jam I’ll be late for school. But it’s not true that I am Mary. My real name is Demetra. I was named after Saint Demetrios, because I was born on his day in the Orthodox calendar: October 26th. But Demetra is an awkward name for English speakers, it would sit uncomfortably in the mouths of my teachers who are English; and my mother, anticipating this fact from the very start, said, ‘We’ll name her Demetra as is the custom, but we’ll call her Mary’. Mary is not the truth. Demetra is the truth. But I am called Mary. No one can see, but each time someone speaks my name I feel a jab in the region of my stomach. When I grew up I found out this jab had names: guilt and fear. Guilt because Mary is not the truth, and I am twelve years of age and I know that it is not; fear that I will be found out as a not-true Mary.

I am twelve years of age and I wonder whether there are other children whose names are not the truth, who feel the same jab, the same guilt and fear that I do. I wonder whether names for some things might not be the truth either. When I grew up I read a book about Confucius, and in the book it said that when Confucius was asked once by a disciple what would be the first thing he would do if a king entrusted a territory to him to rule as he thought right, he said, ‘My first task would certainly be to rectify the names’. The disciple didn’t understand, but I am twelve years of age and I understand that Mary is not the truth and that it is important that names be the truth: otherwise language has no sense, and then nothing makes any sense, or matters. I understood.

I can’t say any of this to my parents because it is in the future and right now I must finish my breakfast and get to school, whether I am called Mary or no. I couldn’t say any of this to my parents. What I do say, as I hurriedly swallow the last mouthful of toast and jam, is, ‘Will you come to see the play? It’s tomorrow instead of afternoon school we’re going to have the play’. My parents are silent for a moment. My father has already picked up his briefcase and car keys in preparation for going to the office, and my mother has begun clearing the breakfast table. There is a moment of silence, they mutter in distracted unison, ‘We’ll see’. But I know this is not the truth, that they will not see. They will not come to see me as white-haired Sarah, holding a doll that is supposed to be the baby Isaac at the beginning of the play, rocking and kissing it and saying, ‘Praise God, I have given Abraham a son’; they will not see me later in the play welcoming Abraham and Isaac back from the mountain, and standing close together with them as a yellow spotlight shines on the three of us, symbolising the grace of God, which is the end of the play. That’s how the play ended, with the three of us in a yellow spotlight symbolising the grace of God.
Could this story possibly be a true story? Could it possibly be the truth that God asked Abraham to cut his son’s throat? That Sarah did not know Abraham was going to cut Isaac’s throat and burn him as an offering to God, at God’s behest? And if she did know, could it be the truth that she did not fall to her knees and rend her clothes and supplicate, ‘Don’t listen to God, don’t kill our only child, don’t, oh, don’t make him a burnt offering’? That she did not tear her white hair and beat her breast and supplicate? If it is the truth then what kind of a mother was Sarah and what kind of a god is God? Or if Sarah was as she should have been and God is as He should be, then how could it be the truth? I am twelve years of age, there is no one I can ask besides myself, but I can’t answer. There was no one I could ask besides myself. But I couldn’t answer.

It is the dress rehearsal. In the first scene of the play Sarah has miraculously given birth to the baby Isaac. We don’t see the birth because you can’t do things like births on stage but we see Sarah, who is me at twelve years of age playing Sarah at the age of ninety, holding the baby Isaac and rocking and kissing him. I am dressed in the light blue cotton robe fashioned out of old curtain material and the white gauzy veil and my plaits are thick with white baby talc. I rock and kiss the doll, and I say, ‘Praise God, I have given Abraham a son’. ‘No, no, Mary!’ the English lady teacher of English who is the director of the play cries out in exasperation. ‘Too flat! Her voice must be ecstatic! Happy!’ she adds, thinking I might not be quite sure what ‘ecstatic’ means. I know what ‘ecstatic’ means. I am twelve years of age but I am a precocious reader, and besides ‘ecstatic’ is a Greek word, and I know Greek. I knew Greek. But the most important thing is not that I am a precocious reader or that ‘ecstatic’ is a Greek word and I know Greek. The most important thing is that I held my brother Louis when he was born, the same way I am holding the doll which is supposed to be the new-born Isaac in the play.

When I grew up I found a photograph of me holding my baby brother Louis. My father must have taken the photograph. I am sitting in a chair next to my mother’s bed in her private hospital room, holding my day-old brother Louis wrapped in a blanket, his face scrunched up and his eyes closed. I am dressed in my school uniform — my father and I must have gone to the hospital after school, or could it have been on the way? It is November, a couple of months into the new school year, and I am seven years of age in the photograph, my plaits, which at twelve years of age almost reach my waist, barely touch my shoulders. My brother Louis’ eyes are closed, and I am looking dark-eyed straight at the camera, not smiling. But when I am twelve years of age and the English lady teacher of English says ‘… ecstatic! Happy!’ I think of my mother giving me my baby brother Louis to hold for the first time and I know now how I should make Sarah speak as she holds the baby Isaac. When I grew up I found the photograph of me holding my baby brother Louis, and I saw that I am not smiling for the camera. But I am twelve years of age and I remember how, when I held my baby brother
Louis for the first time, my heart became secretly ecstatic, happy, how it sang, ‘A baby! A baby!’ and I loved him. And I understand that Sarah need not smile, she can keep the singing of her heart and the love for baby Isaac secret, but the smile and the singing and the love must be in her voice. I am twelve years of age and I remember holding my baby brother Louis, and Sarah’s voice has a smile and a song and love in it, and the English lady teacher of English says, sounding surprised, ‘Why Mary! That’s much better!’ and I say, ‘Thank you’.

After my mother and my baby brother Louis came home from the hospital, for the first while the house was full of visitors. ‘A boy!’ they all said as they stepped through the door, beaming, offering their gift. ‘A boy!’ My mother only smiled a small smile but my father beamed back and invariably answered, ‘A boy!’ No one said, as my heart said, ‘A baby!’ They all said, ‘A boy!’ And I began to know that when I was born, they did not say, ‘A girl!’ My heart still became secretly happy, ecstatic, whenever my mother gave me my baby brother Louis to hold, and I did, oh, I did love him. But I am seven years of age and I know they did not beam and say, ‘A girl!’ and that my father did not beam and say, ‘A girl!’ in return, when I was born. My baby brother Louis looks at me and chuckles his baby chuckle and I look at him and feel how my heart loves him, but I also know what they did not say when I was born.

I remember how my baby brother Louis died. I am twelve years of age and it is the dress rehearsal of ‘The Sacrifice of Abraham’, a play I do not like at all, and I am Sarah holding a doll that is supposed to be the baby Isaac, and I am remembering how my baby brother Louis died. It is the end of August. The Feast of the Assumption has been and gone, my great-aunt has slit the throat of my friend the kid goat, and I have or have not heard the desperate bleating, and I have or have not eaten some of the fragrant barbecued meat, and now we are at the beach. It is probably the last seaside outing before school starts again, the main season is over, and there aren’t many people. Just my mother, my father, my baby brother Louis and I; the next striped and fringed sun umbrella is some distance away. I am seven years of age and I am digging a moat around an elaborate sand-castle, with my back to my baby brother Louis, who is sitting plumply naked on the sand, wearing a white sun bonnet. Louis cannot walk yet but he has learned to crawl, we all laugh watching his little fat body scuttle from here to there on the living-room floor. But right now he is sitting on the sand in his sun bonnet, chuckling his baby chuckle at the sight of the blue sea and the foam of the lazy, lapping wavelets breaking and spreading like lace over the sand. My parents suddenly stand up and say, ‘We are going to get some ice-cream!’ and I throw a quick, distracted glance over my shoulder and see them walking off, laughing, in the direction of the ice-cream kiosk across the street from the beach.

I am twelve years of age remembering myself at seven years of age digging a moat around an elaborate sand-castle. I do not look around at my baby brother Louis. What is the truth? That I did not want to look around? That I simply didn’t
think to look around? I don’t know. I can’t say that the truth is yes and I can’t say that the truth is no, I can’t say. Did I hear the bleating, did I eat some of the fragrant, barbecued meat? I can’t say. I could never say. I remember myself at seven years of age hearing the cries of my parents as they walked, then ran, back from the ice-cream kiosk. ‘The baby! The baby!’ This time they said, ‘The baby!’ and not, ‘The boy!’ When I grew up I thought, ‘That’s when they started to call him “the baby”’. I am seven years of age and finally I turn around and I see that my baby brother Louis has crawled to the sea, into the lazy, lapping wavelets, that he is lying face down in the blue water. The white sun bonnet has come off and is drifting next to him, now a little out to sea, now back towards the shore, like breathing. But my baby brother Louis is not breathing. My parents are making desperate sounds, they are doing the desperate things grown-ups do when their baby son has drowned, but I can only sit looking at them, frozen in place. No one speaks to me. I do not remember anyone speaking to me. No one spoke to me. Then it is afterwards, and it has happened, and there will never be a time any more when it has not happened: my baby brother Louis is drowned. Then it was afterwards, and it had happened, and there was never a time any more when it had not happened.

It is the end of the first act in the dress rehearsal of ‘The Sacrifice of Abraham’, and I am twelve years of age, stepping off the stage holding the doll representing baby Isaac and remembering how no one spoke to me, how my parents never spoke to me about the drowning of my baby brother Louis while I dug a moat with my back to him. I had to speak, they never spoke to me so I spoke to myself. I was seven years of age, and now I am twelve years of age and every night I speak to myself and ask, did I not want to turn around, did I simply not think to turn around, what is the truth? I can’t say yes and I can’t say no, I can’t say. I could never say. I am speaking to myself now, stepping off the stage holding the baby Isaac because it is the end of the first act. I speak to myself as I stand off-stage watching the second act. I watch Abraham as God tells him to go to the mountain with his son Isaac and make a sacrifice. The voice of God is one of my classmates standing off in the wings, at first he wanted to shout the things he had to tell Abraham, but the lady teacher directing the play said, ‘No, speak distinctly but there is no need to shout, God doesn’t have to shout like a policeman to be heard or understood’.

I am listening to the distinct but not shouting voice of God, and suddenly at twelve years of age something happens in my mind and I hear the distinct but not shouting voice of my mother through the open door of my parents’ bedroom. My parents are lying down for their siesta and they have left the door ajar and I am in the hallway and can hear my mother’s voice. I have no baby brother Louis yet, I am still an only child, in the hallway, and my mother’s voice is saying, distinctly, ‘But I don’t want another one, George. You were an only child, you don’t know how fortunate that was. There were six of us, you have no idea’. I
keep on walking to my own room, quiet as quiet, and I lie down and I forget my mother’s words, they go to the part of my mind where words go to be forgotten. I forgot my mother’s words. But now the distinct voice of God has suddenly made the words come to the surface of my mind, shoot to the surface like a cork released under water, and I begin to hear another sound besides the voice of the classmate who is God, a sound like a kid goat having its throat cut, a sound like: aiiiiiiieeeeeee! And the sound is my own voice screaming. And then the sobs start to heave in my body, enormous waves of grief, not lazy, lapping wavelets but huge rollers that break and pour out of my eyes as large, scalding tears, and I am sobbing and screaming and sobbing, and the English lady teacher is bending over me in panicked consternation, saying, ‘Mary, Mary! What on earth has happened to you! Mary!’

In the sick-bay, the school nurse makes me lie down, and as I stop screaming and the sobs become deep, heaving breaths, she gives me a glass of water and a pill and says, ‘There, there. Is that better now, dear? Shall we call your mother?’ I say, ‘No, please, not my mother! I’m fine, thank you’. The teacher is hovering anxiously but the nurse says, ‘Let her rest, it’s just nerves and the excitement of the play’, and they both go out into the corridor, leaving the door ajar. I hear teacher’s voice saying distinctly, ‘Oh, dear. Will she be all right for the performance tomorrow? Do you think she will be all right?’ and the nurse’s reassuring answering murmur.

They didn’t call my mother, and I was all right for the performance the next day. When I grew up I also found, in the same old box containing the photograph of me holding my new-born brother Louis, a photograph of the final scene of ‘The Sacrifice of Abraham’. It is a little grainy, but clearly shows me at twelve years of age in my robe of old curtain material and gauzy veil and my plaits dusted with talc, standing with Abraham and Isaac in the spotlight symbolising the grace of God. I don’t know who took the photograph; it wasn’t my father, because my parents didn’t come to the play. In this photograph, I am smiling. Am I smiling because I want to smile, because I enjoyed acting, even though I didn’t like this play at all, or because I am Sarah, who is supposed to smile? I can’t say the truth is yes and I can’t say the truth is no, I can’t say.

I grew up and I found photographs, and I am always all right for the performance, but I never found the truth about the death of my baby brother Louis. Did I forget to look around; did I simply not think to look around? Or did my mother forget that Louis could crawl; did she simply not think to take him with her to the ice-cream stand instead of leaving him sitting on the sand with me at seven years of age absorbed in digging a moat around a sand-castle, with my back to him? Why didn’t my father think of it? What kind of mother was my mother, what kind of father was my father, what kind of god was God when my baby brother Louis died? When I watch people in Hollywood court-room dramas being sworn in and declaring they will tell the truth and nothing but the truth, I
am always amazed: is it possible to know what is the truth, and nothing but the truth? I myself could never say the truth is yes, and I could never say the truth is no, I could never say. Some now call me Demetra, and I answer, but some still call me Mary, and I answer to that name too, even though I know that Confucius is right, that it all starts with the names, the names must be the truth. There is only one name I am certain is the truth, and that name is: island. The only certainly true thing is that we lived on an island; that I come from an island. I know it is an island because wherever one starts from, if one goes on long enough, one always gets to the sea; and beyond the lies, all the lies, the only truth that remains is the truth of the sea, completely surrounding us, fatal and salty.
An Island in Translation

Introduction

The island of Cyprus has been shaped by a hopelessly complex multicultural history, division, and by a geographical position that has long ambiguated the geopolitical borders of ‘Europe’, ‘Asia’, and ‘the Middle East’. Any discussion of translation, literature, history, and culture in this zone of indeterminate encounter between heterogeneous cultures and populations is intriguing. The literature of Cyprus has been shaped across a spectrum of languages and trans-cultural relations which may range from confrontation, indifference or mutual exclusion, to creative engagement depending on the social and cultural processes and historical moments. If I begin with the island of my birth, it is both because I can speak from a position where I am written and from which I write, where I am translated and from which I translate, but like many writers I am fascinated by island spaces as metonymy of a world. Fernand Braudel observes that islands are subjected to historical pressures that push them at once ‘far ahead and far behind […] general history’, dividing them, ‘often brutally, between the two opposite poles of archaism and innovation’ (150). This seems to also suggest a situation of not knowing which time one is in, like Bloch’s famous concept of Ungleichzeitigkeit (temporal incommensurability). Time compressed into space, and the spatialisation of the temporal in an island territory, brings dissimilarities next to each other but also a mode of non-comprehension or charged speechlessness in need of translations that opens up for revision what may have been denied or apparently obsolete. A layered imaginative geography, in other words, governs the cultural differences related to cultural contests and national or ethnic divisions.

Translation, like writing, may serve to replenish the layered intertextual and interlingual resources of a culture — deterritorialising one terrain to map another. Deleuze and Guattari have used a tetra-lingual model for the spatiotemporal categories: vernacular (here), vehicular (everywhere), referential (over there), and mythical (beyond), which they use to develop the concept of ‘minor literature’ in terms of territorialisation, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation. The distribution of the four functions of language and their interplay will change through time and among different groups and communities, and this interplay is more salient within the cramped space of an island. For example, in the context of Cyprus, languages of territorialisation would be Cypriot Greek and Cypriot Turkish, the rural and maternal languages; the language of the island’s various colonisers would have been vehicular and deterritorialising, languages of the ‘world’ that are found ‘everywhere’ such as French and English. The referential,
and reterritorialising languages of sense and culture in the post-colonial nation state would be Modern Greek and Modern Turkish. Also reterritorialising are the mythic languages of the past, of spirituality and religion such as Classical and Byzantine Greek, Ottoman Turkish. Translation redistributes these functions of language, shifts their centres of power and blurs their borders. For Deleuze and Guattari ‘minor literature’ is written in a major language affected by a high degree of deterritorialisation. It is literature written in a major language but from a minoritarian or marginalised perspective such as Kafka writing in German or writers in former colonies writing in the Langue of the colonisers. A writer in a minor literature is a stranger in the language in which she [or he] writes making other voices vibrate within. As a writer in English in Cyprus and translator into English, I have been involved in the process of ‘becoming-Minor’. I will return to this idea and focus on English and literary transculturation in Cyprus in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but I will first provide a brief historical perspective of language relation and exchange on the island through its long history.

Language relations on the island have been marked by inequalities that have arisen because of conquest, colonialism, or changing demographics impinging on a pre-existing state. Many languages have been used on the island throughout its history. The bronze age Cypriots spoke a language whose script has not been deciphered and may be related to the language of Minoan Crete. Greeks and Phoenicians arrived on the island around the beginning of the first millennium BC and brought their languages with them. The languages of other rulers of antiquity — Assyrians, Egyptians, and Persians — are hardly documented. During the Hellenic and Roman period there was a large Jewish community on the island that became Greek-speaking. With the division of the Roman Empire, Cyprus became part of the Byzantine Empire until 1191, when it was conquered by the crusader, Richard the Lionheart, who sold it to the Knights Templar, and who in turn sold it to Guy de Lusignan in 1192. The ensuing French period on the island lasted three centuries. French became the language of the court and the ruling class, while Catholicism became the official religion and Latin the language of the clergy. The indigenous population retained the Cypriot dialect form of Greek, and the legislation of the Kingdom of Cyprus was written in Cypriot Greek as was the well-known chronicle of Leontios Makhairas during the same period, which was translated into English by Richard Dawkins in 1932 as Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus entitled ‘Chronicle’ — The Chronicle of Makhairas. Also in the medieval period, Italian dialects were used for trade in the coastal towns where some Italians settled. The Venetian economic presence became especially strong and eventually the Venetians took control of the island in 1489. During this period some sonnets were written in the Cypriot dialect after the Petrarchan tradition, although some argue that these may well be translations from the Italian. The Venetians ruled the island until it was conquered by the Ottomans in 1571. With a weakening Ottoman Empire, the island became a British protectorate in
1878 still under Ottoman Rule, was annexed by Britain at the outbreak of World War One when the Ottomans sided with Germany, and eventually became a Crown Colony in 1925.

One may find a kaleidoscopic perspective of this cultural history by navigating the *Excerpta Cypriana* — an anthology of translated writing on Cyprus compiled by the British commissioner of Larnaca and published in 1908. Including excerpts translated from various languages into English from ancient times up to the Ottoman period and evoking the gaze of travellers, settlers, Cypriots and conquerors, the anthology evokes the cross-cultural gaze on the island through the millennia: Strabo speaks of the temple of Aphrodite, unapproachable and invisible to women; the Spanish Jew, Benjamin of Tudela, speaks of the heretic Cyprian Jews, Epicureans who profane the sabbath and keep holy that of Sunday; Neophytus, the twelfth-century hermit speaks of England, a country beyond Romania out of which a cloud of English came with their sovereign; Capodilista, a 15th century Paduan gentleman, marvels at banana trees with fruit like cucumbers, yellow when ripe and very sweet of savour; and a document of Ottoman law professes tolerance toward Christians.

**British Rule 1878–1960**

During the first decades of British rule the combination of colonial rule and Cypriot diasporic consciousness yielded a form of colonial cosmopolitanism. It is noteworthy that literary modernity in Cyprus came belatedly, with the advent of British colonialism in the 1880s, the decade that brought the first printing press (a gift from Alexandrian Greeks) and the first newspaper to the island (published in Greek and English). The history of colonialism and print capitalism are crucial in understanding how the nation ‘form’ has spread and tried to impose periodisation and universal schemes of identity in Cyprus as it has elsewhere. The printing press was a catalyst for the production of local literature, translation and criticism. In his PhD dissertation, Papaleontiou notes that in the period 1880–1930, which coincides approximately with the first half-century of British rule, more than 900 texts by about 400 writers were translated by 150 literati for local consumption (274). English education in Cyprus, and Cypriots studying in British universities, were important catalysts in this literary activity. In addition, there was a Cypriot diaspora in Egypt, Asia Minor and the Levant which engaged with Eastern languages and cultures. The newly arrived English education and culture which may have given further impetus to knowledge of the East through British Orientalism, brought about its own kind of cross-fertilisation and intervention in the home culture, thus marking the island as a cross-cultural gateway between East and West. The translated texts include both European classical and contemporary literature and Eastern literature (mainly Arabic and Persian). Papaleontiou refers to a lecture given in 1917 by Fasouliotis, a former student at the American University of Beirut, who praises the beauty of the twelfth-century Persian poet Nizami, and speaks favourably of the purity of Nizami’s spirituality in contrast
to the Byzantine Christian monastics (275). These communities of the East Mediterranean Cypriot diaspora dissolved in the course of the twentieth century for various reasons, notably the Asia Minor disaster of 1922, the Suez crisis of 1956, and civil strife in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s. There is, however, little evidence during the British colonial period of Cypriot literature travelling elsewhere through translation. In the ’40s and ’50s there were some sporadic translations into English including some poems translated by Lawrence Durrell in *The London Magazine* in 1954.

Colonial cosmopolitan collusions turned into collisions in the 1950s when the anti-colonial movement turned into an armed struggle affecting attitudes toward language, culture, identity and translatability. The relationship of Durrell and Giorgos Seferis to each other and to the island is very telling of the new turn. The two writers became friends and translated some of each other’s work. They grew apart as each played different roles in the rival claims and disputes among Britain, Greece, and Turkey over the island. Seferis, an Asia Minor Greek, whose family fled Smyrne in 1922, felt a sense of *nostos* (homecoming) when he came to Cyprus in 1953 and his sojourn on the island led to a collection of poems first published with the title *Cyprus, where it was ordained for me* and then published in *Log Book III* in 1959. He suggests an analogy between his poetic persona and Teucer, who settled in Cyprus after the Trojan War, and cites Euripides’ *Helen* in which Teucer states that Apollo has decreed that Cyprus should be his home. In contrast, Durrell, who lived on the island for four years in the ’50s, witnessed the rise of fervent nationalism which led him to leave in 1956 in fear of his life. Indeed, it was during the 1950s that English, which was first partially introduced in primary schools in 1935, was taken out because of anti-British feeling during the EOKA\(^1\) struggle in 1955–59. It was re-introduced as part of the official syllabus in 1965–66. Durrell’s book, *Bitter Lemons*, is still an important testimony and was a lightning rod for events on the island at the time, prompting criticism of his colonial Orientalist attitudes. In 1964 the eminent Cypriot Greek poet, Costas Montis (1914–2004), wrote a novella-chronicle set in the 1950s, entitled *Closed Doors*. It was intended, as the author states, as a response to Durrell’s book, however it was not translated into English until 2004.

**Post-Independence**

The separate nationalisms of the two main ethnic communities defined the direction of the anti-colonial movement, and after Independence in 1960 the two largest ethnic communities pursued incompatible national trajectories, which led to clashes and the effective division of the island between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities. In 1974 the northern part of the island was occupied by the Turkish military, which resulted in the forced dislocation of forty percent of the population. The role of nationalism has since been strong in the conservative reterritorialisation of both written and oral cultural practices.
In the majority Greek-speaking part of the island this process may be observed in the construction of a literary canon through state publications and prizes, translations and anthologies as well as efforts by organisations such as Cyprus PEN. One PEN publication, Theoklis Kouyialis’ *27 Centuries of Cypriot Poetry*, claims a national history that extends across three millennia, and emphasises a Greek lineage from the Kypria Epics of Stasinos (7th to 8th century BC) to 20th century voices. Like other anthologies that deal with contemporary poets and construct the idea of a tradition of Cypriot Hellenism, *27 Centuries of Cypriot Poetry* attempts to illustrate the tenacity of a Eurocentric narrative of unbroken tradition, which narrowly defines cultural frontiers and remains unaware of its own translatability. Although it includes literary gems from Cypriot literature in Greek, it excludes volatile forms of difference such as those that emerge in the Ottoman period. The Ottoman period is described in the introduction as one of creative sterility and nothing originally written in Turkish is included. Cypriot literature in Turkish was also developing separately for the most part with the exceptional literary encounters between writers of the two ethnic groups outside of Cyprus. It was impossible in the period 1974–2003 to cross the divide unless for exceptional reasons and with special permission. Remarkably, poet and peace activist Neşe Yaşın has lived in south Nicosia since the ’80s and struggled with the difficulties of crossing. She has been widely translated and her poem in Turkish ‘My country,’ beginning with the lines ‘My country has been divided in two, which half should I love’, has been made into a song in Greek composed by musician Marios Tokkas. The lyrics translated by Cypriot Greek poet Elli Peonidou, and sung by Greek singer Giorgos Dalaras. The song has become an anthem for those working for peace and reunification. Nearly two decades after Kouyialis’ anthology, Neşe’s half-brother, the poet Mehmet Yaşın, edited *Step-Mothertongue: From Nationalism to Multiculturalism: Literatures of Cyprus, Greece and Turkey* (2000), which includes essays and poetry written in English and in English translation from Greek and Turkish and includes some remarkable examples of pre-modern Cypriot poetry selected and translated from different languages. *Step-Mothertongue* combines essays and poetry that challenge the traditional categorisations of Cypriot literature and the delimitations of the literary itself by including, for example, Phoenician tomb inscriptions in its poetry selection.

Though nationalist separatisms have claimed centre stage in the Cypriot political and cultural mainstream during the last half of the twentieth century, it is worth remembering that the first President of the post-colonial Republic, Archbishop Makarios, played a leading role in the Non-aligned Movement, and that less than half a century later, the Republic is a European Union member state as it continues to be a Commonwealth nation. Indeed, the media prominence of nationalist rhetoric often works to disguise and contain the impact of post-colonial migrations on social and cultural change that became all the more visible by the
end of the millennium. Developments of the island’s economy have attracted people fleeing from the post-communist debacle of Eastern Europe and the widespread poverty of South and East Asia. It is now estimated that twenty-seven per cent of the population on the south of the island is foreign-born. The north, meanwhile, has been importing thousands of impoverished Turkish settlers in response to the depopulation caused by Cypriot Greeks who fled to the southern part of the island to escape the invading Turkish army in 1974. It is now estimated that Turkish settlers outnumber Cypriot Turks.

2003 to the Present

These radical demographic changes and the partial opening of the checkpoints on April 23rd, 2003, which allowed north–south crossings for the first time since 1974, opened translators to new potentials or confrontations. At first the crossings were flooded by Cypriots from both sides in search of lost homes and villages. While the sudden unleashing of energy at the surprise opening of the checkpoints has died down and more than nine years later there is still no political solution for reunification, the ability to cross easily has enabled the fermentation of new relationships and communities across the divide.

The buzz of excitement after the first border-crossings brought together poets who attempted to destabilise established attitudes toward questions of historical knowledge, national allegiance and cultural affiliation. In one of the first meetings, I met Jenan Selçuk and heard him read his fine poem ‘The Date-Palm’ in Turkish. I quote an English translation in full:

I am a tree, a date-palm
    in some Mesaoria cemetery,
Civilisations buried in my shade,
their bones
my roots.
Forty curly-haired slaves rowed
the boats
    which brought us from Egypt.
My grandfather a Hellene wearing an earring
my circumciser an Ottoman barber
a boy kidnapped into the Janissaries
a pederast.
I was apprenticed
to Aphrodite in spring
    Zenon in winter.
You may not have realized!
I was the model for the Lusignan architects.
Inherited from Venetian merchants
this sweet tongue,
    chasing pleasure
Roman Byzantium…
A creation of the British
my exhibition
of split personality syndromes.
From time to time
my presumption that I am a human being,
the more I am licked
the more I hold onto lies.

Paranoias
Stitched of flag cloth, a straitjacket
made in Greece
made in Turkey:
I see war when I look in the water!

(Jenan Selçuk [2003] Translated from Turkish by Aydın Mehmet Ali with the poet)

Date-palms, beautiful and elegant, are scattered around the landscape sometimes in groves and sometimes solitary, often recalling those who returned from a haj and planted one in commemoration of their pilgrimage, thus it is the tree of both homecoming and the boon that graced the vision brought home from the pilgrimage. Selçuk’s ‘Date-palm’ is nurtured in the cemetery, seeking nostos in a temporality of haunting, and its line of flight is constrained and threatened by the violence of the referential national cultures of Greece and Turkey and their symbolic order. I loved the poem but I was not totally convinced by some details in the translation the poet gave me. A few years later, I asked Cypriot Turkish writer Aydın Mehmet Ali (who uses English as her literary language) to retranslate it so I could include it in a special issue of 91st Meridian, which I had been invited to guest edit. One of the words that troubled me in the earlier translation published in the first issue of Cadences was the word ‘fold-up’ to describe the ‘Ottoman barber’. I suspected it was a clumsy translation rather than a daring metaphor and it was revealing to discover instead of ‘fold-up’, the phrase ‘a boy kidnapped by the Janissaries’ was Mehmet Ali’s translation for the original Turkish word ‘devşirme’. The Janissaries were infantry that served as bodyguards to the Ottoman sultan and his household. Devşirme refers to the system of recruiting children, usually Balkan Christians, often Greeks, to serve in the Janissaries. The recruits were selected and kidnapped, received military training and indoctrinated in the religion of Islam. The brightest ones rose to hold distinguished and sometimes powerful positions in the Ottoman Empire. While recruitment was by way of abduction, some families were happy for their children to be recruited as they received a secure future with a salary and pension when they retired. Devşirme has a semantic overlap in its root with the concept of conversion, not only of people but of objects such as chairs, and this is why the word ‘fold-up’ came up as a misleading dictionary option in the first translation. The translation above was included in 91st Meridian, but most recently the poet made additional revisions. He used the phrase ‘converted Ottoman barber’, and totally omitted the line about the Janissaries. He wanted a minimalist poetic solution and was not happy to
have an additional line to explain one word. Regrettably in my view, because the
detail of devşirme particularises the ‘conversion’ into a local historical context
and charges the affective body and the imagery of the poem. Many conversions,
inversions, reversions take place in a multicultural society as they do in translation
and are articulated in the tropes and turns that are taken along the path of ‘crossing
over’ in translation. When I read Mehmet Ali’s translation with reference to the
Janissary, I remembered vividly a story I read many years ago by the nineteenth-
century Greek writer, Georgios Vizyinos, called ‘The Only Voyage of His Life’.
Part of the story tells of a young boy whose family dress him as a girl to avoid
abduction by the Janissaries and he assumes his male identity once again when he
reaches puberty and marries.

Movement across languages through the places and spaces of the island are
often marked by the kind of intensity that comes from both shared and contested
references and histories, and processes of naming and renaming. Niki Marangou
maps out the territory in an apparently detached way that allows the tensions
and connections to emerge in the disjunctions among layers of names, images,
historical and social details. This is most evident in her poem ‘Street Map of
Nicosia’:

Looking at the street map
of Nicosia and its suburbs
Fuat Paşa Street ends on Dionysou and Herakleitou
Define Yüksel on Hermes Street
Yenice Şafak on Leontiou Makhaira.
in the vicinity of Flatro Bastion
on old maps the river cut through the town
but Savorniano, the Venetian, changed the flow
to fill the moat with water.
There on Sundays the domestic servants
from Sri Lanka spread out their shawls
and eat together.
The palm trees remind them of home.

(trans. from the Greek by Xenia Andreou)

In translating the above lines, one becomes involved in choices of
transliteration, so that translation, and walking through the streets of Nicosia
with Marangou, becomes a ‘nomadic of intensities’ (to borrow a term from
Lyotard). The negotiation involved for the translator pulled in multiple directions
among territorialisation, reterritorialisation and deterritorialisation becomes very
apparent in the transliteration of place names. Transliterations often involve sites
of habitus-governed translational strategies. For example, this also occurred in
Turkey where there were Turkish-speaking Greek communities (Karamanlides)
who wrote Turkish with Greek letters, and Greek-speaking communities who
wrote Greek using the Turkish alphabet. An earlier draft of the translation of
Marangou’s poems into English, transliterated the Turkish street names from the
Greek script in which they were written in the original poem. The effect on the ear was that of a speaker of standard Modern Greek pronouncing Turkish names without the sounds of the diacritics and without the palatalisation. For example, Yenice Şafak was written Yenidze Safak — if the transliteration wanted to help the English speaker pronounce it, it should read Yenije Shafak. The palatalised fricatives are not found in the phonetic system of standard Greek although they are found in Cypriot Greek vernacular speech. Similarly paşa is pronounced ‘pasha’ by Turks and Cypriots alike (whether Greek or Turkish speakers) but the standard Greek would read the ‘sh’ as an ‘s’. Paradoxically, a Cypriot Greek would more closely approximate the Turkish pronunciation by reading the English spelling. I suggested leaving the names in the poem as they are on the actual street signs, and allow them to enter their own process of signification. The reader will confront the names in variable ways each with their own socio-ethnic linguistic and stylistic habitus, their mythic and historical memory. Like the translator, the streetwalker and reader will react differently when confronted with the street signs depending on where their subjectivity is situated in the interplay of sign, sound, and name. The names themselves function as signifiers that test the boundaries of the mythic past which constructs our cultural memory, and the erasures that have taken place. I was familiar with the Greek names taken from classical antiquity, and with the name of the Cypriot medieval chronicler Makhairas. I wondered about the Turkish names. I also wondered about the fact that the Greek names are written only in Roman letters in the poem whereas on street signs they would be in both Greek and Roman script. I discussed the Turkish street names with two of my Turkish-Cypriot writer friends who assumed the names belonged to the Ottoman past. We also recalled in our discussion that the Roman script for writing Turkish dates back only to Atatürk, so if Fuat Paşa Street, for example, is named after an Ottoman vizier, he would have written his name in Arabic script at the time. The change of script is another kind of erasure or a deliberate turn of direction from past ideology and culture as the Republic of Turkey distinguished itself from its Ottoman past by adopting another set of values and epistemology, and another alphabet and language revolution that attempted to exclude words of Arabic and Sufi origin. This complex cultural politics of past and present have been wonderfully explored in the novels of Orhan Pamuk and Elif Şafak.

As a Cypriot writing in English, I find myself always in the tensions and ambivalences on the edges of different languages. For example, the word I hear for a feeling and image may come to me in the word of the vernacular Cypriot Greek as my grandmother would have said the word. In my poem ‘Find Peace,’ I was caught between using a word like ‘epsimo’ or ‘pekmez’ and eventually settled for ‘grape molasses’ in the lines that follow:

And then glimpse at your kith
Far and away now
Damascene plums on rooftop terraces
Skins charred shielding their flesh of gold
Taste their blood  
Thick like grape molasses

I became caught between intensifying the meaning by stripping it from the sound of the signifier or allowing the intensity to draw on the vernacular word and territorialise it in the rural grape culture and the sound of my grandmother’s tongue speaking of grape must and molasses vibrating within English. When the poem was published I chose the word ‘grape molasses’. In a multilingual translation and poetry workshop, when the poem was translated into Greek, Niki Marangou eventually came up with ‘epsimo’ whereas the first thought that came in dialogue with other participants was the standard Greek word to designate the same. I preferred the affective shift toward the territory of the maternal local rural past and wondered if I had made the right choice in the English original and might change it for a future publication. In translation, the pull between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation remains but within a different set of relations and effects.

ConclusIon

Translation in Cyprus has multiple entry points and demands negotiation for a way though a labyrinthine path to find a line of flight. The movement of translation inscribes an assemblage of relations in their affective becoming and maps the passage of deterritorialisation as seen in the two poems translated from Turkish and Greek previously discussed. This quest for a line of flight is articulated in one of Andriana Ierodiaconou’s poem, ‘Journey’: ‘Swallows fly to green days directly, without hesitation/we have been walking for years now and the sea has forgotten us and become a word’ (translated from the Greek by the poet) (811). The flight in minoritarian literature becomes an experimental literary process testing limits and boundaries, deviating in different directions, exploring the territory for a way to the sea or the unexpected nostos at the end of the above Marangou poem when after roaming the streets of Nicosia we find our way to the moat with the Sri Lankan servants eating among the palm trees. The palm tree’s signification is opened to another kind of homecoming and a new narrative and journey of migration through its association with palm trees on another faraway island.

A new generation has grown up since partition, and few Cypriot Greeks or Cypriot Turks speak each other’s language so they rely on English as a lingua franca and as a language for mediation in translation. Many poets double as translators and translate each other’s work mostly through the mediation of English, spawning an experimental literary dialogue and literary transculturation. This collaboration has recently resulted in the publication of two translated anthologies in 2010. One of Cypriot Greek poets in Turkish, selected and translated by poet Gurgenç Korkmazel (and sometimes using older existing translation), and one of Cypriot Turkish poets selected and translated into Greek by poet Giorgos
Moleskis. Some important new initiatives since 2003 such as the journal *Cadences*, and more recently the Centre for Writers and Translators, have activated the potential of earlier, pre-nationalist forms of cultural cosmopolitanism by bringing together Cypriot writing in English, Greek, and Turkish in the original and/or in translation, and thus provide an alternative perspective and promise of what Cypriot literature might be by setting off different tongues against each other in cross-cultural poetics. The literature is experimental because we are uncertain of the new intratextual relations it will lead us to as it de-codifies perspectives that are not of the established literary culture. In Cyprus, English as a language of literary translation and cultural mediation is complicit with Cypriot English becoming ‘minor literature’, because it has to confront disjunctions of content and expression. Minoritarian poems in majoritarian languages do not express an identity of a minority, but open the potential for another perspective, sensibility and affective attitude by creating new possibilities of speaking, thinking and writing in the performance of translation.

NOTES

1 ΕΟΚΑ (Εθνική Οργανοποίηση Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών, Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston, Greek for National Organization of Cypriot Fighters) was a Greek Cypriot organisation that fought for the expulsion of British troops from the island, for self-determination, and for Union with Greece.

WORKS CITED


Νίκη Μαρανγού

Πάνηγυρι στο Μενοϊκό

Με ρούχα απλά
ντύθηκε γρήγορα και ξέφυγε
Κ.Π. Καβάφης «Ο βασιλεύς Δημήτριος»

Μέρες σαν τέλος της πανήγυρης
που οι πραματευτάδες νυσταγμένοι πια
tυλίγουν τους μπερντέδες τους
μαζεύουν την πραμάτεια τους
φορτώνουν τα καμιόνια
κι ένας ένας φεύγουν
αδειάζουν οι μεγάλες κάμαρες
οι δρόμοι η Πλατεία
κι η εκκλησία που γνώρισε
πολλούς προσκυνητές απόψε

Σ’ ένα τραπέζι ακόμα πίνουν και διηγούνται
πλάτι στους αυτοσχέδιους φούρνους
με τον οφτόν το κλέφτικον
πως έστησαν οι Εγγλέζοι ενέδρα στο χωριό
κι ο ένας ξέφυγε κι ο άλλος πιάστηκε

Έτσι αδειάζει ώρες ώρες η ζωή
σε δρόμο θαλασσινό
μ’ ένα ίχνος ψυχής
και μια αχνή επιθυμία
τόση που να χωρά μόνο μέρος της πόλης
cοντά στη μεγάλη πόλη
απ’ όπου έφευγαν οι Χριστιανοί
που είχαν εργαστήρια μέσα στα τείχη
λίγο πριν από τη δύση του ήλιου

(from Divan, Rodakio, Athens, 2005)
FESTIVAL AT MENOIKO*

In simple clothes
He dressed quietly and left
(‘King Demetrios’, Cavafy)

Days like the end of the festival
when sleepy peddlers
roll up their drapery
gather up their wares
load up their trucks
leave one by one
emptying the large halls
the roads the square
and the church that encountered
many pilgrims tonight

At one table they are still drinking and telling stories
next to improvised ovens
with kleitiikon cooking
of how the English set up a trap in the village
and how one escaped while the other was caught

Life at times empties out this way
seaward bound
with a trace of soul
a hint of vanishing desire
only enough to hold part of the city
near the big gate
where Christians
with workshops inside the walls
would depart shortly before sunset

(trans. Stephanos Stephanides)

*This refers to the EOKA struggle against British rule.

(from Selections from The Divan, Kochlias, Nicosia, 2001
ΑΓΙΟΙ ΣΑΡΑΝΤΑ ΚΙΡΚΛΑΡ ΤΕΚΚΕ

Στον Τεκκέ
υπήρχε μια σκιερή αυλή
ένα περιβόλι με αμυγδαλιά
ροδιά και συκιά
για να τρώνε οι πιστοί
κι ένα αρχαίο πηγάδι
με νερό.
Οι δερβίσιδες ήταν σαράντα
38 Τούρκοι και 2 Έλληνες.
Εκεί ήταν θαμμένοι και οι τεσσαράκοντες
μάρτυρες της Σεβάστειας, αλαμάνοι άγιοι,
που ήρθαν από την Παλαιστίνη.
Στο πανηγύρι στις 9 Μαρτίου
μαζεύονταν χριστιανοί και οθωμανοί
και γιόρταζαν μαζί.
At the Tekke
there was a shady courtyard
an orchard with almond,
pomegranate and fig
so the faithful might eat
and an ancient well
with water.
There were forty dervishes
38 Turks and two Greeks.
It was here that the
Forty martyrs of Sebaste
were buried,
Alamanian Saints,
who came from Palestine.
At the fair on the 9th of March
Christians and Ottomans would gather
and celebrate together.

(trans. Xenia Andreou)
ΣΤΗΝ ΑΓΙΑ ΑΙΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΗ

Στις παλιές εκκλησίες της Πάφου
Μέσα από τις φθαρμένες τοιχογραφίες
Πάντα υπάρχει ένας ευαγγελιστής σε μια γωνιά
Μέσα σε πορτοκαλί φωτοστέφανο
Πλαί στους πορνικούς και τους τυφλούς,
Την Άννα και τον Ιωσήφ
Που βάζουν τη Μαρία να κοιμηθεί
Διακρίνεις συνήθως το χέρι που αγκαλιάζει
Το μάγουλο πλάι στο άλλο μάγουλο
Μέσα στα πράσινα και κίτρινα του χρόνου
Τα άλατα της πέτρας
Το αραβούργημα πλαισιωμένο με τσουκνίδες
Στη βάση του τοίχου πλάι στα απλωμένα χαρούπια
Σπίτι της σαύρας
Και ο Αρχάγγελος υπερμεγέθης
Να μας φυλάει όλους

(from Divan, Rodakio, Athens, 2005)
SAINT CATHERINE

On the decayed wall paintings
of the old churches in Paphos
you always find an evangelist in a corner
in an orange halo
next to the whores and the blind
Anna and Joseph
putting Mary to sleep
you can just about make out the embracing hand
the cheek next to the other cheek
in the greens and yellows of time
the calc of the stone
the arabesque surrounded by nettles
at the bottom of the wall next to the carob heap
a house for lizards
and the oversized Archangel
guarding over us all.

(trans. Stephanos Stephanides)

(from Selections from The Divan, Kochlias, Nicosia, 2001)
ΟΙ ΤΡΙΑΝΤΑΦΥΛΛΙΕΣ

Παρέα με τον γεωμέτρη και τον κηροπλάστη
φύτεψα φέτος τριανταφυλλιές στον κήπο
αντί να γράφω ποιήματα
την εκατόφυλλη από το σπίτι με το πένθος στον Άγιο Θωμά,
tην εξηντάφυλλη που έφερε ο Μίδας από την Φρυγία,
tην Μπαγκσιανή που ήρθε από την Κίνα,
μοσχεύματα από τη μοναδική μουσσιέττα που επέξησε
μεσ' την παλιά την πόλη,
αλλά προπαντώς την Rosa Gallica που έφεραν οι σταυροφόροι,
pου αλλιώς την λέμε και δαμασκηνή,
με το εξαισθησία όρομα της.

Παρέα με τον γεωμέτρη και τον κηροπλάστη
αλλά και τον τετράυχο, τον τίγρη, τον φυλλοδέτη,
τη μηλολόνθη, τη χρυσόμυγα,
tο αλογάκι της Παναγίας που τα τρώει όλα,
θα μοιραστούμε φύλλα, πέταλα, ουρανό,
στον αφάνταστο αυτό κήπο
κι αυτοί κι εγώ περαστικοί.

(from Divan, Rodakio, Athens, 2005)
ROSES

In company with the aphid and the caterpillar
I have planted roses in the garden this year
instead of writing poems
the centifolia from the house in mourning at Ayios Thomas
the sixty-petaled rose Midas brought from Phrygia
the Banksian that came from China
cuttings from the last mouchette that survived
in the old town,
but especially Rosa Gallica, brought by the Crusaders
(otherwise know as damascene)
with its exquisite perfume.

In company with the aphid and the caterpillar
but also the spider mite, the tiger moth, the leaf miner,
the rose chafer and the hover-fly,
the praying mantis that devours them all,
we shall be sharing leaves, petals, sky,
in this incredible garden,
both they and I transitory.

(trans. Stephanos Stephanides)

(from Selections from The Divan, Kochlias, Nicosia, 2001)
ΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΣΤΟΝ ΔΙΟΝΥΣΗ

Ουκ αν έχομεν ειπείν βεβαίως
ούτε αλκυόνων περί ούτε αηδόνων
Λουκιανός

Γιατί ρε Διονύση,
dεν είναι εύκολο να μιλά κανείς σήμερα
με βεβαιότητα ούτε για αλκυόνες ούτε για αηδόνια
όταν κατοικεί σε σπίτι
που δεν θυσιάστηκε πετεινός στα θεμέλια του
κι ούτε έχει κοιμηθεί σε στρώμα
με σταυρούς ραμμένους στις τέσσερεις γωνίες του
όταν έπεφταν τα νομίσματα
χρυσά και αργυρά
κι οι σπόροι από βαμβάκι και σησάμι
ή έχει χυθεί μαζί με τους άλλους στους δρόμους
ώς βαθιά μέσα στη νύχτα
στα λαμπρά φωτισμένα σπίτια
με τους Λάζαρους ντυμένους με κίτρινα λουλούδια
και γύρω απ' τα γεμάτα άνθη στρώματα τους
στέφανα και δημητριακά
που λιατί ερπετά πέταλα
αλεύρι μάραθο κεριά και μέλι
πιο μαλακά απ' τον ύπνο

Έτσι Διονύση,
μέσα στο γενικό θαλάσσωμα
tης ανακρίβειας των αισθημάτων,
πίνοντας καφέ, Παρασκευή πρωί
dεν έχω παρά να σου πω
πως σε πεθύμησα πολύ.

Αναφορά στην τελετή που γινόταν στη Λάρνακα το Σάββατο του Λαζάρου με ομοιότητες
με τις Αιγυπτιακές τελετές για τον Άθωνι

(from Divan, Rodakio, Athens, 2005)
LETTER TO DIONYSIS

Nothing we have said is
certain concerning either
halcyons or nightingales
(Lucian)

You see, Dionysis
nowadays it is not easy for us to speak
of halcyons nor of nightingales
as we have not lived in houses on whose foundations
cocks were sacrificed
nor have we slept on mattresses
with crosses at their four corners sewn
where coins fell
of silver and of gold
and seeds of cotton and of sesame
nor have we poured into the streets
deep into the night
and into houses brightly lit
with Lazaruses in yellow flowers adorned
their blossom-filled beds beset with
garlands and grains
birds lizards petals
flour fennel candles and honey
softer than sleep
That’s why, Dionysis,
in the ‘general turmoil
of uncertainty of feelings’
drinking coffee on a Friday morning,
I just have to tell you
that I’ve missed you very much

(trans. Stephanos Stephanides)

The feast of Saint Lazarus was celebrated in Larnaca until the beginning of this century
and had similarities with the feast of Adonis in ancient Egypt.

(from Selections from The Divan, Kochlias, Nicosia, 2001)
ΔΕΝ ΤΗΣ ΠΗΡΑ ΛΟΥΛΟΥΔΙΑ

Για την επέτειο του θανάτου της μητέρας μου

Δεν της πήρα λουλούδια
αλλά σηκώθηκα νωρίς
να βρω ψάρι καλο στην αγορά
βρήκα και μήλα καθιστά για τάρτα
έτσι όπως τα έφτιαχνε αυτή,
μες τις καλές της μέρες.
Στρούντελ και σνίτσελ απ’ τη Βιέννη
και σβίγγος όπως η θεία Ματίνα.

Δεν της πήρα λουλούδια
αλλά έσβησα στην ώρα του τον φούρνο
για να προλάβω την συνάντηση στο μαγαζί
πήρα τον Γιώργο από το σχολείο
κάναμε μαζί μπάνιο το σκυλί
κι ύστερα ήθελε να του δούμε εφτά βιβλία

Δεν της πήρα λουλούδια,
κατάφερα όμως να δουλέψω δυο ώρες στον υπολογιστή.
Πήγα να δω και την κυρία Δήμητρα,
με κατάλαβε από τη φωνή μου
Είχα καιρό να πάω να την δω, της πήρα γλύκισμα νηστίσιμο
και κάθισα κοντά της και μου έλεγε.

Δεν της πήρα λουλούδια
κλάδεψα όμως τη λουίζα και έβαλα λίπασμα
στα δέντρα. Μετακινήσα τις γαρδένιες έτσι που να πιάνουν ήλιο το πρωί
και φύλαξα τα ρούχα τα χειμερινά.

Δεν της πήρα λουλούδια
μα προσπαθώ ισάς
τούτο το σπίτι να φροντίζω,
τούτο το σπίτι και τους ένοικους του
όπως με έμαθε αυτή σωστά και μετρημένα.

Με προσοχή αντιγράφω τις κινήσεις της
πως έπλαθε ζυμάρι, έβαζε λάδι στα κιχιά,
ανέβαινε, κατέβαινε, και όλους τους εφρόντιζε.

Δεν της πήρα λουλούδια
μα προσπαθώ ισάς
τούτο το σπίτι να φροντίζω,
τούτο το σπίτι και τους ένοικους του
όπως με έμαθε αυτή σωστά και μετρημένα.

Με προσοχή αντιγράφω τις κινήσεις της
με προσοχή να μην τις φάει ο σκόρος.
I did not take her flowers
but I got up early
to find fresh fish in the market
I also found sour apples for a pie
like she used to bake
on her good days.
Strudel and schnitzel from Vienna
and dumplings like aunt Matina’s.

I did not take her flowers
but switched off the oven in time
to make the meeting at the shop
picked up George from school
together we gave the dog a bath
and then he wanted me to read him seven tales.

I did not take her flowers,
but I managed to work for two hours on the computer.
Then I went to see Mrs Demetra,
she recognised me by my voice
I had not seen her for some time, I took her some fasting cake
and sat by her and we talked.

I did not take her flowers
but I pruned the verbena and gave some fertilizer
to the trees. I moved the gardenias so they could catch the morning sun
and put the winter clothes away
carefully, so they would not be eaten by the moths.

I copy her movements carefully
how she kneaded the dough, brushed oil on the pastry,
went up, down, and took care of us all.

I did not take her flowers
but I try like her
to take care of this house and its occupants
like she taught me, with love and care.

I copy her movements carefully
carefully, so they will not be eaten by the moths.

(trans. Xenia Andreou)
ΑΝΑΜΕΣΑ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΖΩΝΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΣΑΡΙΠΟΛΟΥ

Μνήμη Ολυμπίας και Μάριου Ιακωβίδη

Ανάμεσα Αγίας Ζώνης και Σαριπόλου
ξεπροβάλλει ώρες ώρες η ζωή
tυλιγμένη στο μυστήριο
όπως σε άμφια
λευκά ή μαύρα
ή πορφυρά με ανταύγιες χρυσές
κλωστές και χάντρες κεντημένες
από χέρια λαϊκά
που και να αποστρέφουν ξέρουν
to πρόσωπο
και να προσφέρουν τα δώρα τους
γλυκά και χωρίς αντάλλαγμα
ούτε ψεγάδι
καθώς το παράθυρο ανοίγει και φανερώνει
tο τακτοποιημένο εσωτερικό
to παλαιό ανδρόγυνο
με την αληθινή αγάπη στο τραπέζι
η πομπή περνά και χάνεται στην Αγίου Ανδρέου
σκαλώνει στη μνήμη ενός ψηλού καθρέφτη
μιας κόκκινης λάμπας τραπεζαρίας
eφόδια για τα δικά μου πια ταξίδια.

(from Divan, Rodakio, Athens, 2005)
BETWEEN AYIA ZONI AND SARIPOLOS STREET

For Marios and Olympia Iacovides

Between Ayia Zoni and Saripolou
life peers out from time to time
wrapped in mystery
as in vestments
white or black
or purple with golden hues
threads and beads embroidered
by common hands
who know both how to turn away
their faces
and to offer their gifts
sweetly and flawlessly
wanting nothing in return
as the window opens and reveals
a tidy interior
the old couple
with true love at the table
the procession passing by and into Ayios Andreas Street
holding to the memory of a tall mirror
a red dining room lamp
provisions for my own future journeys

(trans. Stephanos Stephanides)

(from Selections from The Divan, Kochlias, Nicosia, 2001)
ΕΠΙΣΤΡΕΦΟΝΤΑΣ

Επιστρέφοντας
βήμα βήμα
στο καλτερίμι
tου παλιού χειρογράφου
περιμένω το σύνηθες θαύμα*
pου είναι κρυμμένο με επιμέλεια
στην 25η σελίδα.
Οι φαγωμένες πλάκες λάμπουν στη βροχή,
oi βάρκες ανεβοκατεβαίνουν τον Βόσπορο
και ο έρωτας μου φαίνεται
υπόθεση πια μακρινή.
Συνεχίζω λοιπόν την ανάγνωση.

Κάθε Παρασκευή ο αυτοκράτορας πήγαινε στις Βλαχέρνες για να παρακολουθήσει
tο σύνηθες θαύμα, όπου άνοιγε το κουτί, όπου φυλαγόταν το κάλυμα της κεφαλής της
Παναγίας και αυτό υπερίπτατο
RETURNING

Returning
step by step
along the cobbled path
of the old manuscript
I await the usual miracle*
hidden with diligence
on page 25.
The weathered flagstones sparkle in the rain,
the boats sail up and down the Bosphorus
and love now seems to me
a distant matter.
So I resume my reading.

(trans. Xenia Andreou)

According to tradition every Friday in Vlachernes in Constantinople the Archbishop opened the box containing the veil of the Virgin and the veil floated on the air. The Byzantine emperor used to visit the church every Friday to witness the ‘usual miracle’.
ΟΔΙΚΟΣ ΧΑΡΤΗΣ

Βλέποντας τον οδικό χάρτη
Λευκωσίας και προαστίων
η οδός Fuat Paşa τελειώνει στην Δίωνος και Ιασίου
η Defne Yüksel στην Λάμπρου Πορφύρα
η Yenice Şafak στην Λεοντίου Μαχαιρά
κοντά στον Προμαχώνα Ρόκα
στους παλιούς χάρτες το ποτάμι διέσχιζε την πόλη
αλλά ο Σαβορνιάνο άλλαξε την κοίτη
για να γεμίσει με νερό την τάφρο.
Εκεί τις Κυριακές οι οικιακές βοηθοί
από την Σρι Λάνκα απλώνουν τα μαντήλια τους
και τρώνε μαζί.
Οι φοίνικες τους θυμίζουν τον τόπο τους.
STREET MAP OF NICOSIA

Looking at the street map
of Nicosia and its suburbs
Fuat Paşa Street ends on Dionysou and Herakleitou
Defne Yüksel on Hermes street
Yenice Şafak on Leontiou Mahaira
in the vicinity of Rocca Bastion
on old maps the river cut through the town
but Savorniano, the Venetian, changed the flow
to fill the moat with water.
There on Sundays the domestic servants
from Sri Lanka spread out their shawls
and eat together.
The palm trees remind them of home.

(trans. Xenia Andreou and Stephanos Stephanides)
ΟΙ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΣ ΣΤΟ ΒΟΥΚΟΥΡΕΣΤΙ

Για τον Andrey Gritsman

Στο Βουκουρέστι υπάρχει
μια πανίσχυρη και μυστική οργάνωση γυναικών
με μαντίλες και χοντρές κάλτσες,
pου συνήθως κρατούν μια πλαστική σακούλα.
Σκουπίζουν τις εκκλησίες,
pουλούν κεριά,
tαιζούν τα αδέσποτα σκυλιά,
ανοίγουν το μπουκάλι του κρασιού του παροδίτα
και κουβεντιάζουν καθημερινά με τον Μπρανκοβεάνου
και την κόρη του Σάφτα.
Ξεσκονίζουν το ένδυμα της
πριν πιάσουν το θρήνο για τους τέσσερεις τους γιούς
και βάζουν το μαργαριτάρι που έπεσε από το περιδέραιο στη θέση του.
Συγκεντρώνονται στο εργόχειρο τους,
pαρ’ όλο που ούτε τα μάτια, ούτε ο φωτισμός τις βοηθούν
και φροντίζουν να ανατέλλει ο ήλιος στη σωστή ώρα
cάθε μέρα.
WOMEN IN BUCHAREST

For Andrey Gritsman

At Bucharest there is
a formidable and secret organisation of women
with kerchiefs and thick socks,
who often carry a plastic bag.
They sweep churches,
sell candles,
feed the stray dogs,
open the wine bottle of the itinerant
and chat daily with
Brankoveanu
and his daughter Safta.
They dust her frock
before breaking into a wail for the four sons
and put the pearl that fell from
the necklace
back in its place.
They concentrate on their embroidery,
even though both their eyes and the lighting fail them
and they make sure the sun rises at the right time
every day.

(trans. Xenia Andreou)
Irini Savvides

STOLEN SWEETS — 1964

Maria decided that she knew several important things and therefore had no need to go back to school. She could count and do maths well already and the things she knew numbered seven.

The first of the things she knew was that she liked sweet things, especially glykon tou spitiou. The glass jars lined up in the armarolla held every fruit imaginable. Cherries, and walnuts, almond, apricots, eggplants, figs, anthos tou gidromilou, all cooked in sugar and dripping in syrup. Her favourite was made from the rinds of the juiciest oranges in the world. They were served only when they had guests.

She knew also that the armarolla was not locked. The jars peeped at her through the mesh wire and tempted her to eat them, but her mother’s eyes were often on her and she was not stupid. That was the second thing she knew. She would wait until she heard the click clack of the woofa, as her mother was busy weaving cloth, and steal a jar to open, eating only from the middle. That way the jars still looked full and her mother was none the wiser. She was careful not to use the same spoon as if she dipped it from one jar to the next, it would spoil the fruit, and her mother would notice the change of colour and she would be found out.

Maria had heard the church bell ring at 7.00 am to call any sleepy heads out of bed, but she had no such luck. She had been up early to feed the pigs, check the chickens to make sure a fox had not gotten to them in the middle of the night and fight, as usual, with the goat. It was a contest as to who was the most stubborn, and sometimes she won, but not that day. The goat had refused to be milked despite her cajoling, her threats and her chasing it around the carob tree, so finally she had called her mother to help. She was none too pleased.

‘This is your job,’ her mother insisted as she caught and tethered the goat, and pulled at its teats to bring forth some milk for the halloumi she was making that day. ‘I have a good mind not to give you any when it is done, honestly! You know I am off to Kyria Koumi’s to make it together. I do not have time for this nonsense today!’

Maria scowled at the goat and reminded herself to give it a swift kick later when she could make a quick escape; but she realised that her mother’s threat was idle. For the third thing she knew was that, despite the fiery temper of her mother and reprimand as she may, her mother adored her. She would be given a juicy piece of freshly made salty halloumi, tinged with mint, to test.

If Maria had really been alert she should have guessed then what kind of day it was to be, but she was still half asleep. Already she had cleaned out the pigpen,
swept the eternal dust from the front yard, thankful that her father had concreted some of it and then pulled a few carobs from the vast tree that sat in the backyard. As she went down the stairs, she was naively glad to be getting out of the house for the day.

The fourth thing she knew was that she hated school. The fifth was that Mihali would be waiting for her.

He stood at the corner of the street and she passed him a few carobs as they trudged up the hill, the cobblestones as slippery as always.

‘Shall we go the short way or by the sshinia?’ she asked, knowing already what he would answer. The smell of the tiny black and red pods filled the air when they walked past the enormous tree. The only thing bigger in the village was the olive tree. It was old, but not as ancient as the famous fig tree in Famagusta. Another thing she knew was that when her mother baked olive bread in the fourno out the back of the yard, that if she used the wood from the sshinia the bread and the house smelt heavenly. But this was not important enough to be included in her list, and besides it was something that any fool knew.

Maria and Mihali walked past the old water mill, no longer in use, well not as a mill anyway. Now the mill was a meeting place and a mystery to her; it turned perfectly sensible girls into trelles! It was where the older kids sat on a Saturday night around the stone circle and on the wooden platform that closed off the huge void beneath it. Here they flirted with each other as they walked around and around the old stone disks.

On Saturday afternoons some of the girls in the village would walk past her house on their way there, always politely calling out to her mother.

‘Kalispera Kyria Dimitra,’ they would say, knowing she would invite them in to collect jasmines. As visitors, they were also always invited to taste the latest glyko. They would sip water, kept cool in the clay pots covered with cotton doilies, hand-stitched with pretty coloured beads on the edges that hung over the top, careful not to smudge the lipstick they had saved to buy. They did not put this on until they had left their parents’ houses. There would often be no trace left of it on their return anyway.

The girls would sit in their crisp cotton frocks in their outer yard, with the huge wooden doors open, watching passers-by. Her mother, all honey and sweetness to visitors, would provide a needle and thread for them. The girls sewed strands of jasmine into necklaces to wear when they headed off to walk around the mill arm in arm, smelling divine.

Mihali and Maria sometimes spied on them and she learnt another thing there. When the girls put on a dress that moved in the wind, they walked in a certain way and boys watched them. She had seen the boys stop mid-sentence; hair slicked back and clean for a change, as the girls paraded past in their swishing skirts. She thought if she could learn to sew these types of dresses, she could make her own living, so she would not have to go to school anymore. It would mean she would
have visitors and would have an excuse to offer them glyko and cool water. Her door would always be opened and she could see the village go about its evenings on hot summer nights. She knew how she would make her way in the world.

So if she knew six things she was not stupid, except for when she stepped into the school gates. Maria was not sure what happened then, but it was as if all the things she knew stayed at home in the confines of her bedroom, and she went into class with no brain. She knew she should not speak out of turn, she knew it, she told herself over and over. But as she could not always remember it, she could not yet really count it as a thing she knew. Maybe next year.

That morning the leader of the school assembly had called Mihali to lead the daily recital of the Kini Prosefxi. Up until then it had been a perfectly usual morning. That moment, as the teacher called upon Mihali to recite the Morning Prayer, she did what she had done the entire year before, when he had been at school. She stepped forward when they called his name and started reciting the prayer automatically.

'Paraklide tou pnevmatis alitheas...' She was stopped mid-sentence by the leader, Kyrios Panos jeering at her.

'What is your name?' he asked.

'Maria Lazarides,' she replied knowing full well he knew her name. Here everyone knew everyone. 'Daughter of Stephanous and Dimitra,' he had also taught her father, but she had to be polite; besides she did not want him to think she had no place in the village, that she belonged to no one.

'What is his name?' he asked pointing at Mihali, making sure the entire school was enjoying her humiliation.

'Mihali Koumi. His name is Mihali Koumi, son of Georgious and Kattia. I forgot sir, he didn’t … I…' A hand ended her obvious explanation.

'Do you want to insult the Apostole child?' he asked her in a voice full of scorn. ‘If he was given back Mihali his voice, who are you to speak for him?’

Maria shook her head in an angry silence. It was not she who was insulting. Mihali gently touched her hand to let her know he could do it. Elitsa and Andri sniggered behind her back, but she didn’t care at all. Gedhi looked away.

'You are so stupid,' Elitsa taunted her ‘as stupid as your mute friend’.

'You have fat ankles,' she hissed not even looking back, knowing in time she would get her own back. Wait until she was sewing their clothes, she thought! She would make the waists so tight they could not breathe or eat, or worse, too floppy so they would look fat, so the boys they hoped to entice would look elsewhere. These girls would never wear necklaces made out of jasmines from her garden. Besides nothing could make them smell sweet she decided, nothing.

As they stood in lines to go inside the classrooms it was as if something in her shrivelled. Learning to read in her morning class was wonderful, but whenever she had to write down the answers to the dull questions they asked after each passage, she became bored. She would look out the window with such longing,
wishing it was the afternoon class already so she could plant her onions, check on her spinach and pick the sweet rocket she had planted well. Her mother was always delighted when she brought home her produce. It proved her daughter had the patience to nurture something, Dimitra said.

That day when the morning break had come and she had been standing in line to drink the horrid *sitisio* she thought she would be sick. The milk was hot from sitting in the sun and she barely swallowed it. ‘I hate drinking this stuff.’

Mihali stood by her and drank his quota. ‘At least we aren’t hungry,’ he said. ‘I think I liked it better when you didn’t talk,’ she half-joked.

As they hung around the back of the line for the *mouroumeleo*, a supposed tonic for their bones, bitter horrid smelling syrup, she really did start to feel ill. ‘I can’t Mihali. I will be sick if they put that revolting spoon with that sticky stuff down my throat today,’ she complained.

‘I’ll go first,’ he offered. ‘And I will hold your hand when you take it, then we can go and kick the soccer ball around and you can beat me at scoring goals. But I have been practising with Mustafa I warn you,’ he said wistfully.

Maria immediately felt horrid for teasing him. ‘No to holding my hand, yes to the soccer,’ she agreed.

She went up to their teacher, *despinis* Maritsa, thinking that with all the money she must be paid she should really have a far nicer skirt, and opened her mouth. ‘I will be sick if I drink that,’ she warned the teacher, who paid no attention to her.

Maria breathed in and tried very hard not to smell it. The teacher put the spoon out and down, down, down went the syrup deep into her throat.

It wasn’t deliberate, really it wasn’t. But when she brought up her breakfast, somehow she managed to get it not only on her own apron, but the teacher’s skirt also. She spluttered and choked and ran off before the teacher could admonish her, hearing the shrill yelling in her ears.

‘This is my best skirt. It is wool, real wool imported all the way from London!’

Serves you right for buying goods from the traitors, thought Maria, as she headed back home. Her mother would have to pay for the skirt to be cleaned and she would be furious! Well, Maria was going home to change. She would somehow have to find the courage to confess. There was no way the girl would return after lunch, she was done with school for the day.

‘I will check on her,’ Mihali offered and then ran off quickly to catch her.

Once he had, he kept time with her pace, and thoughtfully nodded his head as they walked back down the hill.

‘What are you nodding about?’ she asked angry with him and the whole village, no the whole world. Why did adults have to the right to make kids eat and drink things they hated, just because they were little?
‘Because,’ he said quite honestly, ‘even though you speak a lot, you do mean what you say. So I should have known. Anyway, at least we get a few hours off school.’

‘True,’ she said grinning ‘and since my mother is at your mother’s all day, and my father is not coming home for lunch because she is making cheese at your home, we have the whole house to ourselves’. A plan was forming and she was determined to carry it out.

Suddenly they heard the wooden flute tinker its way over the hill and only one of them smiled.

‘Mustafa, my dear friend! What are you doing here?’ Mihali exclaimed and Maria was a little annoyed. Did she always have to share her friend with his friend? Besides Mustafa was older and his will was harder to bend than Mihali’s. Regardless, she knew how she was going to get the taste of that vile syrup out of her mouth.

‘We are going to Maria’s. Come with us,’ invited Mihali and Maria just rolled her eyes and kept walking.

‘What happened to your clothes?’ he asked. He had left his own school in the Turkish section to attend his weekly music lesson. The best music teacher, Ahmed, lived near the Greek school still. He had refused to be enclaved and Mustafa had refused to miss his weekly lessons. It gave him an excuse to escape, despite his mother’s fears.

‘None of your business,’ Maria insisted, ‘and why aren’t you at school? What would your mother say?’

‘She won’t find out. Anyway, I will tell her I was educating you two,’ he laughed and she turned on him.

‘Do you want me to hug you with all the vomit on my dress?’ she asked, and began chasing him down the hill.

‘You smell!’ he teased and soon they were at her door, he making sure he kept well away from her.

Maria opened the vast wooden doors, hearing the familiar squeak of the iron bolt, safe inside at last. It felt strange being home with no adults. It had only happened once before.

In the year prior her parents had gone to church without her, to teach her a lesson. She had been tardy in feeding the chickens and her mother had threatened she would make her stay home and finish the job. Maria had not believed she would make good on her threat, until she had heard the door closing.

As she had sat fuming, feeding the stupid chickens, Maria had decided she would not go without communion and bread. She would have her own. The priest was always saying that Christoulli was with them, so she decided she would test the theory.

Standing on the chair she had reached up and pulled the bottle of Commandaria down from the shelf, and sniffed it. It was exactly what the priest gave them; so
she poured a glass about the size of the one he used to give the entire congregation for Communion.

Maria had then pulled the stale bread from the cupboard and broken it into bits and dropped it into the deep red liquid. Then she went out to the sink, washed her hands and went back to her room to put on the white dress that she wore to church, that was hanging ironed on the wardrobe. She put on socks and real leather shoes, ready.

When she had come out to the kitchen, she had taken the glass in her hand, forgetting in all honesty that the priest used a tiny silver spoon to give each person a single mouthful. Feeling lonely though she headed back out to the chickens. It was their fault she was home, so they could at least keep her company. They could be the rest of the congregation she decided, and she sat singing what she could remember of the liturgy and said her name.

‘I thouli tou Theou Maria, the servant of God Maria,’ she said proud of herself for remembering the right thing to say and then she sipped the glass of sweet port. The heat coming into the chicken pen made her a little sleepy. She was rather thirsty too, so she drank it quickly, chewed the bread and ignored the goat that came nosing around to see what she was eating and later nuzzle her as she slept.

Maria remembered being very sick the next day. She had a habit of bringing up things she could not stomach. Her mother had not scolded her too badly when she had explained what she had been doing, but her father had been kicked out of the house when he had laughed so much his sides ached. The seventh thing she knew was never to expect adults to react as you think they will.

Today nonetheless she decided she would be smarter and not get caught. Besides it was perfectly reasonable to offer food to your guests, indeed it was the biggest insult not to. So she led the boys to the sala, the best room and told them to sit.

‘As you are my guests I will serve you glyko,’ she declared feeling both very grown up and just a little deceitful. ‘Stay there while I change.’

Mihali sat awkwardly unused to being in the room for guests, as he practically lived here, so he was never invited to sit in the lounge room for visitors.

‘You had better not, you know your mother will thrash you if she finds out.’ He shifted awkwardly on the chairs, glad that the sticky plastic covering them would hide any signs of his visit. Really he was much happier sitting in the kitchen.

Mustafa, who had never been inside Maria’s house before, went wandering around. It was a huge house for only three people: three bedrooms he did not enter, a room for guests to sit, a vegetable garden, a kitchen and sink, a huge jasmine vine, two yards, one covered with grape vines, even an indoor bath with a tub, a separate pigpen, then chicken yards, a carob tree so big it made his tummy ache with envy, and of course a fourno out the back.

As he made his way back to Mihali he whistled at the woofa, taking up almost all of another room.
‘No wonder your family is rich,’ he said as Maria returned. ‘Your mother must make beautiful fabric with that.’

‘My mother makes the best fabric in the world; no one’s is as good as hers. Now you go and sit in the sala, like I told you, and I will get the glyko.’

Strangely he did not reply and so she climbed on the chair and tiptoed up to get the jar of preserved cherries. This was one she had not ransacked recently and so she felt safe pulling it down, knowing she could spoon out enough for the three of them without her mother really noticing.

‘Thank you for the compliment daughter,’ her mother’s voice nearly made her fall off the chair. ‘Here, let me help you with that, you would hate to drop it, although you seem quite agile at pulling those jars down.’ Her mother carefully took the jar and put it on the bench.

‘We had visitors. I was just being polite. I was sick. They sent me home!’ Maria stuttered.

‘I heard,’ Dimitra replied pulling out two small glass plates, two tiny silver forks and poured water into her best glasses. She placed them on the tray and suddenly Mustafa stood up.

‘I am sorry, I should go,’ he was embarrassed by seeing only two plates and thought it best to leave.

‘Please I would be honoured if you stayed as my guest,’ she insisted and so he sat again. She served both boys as Maria stood watching. Mustafa could not help smirk when he realised why there really were only two plates.

‘You will not want any, having been sick child,’ she said. ‘I came home to check on you, my concern was…’

‘Much appreciated mamma, but how did you find out?’

‘It is a small village my girl, everyone knows everyone’s business.’

The boys sat eating the syrupy sweets. Somehow they could not really enjoy them, and were relieved once they swallowed the last mouthful. The water helped to unstick their throats a little and when he had finished Mustafa again stood.

‘Efkaristo Kyria Dimitra, but I had best get to my flute lesson with Ahmedbey,’ he declared.

‘You must indeed; it would be rude to keep him waiting. You must also take him a gift from me,’ Dimitra said and reached up for the walnut jar.

‘No!’ called out Maria. It was her favourite. Consequently there were only pieces on the outside of the jar left; she often helped herself to it.

Her mother raised her eyebrows and gave her daughter a questioning look.

‘He is allergic to walnuts,’ Maria blurted out.

‘Apricots?’ her mother asked understanding full well, carefully checking the seal of the jar she selected.

‘They are fine,’ Maria replied. She couldn’t reach that far up the back. How she wanted to go back to school.

As she handed the jar to Mustafa, Dimitra smiled sadly.
‘You are welcome here; the door is always open to you. You can come any time you are nearby. Give my best to both Ahmed and your mother.’

He bowed formally and smiled, but left in thoughtful silence. Mihali stood too.

‘I had better get back to school,’ he decided thinking it would be best not to witness Maria’s humiliation that was sure to come.

‘Me too,’ Maria chimed in; hoping against hope her mother would leave it until later to upbraid her.

‘You are going nowhere my little pontike and tomorrow I will buy a lock for that cupboard,’ she declared.

Well, I will find the key no matter where you hide it, the young girl planned.

Mihali had gotten up to leave but had not moved, torn between staying and going.

‘Goodbye Mihali, thank you for seeing my sick daughter safely home,’ her mother made it easy for them both. It was not her intent to upbraid the girl in public.

‘Thank you for the glyko, it was delicious,’ he said and left as quickly as he could.

Maria stood looking at her mother, who stared silently back at her. She would have loved to have a few of the sweet preserved cherries to get rid of the bitterness in her mouth.

‘You only have to ask if you want something,’ Dimitra said. ‘You will be told yes or no, but you will not steal again. Do you hear me? You almost embarrassed me in front of a guest. I will not stand for that; imagine how insulted Ahmed would have been to get half a jar of sweets from me. A man who has no wife to cook for him.’ Her mother leant and looked severely at the child who was suddenly busy examining the hem of her dress.

‘Are you okay? Why were you sick?’

Maria looked up. She wished she were back at the school garden watering her plants, checking on her spinach, so that nothing was eating the leaves that shouldn’t be.

‘I hate that milk, and that syrup … it makes me ill. I told them, no one listened.’

‘If you promise me not to thieve again I will walk you to school and make sure you never have to drink it again. But I want your word. You will never take what does not belong to you.’

‘I promise,’ Maria said, still standing awkwardly. ‘Mamma, ah, I may have ruined the teacher’s skirt, and it is foreign,’ she admitted.

‘I will make her another one that is not,’ her mother said proudly, and Maria hoped one day she could say the same and fix a problem as easily.

‘Sit down child!’
Her mother turned her back to her and took out another two glass dishes from the *vitrina*. She poured water and took out two more filigree spoons and then she offered the child *glyko* with a small smile on her face. In her day, she had bribed her brothers by taking out three pieces when her own mother was not looking, giving them one to share so they were complicit in her crime, and then eating the other two herself.

‘*Efkaristo Mamma,*’ Maria sat taking small bites not only so the *glyko* would last, but also because this was a side of her mother she rarely saw. As she chewed she asked, ‘Will you teach how me to sew a dress?’ It was what she wanted to know the most. It would give her the freedom to look after herself.

‘There are a few stages before sewing a dress you may have to master,’ her mother said enjoying the forbidden sweets. Dimitra tended to roundness; all her people were full bodied. She had seen her daughter turn her hand to the jasmine necklaces, her fingers were agile and her sense of proportion exact. ‘Mending, first we start with mending and buttons. But only if you will stop stealing sweets?’

The child thought about it. She could not give them up entirely, best to make a bargain. ‘Will you let me eat them sometimes if I ask?’

‘Yes, I told you that already.’

‘You don’t need a lock then,’ Maria agreed and the scolding was done.

‘Shall we take you back to school? If we walk slowly you will get there just in time for gardening.’

Maria nodded, happy with the compromise. Together they walked towards the mill and found Mihali sitting waiting for her.

‘I thought you may come along,’ he said smiling widely.

‘Come on you two, I need to get back to the *halloumi,*’ and she took both their hands as they walked past Ahmed’s house. Seeing them he waved, and played them a tune to walk by, as succulent as the apricots he had been sent.

‘Why did you send Ahmed sweets?’ Maria asked.

‘He has been our neighbour child, for decades. It is what neighbours do.’

The hill was as slippery to climb as it was in the morning.

‘Why did you tell Mustafa he could come again?’ the girl was curious.

‘Because I’m not stupid,’ Maria declared.

Dimitra stopped in her tracks and leant down to the child.

‘Whoever suggested you were child?’

‘The teacher says it to me all the time.’

Her mother suddenly found the will to get up the hill. Did things never change?

(*‘Stolen Sweets — 1964’ is an excerpt from the novel that the author is writing in fulfilment of her PhD, currently entitled, ‘No Man’s Land’.*
MARIOS VASILIOU

Cypriot English Literature: A Stranger at the Feast Locally and Globally

My focus in this essay revolves around a corpus of literature written by Cypriots in English that has yet to define itself either as a hyphen branch of a national literature or as a minor independent category. So from the outset, my paper has a twofold task: firstly, to draw attention to the paradoxical position of Cypriot English writers who remain outside the literary feast both at home and abroad; and secondly, to explore the literary vicissitudes of some works of this corpus, and to examine how their minor position locally in relation to the dominant literatures in Greek and Turkish, and internationally in relation to global English — a position that Deleuze and Guattari (1986) describe as ‘minor literature’ — has engendered syncretic aesthetics. Through this analysis, I also intend to draw attention to the literary cross-fertilisations that occur from such minor positions and suggest that perhaps we should be wary of using globally fashionable literary terms (such as magic realism or postmodernism) in our reading of such syncretist works. Instead we might start viewing them as Eleni Kefala suggests, ‘as responses and reactions to multi-temporal and heterogeneous traditions … where there is a symbiosis of elements and narratives, originating from different places and times, which might or might not (entirely) belong either to the so-called modernity or postmodernity’ (258).

Gregory Jusdanis finds that while generally Greek Literature has been on the periphery of the global literary stage, there was a brief phase after WWII when Greece captured the world’s literary focus since it fitted into its idea of the exotic. However, as he rightly argues this is no longer the case since the literary focus has shifted once more to different geographical locations. For example, the predominance of discourses such as post-colonialism and multiculturalism, has kept the study of literatures in English centred on Britain, America and those countries under their aegis that have sought to win political and cultural independence. In this world context, Greek literature became once more a stranger at the feast (Jusdanis 25). Without lamenting the phenomenon, Jusdanis argues that the world has been split between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ (26), those who speak English and those who do not. Similar to Greek literature and other national literatures that are found on the so-called periphery, Cypriot Greek (CG) and Cypriot Turkish (CT) literatures are also strangers at the international feast. But what about those Cypriots who write in English and belong, according to Jusdanis’ model, in the ‘haves’, and not in the ‘have-nots’? Have they fared better than their CG or CT counterparts? In other words, has English opened pathways to a wider audience
or to any form of international recognition? The answer to this question is grave indeed; not only do they generally remain unknown internationally but even more sombrely, for the most part they remain outside the local feast too. Lately a change of attitude towards Cypriot English writing in Cyprus may be observed amongst both major communities, as exemplified by inclusions in a few literary magazines and journals, such as *Cadences*, *Arteri*, and *In Focus*, or sporadically in literary anthologies, such as the recently published volume entitled, *The Series of Modern Turkish Cypriot Literature* (2009) which dedicated some space for literary works in English by TC writers. Despite this recent slight change of attitude, the general picture remains sobering indeed: with a few exceptions the literary institutions in both communities remain ignorant of writers who write in English, as well as of each other, as Mehmet Yashın points out (223).

The purpose of this essay is to bring attention to Cypriot English writing as part of what Deleuze and Guattari have called ‘minor literature’ (18) whose significance lies in its multiple tensions: on the one hand, with the dominant languages locally, and on the other, with the major language from which it springs, internationally. Using Kafka and the tensions engendered by his authorial location as a Jew of Prague writing in German as paradigmatic of ‘minor literature’, Deleuze and Guattari expound on the revolutionary and subversive potentialities that such literatures can reveal. As they argue, ‘A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language’ (16). Kafka’s position with its attendant multiple frictions, is indeed similar to that of the Cypriot English writers. A Jew living in Prague writing in German is in essence a multiply deterritorialized subject: deterritorialized from [his] ‘primitive Czech territoriality’ (16); cut off from the major German language by his position in Prague; but also in a problematic position in relation to the German language accentuated by his Jewishness which renders him at the same time ‘part of this minority and excluded from it’ (17). Similarly, Cypriot English writers are deterritorialized since they are cut off from the local Greek and Turkish speaking establishments that erect linguistic barriers to them, while concurrently being in an ambivalent position in relation to global English and its attendant colonial and imperial connotations. Cypriot English is indeed exemplary of a literature that is theoretically in a majority position in relation to its local counterparts, by virtue of its allegiance to a major language, yet is in essence in a minority position both at home — since it is ignored and excluded — and internationally relative to global Anglophone writing since even its own postcoloniality does not seem to bestow it with enough marginality to elicit the literary world’s attention. I am interested in locating the position of this corpus of literature both at home and internationally and in exploring the aesthetic results of its dialectical exchanges. This task must also consider questions of identity. In Cyprus, the relationship between language and identity has been profoundly important, since language has been considered by the two major communities to be the primary proof of identification with the
corresponding motherland, as much as with the island itself. As Ashcroft et al. argue, ‘[t]he study of English has always been a densely political and cultural phenomenon’ (3). The history of the reception of English in Cyprus and in effect its paradoxical marginalisation — considering the global presence of English that marginalises other languages — is complex as it began in the late nineteenth century by ushering in a British-sponsored literary cosmopolitanism in opposition to ‘traditional’ Greek and Turkish cultures that gave way to a fervent nationalism from the 1950s onwards that reinstalled the two local cultures as definitive of Cypriot identity.

In an era where literature is still predominantly produced, categorised, distributed, and consumed based on linguistic and national markers, Cypriot writers in English find their work outside such seemingly neat categories of Cypriot, CG, or CT literature, but are also often ignored by the category of ‘post-colonial English’. In essence, in the island they either face the indifference of the literary establishments or when given some attention they are usually treated as anomalies that are better understood as part of the cosmopolitan globe; from the global perspective they constitute a very small dot on the map and appear insufficiently victimised to warrant postcolonial attention.

In most other countries which have had their own unique experiences of colonisation and postcoloniality (India and Nigeria being exemplary), the sheer volume of literary works produced, as well as their position in the global literary market — that has shifted its interest to the so called third-world — enabled them to carve out some space for themselves and become established either as part of English literature or as branches of their national literatures (for example, Indian Anglophone literature). Without disregarding the tensions or the politics of appropriation, absorption, and exclusion that are involved in such processes, let alone the desirability of being part of such categories, it is evident that Cypriot English writing is in a somewhat less established position, one that is better understood within the frame of Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of ‘minor literature’.

Before I begin my analysis of these works, I should explain the way I use the terms ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’, as well as ‘syncretism’. The relationship between centre and periphery, a product of modernity, does not denote a cultural hierarchy in this essay; its use is meant to expose and challenge the literary geopolitics of the world and, in my references to it I intend to interrogate its validity by bringing out from the works I analyse what Kefala has called the ‘multiple modernities’ (22), that are not necessarily inadequate, failed, or belated but simply ‘alternative modernities’ (23). By interrogating the cultural hegemony implicit in the binary of centre and periphery, critical discourses have exemplified that ‘each centre … has its own periphery, its osmotic porous space of ambivalence, where disparate traditions meet, contest and mingle with each other’ (Kefala 35–36). In other words, the exclusivist binary itself allows for a zone of syncretism that can be reclaimed as importantly constitutive rather than a poor by-product.
Consider for instance, the work of a promising young writer such as Miranda Hoplaros who, in her novel *Mrs Bones* (2008), explores ‘what it meant to be a Cypriot girl living in a small township north of Rhodesia — learning English at school, attending Greek lessons and speaking the Cypriot dialect at home’ (8). Hoplaros’ work is neither part of Cypriot, nor of English, African or Zimbabwean literature. It is a novel at the crossroads par excellence. Ambivalence may characterise the work of many contemporary writers, but the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in a work such as *Mrs Bones* have brought about their own fascinating syncretic aesthetics which I will explore.

Miranda Hoplaros’ *Mrs Bones*, an autobiographical novel, is a spatial and temporal journey into 1970s Rhodesia through the eyes of the child narrator, a journey that is both spatially and temporally utopian, or perhaps dystopian since both space and time have been profoundly altered (neither Rhodesia exists as such but only as a failed utopia imprinted on t-shirts, nor the narrator as a child). Instead of a customary plot, the novel presents a series of vignettes which blend personal, social, cultural, and historical events in such an intricate manner as to foreground the complex lives of diasporic people. Consequently, the reader is left with innumerable impressions about the experience of the author growing up as a diasporic person in Rhodesia. Through these simple narrative fragments, the author succeeds in conveying the particularities of her own diasporic experience as well as the complexities that are inherent to diaspora. For instance, in the chapter entitled ‘Maps’ — deliberately (mis)placed at the end of the book, as opposed to the beginning, considering the navigational purpose of these maps into the life of the narrator — the child narrator says:

Colonisers like to draw maps, to label and record like Robinson Crusoe. It’s a way of controlling the outside environment — outside the self. Things look neater when they are in front of you on a piece of paper. The outline of a whole country — the jutting edges and straight lines that represent borders — can be squeezed inside someone’s mind… Maps don’t speak of the mixed smells in shops, the taste of mango, the struggle for Independence … maps are stuck in time. (181)

This allegorical fragment which foregrounds the political and historical implications of maps, particularly in the context of colonialism, blends with her personal cartography in the fragment that follows, completing the vignette called ‘Maps’:

My map is as still as the balancing rocks at Epworth. It has the cities and towns I have stopped at for a passing drink to get the red dust out of my throat, to throw away the egg shells collected in the moving car, lunches at Cypriot’ houses, holidays and the road to school. The spaces in between are empty. These are things I remember from the country I called home. (183)

Thus, the author succeeds in blurring notions of the personal and the political, of the historical and the fictional. In any given chapter, the child-narrator juxtaposes popular literary styles and translates them in the process through its seemingly naive eyes.
The realist description is contested by a post-colonial rewriting and remembering of space and names; the fragmented, inchoate, non-linear narration that echoes postmodern fiction is in tension with the fragments of realist narration of folktales and traditional customs, like the traditional reading of a coffee cup used in forecasting the future. Moreover, the admixture, twisting, and juxtapositions of these discourses, create a narrative style, that is neither one, nor the other, reminding the reader that perhaps these trendy literary modes can only serve as reference points to begin exploring syncretic aesthetics. *Mrs Bones* is indeed at the interstices of linguistic, cultural, geographical, and national categories — where, as Homi Bhabha argues, lie ambiguities, ambivalences, and contradictions. Although there is an increasing volume of literature that is characterised by ambivalence and ambiguity, and which has been analysed under the theoretical category of the post-colonial, I would like to argue that *Mrs. Bones* — as well as the majority of Cypriot English literature — is in a way beyond the post-colonial. The politico-historical terrain in Cyprus renders it recalcitrant to the prescriptive critical models of the post-colonial: on the one hand, Cyprus’ membership in the European Union weakens its post-colonial victim status and consequently its claim for global attention as part of the post-colonial; and on the other, its ongoing intricate national politics marginalise its post-colonial identity in the name of nationalist politics. Nevertheless, the very ‘minority’ status of Cypriot English literature as deterritorialised writing in relation to the dominant Greek and Turkish, and internationally in relation to global English has enabled it to develop further its subversive potentialities by underlining its heteroglossic nature without exoticising it. An example may elucidate this point. In the chapter entitled ‘Darwin’, the author says that:

There is a struggle in Rhodesia. Charles Darwin spoke about the struggle for life. A good way to survive is to change and fit into the environment and not to resist. We live in a township in the north east of Rhodesia called Mount Darwin… The Africans had another name for it. They called it *Pfura* — large rhinoceros… It should really be called *Pfura* because the Africans were there first… We are the township people, the ethnic minority. We are the Cypriots and the Greeks (bundled together as ‘the Greeks’)… The farmers scattered around the township are happy with us. We don’t cause trouble and buy lots of milk to make *haloumi*. (98)

By inscribing the difference between Cypriots and Greeks, the passage — as well as the novel as a whole — posits itself problematically in relation to nationalist discourses. Moreover, the passage reveals the complexity of its post-colonial identity; does it foreground its Rhodesian (or Zimbabwean) post-coloniality or its Cypriot one, or both? The insertion of *Pfura* and *haloumi*, both of which are italicised, inscribe its difference from metropolitan English, yet the refusal of the passage to linger on either of the two, and especially on the latter — which almost warrants an exotic explication but is lost in a narration that reads more like a fable — convey its resistance to the mode of auto-exoticisation that has been observed as pervasive in post-colonial fiction. This recalcitrant minority location of the text
which is paradigmatic of most of Cypriot English literature (exemplified in its heteroglossic nature and its attendant tensions in relation to domestic languages as well as global English) may bestow it with radical and subversive potentialities as Deleuze and Guattari argue, but at the same time has precluded it from any established categories of circulation. In Cyprus, it is excluded by the dominant Greek and Turkish literary networks of production, reception, and circulation and internationally, it is not exotic or victimised enough to fit comfortably in the literary circuits of the post-colonial.

Another particularly interesting aspect of Mrs Bones is the way that it challenges the official historical narratives with their linear chronological sequence. The voice of the child-narrator is subtly contested by the author’s editing, or ‘artificial interference, a way of changing the story’ (9) as the narrator tells us at the start of the book, thereby drawing attention to the process of making a story, or writing history. Indeed through the employment of story-telling that draws from various mythologies such as Greek, African and Judaic, the novel revisits the past and rewrites both time and place, exemplifying a post-colonial gesture of re-appropriation of history from the colonial narratives. The narrative that emerges is profoundly syncretic; it synthesises while violating orthodox notions of history and geography; it merges the personal, with the historical and religious, while subtly and wittingly contesting all of them; it fuses the real with the fictional in such a way, that they both shrink and expand at the same time. For how else are we to interpret the six consecutive chapters named flood narratives, starting with Noah’s Ark, continuing with Nyaminyami, the River God, followed by Operation Noah, which relates the story of the construction of the Kariba Dam, and the loan from the World Bank?

In these chapters, apart from fusing and twisting ample references to the bible, African mythology, Cypriot and African history, and personal narratives, the novel draws attention to the effects the construction of the dam had on the lives of the Tonga. The reader is told that, ‘The Tonga have peacefully inhabited the Zambezi [the name of the river] for thousands of years and are on good terms with the River God, who has a fish head and a snake’s torso. But then the possibility of hydroelectric power destroyed the Tonga’s lifestyle. Colonialism needed power to work… The wall separated Nyaminyami from his people’ and he now ‘sells his story and image to tourists’ (143–45). This revisiting of the past enables the writer to expose the pernicious effects of both colonialism and neo-colonialism. Once more, the narrative fuses, splits and twists the historical and the mythical, the personal and the public, the real and the fictional, translating all of them in the process in a narrative that violates both spatial and temporal borders, adding layer upon layer of voices, discourses, and literary practices that exist at times symbiotically, and at times in tension, demonstrating thus syncretist aesthetics.

This syncretic nature of the novel is also eloquently and subtly foregrounded in the vignette called ‘Reading Coffee’. The author begins by narrating in a rather
child-like manner the process of making the coffee. Nevertheless, instead of underlining the provenance of the coffee in such a way as to highlight its exotic nature or engage in petty nationalist debates — whether the coffee is Cypriot, Turkish, or Greek — the author prefers to relate it to Cyprus by casually dropping in some old Cypriot adages like when she says that

The coffee is for adults. I’ve heard women scare boys into not drinking coffee by telling them they won’t grow moustaches if they drink it. It tastes like the sand I sometimes eat to make myself ill so I will miss Greek school... As mom reads the coffee, the women listen. They drown out their inner voice in the froth that surfaces their cup. They take the voice they hear to be their own. It’s the same in Rhodesia. We hear things from other people. We don’t know what is happening in the bush, outside Rhodesia, the fighting inside Cyprus. We depend for information on others. (77–78)

In a novel that is largely based in Rhodesia, these forays into a Cypriot cultural and historical terrain are certainly significant since they provide focal points for the reader to further appreciate not only the syncretic nature of the book but also the tensions that arise from its location as ‘minor literature’. The above passage demonstrates some of these tensions: on the one hand its refusal to aggrandise and exalt its potential for the exotic, as shown in the symbol of the ‘coffee’ and thus benefit from the growing marketability of the ‘post-colonial’; and on the other, its subtle mockery of Cypriot masculine stereotypes such as the ‘moustache’, as well as its defiance of the official war narratives. We may depend on others for information, yet who are ‘they’ on whom we depend and how ‘other’ are they? The concept of ‘other’, so deeply ingrained in alteritist discourses, is here invested with a particularly empowering and subversive ambivalence. The novel succeeds in bringing out the tensions that are at play in a literature that is located in diaspora but which still refuses to eulogise its diasporic nature.

Andriana Ierodiaconou’s novel *Margarita’s Husband* is also paradigmatic of syncretic aesthetics. It is a novel informed by various global discourses and practices woven together and suffused in a Cypriot setting that oscillates between tradition and modernity during the colonial times. As the title indicates, the novel revolves around Margarita’s husband, a prominent landowner who changed his name from ‘son of Lame Petris to Kyroleon’ (Ierodiaconou 23). He is dreaded by his workers, hated by his son Adonis while adored by his daughter Polyxene, and pitied, loved, and feared at the same time by his wife. The sudden death of Polyxene plunges the family into mourning and further exacerbates the distance between Kyroleon on the one hand and his wife and son on the other. His son, Adonis, who returns to the village after being in Paris for his studies, seems to be a constant source of irritation for the patriarchal figure of the family. Instead of becoming a doctor as he was instructed, he returns to the microcosm of the village enamoured with surrealist poetry, and full of aspirations to become a poet. Through these main three characters the novel revisits colonial life in the 1930s, culminating in the demonstrations that resulted in the burning of the
colonial Government’s house in 1931. Moreover, through the dynamics of their relationships, the novel negotiates the transition from traditional life to modernity, and the role of patriarchal nationalism in the incipient anti-colonial movement. The novel blends magic realist and postmodernist practices with such traditional Cypriot literary genres as the tsiatista¹ as well as with such traditional visions of Saints soothingly smiling during a nuptial ceremony — visions which modernity has hurled into the realm of the occult but which characterised village life at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, these ‘magic’ moments are fused with traditional beliefs that are redolent of the local colour of village life like the appearances of saints in dreams or the outlandish power of the crone of the village to make things come true. From the local point of view, this is ‘village realism’ and not magic realism. Tradition, as Karayanni argues, is also a product of modernity, since its construction depends on a selective exoticisation and definition (Thompson, Karayanni & Vassiliadou 285).

Moreover, the novel entails postmodern elements, like the non-linear narration, the complete collapse of narrative structure in chapter 11, entitled ‘Gethsemane’s story’. Yet these elements are woven into a narration that is realist for the most part. Through the sometimes serious, sometimes amusing splittings and fusions of identity, the novel interrogates ideas of purity which characterise nationalist and colonial discourses. For example, the mystery of Kyroleon’s exceptional height compared to his co-villagers is alluded to in the long-forgotten story of his great-great-grandmother’s alleged rape ‘by a group of pirates, though whether they were Greeks or Arabs and what their height had been no one could say for certain’ (19). Kyroleon’s origins could thus be either Greek or Arab, or both. Evidently, the mixture which is indistinguishable in Kyroleon’s nature, subtly undermines such orthodox conceptions of identity that typify nationalist and Orientalist discourses. It also suggests that cultural heterogeneity is characteristic of all societies.

The novel’s reluctance to locate the story either spatially and temporally, may at first seem to be suggesting that it is indifferent to history, yet its textual fabric is carefully embroidered to precisely grapple with the events preceding the anti-colonial revolution and more specifically the 1931 uprising. Moreover, by re-inscribing the events in ways that defy the nationalist narratives, the novel can be seen as a post-colonial rewriting of history that challenges the historiographical genre with its claims to true narrative and temporally linear unfolding. Through this revisiting of the events prior to the entrenchment of nationalistic positions, the novel brings out the tensions between the various nascent discourses that were vying for power at the time; tensions that were silenced by the homogenising processes of the nationalist discourse that predominated later on. The world of modernity exemplified in the presence of political parties, national education and working-class movements, coexists in this novel alongside the world of the so-called traditional life with its arranged marriages and its never-ending wedding festivities; its officially illicit but unofficially acceptable bribing of state employees
by their co-villagers. The survival of all of these practices even nowadays, at a
time of post-modernity, renders such binaries as ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ suspect
and inadequate. Furthermore, by drawing from such heteromorphous genres
and traditions such as realism, magic realism, postcolonialism, postmodernism,
surrealist poetry, and tsiatista, the novel exemplifies what Nestor Garcia Canclini
(1997: 47) calls the ‘multitemporal heterogeneity of the periphery’ (qtd in Kefala
23). Similar to Mrs. Bones, Margarita’s Husband exemplifies all the tensions that
are present in ‘minority literature’. While grappling with events that portray the
beginning of anti-colonial movement in Cyprus, the novel disrupts the nationalist
narratives and their homogenizing discourses by re-inscribing the events, swathing
them in difference and plurality. Moreover, it posits itself defiantly in relation to
English by inscribing its difference in its gesture of re-appropriation of the anti-
colonial events, answering back to the empire in this manner. Yet, this response to
the empire, which might normally make it accessible to the critical models of the
‘post-colonial’, does not, since the location of the novel in the global literary circuits
renders it inadequately victimised for easy circulation under the ‘post-colonial’.

Comparable to both of these novels are the syncretist aesthetics of Stephanos
Stephanides’ memoir, ‘The Wind Under My Lips’, an autobiographical journey
which as the author says has become ‘layered with time’ (102). The passage I
discuss here is only a short excerpt from the memoir which has not yet been
published in its entirety. Yet, from this short excerpt the reader may see that for
Stephanides, as well as Hoplaros and Ierodiaconou, their experience of Cyprus
itself is syncretic and their journey into the past usually entails some form of
negotiation to bring back home what has been lost. Writing becomes a means of
negotiation with the past, not in a way of retrieving the past intact, but in a manner
that underlines the impossibility of retrieving it, or to echo the words of Salman
Rushdie that ‘the past is home, albeit a lost home’ (9). The author endeavours
to trace the beginning of this journey, and despite his vigilant attentiveness to
the voices of sibyls, and to the advice of elders and sages of a faraway land to
look into ‘prenatal memory’, he opts instead to ‘speculate on crossroads for a
while not paths’ (103). The excerpt is an attempt by the author to revisit his past
and re-member the scattered mnemonic fragments of his floating, unsettled, and
diasporic childhood. Yet, instead of a retour to the past, the author finds himself
constantly detouring. His own beginning ‘detours’ his narration to the beginning
of his progenitors’ ‘peculiar chemistry’ (102), while this in its turn leads his
narration on a detour into their own personal itineraries before they met, and so
on. Through this trope of constant detouring the author succeeds in foregrounding
not only the fallibility of memory but also the process of writing as a way of
bringing back home the experience of diaspora, or homelessness. In this short
excerpt, the reader glimpses what it means to float between three islands, between
the two islands where his parents ended up after their separation, and his final
destination, Cyprus. During his peregrinations, he says, that
The island never stood still. I was floating with it as it revealed its contours to me anew on every journey… In between I was everybody’s child and there was space for me on any journey for harvest, feast, pilgrimage … we only reached Anatolia or the Levant with the imagination. These other places were like mirages for me as I would float on my back on the sea wondering if when I looked around I would be on the yonder shore. Or perhaps these places were already within us — implosions in our imagination, like islands exploding in the sea floating here and there with the uncertainty of detachment. (108–109)

Wandering and floating are metaphors in this work for cultural transfer and exchange, and the role of imagination is paramount in mobilising this process of transfer. The diasporic wandering of the narrator is here not one of lament and sorrow but one of sober optimism about the liberating potentialities that literal or imaginary journeys are impregnated with. The story’s refusal to be located in any other place or time than crossroads is significant in light of the fact that, it challenges fixed notions of both time and space that typify nationalistic and colonial narratives. Temporal and spatial fixities are also negated both by the fragmented narration as well as by the constant physical or spectral dis-placement of characters and events. As the author says, ‘[m]y body is not always oriented about comings and goings. I do know I am still coming and becoming. And not yet ready to go, though I am always going somewhere — even when I stay still’ (107). Crossroads is a metaphor for the space where the personal meets the historical, where literary modes like postmodernism, critical cosmopolitanism, and post-colonialism converge, contest, and mingle with one another revealing the ambiguities, contradictions, and paradoxes that are characteristic of syncretic aesthetics and that are at play at such shifting and transient locations.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the fact that my intention in this essay has simply been to point to the paradoxical position of Cypriot English writers who are not currently participating in local or international literary feasts. Cyprus English literature, being a ‘minor literature’ is paradigmatic of multiple tensions: on the one hand vis-a-vis the territorialised local languages, with their respective powerful alliances with Greek and Turkish metropolitan literary centres; and on the other, vis-a-vis English, the ‘major’ language from where it springs. These ‘minor’ voices however do not speak with one voice, but rather engender a uniquely syncretic literary aesthetics which challenge us to think about critical ways of reading and analysing, while also urging us to consider their position vis-a-vis local and international literary practices. Most importantly, their syncretism compels us to evaluate critically the facile application of literary modes of global marketability such as postmodern, postcolonial, or magic realist, on ‘minor’ literatures that do not perhaps fit easily into these prescriptive categories and focus instead on those critical discourses of cultural transference and cultural translation that are at play in such syncretic practices.
NOTES
1 An impromptu form of poetry consisting of verses of rhyming couplets that is generally performed live in traditional celebrations and which usually entails a competition between the poets for the wittiest poem.

WORKS CITED
WHEN THE GUERRILLAS CAME

Mr Baron says we must hide under the beds. The guerrillas are coming. They are going to get Mrs Baron first. She’s old and can’t crawl under the bed like us. In a way her old age is good for us. When she does her rounds of the dorms — lights out time — we can hear her slow shoes scraping the gravel. We stop being naughty, feel our way back into our beds and share our laughter with the pillow — face down.

Under the bed is dumb. When we play hide-and-seek that is the first place we look. Under the bed. I would feel safer in the bamboo trees where the witches hide at Halloween or in the woods where we practise shooting the cans and do our cross-country running. But it’s dark and maybe the guerrillas are there.

Dad dug a deep ditch in the garden. I didn’t see him shovelling but when we got home, it was there. This awkward looking empty space was our trench. But it rained and filled with water so we couldn’t hide there. We practised hiding at our neighbour’s house. Their cement trench had a flower patch on top, stairs going down and a peeping gap for the watchman. Of course we never went there when the guerrillas came, it was too far. We hid under the bed.

The school is empty. Everyone has gone home, everyone except us. The guerrillas are coming but we stayed. Mr and Mrs Baron, Roger and Colin have nowhere to go. I don’t ask why. It’s not polite to ask questions. Roger is in my class and we play ‘I spy’ from under the bed but the game is over soon because we can’t see much from where we are positioned and Mr Baron tells us to be quiet. He’s holding a pistol, so when he tells us to be silent, we stop.

My younger brother, like Colin, is only five and he has fallen asleep. Mr Baron is worried because he’s snoring. We don’t stand a chance with the guerrillas. I can’t see my sister. My older brother is not with us anymore. He grew up and was sent to high school in town.

Nobody told us why dad didn’t come to get us. We are always the last to go home for holidays. We hang off the gates, kicking the sand, looking down the empty road waiting for the station wagon — us and those Italian Alberto boys. They won’t have to wait anymore. They were blown up in an ambush the last time they went home.
I watch them make coffee. They boil some water after measuring the quantity in a small coffee cup. The women seem to like it sweet, to break its bitter taste, so a teaspoon of sugar is added together with one of thick ground coffee. Relatives and friends store bags of coffee in their suitcases — a return gift from Cyprus. They let the mixture boil till it foams. The cup is blackened when it is poured. The coffee is for adults. I’ve heard the women scare boys into not drinking coffee by telling them they won’t grow moustaches if they drink it. It tastes like the sand I sometimes eat to make myself ill so I will miss Greek school.

They sip it slowly, sometimes dipping dry koulouri inside. The sesame seeds drift apart and if it’s too hot, chunks of koulouri sink to the bottom. When lipstick smudged lips have separated the liquid from the thick particles, the women put the saucer over the lid, swirl it a couple of times and let the contents drip down the sides. The church doesn’t like it when women read coffee cups but they make out the shapes they see in order to pass time.

Mom, Niki, Androulla and Flora are sitting under the tree in our garden. Mom is inspecting the cups individually, twisting them around. She pokes her finger in the cup. ‘Do you see that?’ She looks for the roads first. ‘I see a long road. Have you planned a trip somewhere?’ A trail of coffee means a road but a long journey could mean any road journey inside Rhodesia. The distances are far. Niki’s cup isn’t good this time. She has drunk too much liquid and a dry patch clings to the bottom of the cup, defying gravity. ‘Something is bothering you.’ Niki puts her finger in the mountain of sorrow and breaks up her worries. Next, mom looks for babies, especially in the cups of women who have just been married. Androulla is a new arrival in Rhodesia. ‘You will receive a letter or news from abroad.’ Each cup is its own kaleidoscope of fate.

As mom reads the coffee, the women listen. They drown out their inner voice in the froth that surfaces the cup. They take the voice they hear to be their own.

It’s the same in Rhodesia. We hear things from other people. We don’t know what is happening in the bush, outside Rhodesia, the fighting inside Cyprus. We depend on information from others.
I was born in Bindura. Four months later I had a Rhodesian passport. Above ‘signature waived due to age of holder’ there is a black and white photograph of me. I’m wearing a white jersey that mom made for me. On the jersey is a pin with a row of three golden objects that is given to Greek Orthodox babies by their godparents when they are christened. One is in the shape of a heart and the other a cross. The stamp of the Ministry of Internal Affairs hides the third. I’m a well fed baby with a height of 1 foot 8 inches.

A Rhodesian passport has limitations. Nobody wants us — only the South Africans who stamp our passport at Beitbridge. They leave their mark in purple like the flowers of the Jacaranda tree. The entry stamp to South Africa is a circle. It has the word entry written in Afrikaans as well — Binnekoms. On the way back from South Africa there is a purple square saying Vertrek / Left.

The rest of the world is not as friendly as the South Africans. Mom gets weary of waiting with us. It takes a few days to get to her home. We have to change aeroplanes and they don’t let Rhodesians out of the airport so we have to sleep on the floor with the other Rhodesians until our flight comes. It’s boring being a Rhodesian. By the time we reach mom’s village in Cyprus, she’s so tired of us that she sends us to the local school to remember our Greek again. We are surrounded by the whole school that comes out to see the children from Africa. In the classroom, I stare out the window.

We are not allowed to take any money out of the country either. Mom gets body checked but they don’t look at us. We are wearing heavy gold earrings that tear away at our flesh and diamond rings on our fingers.

In July 1977, my Rhodesian passport is renewed. The photograph remains the same. The new expiry date is 1982. The Rhodesian Passport Office didn’t think that in 1980 Rhodesia would no longer be valid. The country had expired. We’re stuck for some time between Rhodesia and Zimbabwe.
The church in the Greek book is like the one in Salisbury. There is a heavy red carpet that has been stampeded by hundreds of feet leaving behind traces from outside — dirt and dust trails from around Rhodesia. Mothers and fathers are dragging their neat children by the hand in paper cut-out formations. The grandmothers wear black and their grey hair is covered, and their wrinkles speak of their hardship. The men are wearing polished shoes and freshly pressed suits.

Inside the chandeliers dangle from the fragile roof, each branch bearing dozens of crystal diamonds. At the end of the route sits a lighted candle.

I sit on the grass, look at the pictures and read the letters, words and sentences over and over again until they become so familiar I can say them to the air. Further along, the pages are darkened by the priest and his tall hat — good enough to be a magician’s hat with a rabbit hidden in its seams. There are pictures of figs in baskets, winds that play with dresses, natural treasures from the insides of the sea and swallows feeding their young in nests.

The picture I look at most is the postman. He’s wearing an important hat that sits on his curls. A red bag crosses over his shoulders. The children sit on a log being good — the kind of good that means there is something to look forward to. Their eyes are wide, ears open, waiting for their name to be called out — to be remembered.
BROKEN

We get to eat a gingerbread man on our birthday at school — a small brown man with blue icing buttons and a painted face. I lick off the icing first, leaving the man soggy, naked and without character. I then nibble into its body, starting from the legs upwards, until the ginger dissolves in my mouth.

Edward lives in Mount Darwin. He wears a loosely fitted army uniform that he has never taken off. He walks barefoot. We move barefoot too, running cross-country races in thorny fields and woods. Our feet have become flat and tough. Nothing can get through our skin — only the fear of cows. I’m scared of running through the fields. The cows tower above me. I reach their knees and sometimes when they don’t want to eat grass anymore, they chase me. We can smell Edward coming up the road. Somebody gave him a floppy hat and he wears it upside down so he looks like a sailor. He carries a rusty tin, shaking it when he wants some coins. He cleans the road of old newspapers and uses them to eat on. I’ve seen him eat fried potatoes off newspapers. The oil blurs the ink causing a permanent stain. He then licks off the letters and swallows the headlines.

We like him coming to our shop. Dad gives him a Coke and we watch him drink it. He uses his rotten back teeth as an opener (his front ones are missing), hauls the bottle above his lips and lets the fluid flow without closing his throat until his eyes water. Dad sometimes gives him a cigarette but he doesn’t smoke it. He takes a chameleon out of his large army pocket, places in on the counter, lights the cigarette and puts it in the chameleon’s mouth. Even though he’s always dressed for war, he’s not allowed to fight on anyone’s side. He’s too crazy for that.

I recognize that empty licked-off gingerbread man face, that ‘Edward’ face on troubled Rhodesians. I call it broken. We have that face under our coloured hoods when we visit Victoria Falls. Our workers who sit behind the knitting machine, watching it move automatically from left to right, magically knitting jerseys, have that look. It’s a blank look, a look of having given up hope.
PRETEND

Dad has a recording camera that shows film through a projector and two large revolving reels. As the wheels turn, the little brown boxes that contain our lives move in circles, showing moments not related but stuck onto each other.

I don’t like playing pretend — pretending that there is no terror outside our garden fence or inside it. On film our motions are stiff and we move sideward like stick insects, standing in rank from tallest to shortest. There is no sound on the film. It reminds me of the time we stole a packet of cigarettes. We wanted to grow up faster and smoked behind the car. We were found out. Mom smudged our lips with the burning tip to make certain we wouldn’t do it again. Our lips sizzled and blistered and that shut us up. Mute like our dog Puppy who plays death games with the chickens, destroy them before we have a chance to eat them. Dad tied a dead chicken around his neck and despite Puppy’s frustration he couldn’t get at it. He hung his head low. That shut Puppy up.

Dad is shaky with the camera and when we watch our lives again, the images move up and down restlessly. When someone else holds the machine, the picture is clear and dad can be in the story too. During the war we are caught on film on top of a truck filled with bags of mealie meal. A crowd of hungry hands waves dollars at us from ground level and we lift the sacks onto their eager heads.

I feel trapped in the reels. That’s not how my life played out.

(from Mrs Bones, Laser Graphics, Cyprus, 2008. Reproduced with permission of the author)
Alev Adil

NICOSIA GIRL

It’s performance time Nicosia girl,
the traces and erasures of your footprints,
the vestige of your gestures,
your ghost on the balcony,
are dancing for me.
Memory, a secret agent of war,
sets the scene:
a bridge, a labyrinth, a graveyard.
Dance your inherited amnesia,
a heritage in an undeciphered script,
your political dread, your amour projection,
your sentimental terrorism,
double-shadow, violent architect,
my assassin.
NOIR LOGIC

There was no gun sister
but when we were exchanging
words and kisses
my gimlet eyes
my shop bought soul
turned their romance
into stones
and when he had swallowed
a bellyful
he sank, he drowned.
As I did too
having lost track
of who was who,
the mirrors,
the smoke,
the damned dreaminess
of the aquarium,
the shiny screen.
Tell me again,
who were we?
Why did we do
what we had to do?
OKTAY RIFAT

Speaking of death
and things to wear,
the poet was always
immaculate in appearance,
freshly pressed;
not exactly afraid
at the end.
YOU CAN’T GET LOST IN THE WALLED CITY

Daedalus’ fugitive disinformation,
a nomadic Ottoman passion,
a palimpsest of amnesias,
a river, a shopping street,
a boundary, a barricade, a border.
This walled city is a labyrinth of war
under the rule of a secret dream.
On waking in the morning
of the pale blue apocalypse,
in the spring time of the little brides,
the blood poppies,
long after the streets lost all their names,
it’s still impossible to get lost
in the old city.
TRANSIENT THEME

In the cosmic dark room
the image develops,
a wash, an oily film, a transient theme.
I am a woman in the crowd
a grainy dark fragment turning away
against the flow
of indistinguishable faces.
I am a woman passing through,
a cancelled passport,
a lip print on a cup,
a dip in a pillow.
Packing away my chipped deities,
I am a lost civilisation.
A solipsist’s mythology grows shabby in my rucksack,
a beloved broken toy.
I’m taking my gods with me,
knowing there’s always
Nothing to bequeath to eternity.
I lost the thread
of a dream
a mapmaker offered me.
It rained and the ink ran
on the pages of an A-Z for the city
where I always
found myself
lost.
And if I asked among the forest of strangers
drifting in a breeze
of my sleeping
for the names
of streets
for directions
I’d wake…
Evicted unceremoniously
from that city
I’d wake losing
first the punctuation:
the weave of tense,
the warp of sense,
until all that remained:
the traffic roaring like the sea
the harbour lights of my childhood
on a summer’s night,
a small forgotten war and the smell of jasmine,
other cities rising and falling
other fish frying
dogs barking
couples arguing.
Where is that hotel room?
Is it the scene of a murder
or the source of love?
Why am I waiting at the airport?
On waking I am lonely
for a grammar
to contain these questions
to sew the story together,
for a complicit cartographer,
for dreaming in company.
Since its partition in 1963 the city of Nicosia has drawn the attention of artists, poets, and academics. Offering rich possibilities for imagining what lay beyond the fence, both literally and figuratively, the city and its division has been the subject of endless representation in Cyprus. It may seem limiting in a country besieged by partition to choose to discuss poems only by women, but as feminist critic Maria Hadjipavlou has argued in her text *Women and Change in Cyprus: Feminisms and Gender in Conflict:* ‘In Cyprus women are marginalized at every level of the political and peace process’ (10). This article asks whether this is the case poetically, or if literature has provided a space that allows women to cross over the lines enforced by patriarchy and to present alternatives to the national discourses that revolve around blame and binaries Hadjipavlou cites Mary F. Belenky’s assertion that ‘the male experience has been so powerfully articulated that we believed we would hear the patterns in women’s voices more clearly if we held at bay the powerful templates men have etched in our literature and our minds’ (8). This article in a small way seeks to redress a long-standing gender imbalance by examining women’s voices speaking their pictures of this complex city.¹

The Green Line is represented in some of the best-known lines about the partition of Nicosia in Nora Nadjarin’s short story *Ledra Street:* ‘Today I walked Ledra Street and counted the steps from where the kafenion stood, all the way to the checkpoint. It was fifty-two steps. Fifty-two steps to freedom, fifty-two steps to captivity. I can only imagine the other side’ (2006 10). A literal reminder of the residue of colonialism, the line dividing the centre of the capital is a motif that carries the weight of the entire division of the island. As Moira Killoran suggests, ‘the Cyprus problem, the disputed nation(s), and the centre of the divided capital(s) of Nicosia are all conflated into one image of time, space and conflicting national identities’ (129). Nicosia then may be seen as the topos, both a physical geo-political territory and an imaginary landscape that represents the entirety of Cyprus. Personified in poetry and art often as female, sometimes as a lover or as a mother, Cyprus is figured as the one longed for, or as the place to seek what has been lost. Its division represents the gendered policing of

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¹

IRINI SAVVIDES

Cypriot Women Poets Cross the Line

Jasmine
She reached the line:
the perfume, the white
scent
leading her. Jasmine…
(Nadjarian 2003 10)
bodies by the nation state. The nation personified as woman is a common trope for patriotic nationalism. As Hadjipavlou has observed, ‘the gendered, maternal image of the national and the male figure of the state play a vital role in the conscious/subconscious envisioning of the nation/homeland’ (Hadjipavlou 39). But the poems I will discuss push the boundaries of the trope, suggesting how the struggles over space need to be examined as colonising not only the physical spaces of the city, but also the terrain of women’s bodies and thoughts.

This article then aims to do three things. Firstly, it will give a brief introduction to the city, its history and physicality to provide a context and background to the poems. Secondly, it will examine the representation of the city in selected poems of Turkish Cypriot poet, academic and peace activist Nesie Yashin’s early work, and by Armenian Cypriot award-winning author and poet Nora Nadjarian. It will also examine poetry by the acclaimed Greek Cypriot writers Andriana Jerodiaconou and Niki Marangou. It must be noted here that these poems are not represented as ‘typical’ or defining of these poets’ work, or of Cypriot women’s poetry as a whole, but that their selection is intended to show the shifts in visions of the city by women at certain points in time. Perhaps they may also help readers reconsider the line set up by men, policed by men and in this selection of poems, reflected upon by women. Thirdly, the article will consider different ways of crossing the line: moving from the past to the present and perhaps to an imagined future whereby women break out of the prohibitions implicit in nationalism and cross the line of ethical dictates in the national imaginary.

**Walking the Line**

The present day capital of Cyprus sits on the middle of the Mesaoria plain nestled between the Kyrenia mountain range to the north and the Troodos Massif to the south (Maric 65). The Byzantines, the Lusignans, Venetians, and the British have shaped the city. It is a place scattered with neoclassical, Byzantine and Latin Gothic churches many that have now become mosques, crumbling yet majestic Colonial houses, Turkish hammams, medieval caravanserais, a Mevlevi Shrine, a former Tekke of Rumi’s whirling dervishes, endless museums, bazaars and shops. Imams still call inhabitants to prayer, but now the faithful may come from McDonalds and Starbucks, the newfound churches of global capital and consumption. Then there are the empty barrels and piled sandbags, the miles of wire fencing and the UN buffer zone; and checkpoints; roads that end in the middle of nowhere...the line — the Green Line. It is not in fact a single but a double line. An area known as No-Man’s Land or the Dead Zone exists between the two parallel fences monitored by a UN peacekeeping force since 1963 (Cockburn 3). The city has three accepted names: Nicosia, Lefkosia, Lefkosha — one British, one Greek, one Turkish. With every step, one sees the layers left by different conquerors marking the way it has been divided linguistically in its three names as well as literally.
With the recent division of the city into a Turkish occupied Lefkosha in the North and the Greek Lefkosa to the South, street names have been changed, especially in the North where all traces of Greek occupancy have been systematically obliterated. This was partly a result of the Greek struggle for independence against the British in the 1950s and of later inter-communal violence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. As is the case with many colonial outposts, it is easy to look back and see how communal differences were fuelled by a British campaign of divide and conquer (O’Malley and Craig 61). The city streets became the site of civil bloodshed and sectarian violence resulted in the Turkish Cypriots retreating to enclaves for protection and barricading the entrance to the city. The ceasefire line between the two communities, drawn in green pen on a map by Major General Peter Young in 1963, created a de-facto division of the city (Hadjipavlou 85). Following the Turkish invasion of the country in 1974, the city became permanently partitioned and access across the line in either direction was denied. ‘This line’, Hadjipavlou notes, ‘has acquired a physical and symbolic presence in daily life’ (94). Cynthia Cockburn has observed that the line is far more than just a physical fence, it ‘is also a line in our heads, and in our hearts too … passage across it is controlled by uniformed men, at a Checkpoint’ (1). These poems look at moments that see women transgressing this (imaginary and real) line.

When the South of Cyprus was in the process of applying for EU membership the line was unexpectedly opened by the Turkish administration on the 23rd April 2003. In the three weeks that followed 350,000 people crossed the border from both sides (Cockburn 7), worried that the divide would be reinstated as suddenly as it had been partially opened and the opportunity to see those places they had lost three decades before would be lost again. But the closure did not come and crossing with a passport or identity card in hand has since been possible. The decision to cross or not to cross was, and remains for some, politically loaded. Just as significant was the decision on March 21st, 2008 to open Ledra (Locmci) Street, a closed checkpoint in the once central business district (Hadjipavlou 175). In April 2008, Ledra Street was officially opened to pedestrians and the military posts and soldiers were removed. One can finally walk across the entire city and take the fifty-third step that Nadjarian’s character is denied.

**EARLY RESPONSES TO THE DIVISION**

Which Half?

They say a person should love their homeland
that’s also what my father often says
My homeland has been divided in two
which of the two pieces should I love (N. Yashin 1995 79)

Nesie Yashin’s iconic poem, ‘Which Half?’, was originally published in 1978 in *The Labour of Art (Sanat Enegi)*, a progressive Turkish journal that was shut down
not long after, and the editors were forced to flee Cyprus or face imprisonment (Peonidou 2007 24). The significance of the poem to both communities was shown by the fact that the two sides adopted it and that it was later set to music by Greek Cypriot composer Marios Tokas as a symbol for what Cyprus had lost (23). The question that the poem asks still haunts Cypriots today.

Yashin was important in the history of Cypriot poetry for three reasons. Hers was seen as the ‘first bridge which brought us in touch with a poetry … with abhorrence for war’ (Peonidou 2007 27). Secondly, she was one of the first to present a break from the monological narratives of blame. Unlike previous poems that had used rhetorical strategies of national fervour hers was the first poetry to narrate loss as something that belonged to both sides. Thirdly, by presenting herself as occupying no-man’s land and standing in-between the two discursive nationalisms, Yashin opens up the possibilities of imagining a world and a community that is not fixed by binaries: the poem speaks across the divide and belongs to neither side but perhaps to an undefined space. As observed by Killoran, Yashin ‘writes herself into an absent-centre in this idea of nation-ness’ (139). Placing herself in the empty space between both halves of the city, or country, is a daring personal move, yet it is also inherently political as the reader is forced to consider the possibilities of the agency inherent in refusing to be bound by nationalist ideology.

An interesting and important example of the personal being political, and perhaps poetic, is seen in the friendship that developed between Greek Cypriot poet Elli Peonidou and the Yashins. Despite living less than half and hour apart in the ’70s, they had to fly to London to meet. Elli and Nesie kept up a correspondence which ‘resembled illicit love letters’ as the poets talked of their love of their country and the uses of art in trying to help find a resolution (Peonidou 2007 24). The letters were sent to friends in other European countries, who would then forward them to the women who lived on opposite sides of a divided Cyprus. One of the first ever bi-communal events was organised by the Cypriot community in Islington. With representatives from both sides of the divide in attendance, Nesie read one of Elli’s poems in Greek and Elli read one of Nesie’s in Turkish, thus creating a small imagining of the other side (Peonidou 2007 29) and the beginnings of a bridge. It would seem that the circuits of diaspora, being at a remove from the physical manifestation of the division, and perhaps also at a remove from the traumatic emotion attached to that division, allowed the poets to make the first steps towards crossing some of the mythical lines.

Following the publication of ‘Which Half?’ Yashin composed the poetic series, *Unsent Letters* (Yashin 1995 81–103). These twelve letters are written but never sent by an imaginary ‘lover’. It is implied that the lover has crossed over to, or lives on, the other side and the series charts the desire of the woman to be re-united with that which she has lost (her lover being either an actual male or, in an inversion of the gendered dynamic, the nation Cyprus itself). Request for
official permission to cross her own country (‘Permission to cross the border to be granted due to longing’) is coupled with refusal and the admission that to love across the partition is seen as madness: ‘Love has been detailed in no man’s land/ it confessed to being a lunatic escapee’ (83). Women who refuse the dictates of their society and break cultural taboos are here presented as stepping over the line between sanity and lunacy. The letters ask if it is indeed madness to love one’s whole country, or to love someone who lives on the other side. The narrator questions not only the perpetuation of a divided nation, but also the value of a patriarchal construction of the nation, as exemplified in the eleventh letter:

Letter 11th
History buy me a Berlin
I want to take him in my arms
to run and run
to find him amongst the crowds
with hundred degree love
to return to each other.
Add me to him, him to me
History buy me a Berlin. (Yashin 1995 81)

This poem brings together the large canvas History and the small histories of actual bodies, making the narrative of longing palpable. Unusually, here Cyprus is personified as a male lover. Cyprus or the city of Nicosia personified as male reverses the trope of nations as female, as possessions to be controlled, yet because the nation/city remains controlled despite the gender switch, Yashin opens up the subsequent loss to everyone. The comparison to Berlin informs the poem’s hope that the wall will come down in Nicosia too one day. The desire for movement — for change — is positioned against enforced confinement in the repetition of ‘to run and run’, and as in the poem ‘Which Half?, the persona works against the captivity created by the Green Line. But by alluding to a history that might magically return the persona to a time of undividedness, Yashin introduces the theme of impossible return.

Reading ‘Letter 11th’ after the borders had been partially opened it must be acknowledged that the concept of return is problematic. Those who crossed the divide discovered that the longed for world was different from that of the actual world they had returned to, for it was a world they had memorialised and frozen. ‘In a way’, Hadjipavlou writes, ‘their crossings demythologised their desire to return’ (182). In the context of an unattainable return, we can see the poignancy in the female narrator’s desire:

to find him amongst the crowds
with hundred degree love
to return to each other.

But perhaps the heat of desire is now impossible as it is has cooled with time. Or perhaps the reference to ‘hundred degree love’ alludes to the boiling point
of violence as the two opposing nationalisms boiled over and cooled as a result of enforced partition. Either way the return and seeking ‘amongst the crowds’ suggests an impossible odyssey, for the place returned to is never the home left and the wisdom gained in exile, by its very nature, alters the view of ‘home’.

Instead we could read this longing to return as not just for return to a physical space to which the poet belonged, but to a place that for centuries held room for the coexistence of the two communities. This is implied in the parallel syntax, ‘Add me to him, him to me’. The unity desired here is beautifully suggested in the reversed syntax. An important critique of nationalist agendas can be found in the opening and closing lines suggested by the choice of the verb ‘buy’. When the persona asks a personified ‘History’ to ‘buy’ a city without walls, she implies that Cyprus was ‘sold out’ by both the internal and external governments. Indeed, many Turkish Cypriots were forced to leave what became a repressive regime under Rauf Denktash. The last letter in the series, ‘Letter 12th’, addresses the lover as both male and Cyprus. Yashin uses the same syntactical structure in ‘bury me to him/ him to me’ as used in the preceding poem to suggest that the fatherland has proven to be an allusion, and the hope of reunification illusive (‘if one day we don’t become one’) (103). Yashin’s work moves beyond the line of mythical dictates of the Father in regards to concepts of the nation, even if it still is circumscribed within the heterosexual ethic.

**SHIFTING VIEWS OF THE CITY**

Nora Nadjarian has gained international acclaim and awards for both her poetry and short stories. In her second volume of poetry, *Cleft in Twain*, she moves poetically across the divide by talking back to nationalist ideology that was dependent on dualism and allegiance to ethnicity linked to the ‘father/motherland’. Standing somewhat to the side of the key players in the Greek/Turkish nationalist imaginings, Nadjarian’s Armenian heritage provided another voice from the margins. The two poems ‘Jasmine’ and ‘The city’ in particular show the city and its associated world as lost due not only to colonial interference and inter-communal conflict, but also to the passage of time.

‘Jasmine’ centres on ideas of loss and lament imposed by the Green Line. Its imagery evocatively mourns the impossibly Edenic world of Nicosia that has been denied the unnamed woman of the poem. It presents a woman stepping out of line, literally, entering a space that has been forbidden by the dictates of the Father and thus transgressing like Eve. Work on the geography of gender has suggested that ‘the possibilities for behaving in particular ways depend upon the meaning given to femininity — to woman — in patriarchal discourses, and that those meanings are grounded in physical spaces’ (Blunt and Rose 2). ‘Jasmine’ shows a woman refusing to be bound by these dictates; to be repressed by fences set up by men in their nationalist severing of the city. As noted by Hadjipavlou, ‘voices of women are often silenced or subdued and women are encouraged to view themselves as caregivers and nurturers of others (whether fathers, brothers,
husbands, children, the community, the state or the nation’ (13). In the poem, the metaphor for stepping out functions in opposition to the national narrative that imposes traditional and rigid gender roles on women in Cyprus. The persona in this poem refuses to be bound by men controlling the fence and instead goes in search of what has been denied to her through partition. She acts decisively and dares to cross the ‘unstraight line’ that limits her freedom as a citizen and as a woman:

She reached the line:
the perfume, the white scent
leading her. Jasmine.

It was her childhood again,
visiting; like that small breath
of flowers from another’s garden
as she passed by, a child playing
the fence railings like the harp.
Come, come, the scent pulled her.

Always. But the garden was not hers,
she was told. Nor was the aroma,
which lured and dared her to trespass.

Now, as she crossed the unstraight,
the invisible, the impenetrable line,
and as the blue-bereted soldier
watched her feet closely, eye-measuring
the millimetres, and as his mouth
opened to call out HALT!

she was a child again, running, strong.
HALT! They called but she didn’t turn.
Furious pages were missing in the book
of her life. And breathless, she thought
of the jasmine she was to find; the house,
she was to see, the garden; the fence;

and her father’s buried heart. (Nadjarian 2003 10)

The ‘line’ in the poem symbolises many things: the line between past and present; childhood and adulthood; confinement and freedom; imagined and actual journeying. Crossing the line represents a coming of age in both historic and personal terms. Ignoring the partitions set up and enforced by men, she seeks out a garden that is denied to her by men in which, paradoxically perhaps, her father’s heart lies buried. Once again the poet seems to be signalling the power of the mythical Father through the figure of the woman who, in trying to seek the freedom of a child, is, again paradoxically, reined in like a child by the soldier. This reining in by the ‘rule of the father’ is heartless, as the heart of the father is buried in the garden of childhood. This also suggests that the male soldier is
emotionally disconnected from the land, constricted by the father’s heart being buried in the past.

As a cultural signifier, jasmine is a motif for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots of what has been lost in Nicosia. In the early 1950s young girls created necklaces out of jasmine to sell to visitors. The title of jasmine of course evokes a longed-for time for both cultures. But the ‘Jasmine revolution’ also refers to the period in the 1960s when the Turks retreated into enclaves in Nicosia, and Turkish Cypriot cultural life flourished (Hatay and Bryant 423). It is also a time viewed nostalgically by many Turkish Cypriots as one marked by solidarity and community cohesion. Throughout the poem, the scent of jasmine is personified as a powerful force, alternately ‘leading’ her, ‘pulling’ her, ‘luring’ her and ‘daring’ her. The sensuous nature of the call to the garden is implicit and the power of the scent is pervasive. The woman is called by the scent to return to the home of her childhood and the undivided Cyprus for all communities, hers included.

In the national imaginary the call to return to the past is ever-present: ‘Always’. But despite the repeated call of ‘Come, come’, the persona is not allowed entry, being told ‘the garden was not hers’. But who speaks these words is not made clear, perhaps a disembodied History that forced 40% of the population to be displaced in 1974 and the two competing nationalisms that denied people access to lands that been theirs legally and emotionally throughout time. The sense of time in the poem is significant. The word ‘visiting’ is a suggestion that none of what is longed for can be kept, even if it is found, but it is also a reference to a problem that has plagued refugees who have returned to former homes, only to be treated as guests. They have become visitors in their own homes, passing through like the woman who ‘passed by’. Like the scent of jasmine they are transitory and the home they seek is elusive.

In the actual moment of crossing over time is again foregrounded: it is ‘Now’. The description here suggests not only a physical entity, but also a barrier in the woman’s mind. This double meaning is suggested in the words: ‘unstraight’, ‘intangible’, ‘impenetrable’. The UN soldier trying to keep the woman in line is presented in a satirical light and the ridiculous nature of the situation exaggerated. The force of his yelling ‘HALT’ twice as she breaks through the line provides her with the choice to act, to run, to become ‘strong’. She can revisit her childhood, if briefly, and try to reclaim a page back from the metaphorlic book. Her loss of this place and this past is embodied in the images of the missing pages. Hadjipavlou notes that ‘women often feel that the line colonised their bodies’ refusing them free access to live where they liked, to love whom they chose and to travel unimpeded in the country (94), and this seems true for the persona of Nadjarian’s poem. The last three lines of the poem indeed suggest a spectral quality to the woman’s rebellion and flight. The action implied by some of the repeated phrases ‘She reached’, ‘she passed’, ‘she crossed’, ‘she was to find’, ‘she was to see’, may cause the reader to wonder if this is an actual physical journey or an imaginary one.
It seems the journey into the old Nicosia is impossible — an unattainable dream. She must live in the now where the line cannot be crossed except in imagination.

The last line in the final stanza of ‘Jasmine’ provides what may seem a surprise to the reader at first. That image of seeking the place where her father’s lost heart is buried seems to work in opposition to the rest of the poem. One wonders why the woman breaks the confines set up by men to seek her father’s displaced heart. But if the reader keeps in mind that Cyprus is often referred to as the mother, perhaps this buried male heart is what the government, authorities — soldiers and politicians — have denied both men and women access to. Is the divided ‘Fatherland’ heartless, is the woman seeking an actual lost body part or the psychic heart of her nation that has been lost through division? The last line expresses the very essence of the impossible nature of longing and return. If the image were taken literally there would be no trace of the heart after so long a time, and she would therefore be seeking something that has long disappeared. There is futility in her desire. It seems the garden she longs for is an unobtainable paradise.

These issues are also addressed in ‘The City’, a poem to be found in the same collection:

The City
Did you go to the city?
Yes, it was full of pain.

What did you see?
I saw a man dancing with his laptop,
a woman kissing her mobile phone,
a child picking fish off the streets and bashing
them against pavements, construction work
in the sky, rubbish bags for rent,
cars made of money.

What did you hear?
I heard the ten thousand laments
of the muezzin, the ten thousand and one
replies of the priest, the thunder’s lullaby,
the loud to-ing and fro-ing of insults hurled
like stones, the breaking of hearts,
the creak of change,

politicians practising their scales. (Nadjarian 2003 14)

The unnamed city in this poem could at first glance be anywhere. The speaker asks an unknown listener three questions, the first being, ‘Did you go to the city?’ An unidentified narrator explains that they did go and what they found is then recounted. The city is described as being full of ‘pain’, an idea that is also suggested by Killoran in her characterisation of Nicosia as permanently ‘wounded’ both by the division and by time (131). It is a place marked by the fragmented images that are described in response to the second question, ‘What did you see?’
The next reply is a list of the images of commercialisation and globalisation. Two of the personas here are presented as disconnected from each other, yet ironically connected to technology. The city’s wounding has left its inhabitants isolated. The man dances not with a partner but ‘with his laptop’, a woman is ‘kissing a mobile phone’. Nadjarjian presents the poverty and anger of a desperate child ‘picking up fish off the streets and bashing them against the pavements’. In this troubling image, the dislocation of fish from its natural source is heightened by the child’s action and fury.

The environment of the city is changing at a rapid pace — new building impinging on the skyline. The enjambment suggests the never-ending nature of the continued ‘construction work’ reaching as far as, and imposing even upon, ‘the sky’. The juxtaposition of extreme poverty as suggested in the haunting image of ‘rubbish bags for rent’ compared to extreme wealth, represented by ‘cars made of money’, heightens the city’s duality. It is a complex place where the sights suggest fragmentation and disconnection from both humankind and the natural environment. No suggestion of what has caused this city’s predicament is presented yet, but the verb ‘rent’ may imply division and the source of division that has torn the city asunder: it is a city ‘to let’, sold to the highest bidder.

It is in the third question asked, ‘What did you hear?’, that Nicosia comes into view, at least to those familiar with the city and its history. Hadjipavlov notes ‘the recent history of Cyprus is built upon competing narratives and on a contest between which of the two communities suffered the most in 1963, 1967 and 1974?’ (88). Specifically, it is the laments of muezzin and replies of priests across an invisible Green Line that ‘places’ the city. The number of replies — ‘the ten thousand laments of the muezzin, the ten thousand and one replies of the priest’ — suggests the long-standing competition between the communities over this suffering. The fact that the blame and grief has continued for decades after the partition is suggested by the punctuation in the paragraph and the enjambment suggests the ongoing nature of this cycle. The response by the skies in ‘thunder’s lullaby’ suggests both the storm that is ever present and a biblical allusion as insults are ‘hurled like stones’: who in the city can cast the first stone as blameless in the continuing separation? The city is cursed by the ‘loud to-ing and fro-ing’ of blame. A brief moment of hope is present in two references to returned humanity: ‘the breaking of hearts, the creak of change’. The onomatopoeia enables the reader to hear these small sounds figuratively speaking after the thunder and calls of suffering. Is there a slow and inevitable shift to change or, as in the inter-textual allusion from which the collection takes its title (Cleft in Twain), will the heart that breaks — is ‘cleft in twain’ — remain so?

The final line is set in opposition to any hope. The music heard does not signal or represent change but a continuation of the same old rhetoric — men playing the city like it is music, because as Hadjipavlou has observed: ‘No woman, from any of the communities in Cyprus, has ever been appointed to the high-level negotiating team that discusses the future of the island.’ (Hadjipavlou 10). The placement of
this phrase, a part of but apart from the final stanza, emphasises the power of this motif. The reader is encouraged to infer that the city will continue to be played like a piece of music and will also remain cleft by the male politicians.

**SHIFTING BORDERS**

In his introduction to *Modern Greek Poetry: An Anthology* Nanos Valaoritis has described Greek Cypriot Andriana Ierodiaconou’s poetry as expressing a ‘kind of post-colonial revolt’ (Valaoritis 499 2003). Ierodiaconou’s poem ‘The Heart of Nicosia’, elegantly foregrounds the postcolonial condition of Cyprus, more particularly the division partly caused by colonial interference, continued military occupation, and the effects of globalisation.

**The Heart of Nicosia**

‘Inside the walls, in the heart of Nicosia…: Tourist Guidebook’
‘Archangel developments: in the green of the country, in the city…’ Advertising Billboard

In the slow suburbs
in fiery lots without tenderness
under stones
in the archangel’s promises
in the green of the dollar and the wish
the heart of Nicosia.

In bars at night
THE UNITED NATIONS – THE INTERNATIONAL – THE REGINA
in the archangel painted to the lips
under Lola, under Heineken
on the rocks
the heart of Nicosia.

In backstreet shops
under dusty wedding-gowns light-fixtures bales of cloth
in the archangel with tape-measure and scissors
in shop windows, in sentry posts
at the Green line, where we halt
the heart of Nicosia.

In kebab-stands, in pastry shops
in going home from work at six
under the pure despair and the uniforms
in discos, where the archangel
dances electric thunderbolts
the heart of Nicosia.

In embassies, in consulates
in the archangel: expert diplomat
in neighbourhoods
in churches, mosques, contested areas
under red flags, under blue flags
the heart of Nicosia. (Ierodiaconou 1982)
Like Nadjarian, Ierodiaconou seems to be searching for the real key to the old city’s heart that sits beneath all the markers of economic and military conquest. The heart is of course literally ‘inside the wall’, a pun on several levels, but this is also highly ironic considering it resides in yet another image of invasion, this time it is one left by the Venetian conquerors.

The mocking excerpts from an advertising billboard point to three main changes that have occurred in this city over time. Ierodiaconou plays with the idea of ‘green of the country’, no longer an island paradise but one that is now marked by the Green Line. The phrase highlights the over-development of the country and the city, and perhaps the most current concern as greed has lead to rampant building. ‘Archangel developments’ is an ironic reference to the urbanisation that in Cyprus has become the new ‘God’. Rather than divine forces that assist God, Ierodiaconou re-presents the ‘archangels’ in a series of more worldly personas to foreground the corruption of the city: re-developer, prostitutes, a night club patron, and finally government officials who have never solved the division, symbolised by the flags of religion and the UN left hanging.

The first stanza presents the new growth of the city in its ‘slow suburbs’; this is a reference to the weary pace of time there compared to the old city that was once the thriving energetic heart of the city. The land here is presented as lacking ‘tenderness’, which suggests that the old city once possessed this attribute. The archangel’s promises, however, are indeed ‘false’: the colour green again suggests both the greed of money and the Green Line — two things that have sold out the city. As in Nadjarjarian’s ‘Jasmine’, Ierodiaconou’s poem contains a buried hope hidden under stone, the unnamed ‘wish’ to find the heart of the city. This idea links back to the opening reference to a city walled in by conflict and the occupations of the past. The heart of the city literally lies hidden under the weight of history and stone walls. If this city represents all of Cyprus one may wonder what will heal the rift. It seems that History will buy no Berlin here, but that the gendered city is most definitely for sale.

The second stanza then reflects upon the seedy part of the city, where it is ‘night’ in more ways than one. The nightlife and red-light references are concurrent with the military presence of imperialism, its power suggested by the capital letters. The archangel with painted lips may be an image for the city of Nicosia that has been prostituted to imperialism, but like those of her gender, being ‘painted to the lips’ she does not speak. The references to foreign alcohol, ‘Heineken’, and to the famous foreign prostitute, ‘Lola’, put the heart at risk. What was once the essence of Nicosia ‘in neighbourhoods’ is now dying in the evocative alcoholic metaphor ‘on the rocks’. UN soldiers and the military now besiege the once communal area. The sexualising of the city and its prostitution to nationalism and commercialisation are evocatively and complexly portrayed.

This loss of community associated with the old world is developed in the next stanza. The once thriving areas of social and cultural life have died due to the Green Line and become ‘backstreet shops’. The list of domestic images is led by
the image of the wedding gown that is ‘dusty’ which suggests that while waiting for a solution, the promise of reunification has been covered with the ubiquitous Cypriot dust. The marriage of the two halves of the city has never happened. As the city waits like a bride for the day that never arrives, Ierodiaconou’s images of a pre-modern world — light-fixtures, bales of cloth, tape measure and scissors, an old woman sewing — on the one hand suggest a forgotten past that has been halted by the city’s partition; or if not taken literally, perhaps even more ominously the ‘archangel with tape-measures and scissors’ is another indictment of the new developers who divide up the city for gain.

A sense of hopelessness is conveyed in the fourth stanza. Beneath the images of daily life — food, monotony and the ever-present soldiers — there lies a ‘pure despair’. Modernity — in the image of electric thunderbolts — has replaced the old gods of myth; the border and the dance have become electrified, enclosed by fences. Stanza five lists images of division: an entire industry that has formed to replace the neighbourhoods that had a centre. The judgemental tone implied in the phrase ‘expert diplomat’, suggests that for the governmental employees, attempts at reconciliation have simply become a career; like Nadjarian’s politicians they endlessly practice scales ‘in preparation’ rather than play meaningful music.

In the centre of the poem the reader sees what has stopped the city’s flow:

…in sentry posts
at the Green Line where we halt
the heart of Nicosia

The heart is like a stone — hindering the flow of life rather than supporting it. But if the reader does not halt at ‘halt’ but runs the line on, then it is the sentry posts at the Green Line that halt (that is, stop) the heart. The heart of Nicosia is hidden under flags: red suggests the Turkish flag and blue the colour of the UN flag. The spectral haunting of the city by a foreign God that has fenced it and hung its flags and — like the politicians — plays it like music, suggests the very essence of what has come to be termed ‘the Cyprus problem’. Like Nadia Charalambidou, the reader may observe that in this poem ‘Nicosia is both a metonym and a metaphor for the cypriot’s anguish over their island’ (8). There is no simple answer given as to where the heart now lies or how that heart can be rediscovered or returned.

Niki Marangou’s narrators mourn for what is lost but they allow for the possibility of revitalisation. Marangou is a Greek Cypriot novelist, artist and poet who has been awarded several Cypriot state prizes for her poetry and prose, including the prestigious Cavafy poetry prize in 1998. Stephanides has discussed how her work enacts ‘allegorical processes of loss and retrieval’ (2001 10) which are evident in ‘Climbing the Stairs’ and ‘Street Map of Nicosia’. ‘Climbing the Stairs’ is perhaps at first glance a misleadingly simple snapshot view of the city:

Climbing the stairs in an old block of flats
in Nicosia I suddenly saw
through the window the two minarets of Saint Sophia
wrapped in red flags
and Pentadaktylos between them. (Marangou 2008 5)

In this a picture of a moment in an ordinary day of any Nicosia resident looking out the window, perhaps what I find most interesting is the placement of the word ‘Sophia’ (the Greek word for wisdom) on its own line. The persona has ‘climbed the stairs’, which gives her a literal and metaphoric view of the city from above. She perhaps gains this wisdom by looking at the changes in the city from a distance. Killoran suggests that ‘the poets who reflect upon an oppositional position write themselves into the middle, into a poetic engagement of competing forms of historical representations: moving dialogically through these forms, allowing neither to dominate’ (132). The poem seems, like Yashin’s to position the poet in-between, or in fact, above the nationalism that has marked this space.

Her choice of the word ‘wrapped’ to refer to the flags encompassing the cathedral, turned into a mosque, is an ironic reference signifying as in Ierodiaconou’s poem, images of nationhood trying to mark the space as belonging to one nation or one faith. Despite the outer symbols of change to this physical space and its reorientation towards Mecca, when it is ‘unwrapped’ from the symbols of nationalism, the bones of the Gothic cathedral are obvious. The majestic vaulted ceilings and the gaps where the plain glass has replaced the stained glass windows, situate it as a once Christian church. It may be covered in outward symbols of a different faith, but the building itself is testament to the long history of the city itself. The enjambment suggests the flow of the city, mirroring the flow of the single sentence, and of time.

The final line has a cultural relevance that resonates with Greek Cypriots who would know the most famous of all Greek Cypriot poetic nationalistic laments, ‘Pentadaktylos, My Son’ by Claire Angelides (Angelides 3). This poem is about Mother Cyprus mourning a lost son, and it is an example of the monological blame evident in early responses to the invasion, but the geographical and mythical reference may be of interest to general readers here. Pentadaktylos means five fingers in Greek and refers to the mountain range in Kyrenia that was lost to the Turkish in 1974. In Cypriot mythology the mountain range was reputedly created by a Byzantine hero, Digenis Akritas, ‘who straddled the seas between Cyprus and Crete, and … left his fingerprint on the summit of Pentadaktylos’ (Deyes qtd in Angelides xii). Sitting behind the geographic reference this mythical allusion reminds the astute reader of the long Hellenic and patriarchal traditions of the island that stand behind the two new flags that wrap the cathedral. What is remarkable about this poem, as with all of Marangou’s work, is the acceptance of what Cyprus has become, in this case, a ‘Sophia’, representative of the wisdom that accepts and does not need to deny what occurred in the past.4

A Double Perspective

This ‘Sophia’ is evident in the poem ‘Street Map of Nicosia’, an important poem in terms of the re-mapping of the city both literally and figuratively. Maps,
which are central to the colonial and post-colonial projects, are re-envisioned in
this poem which moves beyond the presentation of the city as being ‘fixed, frozen
in time … continually bleeding its timelessness’ (Killoran 129). Floyas Anthias
notes, ‘there has been little attempt to think through the importance of Cyprus as
a translocational space: that is one where interculturality, movement, and flow
have been important aspects of social reality’ (178). Yet I have argued that these
women poets in particular have re-presented the city in terms that look beyond
a static nationalism or as a site of permanent wounding. They hint instead at an
underlying ambiguity of the space and present an openness that addresses the
shifts away from the fossilised binaries that are implicit in traditional narratives
of the capital. These narratives depend on competing nationalisms that are based
on obeying the injunctions of the foundational Fathers; but the poems, of which
‘Street Map of Nicosia’ is exemplar, suggest fluidity and openness to change that
saves the space from being a body forever scarred and fixed in the past.

Street Map of Nicosia

Looking at the street map
of Nicosia and its suburbs
Fuad Pasha Street ends on Dionysiou and
Herakleitou
Defne Yuksel on Hermes Street
Yenidze Safk on Leontiou Mahaira
in the vicinity of Rocca Bastion
on old maps the river cut through the town
but Savorniano, the Venetian, changed the flow
to fill the moat with water.
There on Sundays the domestic servants
from Sri Lanka spread out their shawls
and eat together.
The palm trees remind them of home. (Marangou 2008 3)

This poem shows how time has changed the map of the city; its somewhat
haphazard structure mirrors the puzzle that the city has become. Streets that start
in Greek names end in Turkish ones, and streets that are at first Turkish become
Greek at certain points in the map. These changed names point to the dual nature
of the city. While Marangou mentions the viewing platform Rocca Bastion (once
the only place to gaze across at ‘the other side’), she follows this with references
to the earlier alterations to the city by the Venetian rulers in antiquity. When she
refers to Savormiano who ‘changed the flow’ of the river the poet implies that this
is exactly what has happened with the arbitrary division imposed by the British.

But Marangou moves beyond the past in the city to deal with concerns other
than ‘the Cyprus problem’. After the South joined the European Economic
Union in 2003 Cyprus became for the first time multi-cultural, taking influxes
of immigrants that were not from the predominant cultures. The Sri Lankan
workers add a new dimension to Cyprus that is itself another layer to the city.
Hadjipavlous’ work on gender maintains that: ‘With changes in global production
and reproduction, gender and most recently the “feminization of migration”, have become important issues’ (203). The female domestic workers in Cyprus point to another crossing besides the literal one that needs to be made. The workers are well known for having picnics on Sundays, their only day off, in the public gardens. Perhaps a shared sense of a longing for a home denied to them (either by internal or transnational borders) may allow more crossing over between the lines and communities here. Marangou reminds readers of their displacement in her poignant final line, ‘the palm trees remind them of home’. Perhaps the division in the city is a division all migrants face. Maybe she is metaphorically suggesting this is what the many communities may need — to find ‘home’ and share a meal in whatever form that home may now take. Present day Nicosia is home to refugees from many lands and it is refreshing that one of Cyprus’ most respected poets has moved beyond the old Cyprus problem to show the shifting composition of the city.

In conclusion, this article will end where it started with the two poets Yashin and Peonidou. It asks the question that I opened with: can poetry provide a place of agency for women in Cyprus to cross lines, not in search of a definitive answer but rather with a hope at once both naïve and resigned? While I have chosen to focus on Yashin’s early work some of her more recent poems, in particular ‘The Light Rising Inside Me’ and ‘The Big Word’ (2008), evidence further development of her early concerns: ‘When the big word/ will be uttered by the poem/ either all the poets will be executed/or peace will descend on the earth.’ An interestingly similar closing sentence can be seen in Peonidou’s ‘In Autumn They Descend’ (2008) that presents a wonderful metaphoric comparison between poets and the Careta Careta — loggerhead sea turtles, now an endangered species due to encroaching development into their natural habitat in the Karpassia (Northern Cyprus). The poet instructs readers not to ‘bother the poets/ A rare species of Careta-Caretat/ And at risk of extinction.’ Perhaps like loggerhead turtles she suggests that poets may become an endangered species by sticking their necks out. Should they rather hide in their shells and slowly make their way into the future? Maybe the poets show us how divisive borders limit us, and how by utilising creative energy that is unlimited by borders they may light one small beacon to show us the way across the divide. They are thus rare and valuable. As Stephanides has remarked: ‘If a switch is flicked at the disturbance of displacement, creative ways to remember, to forget, to mourn and to (re)build are shaped’ (Stephanides 2007 11). Women’s poetry in Cyprus may be viewed as an important catalyst in challenging border thinking. Their poetry is a way of thinking through what lies in between the pages and lines of history.

People must love their country.
So he says, so my father always says.
My country,
from the middle has been split in two.
Which half must people love?
(Yashin, ‘Which Half?’, 139, trans by Killoran)
END NOTES

1 Since this essay is examining the issue of gender the following poems will not be discussed here, but may be of interest for further reading. In particular: Maltese poet Adrian Grima, ‘Fifteen Minutes Away’ (2007 37); Turkish Cypriot Tamer Oncul’ ‘Our Wall’ (1997 58–59); Greek Cypriot Stephanos Stephanides, ‘Broken Heart’ (2005 44–45); and Turkish Cypriot Mehmet Yashin, ‘Canticle for a School Teacher’ (2001 55–65) could be examined as part of a selection looking at contemporary male representations of the city.

2 A current examination of theorising the gendering of the Cypriot nation can be found in Lemi Baruth and Mihaela Popescu, (2008), ‘Guiding Metaphors of Nationalism: The Cyprus Issue and the Construction of Turkish National Identity in Online discussions, 2:79–96’, Discourse and Communication, http://dcm.sagepub.com/content/2/1/79.refs.html, paying particular attention to the Virgin Anatolia, the father state and the motherland, ‘depicting women as symbols of the nation and men as their agent’ (91). Additionally, Rebecca Bryant, Imagining the Modern: The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus (2004), presents analysis of metaphoric gendered representations of the nation from both Greek and Turkish Cypriot perspectives, in particular; Greece as the mother and Cyprus as the chaste maiden. She notes that ‘since the 1974 invasion the gendering of the nation has not significantly changed, but now the nation is represented as a mourning mother in black’ (199). Her findings on the Turkish gendering portray an additional element: ‘In Turkey this association (“baby Homeland”) is quite common, clearly implying that Cyprus is the offspring of the Anatolian mother and the Turkish bloodshed on the island’ (200).

3 Other collections that give a more comprehensive view of contemporary Cypriot women poets published in English (and easily available) include: Alev Adil Venus Infers (2007); Angela Costa Honey and Salt (2007); Bize Dair Pink Butterflies(2005); Stella Kyriacou Reflections of Time (1998) and Light of Life (2000); and Lili Michalides Remembrance of A Dawn (2004). Additionally, earlier work by Niki Marangou Selections from the Divan (2001) and Nora Nadjarian The Voice at the Top of the Stairs (2001) will assist in forming a more complete picture. Andriana Ierodiaconou’s work is also available in the anthology Our Fathers, (2011) and literary magazines from Cyprus and internationally.

4 This argument is in no way meant to make light of the trauma faced by both sides in relation to the inter-communal violence, the Turkish invasion and the uprooting of 40% of the population. The complexity of the poetic response to this can be seen in Ierodiaconou’s ‘The Ballad of the Young Son’ (2011 n.p.), Marangou’s ‘For the Friends in the North’ (2008 4–5), Nadjarjan’s ‘Postcard from Girne’ (2003 12) and Yashin’s ‘Refugee Children.’ (1995 107). These poems present the multi-layered complexity of responses to the ‘Cyprus Problem’.

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Nora Nadjarian

SPARROW*

My sister said she was carrying a bird inside her, a bird which would soon be drinking water out of her navel. I wasn’t supposed to say anything about it. To anyone.

‘I am a cage,’ said my sister. ‘Inside me I keep secrets, inside me I keep a bird.’ And she laughed and I laughed, too. We laughed until we no longer remembered what we were laughing about.

‘His name is Sparrow,’ she said one day. ‘He’s only little now, as tiny as a seed — but he’ll grow and grow, you’ll see. And then I’ll set him free.’ She placed her hand on her stomach and her mouth curved upwards, as if she were smiling at another world in the mirror.

I couldn’t wait. Time was too still, it was taking too long. I squinted into the future. ‘When?’ I kept asking. ‘When, when, when?’ My sister looked luminous as she replied: ‘Soon, soon, soon.’ She said he was practising a song for us. ‘He’ll sing it so well that he will astonish us all.’

Time passed. I rode my bike and I skipped and whistled and played and waited. Sparrow was going to be my small gift for keeping my sister’s secret. The air grew heady and my sister soft and heavy, like ripening fruit. When she fluttered her eyelids, I thought she was dreaming with her eyes open.

It was the longest summer. My sister turned sixteen. She wore a long, flowery dress, put her hair up in a ponytail. There were sixteen pink and red balloons bobbing around her head that hot, sticky afternoon of cake, cellophane and candles. My mother spoke loudly and happily about nothing and everything, my stepfather handed my sister the knife, helped her cut the cake. Then she said: I have an announcement to make.

And the world stops there, a sharp intake of breath.

I squint into the past now for details, terrified of what I might remember. The sky is a dazzling blue, the earth hot, sweaty. I am pregnant, says my sister. She wears a necklace of grapes with which she will feed Sparrow. She performs her own birthday song beautifully, she sings her heart out — until her throat is chalk dry and her ribcage breaks. There are feathers everywhere. I run to pick them up as the balloons pop one after the other, leaving sixteen pieces of rubbery flesh on the floor, things torn and shapeless, parts of my sister which will never again be whole.

I sit beside her and ask if it hurts. She whispers: ‘Truth always hurts.’ Then there is a sudden, white silence which reminds me, years later, that she is no longer here.

*(Highly Commended in the Seán Ó Faoláin Short Story Competition 2010).*
I did not understand everything the sibyls told me but am susceptible to their words. I was an apprentice to Hermes, who taught me how to listen and interpret their utterances, and to hear their messages beyond the meanings of words, by turning my ear to the earth and my eyes to the stars and the skies, and to sense with my body the movements of the winds. But as I left the island in the Middle Sea too soon, the messages they passed on to me faded yet still echo inside me in enigmas and riddles of tongues I once spoke and now translate with new words as I learnt new riddles from the seers on the island of the northern sea. And with inversions and conversions of the years, their words would move around inside me so that the voices of the sibyls, Elengou and Marikkou, would echo in the voices of the English seers, Alan Alexander Milne and Wystan Hugh Auden — where the wind comes from, where the wind goes — It’s flying from somewhere As fast as it can, I couldn’t keep up with it, Nor if I ran. I did learn with time that the winds must come from somewhere when they blow, and that time will say nothing but I told you so. So if you are wondering why Demosthenes suddenly bolted with me on a ship… Who knew what he was planning and why? This is all that I can tell you. He had not explained to me why now in mid-life he wanted to leave the island when never before in all his years had he even gone across the surrounding seas to see whatever lay beyond on other shores. He suddenly turned himself inside out or upside down and got up and ran up the sail and put out to sea, carrying me with him. Suppose the lions all get up and go, And all the brooks and soldiers run away; Will Time say nothing but I told you so? Thus spoke the seer Wystan H. Auden.

And so for many a year I would ponder on my last days and months of those boy years in the Middle Sea as the surge of the waves churned, and if they were oblivious to the embarkation before the beginning ended, or before the end began, and how I would come and go and leave with the mystery of how I landed on one island passing the threshold of Katerina’s womb and then was borne on a ship to another island and then to another while the question: ‘Where are you from?’
acquired new complications and
time will say nothing. If the fortunes
were told, would the seers tell me
something more? How and why I
would leave the shade of the aged
olive tree to become a wayfarer
over the roaring mourning of the
sea eternally giving and young,
and yet older than the old olive
tree whose shade would hover over me
like my aura without my knowing.

Before I left the island, the life
around me might have been full of
turmoil and turbulence yet full of
marvel and surprise, taking sudden
turns with curious and magical
vistas. When events on the island
would shake the ground beneath my
feet, I would be seized by a quick
and deadly deity who dropped me
in the eternity of the moment inside the space of the island’s habitat. For I would
be suddenly gifted with the intuitive evasiveness and the rooted volatility of the
mercurial child who moved through conflict without pondering about it for long.

Some visions of that summer seriously intended to stay. Katerina and
Demosthenes had moved irrevocably apart long before the summer of 1957 and I
lived with Katerina’s parents, Pappou Chrisostomos and Yaya Milia, in the village
of Trikomo. On a daily basis I would go to see Yaya Elengou, Demosthenes’
mother, whose house was a little way up the road. Apart from family struggles,
the island was in the middle of a colonial war that was increasing in violence
and intensity. The little town where I was born had become a hotbed of trouble.
Some called it the village of the General, referring to the man who was the leader
of the armed struggle against the British rulers, fighting for ENOSIS or Union
with Greece. EOKA, the organisation to achieve this objective, was formed in
1955, the year I started school. We spent much of our schooldays marching and
parading and shouting enosis-eleftheria. And sometimes the EOKA fighters
would raise the Greek flag over our school, and the British would close down
the school. The same year I started school, there was a new British governor
and a state of emergency was declared that sanctioned the death penalty for use
of weapons, illegal imprisonment and exile of political leaders, whipping of
adolescents for illegal assembly and disorderly conduct, and curfews. Curfews
for me were a cause for celebration and a time to rejoice. I had an innocent’s
perception of the violence around me. I didn’t care if the British closed all the
schools all of the time. When a curfew was declared, it was an opportunity to play another game — zigzag up and down the streets running to each others’ houses, timing ourselves carefully between the rounds of circulating British jeeps. Once we mistimed it. The jeep caught us running and we made a scramble to get inside the house when someone inside the jeep shouted ‘stay inside your houses’ in an awkward Greek. Pappou Chrisostomos went into a rage when he realised the games I played during curfew. I said I was nearly eight and nearly old enough to join the EOKA struggle. ‘British go home.’ I thought that would please him, but he took off his belt and said if I ever left the house again during curfew, he would beat me black and blue. I was stunned and terrified and began to cry at the thought of it. My grandmother said he loved me and it was better that he whipped me rather than the British soldiers. I didn’t go out during curfew after that. One of the boys told me a Turkish boy betrayed us, because they wanted the British to stay in Cyprus and didn’t want us to be free. I didn’t believe him. Whenever I came back from the sea with Demosthenes, we would pass through the orchards where Demosthenes had many friends among the community of Cypriot Turks and we would often stop at their houses. I remember especially an old sibyl who would call me ‘yioka mou’ and pinch my cheeks like my great aunts, and I would call her Theia Emine. If my face became enflamed with the scorching sun, she would place cucumber peelings on my face so the membrane would draw out the heat and make my skin cool and fresh. And she would give us fruit to eat before we went on our way. When prickly pears were in season, she peeled them with such skill that barely a thorn would stick in her nourishing and healing hands.

My spirit of play and my pristine imagination were not easily sullied as I hopped in and out of the conflicts of the adult world. Katerina would suddenly turn up in her car sometimes to take me somewhere. She was proud to be the sixth woman on the island to get a driving licence, but it distressed my Pappou Chrisostomos, aka Ottomos, who resisted her putting me in the car and shouted ‘You are going to kill my grandson,’ as I eagerly jumped in and sat down ready to speed off. Her father in time got used to her driving but another kind of conflict was developing with her mother-in-law Elengou who did not want me to be in Katerina’s custody. One day when Katerina came to pick me up and take me to the beach, she found me in the house of the sibyl Elengou who refused to let me go without Demosthenes’ permission. A quarrel erupted. I ran into Katerina’s car and sat there waiting nonchalantly while Katerina slapped her sister-in-law and pushed her mother-in-law to stop them from trying to grab me and bring me back. Uncle Michalis was chuckling in amusement as he watched his wife and his mother-in-law struggle to fend off Katerina. ‘Give them a good slapping,’ he yelled with relish. I soon washed the whole story off in the sea and as I bounced with the buoyancy of the waves and didn’t give a thought to the struggle that had taken place to get me to the sea for some time to come. I remembered the incident only much later when I was on the other island in the North Sea and I was
wondering where Katerina was. Perhaps she would come and fetch me by surprise as she used to. Years would pass before I would receive a letter. Conflicts move through time like ground waters and assume new forms through densities and transparencies and take new turns and manifestations. Wilson, an old Guyanese sage, told this to me once and I still remember it.

So in 1957 my life became increasingly unpredictable and my movements more haphazard and I flowed through it splashing like a joyful stream, taking unexpected turns. In second grade, the school was closed more than it was open because of curfews. When not house confined by the patrolling soldiers, I gambolled in the fields with whoever was there to take me. At the first sign of spring I joined friends and relatives to bring back baskets full of wild greens and I would beg to ride on a donkey’s back with the cargo of wild asparagus, artichokes, mallow and other greens.

Suddenly, one fine morning in May, Demosthenes turned up in the village saying I would remain unlettered if I stayed there with the school closed most of the time. He wanted to take me with him to the capital city. Perhaps he had other reasons for this, but that is how he put it to me. He must have known that I learnt more outside school than inside whether it was letters, numbers, songs or anything else. Everyone was my teacher. Most of the time in school, whenever it was open, we would repeat things I already knew, or parade around waving blue and white flags and shouting slogans about freedom until the British soldiers shut the school down again. Perhaps Demosthenes was concerned for my safety because he heard of the games we played during curfew. He also had a different view of the politics. Some people called him a commie. When I told him that some of the older boys told me that our queen was not in London, but in Athens with the King of Greece, he retorted that both these queens, Elizabeth and Frederica, were really German. He didn’t believe in the monarchy and didn’t believe that Union with Greece would bring us freedom. But then his reasons for taking me away may have not have had anything to do with education or politics. There could have been another reason why he wanted to take me to the capital that he didn’t talk about. I didn’t question things too much. I was ready for a new adventure in new surroundings for a day or for a week or for a month. One hour rolled into another. Was I going forever? I didn’t understand ‘forever’. Chrisostomos and Milia looked on sadly as my soul took wings with the shifting of the winds and in Demosthenes’ moves, and wondered if I, their little prince, the first child of their first child, would ever return to live with them. Would they ever again call out my name with their every reflection and affection?

And so I went, off on the road with Demosthenes into the threshold zone for a few weeks to finish second grade. To the south of the old city, quite far from the Venetian walls that enclosed it, to an open wilderness where the building of Terra Santa School stood. It was the old school of the Latin community newly built in a huge open space and inside along its corridors friars roamed in their robes
and I stared in fascination. But it turned out that the primary grades were taught in Greek just as in the public schools and I never spoke to the mysterious friars from Italy. To reach my new temporary abode, I walked through fields haunted by Neolithic underground dwellings and necropolis. I negotiated my path to the house with anxiety and excited exhilaration. I heard ghosts speak to me. Demosthenes laughed and said there was no such thing. I was curious to stop and listen and talk to them but I was afraid and quickened my step to get to the house where we were staying. The house belonged to a distant cousin of Demosthenes. I called him Theios Panos. He had a horde of children, and I was content to be among them and the neighbourhood gang. The eldest son doted on me like my Theios Phoevos and loved to race me around side-saddle on his bicycle. The house was in a new development in this eerie landscape now covered over by what has become a prominent neighbourhood with the Nicosia Hilton and the Central Bank. As I pass through nowadays I wonder if the ghosts I used to hear are muted, covered by concrete and wandering in musty underground car parks. Would they still speak to me if I stopped and listened? Sometimes I think I do hear them speak to me: Do you remember us, Wise one? This is the country of the dead.

And the school year would be over in no time and there was an endless summer ahead of me to spend on the rooftop of the sea in daylight and on the rooftop of the houses from dark till dawn. On the last day of school, the teacher — Kyria Loulla — praised me for my knowledge and performance despite missing so much school because of the curfews declared by the colonisers who did not want us to be free. She attributed my spirit of determination to the indomitable spirit of freedom that prevailed in our village, which she called the village of Digenis — the nom-de-guerre of the General who was leading the struggle. I was proud and a little confused. I was used to running around hailing freedom: chaire chaire eleftheria, but the indomitable word left me blank. I wondered what kind of freedom indomitable was. For the months ahead, I would be constantly on the move from town to village, sea to mountain, house to house, aunt to uncle, cousin to koumbaro, kith and kin. Perhaps that was indomitable freedom. Wherever and whoever claimed me as their child, sibling, cousin, playmate, showed me new ways to play, drew me always into the game, to watch any karakiozi show in the square, to play backgammon loud and hard outdoing the men in coffee-shops, always moving swiftly as if to rival Mercury on my feet, ready to sing, dance, speak, mimic all in the world around us. Girl cousins were the best mimics and I was quick to learn from them, impersonating the voices and accents of hoodlums from Piraeus, the rustic speech of villagers, the pompous English rulers speaking Greek. And when we danced no one wanted to dance kalamatiano that we learned in school — unless for fun when we parodied the voice of the teacher teaching us the steps. Rock and Roll was the thrilling new dance from America. No fixed steps, just rhythm and movement, my instructor cousin said as we rehearsed and tried to sway our hips like Elvis Presley. And then everybody would cheer when I
would get up and pretend I was my great aunt, Marikkou the Koursarou, dancing *karjlama*. A feast was not a feast if she did not rouse the spirit with her dance even in her old age and widowhood. This old sibyl, older than her sister Elengou, showed me that the world was play, and with the swirling of your body and your hands, you draw it to you and you let it go. Every time Elengou would take me to visit her, she would hop up and down with joy as if she were going to dance and would pinch my cheeks saying *yioka mou* and look for something sweeter than honey for me to eat.

After the summer vacation began, I would often stay with Katerina in her Nicosia apartment overlooking the Venetian walls circling the old city from the inside. I wasn’t used to apartment buildings. There were very few. It was not too high but I enjoyed the vertigo of the panoptic as I put my chin on the rail and looked down into the street and my eyes would move deep down into the moat within the City Walls. I loved to go exploring in the park down inside the moats of the walls and I would walk back and forth through the moat from Katerina’s apartment to the *Chez Nous*, the bar café that Katerina owned on a corner of Solomos Square. Sometimes I would linger and play down in the moat if I found other children for company and when I got bored I would go to the *Chez Nous*. Demosthenes worked in the Royal British Legion offices close by, but neither he nor Katerina ever gave me explanations about why they never saw each other. The Legion’s offices had high ceilings and big ceiling fans whizzing around. His boss, Mr. Armstrong, was British and he spoke Greek like an Athenian — or so said Demosthenes as I only understood the speech of the island and I had to concentrate to understand. Demosthenes told me that Mr. Armstrong had studied Ancient Greek at a famous University called Oxford and he knew Greek better than we did. Mr. Armstrong would smile and talk to me gently, in a very different way from the English soldiers I knew in the village who enforced curfew in the village shouting their orders that we didn’t understand. He taught me some English phrases and I would go back to the *Chez Nous* and try them on the American and British clientele to amuse myself as I would get bored and wanted attention when Katerina would give her concentration to chess. She was the only woman in the Nicosia chess club and was a challenge to everyone; people from the club would come to the *Chez Nous* to practice moving the terracotta chessmen in the changing afternoon light. She always seemed one step ahead of the game, exuding the same confidence she did in life, as if she would never make a wrong move. She had already left two husbands and for some this was a wrong move but for others this was a daring move. She was larger than life, and full of grace, even when her tongue was sharp. No one walked by without turning his head to snatch a glimpse — even the statue of the poet Solomos in the square turned his head to look at her as she walked by or so said the English newspaper, which also published her photo sitting in the café and made her father angry. He said mothers should not have their pictures in newspapers showing off their beauty. ‘She didn’t care,’ she said. ‘Neither did I,’ I said.
I do not recall the last time I saw her that summer of ’57. It could have been the day I quarrelled with the boy on the seesaw in the children’s play park in the moat across from the Chez Nous. I told him that Queen Frederica of Greece was German just like Queen Elizabeth of the English, and he said my father must be a commie if that’s what he told you, so I retorted by calling his father a pesevengis without really knowing what the word meant. His temper flared and he held his side of the seesaw down and would not let me down unless I first apologised and then shouted Zeto Enosis. I proudly and stubbornly refused shouting OXI as if I were a Greek resistance fighter saying NO to Mussolini’s troops about to invade Greece and he shook me while holding me up on my raised seat threatening to drop me suddenly. Katerina came to the rescue when she heard one long yell but then she made us shake hands and left me nursing my grudge. I would have liked to lunge right into him but he was bigger and a little older, and Katerina was holding me firmly back. I thought Katerina should have slapped him like she did my aunt when she stood in her path to prevent Katerina from taking me to the beach with her a few weeks earlier. I sulked all the way back to her apartment. I sat on the balcony and she placed in front of me a plate of macaroni cooked in chicken broth with a chicken leg on the side. Still sulking, I wouldn’t look at the chicken leg let alone touch it unless she got rid of the skin with bumps where the feather had been plucked and took the meat off the bone squeezing lemon juice on it, just like her mother would do for me. She didn’t have a lemon. They were scarce in the summer and out of season. And so she called out to the woman on the balcony next door in a tone of characteristic sing-song irony: the little prince wants lemon. Whatever the prince wishes the woman retorted going inside to
fetch one from her fridge and throwing it across from balcony to balcony like a ball. Katerina squeezed the lemon on my chicken after skinning and stripping it into pieces. She promised to take me to the movies that night. She hoped that would appease me.

She knew I loved the cinema like the sea. She would take me to open air cinemas to see the latest films. Especially those that excited my imagination of faraway places. That summer I remember seeing *Around the World in Eighty Days* and *The King and I*. Katerina would intermittently summarise the story for me in Greek, as the subtitles were too quick for me. I kept asking questions as I realised from the action and dialogue that there were many details she would miss out and I wanted to know all the relevant tangential information. Where was Siam and why did the king need to bring a teacher from America with her little son and how long did it take to go around the world today in 1957? That night she took me to see *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. This film also had a little boy in it who is kidnapped in Morocco and in the end when he is being held hostage in a house in London, his mother, played by Doris Day, sings a song to let him know where she is. I wanted to know the words of the song, which I had already heard on the radio and I wondered why Doris Day was hailing Caesar in the song. Katerina told me she was not singing Kaesara, Kaesara, but ‘Que sera, sera,’ explaining that this is Spanish for ‘what will be, will be.’ I asked what Will Be meant. ‘Ti tha ginei’ and adding ‘ti tha ginei mazi sou paidi mou?’ gesticulating with her hands the rhythm of her sentence, with light-hearted exasperation at my barrage of endless questions. And I stood there perplexed until it dawned on me that she was giving me the translation while jokingly asking what will become of me.

But that night at the movies, I do not recall what went through my head or if I gave any thought to what would become of me. I just took pleasure in the rhythmic melody and foreignness of the words I heard and tried to repeat them like a mantra without understanding what they meant. I doubt that Katerina knew on that night what would become of me, and I never imagined that after that summer, six summers would pass before I would see her again, on another island in a distant sea. She had got there going west and I would get there going east from the island in the northern sea where Demosthenes would take me. The longest journey of my youth. But how long is long, and how do you measure distance compressed into the time of the imagination, if not by the infection of memory. Perhaps the journey was as long as the longing to find my way out of the northern island in the belly of the whale, and hop and leap like a flying fish to the South China Sea and the island of Formosa whose name resonated the word for yellow plum in the tongue of my progenitors and in the tongue of the Portuguese means beautiful and which glowed like cinnabar in my mind’s alchemy. Katerina talked about it as Formosa in her letters — the name by which it was still known in Greek at the time — and only later when she went there and I visited her did I get to know of the island as Taiwan. Yet the vision of Formosa came to stay with me
like a promise of a future-yet-to-come. The sound of the word ‘Formosa’ would echo and reverberate in my spirit and the years to come I would become captive to a song I heard by a Brazilian song thrush strumming a guitar who taught to me the words and their meaning: Formosa nao faz assim, carinho nao e ruim, a gente nasce, a gente cresce, a gente quer amar, mulher que nega, nega o que nao e para negar, a gente entrega a gente quer morrer, ninguem tem nada de bom sem sofrer — Formosa mulher.

The Beautiful Isle was revealed to me in the summer of 1963 and I haven’t finished telling you about the summer of 1957 nor what happened in the six long winters in between. But my story is caught in a game of lost and found and given to sudden leaps of the imagination. And for a long time my quest and question was like that of the first line of the narrative game of hopscotch invented by Julio Cortazar the Argentine in his book Rayuela: Encontraria a la Maga? Would I find la Maga? I asked. After losing la Maga on one island, years later I find her on another island and we speak to each other in another language. But with time the fundamental question for me would become, Who might la Maga be? And for that matter what kind of creature was I? Once I was a cicada, a ziziros feeding on dew and air, or so the sibyls told me as I buzzed around breaking the silence of noon and disturbing people in their sleep on the island of the Middle Sea. Was I still a ziziros, I wondered, or was I some other cave-dwelling insect — in a cave shaped into a brick-terraced house in a suburb poking coal fires to keep warm in winter? Perhaps if I had chosen to stay on the Beautiful Island I would have become some kind of Formosan whistling thrush on a hinoki tree who spoke Chinese. I did not know what kind of creature I was. At that moment I chose to return to the island in the northern sea, and Katerina accompanied me westward as far as Bangkok. And I thought: here I am in Siam with Katerina la Maga, heavy-heartedly saying farewell. ‘Fae re zizire’ she said as she passed me some sushi telling me this is how the Japanese eat fish. If I was still a ziziros, would I eat raw fish? I was neither here nor here — neti neti — here, there and elsewhere, belonging to some other place where ’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves/ Did gyre and gimble in the wabe, and my imagination was anticipating stories about different islands where All mimsy were the borogoves, And the mome raths outgrabe. I no longer needed Katerina to translate the English tongue and I could even speak it in ways she would not understand.

Katerina la Maga might really be Queen Maya invoking suddenly Beautiful Islands and welcoming me with a red carpet like the little lost prince arriving at last. But islands that suddenly appear may disappear again just as suddenly. The thought made me anxious. Exits and entries made for mysterious longings — there is always the release of exit and the promise of new entry. The new forces inside me were stirring energies that had been brooding in silent sedimentation after long winters on the island in the north and my being yearning with my body churning residues metamorphosing with sprouting hairs and spouting
liquids and other signs of being and becoming to translate and comprehend. What strange other creatures were hatching within me and creating chaos I had to now make sense of. But before meandering toward that direction of the story and the dilemmas of puberty, let me get back to the boy in August 1957 and the passion I developed for hopscotch (long before I read Julio) and for sleeping on rooftops.

Soon after that night at the movies with Katerina when I saw Doris Day singing *Que sera*, Demosthenes announced I would be going to the mountain village of Katodrys, just below Lefkara renowned for its lace. Katodrys was the village of my Theios Michalis who was married to Demosthenes’ sister. So I was taken up the sinuous dusty mountain roads with splendid vistas to an August meditation to celebrate the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, the Holy Mother and Bearer of God. And there in the village, I would stay with my Theia Maroulla and her two daughters Elli and Despina. Up there in those heights day flowed into night into day into night eternally. Glory to the night. I would sleep with my aunt and cousins on the roof terrace among the fruit that was laid out to dry in the sun. People on the island habitually slept under the August skies. This was the first time I slept on a rooftop. Glory to the night. I had always been afraid to climb up on the rooftop with my *Pappou* in the village as the only access was a shaky ladder. Up the solid stone steps and with a wall to touch, I was on surer ground. I went up cautiously at first and then quickened with exhilaration at my ability to reach new heights. My cousins went up nonchalantly to show that they were not scared of heights even though they were girls.

With cooling breeze and in mountain darkness, we waited with excitement and expectation to see the starry showers of Perseus and we waited for stories of how he got up there and about how he rescued Andromeda. Somehow all these stories got mixed up in my mind and I couldn’t remember why the golden showers we were going to see were the tears of some Italian saint called Lorenzo or so someone said in the Terra Santa school. As we waited too long for the stars to fall we wanted Theia Maroulla to sing to us. Everyone around said she was a veritable Sophia Vembo and the neighbours the next day would ask if we heard the nightingale singing the night before. I wanted her to sing ‘*Que sera, sera*’ and I began to show off, pretending I could sing in English and I squeaked the words ‘Gwotever gwilbee gwilbee’. For me ‘*Que sera, sera*’ had become an obsessive mantra, but it irritated everyone else as I said it at every opportunity ever since that night I heard it in the movies with Katerina. My cousin Elli immediately retorted ‘SHATAP’ always wanting to show one-upmanship about speaking English since she was born in Liverpool and was nicknamed ‘*I englezou*’ even though whatever English she knew as a young girl when she came to the island from Liverpool, she soon forgot. Elli proposed we sing ‘To dikopo mahasiri,’ — the double-edged knife — putting on a face as if she were haunted by love as she sang the first lines. It was one of the most popular songs of the time from the film *Stella* and we were all hooked on the song and Melina Mercouri, but I did not want her to have her
way either. I also retorted by saying ‘SHATAP’ and we fell into jousting with the word ‘SHATAP, SHATAP’ until Theia Maroulla interrupted us to tell us how all the stars expire like people and turned to her own choice of song by her beloved Sophia Vembo. Demosthenes and Kassiani had taken her to see her sing live in Famagusta when she was still a schoolgirl. While she sang *mia fora monaha zoume, oloi erhomaste kai grigora pernoume* — we only live once, we quickly come and quickly pass away — I fell into a slumber and did not see any starry showers that night. I was angry in the morning and Maroulla told me to sleep in the afternoon instead of buzzing around like a *ziziros* and I might stay awake long enough the next night. I was determined to try to sleep that afternoon.

In the mornings, gangs of children would gather and play games in the streets, the open spaces between houses, or in the nearby fields. Some of the boys always wanted to play EOKA heroes fighting the English. They had found some empty shells in an abandoned house and wanted us to play there pretending to be EOKA rebels in a hideout. Nobody knew if British soldiers or the EOKA fighters had left the shells there and the boys argued as if they each had access to secret knowledge that no one else had. Whatever the truth, my aunt told me not to play there, but in any case I was seduced by the game of hopscotch and I didn’t care too much about playing with those boys. I preferred to play with the girls. When the boys played, everyone wanted to play Greek EOKA heroes and no one wanted to play the English soldiers as it was a foregone conclusion that they would have to lose in the end. Who played on what side was a result of how assertive or intimidating the self-appointed heroes would be. I remembered my quarrel with the boy on the seesaw in the moat and I shied away from those games. So when the girls called out ‘who is playing Vasilea,’ I would go running to them. The boys taunted me — after all, I was from the village of Digenis yet I only wanted to play hopscotch with the girls. But the ringleader of the girls, Pantelitsa, was a tomboy, and tough as any boy. She stepped out and walked forward as if she were in a cowboy film, stomping on the toes of the biggest boy and putting her hands on her hips as she looked him in the eyes and said: ‘who’s a girl?’ Hopscotch was the best game, I thought — jumping hopping jumping twirling around and then the same again to get back to the starting point. Then there was all the ritual passion that went into smoothing the patch of earth, defining the distances, the space, the boundaries of the squares, finding and choosing a good stone to throw. Sometimes you would share a good stone with another player if you developed a special bond. We played barefoot. This was the greatest pleasure. I loved to feel the soles of my feet blend in with the earth, and grow calloused and hard as the earth in August. I had become unaccustomed to going barefoot the few months I had spent in town. Katerina did not allow me to go barefoot in the way I was used to in the village with my grandparents.

So I savoured the joys of thorn, dust, nettle and stone in daylight and when night time came I cradled in the dark between the drying plums and apricots.
felt the ground under my feet in the morning, and at night I climbed skyward waiting to see more showers of stars falling, shooting, burning out. Expiring. Every day from earth to sky. Did the stars know or care what my next turn would be, I wondered. Right now I was under the August night sky on a rooftop in the village of Katodrys on the mountain slopes. I did not know where I would go to school in the weeks to come nor did I give it much thought. I did not know nor even imagine that within two months I would be living in another land, but I knew what would happen the day after tomorrow. Demosthenes would come with his mother Elengou in time for the Feast of the Dormition. I waited for Elengou with excited anticipation. She always had much to tell me and there were always details to remember and to fill in so I would ask her often to tell me again this or that story. She was always happy when I said, tell me about how Stephanos came from Alexandria and fell in love with you and tell me about the day he died. She told me more stories than anyone else did and I knew she spoke to me more than any of her other grandchildren as if I had been chosen and ordained custodian of her memory. I had decided to put behind me the quarrel she had with Katerina. I hadn’t seen her since I left Trikomo, and in the village I was accustomed to seeing her every day. I would trot by her side like the shadow of her dark widow clothes, keeping step with her brisk sprightly gait. She arrived on the 14th of August and was waiting for me in the house after I came in from the game of hopscotch. I knew she would be on a fast of bread and olives until the next day and I insisted on eating the same. That night I stayed down in the inner courtyard and slept next to her on the bed instead of going up on the rooftop. I alone would wake up with her and the first sunlight and accompany her trudging through the dry dawning golden August fields on the feast day to the little church high above the village to celebrate the Dormition. I would fidget and move from foot to foot when the priest spoke too long and I waited eagerly for the only melodious and dramatic turn in the liturgy that would stir me and intoxicate me with the sounds and smells when I would magically and reverently repeat the incantations, *kyrie eleison, eleison imas*, Lord have mercy, mercy on us, phrases I heard Demosthenes and other people utter in a totally different tone to express their exasperation or incredulity. When the Mother of God was resurrected bodily into heaven, leaving only her intense perfume lingering in the church, I would sway and virtually fall in a trance as if the Theotokou would take me with her. After the church service the summer sun had gotten intense but the walk home was easier down the hill. I would gambol ahead of Elengou then stopping and waiting for her from time to time, or I would turn back and take her hand remembering the mysteries she shared with me.

At the end of that day of feasting, Demosthenes announced with great zeal that the following day he and I would go on an excursion. We would see the rest of the family soon enough he said, but we would spend the rest of August meandering around the island. The final meander I realised only in hindsight,
although perhaps even he was unsure whether he would take me with him at the end of our ‘excursion’. We stopped off in towns and villages, sleeping here and there. He knew people everywhere and sometimes we would take friends and relatives on our drive. We encircled mountains relishing each heavy turn of the steering wheel of his old Hillman in one direction and then the next — chugging up and rolling down endlessly around the sharp mountain bends, digressing at every opportunity saying let’s stop at such-and-such a village and see if so-and-so is in the kafeneio or we would sit in the shade of forest glades, lapping up water in mountain streams, and then suddenly deviate to the coast and jump in the sea. We were going everywhere and all at once and he recorded it all in black and white, taking pictures with robed monks living hermetically on mountain tops and with statues who had lost their heads and genitals. If he was saying good-bye it was either silently or not in my presence. Perhaps he was saying goodbye silently to me or perhaps he knew he was taking me with him. Who knows? Did he know? Perhaps he thought he would rescue me from my fate on the island or wanted me to be part of his own fate whatever that would be? I knew nothing at the time.

I was sad for another reason. Golden August was coming to an end. August was singing its own good-bye as it was dying in a crimson haze. Scattered lacy clouds were moving with the changing winds and shepherds were reading the skies day-by-day to predict what rains the coming year would bring month-by-month. And I wanted to sing for August so it would not leave me: Come August don’t go away, don’t ever leave, don’t leave August, don’t. But August would leave. To bid August farewell we went to the sea of Salamis to swim — just ten kilometres south of our village of Trikomo along the coastal road. We walked
Lagaries (Kypros) 5/9/57
through the ancient city, which not long before had been covered with sand dunes
and wild acacia groves. Demosthenes told me how it used to be the biggest city
with the longest history on the whole island and then fell into ruin and was buried
under sand until Kyrios Vassos became obsessed with uncovering it layer by layer
and he hired villagers from all around to fill wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow of
sand and move it away to reveal the layers of the city bit by bit. I knew Kyrios
Vassos as Theios Vassos because he was a childhood friend of Katerina both
from the village and from school. He was there with his team of workers, mostly
girls and women of all ages, who were digging and sharing in his fascination
of uncovering worlds within worlds. As we wandered around we ran into
Demosthenes’ koumbaro Sotiris. He was a master builder and was there helping
the team in their dig, reconstructing fragments with his hands and imagination.
They had been koubaroi for years. Sotiris was his koumbaro when Demosthenes
married Kassiani, and then Demosthenes baptised Sotiris’ first son. And then,
after Demosthenes married Katerina, Sotiris built a house for Demosthenes and
Katerina where the three of us lived before we became three islands. We left
so quickly I scarcely remembered the house except for some black and white
photographs. It is as if it came and went with the wind.

So with personal and ritual bonding, the two koubaroi went on talking about
worlds forgotten and remembered and people who came and went to and from
other lands and other worlds. Sotiris talked of the damnatio memoriae, a phrase
he learnt from Theios Vassos, and what the seas of fortune might swallow and
expel. Through the holes of memory I translate what they then spoke of, in the
island dialect with the rhythms of speech and gesticulations of the Trikomites,
now and again punctuating their words with ‘re koumbare’.

What houses confiscated
flailed by the wind
and love’s labours lost
Ill-fated lovers seized by what
quirky gods or quirky demons
whatever winds may bring
or blow you away
across the sea
and what if
— this island could catch fire
from a single spark and —
If from the dryness of the grass
in the unrelenting summer heat
Or from the prophesying speeches
of its Generals and its Priests
All have staked their claim
And the season has come if
Hunters catch poems
With sticks
As if song thrushes
For the eating.
And in the island yet-to-come
What poems and what fortunes
And when does longing end —

I slipped through the gap
Cleaved by their breath
When I was hailed by the sea’s blue voice
Which filled each of my ears
And I seized the moment
and cried out
with a dashing to the dazzling blue
ΧΑΙΡΕ ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ, ΧΑΙΡΕ ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ!

The soft zephyrs gently lowering the light
Darkening a distant gathering of girls
From my village street
Whose cadenced voices were
Calling me to eat
Hot potatoes dug from fiery sand
Come eat, come eat
ela fa’e Stefoulli, ela fa’e
Έλα φάε Στεφουλλή, έλα φάε
yellowy flesh
under burnt skin
laced with dusky olive oil
duskier than our gaze
in summer haze
as August bids farewell
or we to August
will the moment ever be the same
and will August be august again
maybe sometime maybe never

(This is an excerpt from the memory novel with the working title ‘The Wind under My Lips’. Stephanides is grateful to the Bogliasco Foundation for a residential writing fellowship in the Spring of 2009, where part of this work was written. An earlier excerpt was published in Cadences, vol. 5, 2009)
Last Meeting with Taner Baybars

It was on the evening of 22nd January, two days after Taner Baybars had died, that I received the news of his death by phone. I had been waiting for it. But, then again, I did not expect it so soon. He was 73 years old. He was a poet who had closed the ‘gap’ between his life and his art. At our last meeting, although he did not openly speak of it, he had known that he was dying; it had been obvious from his words and his preparations. Still, the news of a death is such that it catches you off-guard every time. Pushing you to hold on tightly to your memories, to write whatever memories you have of that person, to protect and preserve them. Maybe, this friend’s death brings you once again face to face with your own mortality; his death gives meaning to your own life.

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It was early in October 2009; I had been invited to France for a poetry event within the scope of the Biennale. It was a three-day programme. To come to France after so many years, and not visit Taner Baybars was unthinkable. I delayed my return for another day. We were to meet again after twelve years; I was excited.

I boarded a train at the Gare-de-Lyon, and after a long journey (the return was to be longer and much more surreal) I arrived in Narbonne.

Paris had been rainy, Narbonne was bright and sunny.

We met at the station. He was hatless; he did not wear glasses; he did not carry a walking-stick. Despite the fact that he moved very slowly and was limping, he looked well. When I told him this, he said: ‘I’m like a pear; I rot from the inside’.

From what he told me, it seems that things had started to go wrong after the small ‘pruning’ operation on his heart two years ago. His stomach was weak; he could no longer drink the red wine he loved so much. Before he could drink two litres a day. ‘It’s all my fault’, he said, ‘I shouldn’t have drunk all that wine on an empty stomach’. The problem with his hip that made walking difficult could be cancer. The diagnosis had not been made yet, he was still undergoing examinations and tests. He had trouble with his right eye too, therefore he could not read much, nor could he drive at night. He mentioned that his father had gone
completely blind before he died (adding that although his father was dead, he had still not forgiven him).

I didn’t dwell on the fact that he hadn’t forgiven his father, he was much more soft-spoken, sensitive and humorous than I had remembered him. At the same time, I knew from working with him that he was extremely tidy, fastidious to a degree of obstinacy and took offence at the smallest thing.

As we were conversing, sometimes in Turkish and sometimes in English, I asked him one after the other all the questions I had saved up over the years. We had coffee in a cafe near the station. Then we walked to a park a few blocks away. Due to his hip problem he was walking extremely slowly. We stopped now and then to rest.

In the park, where the noise of the children playing close by drowned out the songs of the birds, we continued to speak of poetry, short stories, novels, of Cyprus, Britain, France, mutual friends, his favourite music (Baroque) and our own lives.

The inevitable subject came up: since leaving Cyprus he had never returned. ‘When I left, Cyprus had been one, now it is divided. I do not wish to come and see it like that’, he said. He added that he also had a great fear of flying, and said for this reason alone, he would never attempt such a journey. Besides, in our last interview, he had said: ‘I should have returned to Cyprus earlier, however the political situation had made this impossible, and when I was ready to return, it was too late’. In my opinion, the reason he never returned to Cyprus was more sentimental than political.

He told me that some relatives had taken possession of the house left to him by his parents, that they had cheated him (another clue as to why he never wanted to return to Cyprus). It was not the house he was thinking about, but some notebooks, books and objects left in the house.

He told me about brothel adventures in Nicosia dating back to the ’50s, that he had shared with his good friends Ayhan Hikmet and Muzaffer Gürkan — both later killed by the TMT.

We had our dinner in a Kurdish restaurant where Taner was a regular patron, where he was shown special attention. We spoke about the Kurdish issue, about how Turkish cinema had started to touch upon that issue.

Over dinner, I asked questions about the place where he now lived, Saint Chinian. He said he regretted having moved from Charente. Saint Chinian was too hot in the summer months. Too far from Paris. No one came to visit him, not even his daughter. Though his house was fairly large, he was not happy with it. A blacksmith had opened next door. He could not stand the racket he was making. He said he wanted to sell the house and return to Charente.

He thought that I would be staying for a few days. He had prepared a room. When we got home, he would have cooked some kolokas for me, that he kept in the deep freeze for special occasions.
I asked about his last lover, Miu, a Chinese woman and the subject of his book, *Chrononauts*. She had kidnapped her child who had been living with her ex-husband and gone to China. She could not come back.

He complained about the hardships of living alone, especially now that he was not well. I asked him a very personal question, one that I normally would not have dared. I asked if he ever regretted leaving his wife; he replied ‘never, I have never regretted it even for a moment’.

Because he could not drive in the dark, he had to return home before nightfall, and his house was forty-five minutes away. As he was leaving, he gave me an oil painting (*le bois l’air le feu*) from his last exhibition and some old, valuable books, some of which were dedicated to him personally.

I accompanied him to his car. A bag full of glasses and maps on the back seat caught my eye. I promised to visit him again next year, in the summer, with my family; and not knowing it was our last meeting, we said goodbye.

After his departure, I had another two hours until my train. I went straight into the ‘Bodege’, a bar next door to the train station. I ordered myself a glass of red wine and started reading his poetry collection, *The Fox and The Nightjar*, once again.

(Translated by Oya Akin)

(Originally published in *Cadences*, vol 6, 2010. This is an edited version of the original)
Dear Father, you ask in your letter
why for so long I have written no word.
To you I shall not confess any more than I can afford.
I am not insensitive to what you write:
a friend was murdered, a friend’s house burnt.
These I understand, I know
and as I said I can feel your grief.
Several times everyday I pause while walking
and talk to them loudly.

Homesick?
I am not because I’ve never had a home
but you are not responsible for that.
Yet I still remember the sea and the mountain
together, at night infinitely apart,
and the space between them my cradle.
I must have no digressions in a letter
so I stop living in that alien past.
In the present, I mean right just now,
the summer rain is beating on the sash
and the conceited sun is falling on the mirror.
Very, very strange.
Nevertheless I have to burn a fire in June
it’s so cold
although there’s nothing wrong with the equinox.

Unhappy?
I said I would confess no more than I can afford.
I shall not say I am happy nor unhappy.
but what you guess is true:
I do sit on my own for hours
and breed thoughts as you breed friends.
Yes, I do sit on my own,
I laze,
I cut my nails and wait till they grow again
and in the meantime I do nothing.
I’ve just looked out:
Rain shines like broken pieces of glass;
my mind is strung; before me the horizon
lies black and strangled.
I wonder where the sun is coming through.
But I don’t feel I can provide solutions
so the sun will shine and I shall remain
ignorant.

Unhappy?
I said I am not.
I know that there’s a grain of happiness
in everything I touch.
That is if I touch.
I know that trees would answer my touches
a bird’s wing would unrein my tongue,
my ears would receive the vibrations
of this city.
I do not reproach them with irreponse,
it is my fault.

Unhappy?
Father you are persistent.
I said I am not unhappy
though I know I would unearth unhappiness
in everything
if I touch.

(from To Catch a Falling Man, Scorpion Press, Lowestoft, Suffolk, 1963)
SNOW FORECAST

When the sky is making all this effort
to coax the rain to snow, turn bovine voices
soft, and quietly impose its presence—

how can I think glumly about my pose
in a small bed, left arm’s absent mistress?
Words I have meant to say but have not said
could not form a single, pure flake.

WAR CEMETERY OMAHA BEACH

The grey fall towards the sea
trim the green grass
cycloped with pill-boxes
mossed inside, sanded without.

You, in your young shoes
trot among the Davidis and Crosses
pause before a beetle
and raise your foot.

I shout: Do not kill it
and the ghosts around me laugh.

(from Susila in the Autumn Woods, Sceptre Press, Rushden, Northampton, 1974)
LET’S HOLD HANDS

I always find myself holding the hands
of girls who’ve lost boys, of women
who can’t win their husbands back.

In their deflected monologue I become
the lover, the husband, a soothing ear
or the hologram of someone already dead.

I trail in a rumour of hands, not one
really mine to hold. I hold the pan
and what I cook in it is mine, it can’t
sadden my ears with tales of a happy past.
I grasp the handle and briefly thank God.

GÜR GENÇ

Taner Baybars’a Sorular

GÜR GENÇ: 1955’de Kıbrıs’tan Britanya’ya gitme/göçme nedeniniz sadece eğitim miydī, yoksa ülkenin sürüklenmekte olduğu durumdan uzaklaşma isteğinin de payını var mıydī bunda?

[Did you emigrate from Cyprus to Britain in 1955 for educational reasons or did your desire to get away from the situation the country was being dragged into also play a part in your decision?]

TANER BAYBARS: My first aim, at the age of 17, was to leave the RAF (where I was working in the Force’s technical library) and do something better. This is perfectly normal for a young man at that age; he is not really concerned with the politics of the nation, let alone of the world; he is not able to assess the future developments in his own country. He is motivated, primarily, by his own ambitions. Well, probably all that has now changed. A sense of adventure and cultural curiosity have always been a part of my character. Cyprus, at that time, offered no possibilities for expansion in these domains. Our main literary exchange took place at Mapolar’s bookshop. It must not be forgotten that many others who were of the same mind, and a lot older than me, had already taken the route either to Turkey or to England. Quite by chance I discovered, more or less at the same time, the municipal library on the moat at the bottom of Ledra Street, and the British Council Library on the other side of the moat. They were god-sent! I devoured all the books that appealed to me, and Maurice Cardiff at the British Council encouraged me strongly to write in English. His other protégé was Mehmet Münür, an artist who left for London long before me. Apart from that I was greatly influenced by Ayhan Hikmet and Ahmet Gürkan who were my mentors and guides, and in spite of the age difference, they treated me as an equal. They both urged me to go to England and study law and then return to the island where people would listen only to doctors and barristers, but those involved in the arts or literature would be mocked or ignored. Both Ayhan and Ahmet knew London very well. An equally important factor was that I already had cousins in Britain in various universities, Edinburgh, Nottingham. So there was nothing unusual or ominous about my decision to leave Cyprus.

GG: 18 yaşındayken Yayınladığınız ilk şiir kitabı ‘Mendilin Ucundakiler’deki şiirler Türkçe’ydi, arada 7 tane İngilizce kitap (çeviriler hariç) yazıp
Taner Baybars’a Sorular

This question keeps coming up every time I am interviewed or something is written about me. Frankly, I am very puzzled. First of all, my secondary school education at the Lycée was entirely in English except Turkish and Greek language lessons once a week. Eighteen months at the RAF introduced me to the real spoken English, the civil service jargon, the Cockney, the slang. Then arriving in England, everything became English! You must remember that I was only 18 years old plus a few months. What we call language is something like air you breathe in and exhale every day. How on earth can one live in an entirely English environment, especially at such a young age, and avoid being influenced by the language that one is breathing daily. You stop hearing the language you were born to. A Jewish friend of mine said that his father, an émigré from Russia, told him many years later, that when he realised that he was dreaming and counting in English, his mother tongue was pushed to the background. Once you dream and count in a different language, he added, your own language has gone, whether you like it or not. It is now twenty years since I have been in France but I still dream and count in English although I speak French quite well, simply because I arrived here much too old. These factors must be taken into account when discussing why someone from Cyprus starts writing in English; or a Pole; or a Pakistani — it is the age that matters, nothing else. In my case, there is also the question of the changing nature of Turkish. To me, certain modern texts make very little sense because the language is being invented all the time, and I cannot understand it. Yet when I talk to people, their Turkish is no different from what I speak, but if I write as I speak, they call it Osmanlı Türkçesi! Yes, a language evolves, but inventing new words is like creating an artificial language, a Turkish Esperanto, if you like, derived from Turkic roots which are as dead as Latin or Aramaic. To imagine that one could follow all these lingual changes, on the other side of Europe, and continue to write in one’s original language is, very simply, not realistic. Just look at what is going on in Germany among the Turkish immigrants and the second generation…

Yes, I did write some Turkish poems a few years back; in fact when I first moved to Mediterranean France from the Charente. Some Cypriot Turks came to stay with me and we spoke Turkish all the time. There was also the satellite TRT International which filled my ears with Turkish
words I had forgotten. Those poems in Turkish resulted from these two experiences as, from time to time, I am impelled to write certain poems in French.


[Lacan explains the need for language with the emotions ‘loss’ and ‘absence’. If we are to approach this proposition from poetry’s point of view, what is the relation of your poetry with ‘loss’ and ‘absence’?]

TB: Lacan’s theories are based almost entirely on the use of the French language. With some drastic modifications they could be applied to other languages as well, I suppose. I don’t know. I am not really qualified to comment on Lacan and his psychoanalytic methods. My sources in this respect are Alfred Adler and Karen Horney. I don’t understand what you mean by ‘kaybetmek’ and ‘yokluk’. They have never played a part in my life except in the first four years on arriving in London where I knew no-one. At that time I was busily writing in Turkish, not poetry but what I called ‘Londra’nýn Mikrokosmosundan İskeçler’. They were published in *Yeditepe* and my short stories about London life in *Hisar*. I have no idea what has become of them. Now, those might well explain the Lacanian concept of loss (yokluk) and the substitution of that loss with words. Apart from that period, my language evolved as I heard it, read it, and wrote it. Without the slightest sense of loss or regret!

GG: *Şiiriniz hem Batı hem Doğu kaynaklı imgelerin kesişme noktası. Hemen hemen her şiirinizde metafizik bir boyut var. Dinle olan ilişkinizden mi ileri geliyor bu, yoksa zaten şiir metafizik derinliği olması gereken bir sanat mıdır?*

[Your poetry is often the point of intersection of images from both West and East. Almost all your poems have a metaphysical dimension. Is this because of your relationship with religion, or does the art of poetry have to have a metaphysical dimension anyway?]

TB: I am not really aware that my poetry or anything else that I have been writing deserves this generous accolade! That reminds me of one of my teachers who was imported from Turkey for Ortaokul, to offset the importation of English teachers at the Lycée. I was still in Ortaokul at that time. I can’t remember his name. He was our Maths teacher. One day on the playground I asked him how he knew so much about everything. He told me that kültür dediğimiz şey, okuyup araştırmamız sonunda aklimızda kalan esansdır. [What we call culture is the essence of what we have read and researched]. So, when I write, I am not thinking about my origins
or my present circumstances. I write because I must and the result has nothing to do with my ethnic background or beliefs.

A great Jewish philosopher and theologian, Martin Buber, said that religion is the greatest obstacle between man and God. He said that it is enough to accept the uniqueness and greatness of a creator and recognise His will. In short: to be Godful. That is very different from being religious. But like most concepts — spiritual, political or whatever — religion assumes a different guise from one nation to another, from one individual to another. Look at the tragic interpretation of religion in Iraq, or of Christianity in recent Irish history. It is like a bottle of perfume which has a different scent on each person who rubs it on his or her skin. On the other hand, a mystical belief in God, the Being beyond our comprehension, the Omnipotent and the Omnipresent, does not change if we approach the belief free from an organised order of worship.

Doubts about a polytheistic universe began with the Greek philosophers, and Plato (Eflatun) and Socrates explored the possibility of a universe with one single Godhead. Similarly, in our own age we are becoming more and more convinced of the existence of parallel or contrary universes (multiverse, in Quantum Physics). Monotheism belongs to the three Semitic religions: Judaic, Christian and Islam. Although there is a charm in the Greek concept of a hierarchy of gods, to which I was deeply attracted in my early teens, in later years I found that the essential facet missing from the Greek mythological faith was a personal mystical element. On the other hand, the Greek myths reflect the primordial awe of nature, human fears, the force of emotions, and the reasons for the wonders of our lives, far more than any established religion...

In Islam I am very much drawn to the Sufis, to Rumi. I think that Yunus Emre is one of the greatest humanists ever and if my good friend Tâlât Halman hadn’t translated his poems so magnificently, Yunus would have been one of my major translation projects. It may come to you as a surprise but the most eloquent, the most precise mystical expression I have found is in Dede Korkut: I believe it is in Deli Dumrul when the ozan geldi, söz söyledi, şöyle dedi, ‘Ulu Tanrımd, yücelerden yücesin, kimse bilmez nicesin; cebbar Tanrımd, kimi cahiller seni gökte arar yerde ister, ama sen gönülleşin’. In Oduz Turkish, this revelation is even more poignant. If everyone remembered that they are in fact carrying the essence of God within themselves, there would be no conflict, no bloodshed. Religion is responsible for all the troubles in the world not because of the belief a religion declares but because human beings are always trying to impress their own ideas, not their faith, on other people. They use religion as a tool to manufacture their misdeeds. If, on the other hand, religion is used in a positive, fruitful manner, then you have architectural masterpieces to the glory of God, art and great poetry.
Maimonides (Jewish), St Augustine (Christian) and Ibn’ Sinâ [Avicenna in Latin texts] (Moslem) are the three most significant mystics, but there are many others, who followed them. What I am trying to say is not new: if you delve into the mutasavvýf period of Ottoman literature, you’ll find poetry that transcends the boundaries of religion.


[Also, many of your poems have an erotic tension and energy, especially the period that began with ‘Narcissus in Dry Pool’ and after. Furthermore, ‘Haiku Erotique’ which you wrote in French and poems you wrote in Turkish such as ‘Ömerge Sokağı 1952 Yaş 16’ can even be considered pornographic. What can you say about this?]

TB: You are probably right. I wasn’t conscious of that. I want to feel free to write about any subject that inspires me. In order to do that you have to employ the language the subject demands of you. If you are talking about love it wouldn’t occur to you to choose another word for ‘heart’ because it is, essentially, a term used in describing an anatomical organ. [But there was a time in English literature when ‘leg’ was banned; you had to say ‘limb’.] We remember it now with a tolerant smile; the haiku you mention was read to a mixed group of poetry lovers in the town of Confolens. In French. No one blushed, no one protested. If, instead of clitoris, I had said, ‘female penis’, that would have been just too awful, and insulting to a woman. The Ömerge poem would have been impossible to write without the words I have used there.

GG: Özellikle 2000 yılında yayımlanan son İngilizce şiir kitabınızı, ‘Tilki ve Beşik Yapanlar’da hemen hemen her şiirde bir ‘tilki’ imgesi var. Şiirinizdeki bu tilki imgesi neysi simgeliyor?

[Especially in your last English poetry book, Fox and the Cradle-makers, published in 2000, almost every poem has an image of a fox in it. What does the fox symbolise in your poetry?]

TB: My first seven years passed in Vassilia. There were many foxes on the mountain slopes but all the village folk talked about them with respect and admiration. Then, in the family, they began to call me ‘tilkicik’, because I had an answer to everything, and I managed to avoid getting into trouble. My mother had a fox fur that she used to put round her shoulders when we went out in Nicosia. I refused to come anywhere near her when she had that fur on. Eventually she gave it away. Those button (boncuk) eyes on
that fox’s head! I’ll never forget them. Apart from these early influences, there is something else about a fox that appeals to me: although he loves his home and his family, a fox is a lonely hunter. See, for example, how Fox is dying in Çobanaldatan…. Alone!

GG: *Bazı eleştirmenler Britanya edebiyatına dahil ederken, bazıları da Kıbrıs Edebiyatının bir parçası olarak görüyor sizi. Siz en fazla hangi dil ve coğrafya ait hissediyorsunuz kendinizi? Ya şiiriniz?*

Some critics include you in British Literature; others see you as part of Cyprus Literature. What language and geography do you feel you belong to? And what about you poetry?

TB: What I have said about language in your question above, partly answers this. I was born as a ‘British Subject’ and all my documents show me as British Citizen. If this description applies to my passport, my pension from the British government, why should it change when it comes to literature? Besides, it is the language that claims you and not your origin. It would be ludicrous to classify Joseph Conrad as a Polish writer; Nabokov as Russian; Tom Stoppard as Czech; Rushdie as Indian … and many others. I think this concern about who belongs to where is found only in younger nations. Even such an Irish poet as Seamus Heaney is found under English literature. I believe that it would be perfectly in order to describe me as ‘British poet of Cypriot (or, Cypriot-Turkish) origin’, as you would Conrad as British of Polish or Nabakov of Russian origin, and so forth…

There is something else that you might find interesting. In libraries there is a classification called ‘Dewey’ and it is used internationally. My books all have the reference 821 which indicates English literature; the books have appeared in the English language. Moris Farhi is of Turkish origin but he lives in London and writes in English. If you look up his book Young Turk on the British Library Integrated Catalogue website, you’ll see that it is first classified as British fiction, 823, then 914 which is Turkish history.

GG: *30 yıl kadar İngiltere’de yaşadıktan sonra Fransa’ya, atalarınız olarak kabul ettiği Lüzyyanlar’ın yaşadığı bölgeye taşındınız? Bu süreci anlatır mısınız?*

After you lived in England for about thirty years you moved to France, the region where the Lusignans used to live, who you accept as your ancestors. Can you tell us about this process?

TB: I really am glad to have the opportunity to correct this misconception. It all began with a visit from a Cypriot poet and his wife to my house in the Charente, near Angoulême. His wife was studying the myths of Cyprus and the subject included the Lusignan dynasty in Cyprus. The Lusignans ruled the island for three hundred years almost as long as the Turks; some three
hundred years of reign. I jokingly said that the Lusignans must have left a genetic imprint on the Cypriot population, and especially in the Paphos area where there were more blonde people than anywhere in Cyprus. My maternal grandparents were from the Paphos region, and in our family there are many sarışınlar. Again, as a joke, I said that I might well have been drawn to Angoulême, not Lusignan, which was a part of the Angoumois Kingdom. Where I used to live in Charente, is more than 150 km from the small town of Lusignan but only 33 km from Angoulême. The reason for choosing the house that I bought in the Charente near Angoulême, was purely financial: it was the only property I could afford at that time. The rest is coincidence. That such an innocent remark should be thrown out of context and blown into a historical fact, is a lesson not to make such jokes even in intimate company! Angoulemi used to exist on the map of Cyprus before the Turkish revision of topographical names. Angoulemi, quite obviously is from Angoulême, but apart from that, there are many other villages in Cyprus, particularly in the South-West of the island, which are corruptions of names that exist to this day in Poitou-Charente, the ancient Lusignan-Angoumois Kingdom. This fact was diligently observed by my old friend Georges der Parthogh and his wife Lana who came to visit me soon after I moved there.

Now I live on the Mediterranean coast, not far from Narbonne. Narbonne was the first Roman colony outside Italy. Is someone now going to suggest that I have moved here because of the Roman ruins of Salamis in Cyprus? And that I have descended from the Romans who ruled Cyprus?

GG: Fransa’ya taşındktan sonra, bir dönem bağcılık ve meyvecilik işleriyle uğraştınız. Bu dönem anlatabilir misiniz?

[After you settled in France, for a while you dealt with vinery and fruit growing. Can you tell us about this period?]

TB: While reading your question I couldn’t help smiling! These are all romantic concepts in the mind of someone who wants to see you doing all these things because it will sound interesting to readers. I have a vague idea where the rumour comes from, but … in popular journalism this is understandable, however deplorable it may be. In literary journalism, it is simply very sad. I have no idea how this story came about. Of course, like most convincing lies, it is based on fact. I did have a large garden in my first house and planted several fruit trees for my own consumption. Under the influence and the guidance of my winegrowing neighbours, and with a lot of physical help from them, I planted around eighty vines. The most popular drink of the Charente is called pinot a naturally sweetish wine that is drunk as an aperitif. My vine stock would produce around fifty litres of pinot. I was experiencing a new approach to life after thirty-five years of
books and library work in London. Anything different, I embraced with joy! If you talk about –cılık and –cilık, it sounds like a business, but what I was doing was entirely for my own pleasure… and a little present to visiting friends.

GG: Generally in your poetry, there is proximity to nature, a turning not to urban but to rural life. How would you describe your relationship with nature and how does it affect your poetry?

TB: In my book about my childhood in Cyprus, Plucked in a Far-Off Land (Uzak Ülke in Turkish translation, YKY), I give a detailed account of my first ten years, first in Vassilia and then in Minareli Köy. By the way, in Uzak Ülke, for some mysterious printer’s error, Vassilia is irritatingly spelled as Vavilia or something like that… No matter, but actually, it matters a lot! Of course, during those very formative years, the rural impressions on your mind last more than a lifetime! I have always been a lot happier in quiet and serene places than in bustling cities. Even when I was young, I never wanted to go to a discotheque although I was quite happy to dance to such music at private parties. In London I was happy because after the bustle of the city I was able to return to my house on Highgate Woods and relax in the rural surroundings, do gardening and mow the lawn. In the Charente it was even better. Down here in the noisy and unruly town of Saint-Chinian, not to be recommended to anyone, I am still not far from what they call the garrigue, the open meadows and hillsides, exciting vegetation and bird life. And I am only twenty minutes from the Mediterranean. Not more than forty minutes from the mountain range of the Espinouses. These influences inevitably come into my poems, particularly in the Miu Sequence, a part of which has been included in Çobanaldatan. I haven’t turned against city life. I love visiting Paris, Toulouse, Montpellier, Avignon, Aix en Provence… These are cultural visits. They don’t inspire me with images; whereas a walk in the vineyards, or on the rocky hills, does. There is always something to look out for, and discover, such as the French alıç. At the moment it is the season for the perfume of broom. I can also hear the nightingale, even in this noisy and filthy town of Saint-Chinian, as soon as the traffic noise dies down. Nature is always within walking distance.

GG: In the past you wrote short-stories in Turkish. Have you ever thought about collecting and publishing them as a book? Have you written more short-stories since?
TB: No, the idea never occurred to me because I haven’t written many and what I have written wouldn’t make a book. In any case, the short-stories that I wrote in Turkish were all published either in Turkey or in Cyprus. I have no record of them. I have written some short stories in English for an English journal published in Montolieu (the book town of the Languedoc region in France). They are chiefly in the category of the supernatural which I find an eminently suitable subject for short stories.

GG: Henüz Türkçe’ye çevrilmeyen, 1965’te yayınlanmış A Trap For The Burglar adlı bir romanınız var, ama yeni basımı yapılmadığı için kitapçılarda bulunmuyor ve dolaşımda değil. Yeni basımı yapmayı düşünüyorsunuz?

[You have published a novel called, A Trap For The Burglar (1965) that has not been translated into Turkish yet. However, because it is out of print in the U.K it is difficult to find. Have you thought about reprinting it?]

TB: This book is still available from Australian booksellers because the illustrations were by one of the greatest Australian artists of the last century, Arthur Boyd. The Amazon prices are extremely high. No one has approached me for a reprint as Ruth Keshishian did for a reprint of Plucked in a Far-off Land. Maybe one day … who knows…

GG: Eskiden Taner Fikret Baybars olarak biliniyordunuz. Göbek adımdan neden vazgeçtiniz?

[You used to be known as Taner Fikret Baybars. Why have you dropped the middle name?]

TB: Now, another opportunity to put the record straight; thank you. My family name is, in fact, Evliyazâde. But my father was known only as Halil Fikret. When I was eight years old, I made friends with Vamık Volkan, whose name had been Vamık Celal. So, I decided to change my surname as well! Kemal Rüstem was beginning to publish his Yeni Mecmua and through my uncle Hasan he asked me and Vamik to contribute a short poem. I was only eight at that time and desperate to adopt my own surname. We were in Minareliköy and my father used to conduct a kind of educational evening class for adults. I used to go along with him. On one of those occasions he talked about the Baybars dynasty, the exploits of the sultans. I was fascinated. Much against his protests I assumed the name Baybars and my poem in Yeni Mecmua was published under Taner Fikret Baybars.

Many years later my young brother adopted the same name, to my great surprise, and to my greater surprise my own father and mother adopted the name Baybars! Am I unique in giving my chosen name to my own parents?
GG: *Uzun yıllardan beri günlük tutuyorsunuz. Bu günlüklerden söz eder misiniz?* [You have kept a diary for many years. Can you tell us about these diaries?]

TB: Yes, that is true. I started keeping a pocket diary in 1947 when I was barely eleven years old, mainly because a cousin whom I loved very much, just like a young aunt, was getting married to an Arab hotel owner in Jaffa, and Palestine was about to bleed, a wound inflicted by armchair politicians of the West. The wound remains open to this day. In any case, my young cousin went there for her wedding and I kept hearing the news from my uncles. I felt a great impulse to keep a record of all the events of those months which became years, and they contain a boy’s concern about war and its disasters. Unfortunately those diaries from 1947 to 1952, written in Turkish, I left in our house in Ortaköy. They disappeared among many other precious childhood possessions after the death of my parents and the mysteriously undocumented sale of the house. I have no idea what happened to them or to the furniture, and I never received a proper account from the so-called solicitor who was looking after my parents’ will.

Luckily, though, I have all the others, from 1953 (written in English) to the present day. The main emphasis is on what is happening around me rather than to me; you might call it a running history of personal, social and political developments. Sometimes I do dwell a lot on health, on emotional distresses, but the main purpose of what I write almost daily is to record our times, to describe people in my life, their problems, their joys... The books will be of historical interest to social researchers, chronicling the developments in three disparate countries over sixty years or more. They will be deposited at Reading University where there is a Baybars Collection already. Apart from these journals I have a comprehensive collection of photographs to accompany the text.

GG: *Son dönemde şiir ve düzyazıdan çok, resimle uğraşıyorsunuz, sergiler açıyorsunuz. Resim olayı ne zaman, nasıl başladı? Kaç sergi açtınız?* [Lately, more than poetry and prose you work on painting and holding exhibitions. When did you start painting, and why? How many exhibitions have you held?]

TB: For a very long time I have always wanted to use colours, to mix them, as I do words, to make them vibrate... Neither my job in London, nor the circumstances allowed that. When I began to live in the Charente, I met a delightful Dutch couple. The husband encouraged me to paint because of my comments on his paintings. He sensed that I had a good eye for colour. He gave me free lessons for three or more years, once a week which became a social occasion to eat, to discuss the arts, literature and music. So, that was the beginning, and the year was 1991! The Charente
is not a region for artistic activities like the Mediterranean coast. When I came down here, I was encouraged by the throbbing artistic energy. I got right into it and have changed styles and techniques over the years. I love it for a very good reason: you paint, you have a sufficient number of canvases or whatever, and then you have an exhibition. That takes no more than three to six months. What you have created is already out there for the public to love or to hate.

Writing is not like that. You spend a year to write a novel; you spend several years to write poems to form a book. Then you have to send the scripts out and wait, and wait, and wait… Then the answer is ‘no’, so you start all over again. This is an adventure for young writers and I am not young. Only my creative energies are young but I have no patience. Even if I have no bookings in galleries or anywhere else, I can display my art work at home, and people do come, from all over the region. Things will be even better when I establish my blog for word and art.

I continue to write, of course, especially my daily journal and my essays but I don’t really see my essays published in my lifetime. The sequence of poems that I began to write some years ago, for my Chinese girlfriend Miu, continues. But there are no takers. Magazine publishers in England expect, nowadays, poetry broken into plain lines from a piece of prose. I hope this disease doesn’t infect Turkish poetry which is still as poetry should be: ‘an experience or emotion that cannot be expressed in any other way’.

GG: 1955’de ayrıldığınız Kıbrıs’a bir daha dönmediniz, nedenini sorabilir miyim?
[You left Cyprus in 1955 but you have not returned since. Can I ask why?]

TB: This is not only with Cyprus. For instance, I have been in France for far longer than I ever lived in Cyprus! True! I have been back to England only five times because it is close, but five times in twenty years doesn’t indicate frequent visits… I have seen the videos and dvds of Cyprus, recorded by friends and relatives. There is nothing in them that I recognise or identify with. I received a photograph of the school house and the mosque in Vassilia, my first seven years passed there, and I looked at it unbelieving that the mountain was so close when to my child’s eye it was distant, distant, distant… The great avenue (in my mind) of Victoria Street, is no more than a lane! These images of the past would collide very badly with the reality of now, and I am not certain that the result might not be a tremendous burden on mind and psyche. I should have returned much earlier but the political situation made that impossible, and when I was ready to return, it was too late.

Because, the tragedy of Cyprus left me benumbed. The present situation is entirely due to the ineffectual handling of the 1974 crises by the British government. It was a political miscalculation, not to say folly, of Wilson
and Callaghan. If they had intervened, Turkey would not have taken the action that she took in the end. Ecevit said so in their meeting in London, the Wilson administration remained inert. It is hardly surprising that in the Middle East, wherever you look, wherever you find a mess, there is a stamp of the Lion and the Unicorn. Anyone who needs to understand exactly what happened to Cyprus, from a totally objective point of view, to understand fully the catastrophe in Cyprus, should read, *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus, 1954–59*, by Robert Holland who is the authority on the subject. The two Cypriot communities have been used, divided and set against each other by the British (and obliquely by the USA) for the sole purpose of maintaining airbases on the island. And who paid the price? And Iraq is now being demolished for very similar reasons.

So, I would prefer to relish the memories of that glorious past than a revisit that will certainly bulldoze them.

(This interview was conducted in Spring 2008 and was originally published in *Cadences*, vol 4, 2008 [Cyprus] in English, and in *Kitap-lik*, 126, April 2009, [Istanbul] in Turkish.)
A Biography of a Bookshop

OUTSIDE THE VENETIAN WALLS

The Moufflon Bookshop is part of a large sandstone building in the ‘liner’ style of curved architecture from the nineteen forties; it is now dwarfed by the high rise buildings that surround and block the original view of the uninterrupted line of the Kyrenia Mountains. But a photograph which I keep at the front desk, enjoyed by customers, shows the same location in the quite recent past, where sheep are grazing amongst the shrubs and rocky terrain just outside the visible renaissance Venetian walled city of Nicosia.

When my brother Jirayr Keshishian [1940–1992] returned to the island, he chose Sofouli Street as the location for his new shop which he opened in 1967, although it was considered to be well out of town. The island had become an independent Republic in 1960, but by 1963 the inter-communal tension had resulted in the Turkish community living in enclaves. Books in Turkish published locally, or imported from Turkey, were sold at several Turkish booksellers, while books in Greek which is spoken by the majority of the population, published locally or imported from Greece, were sold at the numerous Greek booksellers. There seemed to be a need for an international bookshop, that could import foreign language books, especially in English as it was a familiar language still spoken after the eighty or so years of British rule.

Moufflon Bookshop stocks books primarily in English but it has a service in bringing books regularly from Europe, and at times from other parts of the world to cater for the fast growing foreign population of people tied to trade; for the professional labour force;
for refugees; for asylum seekers; and of course for the ever changing diplomatic community on the island.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

I took over the running of the shop at the start of 1995, having returned from Britain after 35 years of absence. When I entered the shop and began to shape its future, my initial and lasting decision was to place new titles alongside the out-of-print books, but not publications earlier that 1850 as I had no knowledge of antiquarian books. It was clearly a strange move as the majority of local customers were used to purchasing books in pristine condition. Yet over the years the interest in all types of books developed, and in time encouraged us — the staff — to mount our first Book Fair of out-of-print, used and rare books, held in the old city of Nicosia at the start of November 2000. It has become an annual event and one that attracts book-lovers of all ages from around the island.

A STROLL THROUGH THE BOOKSHOP

Books related to history surround you as you step into the shop. The titles cover world history — ancient, mediaeval and modern — politics, international relations, war, peace, conflict resolution and political philosophy. There is a large section on titles that relate to neighbouring countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, and another more recent section on the history of European countries and especially topics related to the European Union.

At the heart of the shop are books relating to Cyprus which is by far the richest section and most in demand. Books on our archaeology are of particular interest to the international community. Archaeologists in their annual expeditions discover sites and artefacts that result in the re-writing of our early history
10,500 BC–330 AD. It is no longer considered derivative of much greater civilisations of the neighbouring countries, but a history and culture that has its distinct features. Books on Byzantine culture and history abound. More recently, there has been a growing interest in all aspects of our Latin mediaeval monuments, trade links, literature, and of course the crusades. Books in English on the Ottoman period are just beginning to appear. The British period is very well documented, as are the fifty years of the Republic.

In the same room are books on Natural History and Science, Philosophy, Religion and Cultural studies. The centre shelves carry all the books related to Cypriot literature, mostly in English, but also in other languages. Alongside are books on world poetry, classical literature — Latin, Greek and Sanskrit — and poetry magazines both local and foreign.

Books on the visual and performing arts are found in the large adjacent room. They include books related to Cypriot Fine Arts, Photography, Architecture, Music, Drama and Dance. Beyond, in the circular balcony, are the books for children and the young readers. Here we make it a point to have a rich selection of bi-lingual books for children who are being taught and talked to in several languages.

Along the lengthy corridor are the books on literature — short stories and novels — paperbacks, hardbacks and first editions, journals, diaries, letters, essays, critical works and biographies. And beyond, in the second balcony, are the books on linguistics, dictionaries and a wide choice of books on language learning.

Books on cookery and beverage, and health are shelved in an in-
between passage that leads to the Travel section. There we stock maps, including geological ones of the island, world guidebooks, and travel photography books, and a fine section on travel literature. Cyprus prides itself on having had a steady stream of visitors throughout the centuries who have recorded their impression of the island and its people.

The office space is where customers may leaf through catalogues or look up the book bank to place orders. It is also the space where we process books for export, as the Cypriot diaspora is widespread in almost all continents. Scholars working on Cyprus are growing in number, and customers who wish to continue their interest in the island after their travels look up our website and place their orders (www.moufflon.com.cy).

**Cypriot Literature in Translation**

The shelves that stock local literature are expanding continually. Poetry is by far the most popular literary form, followed by short stories. There are very few novelists and playwrights. The majority of writing is in the local languages, but there is a growing number of writers who have chosen to write in English — sustaining the slender thread of the island’s colonial literature. The journals *Focus*, *Cadences*, and more recently *Cyprus Dossier*, accept new writing.

A considerable volume of local writing is being translated into English and other European languages. Several local universities during the last decade or so offer Literature both as undergraduate and postgraduate courses in English. This has certainly stimulated the writing of Cypriot literature in English. There has been a whole process of translating Cypriot literature into other languages — at present mostly European: it is something that will surely develop over the coming years.

As a bookseller, I receive information of titles from abroad well ahead of their publication date — at times even manuscripts in progress. They are mostly from Cypriots in the diaspora, as well as foreigners who have written down their recollections of the island, or tried their hand at fiction set in Cyprus. There are several independent presses as well as universities throughout the world who have an interest in our literature, offering courses and carrying out translations and bringing out publications of great interest — Australia, Canada, Germany, USA, France, Russia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Italy the Netherlands and most recently Spain. There are also foreign journals, magazines and anthologies that have begun to include our literature, so I try to bring copies to the bookshop for our local readers to be in touch with the activities abroad.
 REGARDING THE ORAL TRADITION
The oral tradition is still very strong amongst both the Greek and Turkish population. It’s a vibrant layer below the standard languages that are taught at schools and used officially throughout the island. Poetry, narrative and epic recitations — often heard at village feast days or festivals — have been recorded, and more recently transliterated and published. I try to stock these for the shop, both in book form and DVD / CDs. Some have been translated into English, as in the works Hambis Tsangaris. In addition to the dictionaries that capture the regional vocabulary, whether in Turkish or Greek, there is a publication of the first Greek Cypriot / English dictionary by Roys Papagelou (2001).

BIRTH OF A NEW SCRIPT
I look forward to literature being published in the Cypriot-Maronite language, and subsequently translated into English and other languages, sitting alongside our books. The recently created script for this endangered language has enabled the younger generation to be taught at their own schools. Several villages on the island are inhabited by a community of people called Maronites, who are distinguished primarily by their religion. It’s a branch of Christianity that looks up to the Vatican, but had its origins in ancient Syria-Lebanon. Over the centuries the Maronites became Hellenised and wrote their literary works in Greek, which we stock at the shop. Alexander Borg who has been studying the language in depth is writing a monograph for Moufflon Publications about the process of creating the script.

THE TURN OF THE CENTURY
It was interesting to see a series of texts in print, both creative and critical, that appeared on our shelves during the last decade. They seem to map out a new strand in the literary life of the island.
A chapter in Post-Colonial and African American Women’s Writing, by Gina Wisker (2000) included a whole chapter on Cyprus; Step-Mothertongue edited by Aydin Mehmet Yashin (2000), resulted from a gathering of writers at Middlesex University UK. Weeping Island, 2001 was a multi-cultural collection of Cypriot literature; Cypriot Identities, Conversations on Paper, edited by K.B. Costello 2005; a new section wedged into the revised edition of the Encyclopaedia of Post-colonial Literature in English, edited by Stephanos Stephanides (2005); A Tribute to Cypriot Literature edited by L. Papaleontiou, Quebec, Canada (2007); and
conference publication *Cultures of Memory, Memory of Culture* (2007), edited by Stephanos Stephanides all seemed to open up the subject both to the general reader, as well as to some students (UK, USA, Australia, Germany, Cyprus) who have chosen to pursue their postgraduate work on Cypriot Literature.

**ON MOUFFLON PUBLICATIONS**

The overarching theme of the publications is the island of Cyprus in all its aspects and in the context of the eastern Mediterranean. Our aim is to highlight the lesser known history and culture of the island, both in a book form, or as forty-page monographs. We have in mind local readers, diaspora Cypriots, and others who have shown interest in the culture and history of the island. The editing/design work is carried out by Toby Macklin and the cover design work is by Alex Storer.

The literature series began with the poet Taner Baybars who gave me permission to reprint his memoir, *Plucked in a Far-off Land*, for a paperback edition (2005). The memoir of growing up on the island before the period of modernisation was written in English and therefore there was no process of translation. Capturing the same period is the book written by Andreas Keleshis, about the life of the fishing community at Kyrenia: the fictionalised memoir, *Maistrotramoutana*, was translated into English by Andrew Hendry (2007). *My Own Deftera* by Theoklis Kouyialis [see Artists’ Books ] is of particular importance as I wished the memoir written in poetry to be a bi-lingual publication (2007). Nora Liassis, an Australian scholar, and Dean of Humanities at the European University in Nicosia, took on the translation work as she was already familiar with the poet’s work.

Most diaspora Cypriots whether in African countries, New Zealand, Australia, Europe, Canada or the USA, have acquired the language of their adopted country and therefore their original language is something still listened to, but less spoken, and only within the context of their homes. A few venture to weekend classes set up by their communities, and therefore bi-lingual editions would address in particular, the needs of those readers who still have a slight knowledge of the written language.

Andrew Hendry is at present translating into English, a complex novel, *Eastern Mediterranean*, which is set in Nicosia during the difficult months that led to the 1963 civil troubles. It is written by the established novelist and short story writer, Ivi Meleagrou, and will no doubt find a new and wider readership in translation. I came across reference to it in a lecture and later the publication *The Rustling of
the Palms and the Violet Hue of Pentadakyllos: Writing the Myth of Nicosia in Cypriot Prose by the literary scholar, Nadia Charalambidou (1995). The novel, The Heart of the Earth, written in Serbian by Svetislav Basara during his stay in Cyprus, is being translated from Serbian into English by Randall Major.

The Fabric of the Ancient Theatre (2004, hardback; 2007, paperback) is a journal written during the University of Sydney excavation of the Paphos theatre from 1995. The author, Diana Wood Conroy, travelled to the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Turkey and Greece, in search of similar Hellenistic theatres. The volume includes her sketches, paintings and weavings inspired by her work on the Roman frescos of the theatre precinct. A related publication is due out this year: Letters Home 1927–1931 written by the youngest member of the Swedish expedition, Alfred Westholm, and translated by Ann Wohl. In his writings he captures everyday life in rural Cyprus, describes the landscape in detail, discusses the archaeological finds, and writes of his encounters with the villagers who work with him. Late 2012 will see the publication of George Seferis’s Journals written during his three visits to Cyprus in the fifties, and translated into English by Andrew Hendry. The poet had a particular feel for the island, and produced numerous poems as a result of his travels, encounters and experiences. I am also working on the Journals written by John Lehmann, editor of New Writing, during his visit to Cyprus in the fifties. A few of his poems were published in the Cyprus Review, and he returned to England with a handful of Cypriot poems in translation which were then published in his London Magazine.

The forty-page monographs published by Moufflon touch on a wide range of subjects. One that has a literary association is the forthcoming publication on The Dukhobors in Cyprus 1898–1999. Impressed by their simple devout life, Leo Tolstoy took an unfinished manuscript which he had put aside and completed it. The sales of Resurrection provided some of the money which helped the Dukhobors / Spirit Wrestlers
arrive safely on Cyprus from Russia and then move on to settle in Canada a year later. Also of interest to the literary history of the island will be the monograph, *The Correspondence between the Poets, Mary O’Conner and Kypros Chrysathis*, during the years of the independence struggle from the British. Andis Panayiotis found the folder of letters in an archive and has researched the background to this strange literary encounter. His own doctoral research on ‘The Translation of Greek Cypriot Poetry into English since the Turn of the 20th Century’ will be published by Minnesota University Modern Greek Press.

A recent publication of ours is *Entrelacs Chiprois* by Gilles Grivaud (2009) in French. The author discusses the writings in Greek, Latin, Italian and French during the period of Lusignan and Venetian rule 1191–1570, in the context of the intellectual life of the island.

**Exhibition of Artists’ Books**

The idea of allocating a small area to display artists’ books — one-of-a-kind or multiples — throughout the year came to mind when I was restoring the shop in 1995. I was introduced to the art form by the Scottish artist and poet, Ian Hamilton Finlay in 1962 when I was studying in Edinburgh. It has been a joy to see the development of artists’ books throughout the subsequent decades. Bringing books from abroad was straightforward as Book Art has flourished across all continents since the 1960s.

It took a while to discover local artists and encourage them to try their hand at making books in Cyprus. Mary Plant (b. 1944 in Famagusta) had already been working on her *Aphrodite’s Library* using classical texts to inspire her in the shaping and detail of her books. Horst Weierstall (b. 1944 Wuppertal) who had made Cyprus his home since the 1980s, continues to find inspiration from modern and contemporary literary texts in the shaping of his books. Fifteen years on, numerous young artists have joined in exhibitions, and participated in the annual exhibitions of altered books.

Of great significance was finding the joint works of the painter Christoforos Savva (1924–1968) and the poet Theoklis Kouyialis (see Moufflon Publications). Savva had returned from Paris having studied with Andre Lhote. He most probably saw many exhibitions of Livres d’artiste especially those promoted by Stratis Eleftheriades of Lesbos, Greece, who had set up a publishing house, Teriade, mainly for artists’ books.
On his return to Cyprus, Savva met the young poet and was impressed with his more experimental writings. In 1963, he suggested that the poems be written by hand on large art paper. He then worked on and around the text with his art work and collage technique. In 1998, in memory of Savva, I chose 10 of the 15 sheets and displayed them in the corner of the shop: we were happy to realise that these were in fact the start of the Book Art tradition in Cyprus.

**THE FUTURE OF BOOKSHOPS**

Physical bookshops seem once again to be in a precarious situation. The Kindle has arrived on the island, as well as ebooks and ipads. Certain customers prefer to place their orders online. But there are those who still enjoy visiting the bookshop regularly, browsing and buying books, enjoying the whole process of isolating volumes, looking at the cover or dustjacket, the binding, the pages, the print, as well as the content. These individuals are the ones who encourage us to continue the traditional book culture.

My brother’s insight in 1967 was that books, like the rare moufflons, (an agile mountain sheep unique to Cyprus) could be fostered and developed. In 2011 the once near-extinct moufflon is now prolific, coming down from the mountain forests to nibble on vine shoots near villages. Books too can transcend the endangered status, flourishing quietly when tended with care and attention to the needs of writers and readers.
When Orhan Pamuk was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2006, the Swedish Academy chose to announce the award by concentrating on Pamuk’s memories of Istanbul in his autobiography, *Istanbul: Memories of a City* (2005). The book, a melange of Pamuk’s autobiography and the history of Istanbul during the author’s childhood combined with flashbacks to the Ottoman past of the city, concentrates on the author’s and the city’s melancholy, or to be more precise it focuses on the Turkish equivalent of the Western idea of melancholy, *huzun*. There are around two hundred photographs and illustrations in the text, from Orientalist images of the city to photographs by Turkish photographers and a collection of family photographs. However, the association between image and text does not stop here: chapters are given titles such as ‘Black and White’ (chapter 5) or Istanbul is described by Pamuk as a ‘city that mourns over its loss of colour’ (39). The main concern of this essay is to investigate the relationship between text and photography in order to reveal their symbolic and symbiotic relationship in understanding the clash and interlacing of cultures. In particular, the essay will concentrate on the memory of the Ottoman past of Istanbul that Pamuk dwells upon and its importance in understanding the past multiculturalism of the city in order to juxtapose this to Nicosia and its lost multiculturalism through the use of photography and text in the collaboration between the photographer Arunas Baltenas and the writer Niki Marangou in *Nicossiences* (2006). The Baltenas and Marangou’s text is written in three languages, English, Greek and Turkish, which divide the book into three sections and the photographs are not referred to in the text as in the case of Pamuk’s book. What distinguishes both books is the use of ruins in the photography. My concern here is how the symbolism of ruins works in both books in order to reveal the precariousness of cultural realignments through the juxtaposition of word and image.
The last photograph in the final chapter/photographic acknowledgment section in Pamuk’s memoir shows him and the photographer, Ara Guler, whose photographs of Istanbul provide the majority of the illustrations in the book (Fig. 1). It is only at this point that the reader is partly informed of the relationship between the photographs and the author’s narrative when Pamuk reveals that he relived the excitement and puzzlement of writing the book while choosing the photographs. This enthusiasm is evident in the smile on Pamuk’s face who is seen sitting in front of a selection of slides and seems to be placing them in some kind of order, the process of which made him ‘drunk with memories’ (335). For Pamuk the photographs represented a projection of his ‘own memory onto a screen’. This projection of screen memories made him want to ‘capture and preserve’ the dreamscape that each photograph represented and ‘write about it’ (335). The selection and ordering of the photographs and the intoxication that follows such a process, provide some indication of the relationship between photography, memory and the text in *Istanbul*.

My main concern here is to pose a number of questions that I hope will untangle what seems at first glance to be a very straightforward relationship. My first question is to what extent the temporality and spatiality of the photographic image, and in particular the image of ruins, presents a particular relationship to melancholia and memory that moves beyond the symbolic mode of the text? How does Pamuk use the two media in tandem in order to address questions of representation, mediation of private and public memory, and the possibility of an alternative model of cultural memory that departs from the cultural confines of borders? Finally, how can this transcultural model of memory help the reader understand the representation of the city of Nicosia with its divided and abject space.

The use of photography in autobiographies has become increasingly popular since the invention of photography, especially in a new kind of memoir / autobiography that Annette Kuhn terms ‘revisionist autobiography’ (180). The special relationship between photography and autobiography forms the main concern for Linda Haverty Rugg who argues that photographs in autobiographies, or even a reference to photographs, cue the reader into a complex play of signifiers that indicates the presence of a person upon whom text and images rebound (21). Discussions of the relationship of photography to text have largely relied on a binary relationship that sees photographs as lacking intentionality, with language providing the framing of the photograph and the construction of its meaning. Contrary to this Jay Prosse argues most convincingly that photography in autobiography functions as a *memento mori* that makes real a loss and helps one to apprehend it by capturing a reality that might otherwise not be seen or most importantly, ‘we would choose not to see’, and it is exactly this intentional oversight that cannot be recovered by the text (Prosse 2, 9).

The city of Istanbul is remembered in the book through the writings, lithographs and photographs of Orientalist writers, artists, architects and photographers.
like Gustave Flaubert, Le Corbusier, Gerard de Nerval, Melling and Theophile Gautier who construct the identity and, most importantly, the memory of the city that Pamuk wants to remember. These European artists engaged with the city before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and for Pamuk they offered the viewer / reader the variety of life that characterised the city before the Turkish republic was established and from which point onwards the ‘world almost forgot that Istanbul existed’ (6). For Pamuk the Istanbul in which he was born and lived all his life was a ‘city in ruins’ and most importantly, a city of ‘end-of-empire melancholy’ which he spent most of his life ‘either battling’ or ‘making it my own’ (6). How is this melancholy constructed through photography and its relationship to the text?

For some preliminary considerations on this relationship I want to consider two photographs that Pamuk uses in the first chapter. The first is a double spread panoramic view of Istanbul by Ara Guler (Fig. 2) and the second is another family snapshot of baby Pamuk in the arms of his mother (Fig. 3). Neither of these photographs is referred to in the text, as is the case with the majority of the images that punctuate, and to a certain extent puncture, the flow of the narrative. The panoramic view is of the historical part of the city, the Sultanahmet area with Ayia Sophia in the foreground, the Blue Mosque and the Bosporus in the background. It is very much a picture post-card image of Istanbul with its two main tourist attractions. What the photograph also represents is the two civilisations that inform the construction of the identity of the city: the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires and the clash of these two civilisations in the spatiality and psyche of the city. This image differs from the following images of the city in that a certain melancholy characterises most of the other images whereas this image is a more positive image of Istanbul. Another complication is that the photographer of the image, Ara Guler (who photographed most of the images of Istanbul in the book), is of Armenian descent. This fact is not revealed to the reader. The importance of this association is related to the fact that Pamuk himself was prosecuted under the anti-Turkishness law (Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code) by which law anyone who expresses views contrary to those advocated by the government is
liable to prosecution. Pamuk was prosecuted under these laws for mentioning the
Armenian and Kurdish genocides during an interview with the Swiss newspaper,
*Tages Anzeiger*, in February 2005. The publication of the interview resulted in a
public outcry in Turkey which culminated in the burning of his books and of his
photograph, and with *Hurriyet*, Turkey’s largest circulation newspaper, calling
Pamuk an ‘abject creature’ (*Die Zeit* online).

I will now examine the relationship between text and photography in the first
chapter where the above images are positioned in order to explore the screen
memories that Pamuk claims photographs of Istanbul create for him and his
relationship to the city which he describes as ‘one of fate’ (7). He accepts the
city that he was born in although it is an ‘ageing’ and ‘impoverished’ city ‘buried
under the ashes of a ruined empire’ (7). This conditional acceptance of the city
provides the main connection to his relationship with the photographs. In the
Turkish language, according to Pamuk, a special tense distinguishes ‘hearsay
from what we’ve seen with our own eyes’ (8). This tense is used when relating
dreams, fairy tales, or past events that were not witnessed. The distinction is
a useful one according to Pamuk, especially when one is narrating one’s life,
because we cannot remember our earliest memories since these are narrated to
us by somebody else and are ‘imprinted in our minds’ to the degree that they
‘end up mattering more than what we ourselves remember’ (8). The formation
of the self through these memories and experiences works in the same way that
the identity of a city is formed through memories that are handed down through
previous generations and, according to Pamuk, always depend on ‘others’ to tell
the story: ‘we let others shape our understanding of the city in which we live’ (8).
What Pamuk is also engaging with at this point and throughout the book is the relationship between memory and photography and the argument put forward by Walter Benjamin and other commentators that photography creates a ‘false’ or ‘counter’ memory which results in what Sontag calls the replacement of memory by a photograph (Benjamin ([980]; Barthes; Sontag). The relationship of the two photographs to the text can then provide a third reading: the two images if read in conjunction can provide an allegorical meaning to the text; the motherly protection that baby Pamuk receives in the arms of his mother offers protection and comfort to the smiling young child looking over the balcony of their apartment at the world below in the same way that the photograph of the city provides a pacified coherent image of Istanbul that like the motherly love can also produce a symbiosis between the two religions, East and West as well as a number of ethnic groups.

This relationship of photography to memory also creates also the main problem for representations of Istanbul. Because of the absence of such visual representations from Islamic artistic tradition, Istanbul’s identity and memory is established only through the images produced by Western travellers mainly in the nineteenth century. The question that then arises is what kind of cultural memory is produced in relation to a city that relies exclusively on the Western gaze. In the chapter titled ‘Black and White’, the city is described in photographic terms: the dark surfaces of the buildings, their texture and shading and the black and white crowds in the darkening streets during wintertime. Pamuk favours the winter darkness because it offers protection from the inquisitive Western gaze since it veils the ‘shameful poverty of our city’ (32). At this point a Guler photograph is inserted into the text (Fig. 4), so that the narrative refers not only to the literal
poverty of the city but also to the shame of the nation in the eyes of the West regarding the Armenian genocide. Pamuk says the photograph captures the back streets of his childhood where concrete apartment blocks stood next to old wooden houses. It is the chiaroscuro of the photograph, the ‘chiaroscuro of twilight’ (32), that best encapsulates the photograph as a representation of the city. Pamuk writes that it is not what is represented in the photograph — the cobblestone streets and pavements, the iron grilles on the windows or the empty, ruined wooden houses — but the shadows that the two people form in the photograph that provide the punctum: ‘these two people who are dragging long shadows behind them on their way home are actually pulling the blanket of night over the entire city’ thus metaphorically pulling a blanket over the city’s inconvenient history (32). This blanket which will render the city invisible to the foreign gaze produces an oxymoron: a photograph is supposed to enlighten a situation through its presumed representation of reality and not bring darkness and veiling. What the photograph and the oxymoron it creates achieves in this instance is to bring to the forefront the immensity of loss that Pamuk is feeling in relation to his city and the nation as a whole. To see the city in black and white as in a monochrome photograph, ‘is to see it through the tarnish of history: the patina of what is old and faded and no longer matters to the rest of the world’ (38). The protection that the black and white offers can also be seen in the way the people dress (Fig. 5); they all wear ‘the same pale, drab, shadowy clothes’, something that Pamuk finds a deliberate act in order to make a moral point: ‘this is how you grieve for a city that has been in decline for a hundred and fifty years’ (39).
Through this grieving comes the idea of _huzun_ that Pamuk develops in chapter ten. Pamuk places importance on the distinction between the Western idea of melancholia and its Turkish equivalent, _huzun_. The word has its roots in the Arabic language and is meant to convey a feeling of deep spiritual loss. What is important, according to Pamuk, is the absence rather than the presence of _huzun_, which causes distress; it is the failure to experience _huzun_ that leads to feelings of _huzun_ and one suffers because they have not suffered enough. Hence, the melancholia that characterises the life and culture of Istanbul can be attributed partly to this idea of honour that one feels in experiencing _huzun_, but for Pamuk this is not a complete explanation of the melancholy that the inhabitants of Istanbul feel. In order to understand this melancholy one needs to place it within the social and historical context of the city following the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the way in which this history ‘is reflected in the city’s “beautiful” landscapes and people’ (82). It is through this positioning that _huzun_ can be understood as a ‘state of mind that is ultimately as life affirming as it is negating’ (82). According to Pamuk, to feel this _huzun_ is to ‘see the scenes, evoke the memories in which the city itself becomes the very illustration, the very essence of _huzun_’ (83).

It is exactly at this point that the relationship between the photographs and the narrative becomes clearer. The photographs convey to the reader the _huzun_ of the city by making us see the scenes and by making the city the actual illustration. By seeing the city through the photographs the city becomes the illustration rather than the photographs. What this visualisation of the city through the photographic medium also achieves is a sensual encounter with the _huzun_. One can ‘sense it everywhere’ almost ‘touch it’ (89) (Fig 6). The tactility of the photographic image is transformed into the tactility of the _huzun_ in the city. Photography, an imported Western medium, provides the evidence of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire that litter the city and which are ‘reminders that the present city is so poor and
confused that it can never again dream of rising to the same heights of wealth, power and culture’ (91). Memory, writes Walter Benjamin, is not an instrument for the exploration of the past but rather its theatre, the medium of what has been experienced, as the earth is the medium in which cities lie buried in debris. Most importantly for Benjamin, ‘facts are only layers, which deliver … the true assets hidden within inner earth: the images, which stand like ruins as the treasures in the prosaic chambers of our belated insights’ (2006 40).

The huzun is presented visually through the many photographs of ruins and decay (Fig. 7 & 8). They puncture the text in order to remind the reader of the loss that Pamuk feels in relation to the Ottoman past of the city. What is also conspicuous about these photographs is the absence of life. Any contemporary visitor to Istanbul will be struck by the intensity of life in the city, the noises, the smells, the crowds of people moving constantly day and night along its main streets. Instead, the photographs Pamuk chose for his text are characterised by an eerie silence, the tranquility of ruins and the melancholy of loss. When commenting on Atget’s photographs of empty Paris streets, Benjamin writes that the ‘city in these images is cleaned out like an apartment that has not yet found a new tenant’ (1980 260). For Pamuk, like Atget, the empty streets of Istanbul stay empty after the expulsion of its multiethnic inhabitants following the demise of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century and the establishment of the Turkish Republic; and it is photography that conveys this loss in a much stronger way than the text. In the photographs that Pamuk uses, there is not the regenerative energy that usually characterises Atget’s photography and enables the viewer to see the ordinary streets of Paris from a fresh angle and light; although for the Turkish reader the photographs might present an invitation to see their city in a different light — as haunted by the past.5 These ruins, cracks and imperfections form the subject matter of the photographs that Pamuk uses to create, I would argue, an ‘in-between space’ in relation to the text and the photographs. It is exactly the same in-between space that Niki Marangou and Arunas Baltenas capture in their work on Nicosia. An alternative space is created in the text through the incorporation of photography which offers a possibility that exceeds the artificiality of boundaries and nationalist discourses.

Three photographs precede the English section of the book (Fig. 9, 10, 11). The first photograph is of a deserted, empty, ruined house which must have
been a mansion judging from the imposing staircase that is still arresting and is emphasised by the only source of light in the photograph that falls from above and onto the staircase. The second image provides a complete contrast to the photograph of ruins. It shows a Greek Orthodox wedding ceremony and it is the only photograph with a number of people in it. This photograph is followed by a deserted walled garden with an open gate under an impressive archway. Opposite, a house built in typical early twentieth-century architecture can be seen. Its façade is weathered and in need of attention and care.

Turning the page, the English text immediately introduces the reader to Nicosia’s ‘tension’, the Green Line that divides the city into two. According to Marangou & Baltenas however, this artificial border is also the source of the ‘passion’ that
characterises the city and which makes Nicosia more similar to Constantinople (the author uses the Greek name of Istanbul which I adopt from this point onwards) than to Athens. This similarity is stressed in the first page with references to the minarets of Ayia Sophia and the voice of the imam. This introductory page then leads to the narration of the author’s early life in Cyprus, a life characterised by cosmopolitan interactions. This was a colourful life full of sounds, smells and tactile
surfaces. The sensorial childhood memories are in sharp contrast to the black and white photographs which are devoid of life, like the photograph of an architectural detail (fig. 12) that interrupts the narrative at this point. Moreover, it is not only the Turkish community that used to fascinate the author but also the Armenian community of Nicosia with its colourful quarter and intriguing smells. Her daily rounds of the city would reveal hidden treasures, tokens of the rich history of the island and its cosmopolitanism.

During this period, the first roadblocks appeared as the author was growing up and finally the city was divided into two. At this point, another photograph punctures the narrative (fig. 13) showing two children in a deserted street in front of a semi-derelict old house. Their tiny figures provide a glimpse of hope, which however is immediately taken away by the next photograph of the front door of a crumbling house. The two photographs offer to the viewer a past and a present that co-exist and function in simultaneity. The past is in a state of virtuality and invites readers to place themselves in it if they are to have recollections and memory images. To remember, writes the philosopher Henri Bergson, is to throw oneself into the past, to seek events where they took place and to refuse to conceptualise space as a passive repository whose form is given by its content and instead, to see it as a moment of becoming and a passage from one space to another (187). The threshold of the door provides exactly this.

The text ends with a rejection of the new city of Nicosia that expanded beyond the old Venetian walls and is characterised by wealth. These new areas are according to Marangou ‘drained of colour, the new houses with tall columns and endless rooms could be just anywhere’ (Marangou & Baltenas n.p.). They lack the
character of the old city where the crumbling walls of the houses convey a sense of history. It is in the old city that one can sense ‘Nicosia’s geographical location facing East’ (n.p.). For Marangou the garden provides a microcosm where:

I have planted roses in the garden this year
instead of writing poems
the centifolia from the house in mourning at Ayios Thomas
the sixty-petaled rose Midas brought from Phrygia
the Bankisan that came from China
cuttings from the mouchette surviving
in the old city,
but especially Rosa Gallica, brought by the Crusaders
With the exquisite perfume
[...] 
we shall be sharing leaves, petals, sky,
in this incredible garden,
    both they and I transitory. (Marangou & Baltenas n.p.)
The garden and its smells not only represent the embodiment of memories from different corners of the history of Cyprus but also offer the possibility of reconciliation. It is through these shared historical memories of smell that the ‘I’ can express itself as a subject and a Cypriot. The book ends with a photograph of a rose bush in bloom (fig. 14).

In many respects, Marangou proposes like Pamuk, a Deleuzian ‘in between space’: a space, which is at the intersection of two events or rather two series (Grosz, 91–105). The events / series that she represents are aligned in order to create
a plane of consistence and coexistence. Her narrative is a process of becoming that transubstantiates memories through their encounters with history and the objects around them. This allows memories and objects to be released from the systems they belong to, in order to work for the whole rather than to function singularly. The process that Marangous’ narrative instigates in relation to Baltenas’ photographs endows memories and history with transforming possibilities in relation to the landscape that surrounds them.

Like Pamuk, it is exactly reflection that allows Marangou’s and Baltenas’ work to create an in-between space. This is a space without boundaries. It takes its form from the abject space of the dead zone which sits outside of the identity of those that constitute the enemy or the friend, in order to provide possibilities, realignments and openness, as opposed to cohesion and unity. This space is where identities can be undone and the binaries and dualisms that dominate Cypriot culture can be re-thought and contested. This space also allows the reconstitution of identities and the re-evaluation of what constitutes the other. As Elizabeth Grosz argues, ‘any identity is always riven with forces, with processes, connections, movements that exceed and transform identity and that connect individuals to each other and to worlds, in ways unforeseen by consciousness and unconnected to identity’ (Grosz 95).

Marangou and Pamuk juxtapose photography with text in order to reveal the complexities of memory, loss, trauma and space in relation to geo-political, aesthetic, and identity issues. Their constructed spaces, inspired by the ruins of Nicosia and Istanbul/Constantinople, become spaces where, through an interrogation of memory, they can reveal the interruptions of history in the
spatiality of the city in order to create another possibility of history. As Benjamin wrote: ‘in the ruin history has materially distorted itself into the scene. And figured in this manner, history does not assume the form of the promise of an eternal life’ (1977 177).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
All images from *Nicossiences* have been reproduced with permission from the authors.

NOTES
1 Pamuk, Orhan 2005, *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, Faber, London. All references refer to this edition
3 See Scott 62 and Mitchell 109, for two contrasting views.
4 The Armenian Genocide was centrally planned and administered by the Turkish government against the entire Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. It was carried out between 1915 and 1918. The Armenian people were subjected to deportation, expropriation, abduction, torture, massacre, and starvation and the majority of the Armenian population was forcibly removed from Armenia and Anatolia to Syria, where the vast majority were sent into the desert to die of thirst and hunger. Large numbers of Armenians were methodically massacred throughout the Ottoman Empire. It is estimated that half a million Armenians died during this period. The Turkish government denies to this day that the genocide took place. See http://www.armenian-genocide.org/genocidefaq.html
   In 1999 over 40,000 Kurds were killed during military operations in Turkey and according to figures published by the Turkish parliament, 6,000 Kurdish villages were systematically evacuated of all their inhabitants and 3,000,000 Kurds were displaced. See http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=13491
5 See Cadava for a discussion of ruins and photograph.

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Aydın Mehmet Ali

FORBIDDEN ZONE…

A cracked skull appeared beyond the hotel… Snuggled in the shape of a foetus. A larger head compared to the body. Only the shoulders and upper torso visible. A large chunk missing. Jagged edged. The sky peering through from the other side. The sharp lines of the late 1960s early ’70s hotel clashing with the smooth rounded contours of the skull. An almost square building twelve storeys high. Broad and full of bravado while facing the sea, narrow and vulnerable from the side, almost flimsy. The neat lined-up balconies as though at a military parade, reminders of the boom ’70s package holidays. Maximum sun. Maximum sea. Tiny boxes. Wall to wall windows. Wall to wall balconies. Angled for privacy precariously balanced against the aim of the holiday, to be seen, to be exposed, to be noticed, to be a star for fifteen days in a year…

Drinks, sun, sea and the local tanned olive-skinned boys with erotic eyes and shy smiles. Always moving around in groups. More in love with their own bodies and each other than the tourists, peripheral to their lives but still a temptation. Doing somersaults on the beach, games, excuses for touching, embracing each other, holding tightly. Older women aware of their own attractiveness glancing, careful lest their lingering looks attract exaggerated attention needing justification to husbands. Older men wistful. ‘Accidentally’ the ball is kicked towards the blonde, red-skinned tourists sizzling in the July heat. Blue-eyed, loud-laughtered, bikinied girls. A few smiles, furtive looks. Seductive games while drinking bottles of coke or beer unable to quench the thirst. Laughter, movement, running. A cacophony of noise, a perfect camouflage for the hastily spoken words while picking up the ball from the blonde tourist talking to her friend. The dark long fingers gently brush off the wet sand grains from the ball, enough time to arrange to meet at the disco, at the back of the hotel. What time…? 8.00 tonight…? OK.

The cacophony has died. An eerie silence patrols the hotels, the balconies, streets, gardens, the disco. The blood-red hibiscus continue to blossom on the veranda, between two hotels half submerged in the sand. And date-palms, natives and lovers of the sand dunes. The pigeons have taken over the hotels. The new tourists with permanent residences and no visas. No one can order them about.

Forbidden Zone

Red boards. Black letters with black soldiers gun in hand tangled in barbed wire guard the empty hotels. Against whom?
Zone Interdite

The pigeons in defiance of orders fly in and out, settle anywhere they wish, shit indiscriminately, even worse dance in courtship and fuck all over the balconies, in full view of the guards impotent in preventing or punishing such audacious violations of morality, decency and military dictates. The quick succession of generations ensuring erasure from memory passed on by those witnesses to carnage.

Verbotene Zone

Empty holes. The dark hollow body of the hotel cannot prevent the echoes escaping from all its orifices. Cooing sounds echo around the hotel corridors, bedrooms, dining room, barely audible but the woman with the dark hair and olive skin can hear them as her bare feet touch the sand, and toes sink in gently gathering sand grains and tiny ground white pink and yellow shells on her skin. She turns her face to the hotel and silently calls for the sounds to come to her… A child’s voice. Laughter. Excitement. A little girl. With Daddy. A game is being played. In and out of the water. Daddy-Daddy-look-look! Catch me! Catch me! She is three. Dark hair. Bouncing in two bunches on top of her head. Rubber duck ring around her bottom. But Daddy look, look at me! Look! I’m nearly swimming. Little bare feet run in and out of the water leaving tiny footprints kissed then erased by the sea foam. Daddy is looking at the lone figure in the distance on the other end of the beach. She walks without haste. Daddy holds the little girl in his arms. His eyes watch the lone woman in a white flimsy dress with fluttering tiny cornflower-blue flowers. Daddy-daddy-look... Yes I’m looking. The woman is watching the little girl. Daddy is bald. He can’t believe the lone woman is looking at him so boldly. Daddy smiles at the lone woman in expectation…

* * * * *

Planes flew over in July. Fighter jets screeched and tore the sky apart. A confused moment. Happy birthday to you happy birthday dear Aris happy birthday to youuuu… From the basement of Aspendia Hotel. Wish wish blow the candles and wish… Don’t tell anyone or it won’t come true. Close your eyes close your eyes. Now, wish… silence everyone… A roar whistles past. The walls shake. The crystal chandelier. A deafening blast as though the earth exploded. Clouds of dust descend. Invisibility fear seep through. A child’s whimper. Adults shout orders, get down get down... hands reach out for each other crawling on the floor until they reach other hands, other body parts. Hold on. Hold on. Quickly quickly let’s get out of here. Dust covered bodies try out slow ghostly movements. My beautiful dress Mummy... my pink fairy dress... it’s dirty. A whimper. I won’t be able to be an angel again Mummy... loud wails. I want to be an angel Mummy. You said you won’t get me another if I get it dirty. It isn’t my fault Mummy! Mummy? An
imperceptible silence. A hushed trembling voice. Shusssh Alexia... don’t cry baby. It isn’t your fault. We’ll get you another one baby... shuuush... A loud explosion shakes the walls further. Windowpanes explode a rush of hot wind blows in, furniture flies off, debris falls, the stunned silence no longer contained, screams screams fill the air, hysterical, uncontrollable screams. In between offerings and prayers to God and Jesus and to the Holy Mother Panayia, Mary. The fear of death of the adults soaked up by the young unable to comprehend the complexities of life and death but well aware of fear. With tear-filled eyes and faces the young watch the adults, wait for them to make everything all right, to stop the loud roaring, to stop the dust and debris, to get back to the party. The adults paralysed by fear become children ... holding babies tightly against themselves, nearly suffocating them, searching for safety. Get into the cars quickly get into the cars... a man’s voice penetrates through the dust and fallen debris from what was the direction of the door. But he is invisible. Mummy my cake... I haven’t made a wish yet. And the candles have all blown out, by themselves. Wait Mummy wait...

The swings are buried under the sand whipped up by the winds from the sea sometimes bringing red sand clouds from the Sahara. They don’t move. The top bar rusty with peeling blue paint stands half a metre above the sand dune; the immovable rusty brown chains hold the seats trapped under the sand. No children’s laughter, high-pitched excitement, giggles. Push Daddy push... higher higher... up to the sky... the high pitch of excitement skirting the edges of fear. Hold on now... don’t let go! Both hands! Both hands! Don’t wave to me...

White sand lilies blossom at the end of Summer, their scent descends on decay, destruction, decomposed bodies, broken windows, doors, abandoned buildings, flowers, trees, prisoners of barbed wire protected by red signboards black gun-touting shadow soldiers. Visible. Impenetrable. A shrill whistle tears the silence of the day. The fight of the shrill whistle against the thousands of cameras clicked by the day-tourists from the South on their quick tour of the North to the abandoned well-guarded empty hotels silent witnesses to war and atrocities. Unmovable, unhidden, magnificent monuments to shame stand stoically while around their skirts insignificant nobodies flutter desperate to impose unimplementable rules with the help of the gun-totting-black-shadow-soldiers strapped on barbed wire. The whistle losing the battle of no photographs to the music of the click clicking of cameras and languages of the world whispered along the narrow beach in homage to the dead and disappeared.

His whole upper torso is tattooed. He struts his legs, a peacock on an almost deserted beach. A few late season English tourists afraid of the sizzling July heat arrive in November with their umbrella and cool-box always at the same spot with the stones they have appropriated. A few tut-tuts followed by the assertive claiming of the umbrella bearing stones which may have been scattered or used for other purposes by the university students for a cheap night-out on the beach the previous night. The stones oblivious as to their constantly changing ownership by
day and by night. Sunflower seed husk patterns and empty beer bottles evidence of the nightly crimes. They must be animals these people how could they do this? Why don’t they put their rubbish into the bins? The anger and frustration from the slightly disabled young street cleaner pouring curses on the privileged spoilt brats at university while he clears up rubbish. He is luminous in his orange jacket moving around picking up their rubbish. A Cypriot by accident brought over from Turkey when three years old by parents offered land and houses abandoned by the Cypriot greeks after the invasion in 1974, cursing the students from Turkey who come to escape military service and in the process live envious student lives due to generous parental contributions.

The tattooed peacock struts over to the English couple settled under the umbrella ensuring high visibility from the barely five people making up his beach audience. The woman with the dark hair walks by steadily looking at his tattoos, sagging body, greasy dyed streaks of hair which travel from one side of his head over the top to the other side in a futile attempt to cover the bald patch on the move. Streaks, forever at the mercy of gusts of wind. But he doesn’t see. In the mirror he only sees the body beautiful and dazzling white smile of his youth now maintained by porcelain dentures…

* * * * *

Yorgos runs into the room. He tries to disperse the thick dust clouds burning his eyes with futile hand movements. Gasping for air as he swallows the earth tastes stuck on his tongue and roof of the mouth. His heart pounding, ricocheting echoes in his ears. He barely recognises his voice shouting into the void, ‘This way … this way!’ drowned by the screams and cacophony of sounds. He desperately wills himself to believe his wife and child are alive. Trying to identify scraps of nuances amongst the screams, shouts, crying children and women, shaking chandeliers and falling debris. Tears stream down leaving luminous snail trails on his dust-covered face.

‘Ariiii… Mariaaa…’ bellows out of his lungs as he hurries himself from one shadow to the next losing his balance, crushing into objects and bodies, falling over scrambling up and dashing forward into the dust fog.

‘Daddy… tomorrow is my birthday! You know… did you buy me a present? Mummy says it’s a surprise.’ The previous night his son had crawled onto his lap as he was reading him a story and conspiratorially whispered, ‘You can tell me… I won’t tell Mummy’. After a brief silence he added wisely, ‘It will be our secret’. Yorgos had chuckled at his son soon to be six playing games he had picked up from him. He marvelled and worried at the capacity of the young to pick up so much which was not consciously taught them.

‘Ariiii… where are you?’ his voice bellows into the hall of chaos as fear begins to wrap him up. He wipes his eyes smearing his face with salty mud aware that no one can hear him.
He jumps out of his skin as a hand grabs his arm and grips it painfully tightly. He catches Maria’s scent as he wraps her in his arms breathlessly asking, ‘Aris? Aris?’ before he becomes aware of two little hands pulling onto his trouser legs. Yorgos picks up his son as they rush towards the sea through the back entrance hoping it will save them from the wrath of the fighter jets screeching by and burning up what was spared by the heat of July. They crawl on the sizzling sand amongst people scattering in all directions and circle the hotel. They rush past the crimson-red flowering hibiscus bushes on the corner, turn left, past the date palms growing in the sand, emerging in front of the hotel. Their car is covered in debris and broken glass. All the hotel windows next door had exploded from the bombing. People run in all directions, confused as to which direction leads to safety. Where did the attacks come from? They jump in the car. Total strangers bundle in after them, with ghostly fear in their eyes. Silent. Stunned. Yorgos struggles to turn on the ignition. His fingers shaking uncontrollably like the poplar leaves in a summer breeze. Maria watches carefully without panic as he tries to spit the grit sticking to the inside of his cheeks, no saliva comes. ‘I can drive,’ she says gently touching his trembling fingers.

The roads are filled with streams of people walking, running, crying, calling out, looking for loved ones, someone they might recognise, searching, constantly searching with dazed eyes, in disbelief, trying to guess the way out, the safe passage. Cowering with every loud bang, searching the skies for the next fighter jet attack.

‘What’s he doing hanging down from the hole? It’s dangerous…’ Aris’ trembling voice breaks the silence of held breaths, looking up at the tenth floor of the first hotel on the Beach. Neither Maria nor Yorgos explain. No one speaks. Sweat pours down the roots of their hair, behind their ears, trickling between their breasts and down their spines, creeping between their buttocks creating pools on the leather seats of the car, drenching their clothes. A young man hangs precariously over the wall framed by the massive hole torn open by the bombing, a direct hit by the fighter jets. He was so still. Dead. Aris knew. The side of the hotel has collapsed, all the way from the top beyond the tenth floor, creating craters on the ground and mounds of crashed concrete, metal and red bricks.

The car crawls towards the new yellow painted modern church while they avoid talking lest it betrays fear. They are reduced to eye signals and quick secret hand and finger movements they hope Aris can’t see or interpret. Avoiding people on foot, bicycles and motorbikes running in and out of cars is becoming even harder. They head towards the West. The safest bet, Maria and Yorgos signal to each other. The jets had come from the north so would the soldiers. The invasion had begun. For days they didn’t want to believe it, for days they wished it away, they wanted to believe that diplomacy would prevail, that the big guarantor powers and the West would not allow it. Surely common sense would prevail. War was not in the interests of Cypriots. There were deliberate provocations but
surely the majority of people could see through them and would restrain from reacting. It couldn’t happen… They wanted to continue the normality of their lives just like yesterday. But it had happened. And it was changing everything beyond their imagination.

They approach the traffic lights by the famous Venus nightclub on the corner on the left, where the sailors of the world docked at Famagusta harbour for a short respite seeking the comfort of the arms, tongues and groins of prostitutes and delights of young olive-skinned boys willing to fuck them senseless to prove their masculinity. They were thefuckers and not the fucked. You are not a puşt, a Turkish word finding itself transformed into the Greek Language as pushtis, a poof, if you did the fucking, they said. They saw the dark clouds billowing out of the upper windows and doors of the District Court House. Tongues of fire devouring the timber structured roof with an avarice and speed uncurtailed by the absence of firefighters. Yorgos gazes at the building only for a brief moment imagining the transformation of bundles of white sheets of paper into the black flakes flying around in the skies. Records of his cases, victories, defeats for justice, fairness and equality before the law for all people; some he had defended without pay out of a principle, now mere specks fluttering in the bluest of skies. He barely hears the gasps of Maria and Ari as he wonders the whereabouts of Mustafa, his friend since the English School in Nicosia and fellow barrister since their time together at Lincoln’s Inn in London. He closes his eyes willing with all his powers that he be unharmed. He can hear the screams of the panic stricken animals and their crashes against their cages, imprisoned in the small zoo opposite as he puts his foot down.

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‘Pull up… to the side of the road…’ came the order from nowhere. In Cypriotgreek spoken by the softness of a CypriotTurkish man. All Yorgos could see was a rifle pointing at him, straight into his eyes, level with the car window. It caught flashes of light from the headlights of the car behind. The gun shook with impatience, held by a relaxed hand, pointing towards the left. There was nowhere to go. The road was blocked by hundreds of cars, small pick-up trucks, lorries all going the same direction: West. Gridlocked. Others just walked alongside cars or stood waiting.

‘Get out,’ came the order immediately after. Yorgos opened his door slowly and scrambled out of the car, loaded with some of their belongings, avoiding any sudden movement and squeezing his wife’s hand gently with trembling hands.

They had managed to get back to their house in the new developing suburb of Varosha with modern houses, beautiful large gardens full of bougainvillaeas, frangipani, jasmine, roses and pavements lined with trees transported from other parts of the Empire. Australian bottle-brush, South African jacaranda, flame trees from Malaysia, ficus variations from Africa, broad-leafed almond from
the Caribbean and a purple sometimes white flowering legume trees, their scent descending over the streets especially during warm spring nights. They had decided to pack some things and travel by night as they thought that to be safer.

What do you take with you at such moments? Will you be away for long? Is this temporary? When will you return? Not returning, not an option to contemplate. Just a situation you need to get yourself through. And you have no answers to the same questions asked by others seeking reassurance. Maria did not ask. They packed some summer clothes, books, toys for Aris, important documents, money, passports, jewellery, ID cards and a first aid box. Yorgos wanted to take some law books and case files he was working on. He dropped them when Maria said, ‘But the Court House was burning’. Some water and food on the way was better use of space she suggested. When Maria took her wedding dress he just looked at her but said nothing. Some photos, she insisted on taking some albums and photos off the walls. She looked around the house in desperation for what else to take. She, much more astute and quick as to what she could leave behind; he, feeling useless and detached. It didn’t matter anyway; they would be back in a few weeks…

He was so young, the hand holding the shotgun. On the inside of his forearm a tattoo of the crescent and star in lurid red. They came eye to eye. He was barely fifteen–sixteen. One fully aware of his powerlessness, the other unused to wielding such seemingly limitless power. One used to operating in circles of power curtailed and limited by the laws of the land, the other operating without boundaries on that insignificant remote road leading to the village of Derhinia usually deserted, running through potato fields witness only to occasional tractor jams caused by three or four travelling together during harvest or sowing time.

He guided Yorgos unhurriedly to the side of the road before he came back and leaned down to look into the car. He noted Maria’s frightened eyes darting back and forth to her husband while she held her son’s hands, squeezing, letting go, caressing and squeezing again. She heard women screaming from other cars in front and behind her. She noticed another body, the crotch level with her window on her side of the car. She didn’t look up. She kept her eyes on her husband. ‘Can you drive?’ the young man asked. She was surprised by his steady, unhurried voice. She nodded after a while trying to prevent the possible scenarios crowding her head, threatening to overwhelm her. She kept repeating to herself to be focused. ‘My husband…’ she managed to say, swallowing hard to overcome the fear in her mouth but he had already moved away, towards Yorgos. She waited in the car for what seemed to be an eternity trying not to take her eyes off her husband, her ears picking up the screams, crying, curses, half-hearted scuffles betraying defeat, the guilt of self preservation, abandonment of the self and others to fate… The futility of resistance, struggle, the surrender to what is perceived as more powerful, reluctance to become martyrs in a land eulogising ‘martyrs’ adorning most streets in all towns and villages with their names, where special parades and anniversaries are organised with much pomp and ceremony,
where the families of the martyred are honoured and rewarded for giving birth to
and instilling the sacred duty of martyrdom for the Cause. Maria noticed other
Cypriot Greek men by the side of the road. Her heart beat faster but she was alert.
Why were they separating the men from the women? She was startled by a scream
close by. She looked towards the back of the car. A woman wearing a black
headscarf and clothes, a sign of mourning, was being dragged along the road. She
held on tightly to a young man wearing a white T-shirt being dragged away in
turn by two men each carrying a shot gun in the other hand. Her scarf came off in
the scuffle, her legs covered in blood as they grazed along the side of the asphalt.
They hit her arms repeatedly with the butts of their rifles but couldn’t make her
let go. ‘He’s my only son…’ she was wailing. ‘The other two you killed in our
village!’ she spit out the words in anger rather than fear. ‘You killed my husband!
God’s curses be upon you! Satans! Murderers! May you burn in Hell! I curse your
wives, your children! May they be killed and raped… like you are doing to us!’
The slim young son imprisoned in the powerful hands of the two men, gripped
from under the arms was being pulled away, his feet scraping the ground, his face
crumpled, tears flowing.

Maria kept her eyes on her husband holding onto her son sitting on her lap…

* * * * *

‘That night the army officers from Turkey in charge of the operation made so
much money. Imagine … these people were trapped! On the road, they could go
nowhere. They handed everything over in exchange for their lives. The officers
claimed it was for the Cause, to buy guns and ammunition so we could defend
ourselves against the Greeks.’ He leans sideways from where he is sitting, stretches
his arms, his face breaking into a smile, the folds of his face curtains on either
side. Dazzling perfection achieved with porcelain dentures.

‘Come… come to Grandpa bullim, come… come,’ he makes a childish
gurgling sound as the thick rough fingers make waves in the air cajoling the
toothless wonder on all fours crawling away speedily scattering little excited
cries and giggles to his audience of one. He pretends to get up to follow the baby
who becomes more excited by the chasing game scuttling off even more speedily
giving out little victory cries of delight. He sits back in his seat, his eyes moist as
he continues to watch the baby for a while.

‘Those who tried to crawl into the darkness, it was a moonless night… to
disappear into the potato fields, were shot or beaten mercilessly and dragged
back onto the road. A deterrent. That night was Godless… He abandoned us all.
They raped women,’ after a brief silence, ‘…and girls, some as young as thirteen–
fourteen’. He seems reluctant to go there. He resists. but it’s like a flood. Once
the barrier breaks, he is swept in the torrent. That memory has been buried for so
long… thirty-four years. Why dredge it out? What good would it do? The dead
are dead. What’s done is done.
'I will never forget this man… he just stood there, calmly, once he realised he was going to be killed. He was a barrister, I think, famous one. I knew him. He had defended many Cypriot-Dutch people, even when he knew some couldn’t pay him. But I couldn’t say anything. I kept quiet,’ he lowers his voice and throws a glance towards the house. A quick confirmation that no one was close enough to be listening… to what? Shame? Guilt? Remorse for his silence on the night but even worse his silence for over thirty-four years? He colluded. He was complicit in the creation of this history, he knew. But even more so the creation of the schizophrenic society of cowards his children and grandchildren now inhabited. This was his legacy and that of those still walking around free. Wherever they dig the ruins of the past … skeletons emerged with the recent excavations of mass graves. Bones, hidden at the bottom of waterless wells, under bridges, caves, ravines, remote and not so remote fields, emerged to tell half the story, the other half still a secret, safe with the perpetrators.

‘I didn’t want trouble with the officers from Turkey or the TMT* killers they brought to Famagusta, to do the killing. They would bring in outsiders because they knew the locals would find it difficult to kill someone they knew or grew up with. It wasn’t worth putting my life and that of my children in danger and be accused of being a traitor. Do you know what that means? Especially during a time of war? I’ll tell you … death! They used to kill “traitors”, and you could be a traitor sitting in the café with a Cypriot Greek you’d known all your life. You immediately became a spy! It didn’t take much to be one.

‘I killed some myself…’ he shuffles in his chair and glances over at the baby. ‘When you get the orders and the gun delivered in the middle of the night, from “high above”, you don’t ask questions. You go out and do what you are told. It was all for the Cause. We killed many good people, some totally innocent … for the Cause. I left and went to London. Now, I know most of it was for the personal Cause … of the Leader!’

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The body next to the passenger side of the car leans over calmly and opens the door. Maria holds tightly onto Aris. She is feeling exposed, more vulnerable; the shield created by the car door has been removed. She tries to keep focused, her heart beating like a trapped bird. She looks at her husband watching her, agitated. He tries to take a step forward, a muzzle slowly cuts across his chest, dark against his white linen shirt. The hand leans down and grabs Maria’s arm. She is still holding onto Aris, straddling her lap. He pulls her out, forces her onto her feet. Maria can hear Yorgos’ desperate shout, ‘Mariaaa…’ as she is dragged from the car. A few steps along, the young fourteen–fifteen year old appears by their side. He is calm, ‘En entaxi,’ he says in Cypriot Greek, ‘It’s OK. Don’t be frightened.’ She looks at the face with the innocence of youth. His Cypriotness a momentary comfort evaporating as soon as he leans over to take Aris from her
arms. Her elegance, gentle manner, reasonableness vanishes. She snatches him away her eyes scattering fire, ‘No! No!’ she hisses. From the corner of her eye she sees the muzzle against Yorgos’ heaving chest. She is on her own. She takes a few steps back and stares at the young boy. He has not changed his expression. Such calmness, control, so unnatural for one so young. The man’s face a mocking leer. He grabs her hands and prises them apart at breaking point. She struggles twisting and kicking, tears rolling down her face drenched in sweat. She tries to escape by dropping her body on the ground suddenly, but the two hands hold on, bruising her forearms and burning the skin. Aris is sitting on her lap, his arms tightly around her neck, almost suffocating her. The young boy prises Aris’ hands from around her neck and pulls him up into the air, like in a game of swirling around… Suspended in mid-air by his arms, he looks over his shoulder at his mother being dragged away by the stocky man with bullets strapped across his chest, wearing camouflage hunting trousers and boots.

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‘He dragged her into the night. A light elegant little thing she was. Like a bird. Young, barely in her mid-twenties. I heard him shout like a wounded animal, “Mariaaa… Mariaaa…” as they dragged her from the car. She was wearing a light blue sleeveless dress. You know, it was a hot summer… ’74. And she was beautifully tanned, with dark hair down to her shoulders…’ He pinches his lower lip and bites the tip of his thumbnail. He looks up, ‘You should’ve seen what he did to her… Sex is one thing … but this was something else! Her face was cut up, eye swollen, lips cut up, bleeding, dress torn into shreds,’ he demonstrates by moving his hands from the top of his chest to his knees, repeating the action a few times, his face crumples up, ‘… soaked in blood. You could see her legs and arms sliced open…’ he shudders. ‘She was covered in the red soil of the potato fields … she held her forearm, it dangled unnaturally … it was broken. She walked barefoot into the headlights of the cars on the road. For everyone to see … as though she wanted everyone to see! She didn’t cry or shout. Nothing! She limped, dragging her foot, looking ahead, searching for their car.

‘She was the symbol of our shame … of the shame of our Cause. And of those who carried out such atrocities in its name. I wasn’t proud to be a Turkish man that night! The blood running in my veins was not noble that night … it was a stinking sewage!’ After a deep sigh, ‘And he was Cypriot Turkish, he wasn’t from Turkey…’

He realises he is going bright red in the face and throat and sits back in the chair reminding himself not to forget to take his high blood pressure pills, as he sometimes does. The toothless wonder is preoccupied with a bright orange marigold flower he has decapitated with one flying swoop from the flower-pot next to his chair busily deflowering it, scattering clumps of petals all around him.

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‘What’s you name then?’ the fourteen–fifteen year old asks Aris. He does not look up. He keeps furtively looking in the direction the last time he saw his mother. ‘Mine is Hasan.’ Aris wipes off his tears with his palms. His mother has been gone a long time.

‘Where do you live? Are you from Famagusta?’ Aris looks at the ground, covering his eyes with his hands, his elbows on his bare knees. ‘I’m from Sandallar, Sandalaris… do you know it?’ Aris gets up and looks in the direction he has last seen his mother. He is agitated. ‘Don’t worry she’ll be back.’

‘When?’ Aris asks as quick as a flash. ‘Soon. Soon she will be back. Just sit down…’ Aris does, looking at the gun the young boy is carrying.

‘This is my father’s gun. Do you have one?’ Aris is shocked; he is not even allowed to have a toy gun. He checks that he can still see his father. He lifts his chin up, the Cypriot gesture of ‘No’. ‘I’m thirteen. I learnt to shoot when I was nine. My father taught me.’ A brief silence as the thirteen-year-old caresses the shotgun.

‘Have you seen anyone dead?’ asks Hasan. Aris jumps up, ‘Yes, at the hotel,’ he blurts out. ‘A man. He was hanging from the hole in the wall. After the jet fighters…’ Hasan nods slowly. ‘Have you?’ asks Aris with fear, for the first time looking at Hasan. ‘Yes,’ he says with a deep sigh. Aris watches Hasan’s face with fear, for the first time. They are sitting on the ground by the car on the road, leaning against it facing the darkness into the fields, beyond the initial light amber headlights casting long shadows. All the doors are open, looted, their belongings now belongings of others. ‘My Dad,’ came from Hasan. Panic in Aris’ eyes, he looks for his father who is still standing by the side of the road, further down, with many other men of all ages. Aris looks up to see Hasan wipe his nose, ‘My mum. My two sisters. My little brother… he was your age,’ Hasan nods towards Aris. ‘My eighteen-month-old baby brother … and my nene and dede. They were old.’ He looks at Aris, ‘Why did they kill them? They are all dead… I have no one left…’ as though murmuring to himself. Aris stands up like a shot. He starts to tremble, his eyes full of tears he does not hide, looking directly into Hasan’s face which is now oblivious to his presence, crumpled, eyes shut, covered in tears and snot sobbing uncontrollably. Aris sways from leg to leg, agitated… He must pee…

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‘She swept her son into her arms with that single arm, she held him. He wrapped his arms around her neck, his legs around her waist tightly and pissed all over her breasts and down her front. She took one look at her husband, put her son into the car, got in, put it in gear, put her foot down and took off with one foot and one arm into the fields overtaking the cars blocking the road, like a woman possessed. No one dared to shoot or drive after her. We watched her as the lights of the car disappeared on that lonely road going West, far into the distance into the night…’
He murmurs almost to himself, ‘No one said a word… but you couldn’t help but admire a woman like that. I looked at her husband. A strange tiny smile on the corner of his lips … that’s all.

‘After a while we were told to tell the women, children and the old to go. We pushed them into the cars, lorries, pick-up trucks, threatened them with guns. Some just left, others wanted their husbands and sons. They tried to walk over to the men; we turned our guns on them. They stopped. It was heart breaking really, we didn’t allow them to say goodbye.

‘We were under orders. We didn’t know what the officers from Turkey wanted to do with the men. Later they said they were going to be used in prisoner exchanges. It made sense…

‘Then out of the blue, a young one, barely fourteen–fifteen … he went berserk! He started shouting and screaming about his father, his mother and sisters. He was crying about his brother who was six… We knew him. He was the only survivor, his family was massacred alongside thirty others, we were told, in one of the Messaoria villages. He waved his gun at the men, at the women and children who were scrambling into the cars and lorries, frightened out of their wits. He kept shouting, “I’m going to kill you … why did you murder my family? What did we ever do to you…?” tears and snot running down his face. It was heart breaking. He had found them brutally murdered in the house and around the yard when he came back from tending his herd.

‘Then a hothead from another village shouted he wanted revenge, an eye for an eye. He was one of the sharp shooters but young, barely eighteen–nineteen. He was one of those who had heard there was a blockade and that Greeks had been taken prisoners. So he turned up for a bit of excitement with a couple of others. He wanted to kill everyone. He kept pointing his gun at the women and children getting into the cars, then at the men lined up at the side of the road. He was raging, running up and down. No-one in his family was killed… Then a couple of others also got worked up in a frenzy and started to do the same…

‘The army officers didn’t intervene. They let it play out. Some of us instinctively walked towards the women and children and stood facing the hotheads. We took a risk. The hotheads turned to the men. They started pushing and hitting them with the butts of their guns, kicking, swearing… They were pushed against the wall of the open reservoir used to water the orange orchards. A low wall of about two feet. Some instinctively climbed on the wall. We stood back. Suddenly a machine gun rattles out. From where we don’t know! Shotguns join in. It was Hell! The men didn’t have a chance. They were mowed down. They fell back into the water. Again and again… they killed them all… hundreds… it only took a few minutes.’ He shakes his head as the image resurrects itself. ‘We had to let them do it … to take revenge … an eye for an eye,’ he says slowly. A brief silence, ‘Some of us just dropped on the ground.’
When we went to look, the reservoir was full of dead bodies, all piled up. Riddled with bullets. Some still with their eyes open. The water had turned to blood. I will never ever forget it…’ he rubs his fingers and hands repeatedly.

‘As the day began to break, they opened the sluice gates and the blood water gushed out like a river. It rushed to the orange trees a little further down,’ he looks down at his knitted fingers going white at the knuckles, then away into the distance. A vacant look.

‘We buried them in two mass graves. Huge. We dug all night… All of us… just digging and digging. We managed to bury them as the sun was rising,’ he sighs and rubs his palms on his legs a few times, absentmindedly, looking down.

‘Some took whatever was left on the bodies … the worst was the gold wedding-rings. They cut off the fingers… The officers said it was to prevent identification but it was robbing the dead … and we all knew it.’

He straightens his back, takes a deep breath, exhales loudly and looks straight ahead, ‘They are “missing” according to records. No one found them, so they are ‘missing’. They are DEAD! Many of us are witnesses … but no one will say. The area is under the control of the Turkish military. The “Forbidden Zone”. No one can enter except military personnel. Their graves and our secret are safe. What a secret…! I’ve lived with this all these years…’ an imperceptible tremble in the voice immediately buried.

‘And you know … it’s not very far from here. Only just down the road… Some nights it’s so hard to sleep. Well you know that; I come here to talk to you. But even that doesn’t help,’ he hangs his head staring at his lap for a while.

‘Two summers ago I got really worried!’ he looks up, ‘It was the time when they started to dig up the graves. People rang the UN Missing Persons Unit anonymously giving details of murders and burial places. Then one night, I heard what I thought were tanks in the “Forbidden Zone”. When I listened carefully I realised they were bulldozers … they were at it … all night! Then the next night! It went on for three–four nights! I was worried… I was so scared! What if they were found?’ After a brief silence as though to himself, ‘and maybe part of me wants them to be found.’ He looks around him with vacant eyes, ‘The following day I asked one of the TMT members, a hardcore, I told him I’d heard bulldozers… At first he didn’t want to say, but we carry a common guilt … we were all there.

‘Anyway, you know what they were doing?’ he waits for a respectable pause, ‘They were digging up the mass graves after thirty-two years!’ He calms down, ‘They scooped up the bones, shoes, rotting clothing, everything with those huge mechanical diggers and dumped them into the back of military lorries. I suppose they were afraid someone amongst us might talk… We wouldn’t would we?’ he asks without seeking reassurance, then continues in the same breath, ‘They sent them to a stone quarry halfway up the Pentadactyllos Mountains and crushed everything into small pebble-size pieces. They loaded them up again, brought them back and laid them down as hardcore then tarmac on top … on the road
they are re-surfacing in the “Forbidden Zone” leading to the hotels the Army has commandeered for a luxury holiday resort for its officers. All under the control of the Turkish Military. Ingenious … with orders from the highest command outside the jurisdiction of the UN. All that remains is a beautiful, smooth asphalt road.

‘No one will ever find them…’

He sighs again and looks at the face sitting in front of him listening to his confessions. It’s not the first time. He has come here before, to this safe place where he can dig, excavate in his memory where he has chosen to bury, to forget so much. He sits in the same chair and talks, sometime losing all sense of time … he looks out for signs of disapproval, accusation, hatred even sympathy and understanding, signs of forgiveness, of guilt, of shame … in the face.

He picks up his grandson who has come up and put both hands on his knees, now standing, pleased with his creation of torn up newspapers, thrown and scattered cushions, plastic cups, boxes empty of their contents, shoes and sandals, socks, decapitated marigolds, busy-lizzies, daisies, stock flowers…

‘Come here … you maskara, little clown! Look… look! Say goodbye! We have to go or they will be after us. It’s food time.’ He lifts him up and holds him close to his face, breathing in his sweet curdled smells, cheek crushing into cheek, showing him their images in the mirror.

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The woman with the dark hair walking barefoot on the beach notices the tattoo of the lurid red crescent and star on the inside forearm of the man playing with his daughter running in and out of the water’s edge amongst the descending shadows of the deserted ghost hotels in the Forbidden Zone guarded by the black shadow soldiers on red boards tangled amongst barbed wire as the sun goes down in the West.

* TMT: Türk Mukavement Teşkilatý (Turkish Resistance Organisation)
CHRISTINE PAGNOULLE

Past into Future: Cyprus’ Undivided Literature — Aydın Mehmet Ali and Stephanos Stephanides

Cyprus is one of those places in the world where the commonplace of coming to terms with the past in order to forge some possible future takes on a most acute significance. It may not be necessary to go back beyond a half-century or so to understand the way the past has been used by both Greek and Turkish nationalists to keep resentment, rejection, and indeed hatred of the other ethnic community alive. Still it does not seem too far fetched either to consider that, as often happens, such enmities are fed by a long previous history. Cyprus is strategically located between three continents:

The island’s geographical position has long made it a zone of indeterminate encounter between heterogeneous cultures and populations, ambiguating the cultural and political borders of ‘Europe’ and ‘Asia’, and ‘the West’ and ‘the East’. (Stephanides 2009b)

As a consequence it has had a ‘hopelessly complex multicultural history’ (Stephanides 2009b), claimed as it was by rival powers over the centuries, indeed the millenia. As Mehmet Yaşin points out,

the Cypriot identity was already under occupation from the beginning of history. The transition of Cypriots into a state structure, the adoption of their own — or having themselves ‘adopted’ — language and alphabet, and the culture of the region, and thus finding an identity has always been through external interventions. The outsiders have interrupted internal dynamics, changed the character of the country and determined its fate. (34)

The island was ruled in turn by Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, and Persians. Cyprus was part of the Greek empire, which became the Christian Byzantine empire. Then crusaders came from the West; by the end of the twelfth century Richard the Lionheart had introduced Roman Catholicism into this overwhelmingly Orthodox area. It was briefly ruled by the Knights Templar, then it became a feudal kingdom under the Lusignan family, until the last queen sold
it to the Venetians. By this time it was under attack from the Ottomans who took over in 1571. Self-awareness among Greek Cypriots and an explicit wish to be united with Greece (Enosis) started to develop with the Greek war of Independence in the 1820s. In 1878, after the war between Russia and the Ottoman empire, Cyprus became a British Protectorate; and then in 1925 after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War it was made a crown colony. British colonial policy further aggravated ethnic tensions: when independence was achieved in 1960, in keeping with the British approach so far, the constitution gave the Turkish minority political rights that were resented by some as excessive; it certainly sanctioned divisions wherever it could. There were armed groups on both the Greek and the Turkish sides, and from 1963 onward the word ‘atrocities’ became a routine part of life on Cyprus. The propaganda on each side projected misdeeds (gang rape, torture, summary execution) onto the other, representing them as inhuman brutes, although as Yiannis Papadakis narrates in Echoes from the Dead Zone, Greeks and Turks share a similar culture, and Greek and Turkish Cypriots have more in common than is readily acknowledged by politicians.

For Turkish Cypriots a sense of belonging to the same island as Greek Cypriots was paradoxically brought out by the official partition of the island. In mid-July 1974 the military junta in Greece supported the Greek Cypriot nationalist organisation EOKA B which took power in Cyprus and overthrew Archbishop Makarios, who had just been re-elected President with a sweeping majority. The latter appealed to the UN to stop such unlawful acts and, allegedly in response, Turkey invaded the island a few days later. UN forces enforced a ceasefire and have since patrolled the ‘Green Line’ between Turkish controlled north and the rest of the island (this remainder is the officially recognised Republic of Cyprus — now populated by Greek Cypriots). Greek Cypriot families had to leave their houses and villages to move to the south just as Turkish Cypriots living in the south had to be ‘relocated’ on the northern side of the demarcation; these people also resented the presence of immigrant Turks who had been encouraged to settle on land abandoned by Greek Cypriots in the war and given away cheaply by the Turkish government. This can account for a stronger sense among the Turkish Cypriot population that they belong to Cyprus. Among Greek Cypriots, however, the Turkish invasion is still deeply resented, as Papadakis notes in his introduction, exposing the one-sided approach that exculpates the Greeks whereas the Greeks were also largely responsible for the events that eventually led to partition:

Everyone knew how Turkey had invaded Cyprus in 1974, out of the blue, ostensibly to protect a small Turkish minority there, grabbing forty per cent of the territory and tearing away one third of its population from its ancestral lands, turning them into refugees; everyone knew about the killings, the rapes and the 1,619 persons still missing or unaccounted for. (2005 5)

The latest historical development is the Republic of Cyprus (which officially includes the north) joining the EU in 2004. Intransigent moves on various sides have resulted in the current stalemate, and a still-divided island.
The contrast between ethnic propaganda, albeit qualified and muted, and attempts at bringing communities together can be illustrated in the radically different approaches to editing and publishing policies. Apart from the popular media pandering to prejudices, a collection of short stories such as *Face of an Island: Twenty-Four Short Stories from Cyprus*, edited by Panos Ioannides, presents a single face of the island since the preface and many of the stories articulate the dominant discourse in the south. On the other hand, the five substantial contributions that make up the collection *Turkish Cypriot Identity in Literature*, edited and translated by Aydın Mehmet Ali and published in 1990 all testify to a sense of groping uncertainty and to a clear-sighted view of the Cypriot predicament. Similarly, though along different lines, the journal *Cadences: A Journal of Literature and the Arts in Cyprus*, launched in 2005, is dedicated to exploring and interlacing various linguistic and ideological contributions; the editorial statement repeated in each issue clearly points to its programmatic intention to contribute to mutual understanding:

Writers in Cyprus think, feel, and express themselves in several languages, Greek, Turkish, and English being three of the most prominent. *Cadences* is a bridge between them, a meeting point at which writers of the diverse communities of the island may find each other, and learn from their encounters with difference. It is committed to building bridges between the communities ... while both encouraging students and new writers and publishing those who are more established. Published by the Department of Humanities at European University Cyprus, it has an advisory editorial board composed of prominent writers and academics from the Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot, Armenian Cypriot, Palestinian, American and London Cypriot communities. Its aim is to reflect the diversity of the island’s writing and in the process enhance cultural understanding and communication. Writers inevitably see things differently from politicians, and by attending to the cadences of their many voices, we can learn something of the rhythms of experiencing diversity together.

*Cadences* includes contributions in the three main languages, with or without translations.

Significantly, both Stephanides and Mehmet Ali not only publish in this journal but are members of the editorial board. Their names point to their respective Greek and Turkish origins, and their friendship as well as obvious similarities in their approach to the trauma of their country illustrates the journal’s project. Both write in English out of choice and because of biographical circumstances. Aware as they are of the importance of language in acknowledging the other community they use both Turkish and Greek in their writings. In Mehmet Ali’s ‘Bedtime Story’ the use of Greek by the Turkish Cypriot mother is an essential narrative element. Stephanides’, quoting the Turkish poet Gür Genç, his pointed reference, as well as his dedication to Aşik Mene, a Turkish Cypriot artist whom he calls his brother in the poem ‘Sentience’, also point in the same inclusive direction.

Stephanides was born in Trikomo, in Mesaoria, northeast Cyprus in 1949. When his parents separated his father took eight-year-old Stephanos to ‘darkest Manchester’ (‘Archaeology of a Tooth’ 27). He stayed in Britain until he completed
his university education in Cardiff. Stephanides travelled extensively and lived in several countries including Guyana for several years in the 1980s. It may not be mere chance that two countries he is particularly fascinated with — Guyana and India — are also ‘divided to the vein’ as Walcott would put it.\(^2\) He returned to Cyprus in 1991.

Born in Nicosia in 1947 Mehmet Ali went to London to escape from warfare in her country in 1963; London is where she discovered love and life, and is where she now feels at least as much at home as on her native island. According to the contributor notes to *Turkish Cypriot Identity in Literature* she is ‘[a]n educator, translator, writer and community activist’, and founded ‘the Turkish Education Group and FATAL (For the Advancement of Turkish Arts Literature)’ (Mehmet Ali 1990 121). Being an internationalist to the bone, she actively promotes understanding among people and particularly among those ethnic groups that are all too often pitted against each other. She is also deeply committed to creating situations in which women can shape alternatives and thus gain confidence. Her main weapon is writing, publishing both her own and other women’s texts. In this respect the collection of stories and poems she published with Gûlfidan Erhûrman, *Bize Dair / Pink Butterflies* is exemplary: it brings together poems in Turkish with only four of them translated into English, and short texts, stories or direct personal memories in English.\(^3\) Her writings are ground-breaking in several respects. She was among the first Cypriots to write about gang rape and about homosexuality. Her use of two adjectives as one word (‘Cypriotturkish,’ ‘Cypriotgreek’) is her way of bringing out the perplexing complexity of an artificially divided identity:

Turkish-Cypriot-Woman. Cypriotturkish woman. Is the relationship as simple as a dash in between? The divided person of a divided land continues her division even further in another land. Searching for the pieces to put together, to claim. Searching for ‘wholeness’. (Mehmet Ali 2005 89)

It could be argued that because of these circumstances Mehmet Ali and Stephanides are not representative of average Cypriots, that they are more attuned to the English-speaking world than to their home island. This is however belied by their deep commitment to the present and future of Cyprus, and by the fact that many Cypriots share their concern, not only among academics like Stavros Karayanni, *Cadences*’ editor-in-chief, but also among ordinary citizens on both sides, as reported by Papadakis.

Stephanides’ poems about Cyprus all touch upon the delicate alchemy of memory. One of his more entertaining works is ‘Archaeology of a Tooth’, (2005b) in which the eponymous tooth metaphorically represents the pain of partition, and the need for it to be bridged. The first lines move from confidence in the new teeth a child starts growing after six, to the concealment of a broken tooth with a crown. Stephanides describes this moment in a memorable line, as ‘A juncture of memories with jagged edges’, the last words a reference to both the pain of the injury and to the conflicting factions tearing at his island. It may be suspected
from the words ‘comfortably concealed’ that the smoothness is deceptive and that ‘silent putrefaction’ is festering away underneath; the crown is but a seal on ‘quiet mourning’, hiding the pain of exile. What is repressed becomes a source of rampant infection on the day the poem’s narrator crossed back to the north and visited Trikomo for the first time in decades. The extraction will ‘pull out [the] root’ of the stench — that is, the concealed mourning. What it does is make the gap visible; bring to light the division, ‘fragmentation and deracination’. It now has to be bridged, not only with an orthodontic device — ‘A porcelain smile to hide memory’s holes’— but also with words:

as I rehearse words
That will bridge the gap my tongue slips through
As it feels for words that steal the air

and

To trap the air in words that bite and hiss (2005b 28)

The last words of the poem — ‘to pacify the pain in a memento of empty air’ — neatly express the need for remembrance if words are to heal the scars. About the middle of the poem we come upon five lines that consist of questions about the nature of memory and which, I would say, are characteristic of Stephanides’ tendency to the abstract. Yet in this case ‘memory’s beginning’ that lies ‘in fragmentation and deracination’ has an obvious relevance to his own experience and to that of all people who have known exile and who belong to divided countries.

The overwhelming energy of life, the sheer force of elementary sensual experience powerfully counters the awareness of death and loss in two of Stephanides other poems, ‘Requiem for Trikomo’ (2005c) and ‘Sentience’ (2005d). While ‘Requiem for Trikomo’ rambles in apparently disconnected parts, ‘Sentience’ floats on unresolved ambiguities in the syntax and references. The epigraph to ‘Sentience’ consists of four lines by Derek Walcott:

So what shall we do for the dead,
To whose conch-bordered
tumuli our lifelong attraction is drawn
As to a magnetic empire.

These words express some helpless attraction to the dead; yet in the first lines of the poem (‘I know this day of May will be the day / The dead will awaken only once’) the situation is reversed: the dead are invited to awake on a particular day of May when they are not yet too remote (‘Next spring will be too late’) and when life is still pulsing strong enough (‘Next month the fragrance of spring / Will fade away into the summer drought’). This Day of the Dead, out of tune and time with the Day of the Dead on November 2, is a day of intense living involving our deepest, most elemental senses — touch, with the ‘shudder of the skin’, the feel of the sea that recalls ‘the sensual bosom of our dead mother’; smell and taste , with ‘the aroma of the bush our grandmother used to burn / To bake the bread in her
clay oven’. Sensuous appeal, awe and even fear are close together, as suggested in these lines, which is reminiscent of Rilke’s first Duino elegy,

We feel it in the shudder of the skin  
In the redness of the poppy  
Everywhere the dead send their messengers  
But many turn their heads away in dread (25)

The dead the speaker is calling upon are the relatives and neighbours he left in Trikomo, and particularly his mother and father, when they were together ‘dream[ing] their dreams’ on the ‘green balcony’ of his childhood. Because the small town lies in the north, there are new inhabitants replacing the Greek Cypriots who had to flee south of the line, which is why he is greeted by ‘a stranger’: ‘you will send a stranger to tell me my story’, with ‘you’ here standing for his parents, or possibly just for his mother. The stranger is friendly and welcoming: ‘He will first give me fresh lemonade / to quench my thirst’, however he is now the official owner of the place, and as such he has the key to his past. Significantly when he looks down from the balcony, he sees both ‘bell-towers’ and ‘minarets’ as in another poem ‘Broken Heart’. ‘Byzantine saints’ are mentioned next to ‘wailing prayers of unseen hodjas’, and likewise in ‘Bedtime Story’, Mehmet Ali points to a brotherly closeness between Muslims and Orthodox Christians when the Turkish Cypriot Osman remembers how they would go and light candles for their departed Greek Cypriot former neighbours in the all but deserted Orthodox Church in the north: these are as many gestures of inclusive tolerance. Similarly, the last lines (used as an epigraph to this article) seal his acknowledgement of kinship with his Turkish Cypriot friend, working out reconciliation beyond the feud through a comprehensive act of remembering.

The narrative element is stronger in ‘Requiem for Trikomo’. The first part of the poem is in the shadow of the past, though not altogether in the shadow of death. Sacred numbers echo each other — five, seven, three. Three is repeated three times: three roads, three towns, and three socially important buildings — the coffee shop, the church and the cinema all jostling each other in the memory of the young boy. Aphrodites and Madonnas merge into the magic of Melina Mercouri and Sophia Loren ‘surging from the blue’, which she does repeatedly in Boy on a Dolphin, an image which is both literal if we think of the film Boy on a Dolphin and easily associated with the birth of Venus rising from the sea. In the last lines of this stanza, mourning is called ‘longing’ and is figuratively linked to the wheat the speaker’s grandmother, Eleni, milled on the day her husband died, a juxtaposition that is also a reminder of how closely life and death belong together. This parallel introduces the bolder comparison of the speaker laying himself out in the earth to decompose and thus achieve an intensely sexual experience of union.

The last stanza begins on a factual note,

Today Kathy shoots photos for the post-mortem  
To seize the lost house in my voice
Yet the second line already disrupts expectations: how can a house be lost in his voice? How can you ‘shoot photos’ of a voice? Then all in a flash, smells ‘[send] [him] running / to the random sensuality of seas’, ‘life [explodes] from the stones’, and in the last lines ‘mourning’ becomes an all-embracing movement originating in the desiring body:

Desire of my body mourning
Stretching in all directions

While we find the same note of longing and a similar sensuality in ‘Ars poetica: Sacred or Daemonic’ (2005e), this poem also has a decidedly humorous dimension. It revolves on an often playful ambiguity, first, allegedly on the source of the poet’s inspiration but also on the proximity of sexual consummation and death, as suggested in Pierre de Ronsard’s erotic and humorous elegy used in the epigraph:

Je ne veux plus Maistresse à tel prix appaiser
Ma chaleur Cyprienne, et mesmement à l’heure
Que le Soleil ardent sous la Chienne demeure

En ces temps faisons trêve, épargnons nostre vie
De peur que mal-armés de la philosophie
Nous ne sentions soudain, ou après à loisir,
Que toujours la douleur voisine le plaisir.

The poem brings together the speaker’s unquenched yearning and the dislocated condition of his country. It begins with uncertainty as to the identity of the addressee: initially the reader, and then an anonymous ‘I’, while later including the woman/goddess he wants to strip naked, and finally Cyprus.

The poem begins and ends with a warning: ‘Do not be deluded’, ‘So don’t believe me’, followed by an explanation, respectively: ‘I have a split tongue’ and ‘For different daemons speak within me’. What comes next, both in the first and in the last lines, can be read either as most intimate or quite public and indeed political, and the two readings have to be accommodated. The ‘missing parts’ (those striking last words in the poem) are the ‘heads and genitals’ recklessly lost ‘in the world’s tormented ideology’, both private parts and amputated parts of the island.

The first stanza suggests a hopeless loss:

Moving between reluctant whispers
And inaudible pulse articulating peace
You know you will never find
In the lull of your dead muses
And the platonic lambda
How to reach pure sound?

The muses are dead, and who knows yet about the ‘platonic lambda’?4

The second stanza moves on dream-like shifts and associations. It begins with a sense of complete disorientation enhanced by signs in two languages. That the
road should be ‘one way’ echoes the one-sidedness of exclusive approaches. In the following lines verbs normally associated with the police and with dogs are inverted: ‘the police sniff’ and ‘their dogs label me “under control.”’ Next the speaker escapes such oppressive constraints to indulge in the erotic sensuousness suggested in the epigraph.

And when I find you  
I strip you naked  
In reckless desire for your disease  
(or was that only in my dream?)  
I do not know if it’s your malady I want  
or if I am diseased by your desire

The phrases used about desire are reminiscent of both Ronsard in the early sixteenth century and John Donne one century later, with the paradoxical association of disease and desire, the play on sounds, and the mannered use of the word ‘malady’. Both the context and the use of the word in English in the Renaissance point to venereal disease, which takes readers back to Venus-Aphrodite. The slightly confusing syntax of the line ‘weaves halos fudging stories’ matches the suggested uncertainty, which only increases when the stories turn out to be about ‘roaming phantoms on an overlay of cities’. In the last lines of this long stanza the speaker poet turns words into powder, just as statues can be pounded into grit, in an act of wilful destruction. ‘Chasing’ in the next line can mean either hunt for or hunt away, but the restriction expressed in ‘merely’, which is echoed in the word ‘lack’, suggests the latter. Actually, we must not choose, we have to combine the two meanings, however contradictory. So it can be argued that this allusive extravaganza is one of his most successful attempts at retrieving missing parts and restoring broken stone.

Where Stephanides’ poems take readers on oblique and allusive journeys on which words call up sensuous experience, Mehmet Ali’s stories are grounded in facts and definite situations. The complexity of her stories lies in their structure and in the combination of various time layers and different perspectives.

‘Caught Out’ and ‘Bedtime Story’ share their main location in London and a focus on a homosexual relationship. In ‘Caught Out’ the story of the family scandal referred to in the title is framed by marketplace gossip. A young man called Ahmet who is married to a beautiful girl called Cernalyie is ‘caught out’ with his male lover (Cernalyie’s cousin). Outrage is compounded by the fact that the lovers had been using a flat bought with wedding money. The lover is sent back to Cyprus and Ahmet drifts into gambling and drinking. The story alternates between the perspective of Ahmet and that of his wife with passages that report their respective childhoods, and italicised unpunctuated paragraphs that read as transcripts of half formulated thoughts. Though quite tragic for some of the characters, partly because of the framing story, this narrative has the light touch of a comedy of manners.
‘Bedtime Story’ takes place in a London hospital. Two young London Cypriots, both suffering from AIDS, both homosexual, are placed in adjacent beds. One of them, called Osman in Cyprus and Ozzie in London, is a Turkish Cypriot who left the island to avoid being drafted into the Turkish army. The other (Antoni, Tony) is a Greek Cypriot; he came to London with his family when they had to flee the Turkish invasion in 1974. While the rest of his family went back to the Republic of Cyprus, he stayed because he was in love with a Turkish Cypriot. The narrative begins in the perspective of Osman’s mother, then alternates between Antoni and Osman. The last paragraph is quite effectively removed from any of the characters’ perspective. It consists of short almost factual sentences, which record Tony’s death, and the final uncertainty as to what will happen to his body. Time periods include Osman’s leaving Cyprus and his mother three years earlier, and the two young men’s tense first meeting a couple of days before. The story contrasts the mothers’ attitudes. Antoni’s mother disowned him on hearing that he had a Turkish lover. The greater transgression is not that the lover is a man but that he belonged to the inhuman people that did those terrible things to the people in the village where they used to live, killing and taking the men away, raping the women including young girls: ‘how could I love a Turk my eternal enemy after what they had done to us?’ (64). Osman’s mother, on the other hand, who had been devastated when he left, flies over as soon as she hears of his being ill and comforts Antoni with sweet Greek words.

This story of two young people dying of AIDS is hardly the kind of comforting tale one could read children at bedtime but it is indeed a bedtime story in the most literal sense. The element of pathos introduced by AIDS may be rather expected, but it can also be argued that it gives added poignancy to a mutual recognition that is sealed and hallowed by the endearing words spoken in Greek by Osman’s mother. To use Freud’s description of attitudes to mourning (wiederholen, durcharbeiten) as reformulated by Dominick La Capra, it can be argued that the other mother’s attitude, is typical of the ‘acting-out’ moment of mourning, when the patient is caught in the compulsive repetition of tragic events, and cannot ‘work out’ the more detached view that makes forgiving if not forgetting possible.5

‘Forbidden Zone’ mainly consists of direct narration that shifts between reporting what happened on the 20th and the 21st July 1974 and describing people on Famagusta beach in November 2008. Clues to the later date are the empty hotels half buried in sand and the boards ‘tangled in barbed wire’ (188) with the ‘black soldiers gun in hand’ (188) and the trilingual warning to trespassing tourists that gives the story its title. The narrative includes increasingly longer passages in direct speech in which a man who participated in the 1974 events tells about them thirty-four years later. The memory of violence and the wound it inflicts on both victims and perpetrators is central to the story. The narrative juxtaposes grim humour such as references to the flippant indifference inherent in mass tourism with a horror that should be unspeakable but is translated into words.
A Greek Cypriot family were celebrating their son Aris’ birthday in one of the hotels along the beach when Turkish planes began bombing. Father, mother and child managed to drive away unscathed. They collected some belongings and, like many others, attempted to escape to the south. However, they were held up by Turks and Turkish Cypriot militia. The men were lined up near a dam and eventually shot dead; the women were raped. The slim elegant mother was taken aside and almost pulled apart in a savage raping, yet she survived and even took her son back and drove away with only one functioning arm and foot.

The absurdity of the killing is brought out by the utter absence of grounds for personal resentment between the two groups as illustrated by the fact the Greek Cypriot father is a lawyer who would defend Turkish Cypriots as well as Greek Cypriots.

What happened to the young couple is echoed in the poem by Mehmet Ali entitled ‘searching for the one missing’ and published in Cadences in 2009. It is laid out in two columns, with instructions on the left (‘you have to be convinced’, ‘you have to stop feeling’) and alternative or cumulative multiple answers on the right, ending with the repetition of ‘wait’ — an endless and pointless waiting, a hopeless non-mourning (52–53).

The possibility of a one-sided reading is ruled out. Indeed another Turkish Cypriot character who is mentioned both in the older man’s remembering and in the direct narrative is a boy who looks fifteen and is actually thirteen, Hasan, who seems composed and collected, but suddenly releases a visceral need for revenge: he had come back home to find his whole family slaughtered by EOKA guerillas.

As the story weaves together different periods it also suggests parallels between characters and situations. Though readers are not to know who those 2008 people actually are, the woman on the beach recalls Maria, the elegant Greek wife and mother who was raped in 1974, probably partly because of the way she ‘calls for the sounds to come to her’ (189) from the deserted hotel. Her silent call is answered in the 2008 present by the laughing piping voice of a three-year-old girl playing in and out of the sea and demanding her father’s attention. The father pays scant attention, looking rather at the approaching woman. He may not be the grown up version of the thirteen-year-old who stopped the fleeing car on the road out of Famagusta and held the boy Ari, but he has the same tattoo on his forearm. The final paragraph is one long balanced sentence in which several strands are brought together and somehow laid to rest, in great poetic density:

The woman with the dark hair walking barefoot on the beach notices the tattoo of the lurid red crescent and star on the inside forearm of the man playing with his daughter running in and out of the water’s edge amongst the descending shadows of the deserted ghost hotels in the Forbidden Zone guarded by the black shadow soldiers on red boards tangled amongst barbed wire as the sun goes down in the West. (201)

The remembering man on the beach is the central figure in ‘Forbidden Zone.’ Especially in the penultimate part, readers share his sense of guilt and grief. He wanted the mass graves to be found and the past slaughter to be exposed, but all
he can excavate is his memory. The pounded remains of the dead were used to stabilise the roads leading to the new luxury of hotels built for the Turkish army. His grandson — significantly? — takes great pleasure all the while in tearing and destroying, as indeed children will. Does this point to some streak in human nature that drives us to violence?

Papadakis states that ‘If a reunited federal Cyprus does eventually join the EU it will become the first EU Muslim-Christian federation. Cyprus for once could become a beacon — well, at least a candle — of hope in this post 9/11 world that has witnessed boundaries turning into iron lines of divisions’ (2005 251). This does not seem impossible. For three centuries, from the end of the seventh until the end of the tenth century, Arabs and Byzantines — Muslims and Orthodox Christians — cohabited in relative peace. This historical parenthesis of coexistence could comfort some reasonable expectations. Particularly with such committed writers as Stephanides and Mehmet Ali, literature performs a difficult duty of remembrance and acts as a constant reminder of complexity. As Stephanides writes in his introduction to Excerpta Cypriana, literature is ‘an interactive form of agency’,

a battle of the imagination between inert substances and volatile forms of difference, between the local and the world, across generations, ethnic groups, sexual orientation, and literary languages, moving through the memory and forgetting of repatriates and immigrants, and of those dislocated within the island by a history of violence or simply by time itself. (online)

Inevitably the memory of violence is inscribed in Cypriot literature, as it has been through the centuries and all over the world. So far it has not prevented its relentless absurd repetition. Should we assent to Adorno’s grim assertion that poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric, that is, that literature dealing with acts that violate human dignity should not be written? But how can we live in a world deprived of poems? To his wistful question wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit? Hölderlin answers in an almost grandiloquent gesture, yet even if poets are not, as he claims, ‘holy priests’ ‘wandering through a holy night’, do they not bring out echoes, piece broken parts together, re-member, and thus contribute to some heightened understanding?

The poems and stories discussed in the present article are so neatly achieved, so ultimately pleasurable that it raises the question that can be asked about any work of art commemorating absurdity and horror: are not these somehow transfigured, transmuted, turned into beauty? Is not the world made whole again? And if words can heal, should we not worry that it makes further slaughter possible, indeed even a source of inspiration?

NOTES

1 All poems by Stephanides quoted in this article can be found in this issue of Kunapipi.
See the lines ‘I who am poisoned with the blood of both [Africans and Europeans], / Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?’ in ‘A Far Cry from Africa’ (1962).

We have decided to leave our emotions, pains, thoughts, angers, hopes, loves and love for life in the original languages in which we have lived them through and publish this book in our two languages’. (Mehmet Ali 2005:6)

In Plato’s Timaeus, we find that God created the Cosmic Soul using two mathematical strips of 1, 2, 4, 8 and 1, 3, 9, 27. These two strips have the shape of an inverted ‘V’ or the ‘Platonic Lambda’ since it resembles the shape of the 11th letter of the Greek alphabet ‘Lambda’.

See for instance the following passages in La Capra’s interview with Amos Goldberg: ‘Acting-out is a process, but a repetitive one. It’s a process whereby the past, or the experience of the other, is repeated as if it were fully enacted, fully literalised’ (Shoah Resource 5); and ‘When one comes to certain problems, such as that of mourning – which can be seen in Freud as one important mode of working-through – one may never entirely transcend an attachment to a lost other, or even some kind of identification with a lost other, but one may generate countervailing forces so that the person can re-engage an interest in life. One sign of this in the process of mourning is the ability to find a new partner, to marry, to have children; and not to be so enmeshed in the grieving that the present doesn’t seem to exist for you, and there is no future’ (6).


WORKS CITED


Stephanos Stephanides

BROKEN HEART

on a twilight pilgrimage
I cross Venetian ramparts
I journey inward
seeking a language of lament
a muffled murmuring of old heart
graffiti on old walls
our dreams are in the tombs
tombs are in our dreams
eyes blind and eager
jalousies hiding light of white courtyards
ghosts of moustachioed men striding wicker chairs
muddied destinies at the bottom of coffee cups
shadows of grandmothers in the memory of lemon-trees
arthritic hands still joining my quilt piece by piece

shielding my body
stone uterus of weeping icons
Byzantine saints whose names I don’t recall
only a memory a fragrance of ancient smoking leaves
and wailing prayers of unseen hodjas to the north

warm countenance of youth in cold helmets
is the lifeline of this ailing heart
fluttering banners
that banish me from severed arteries
and I move outward through the city gates
while I dream of east and north
of apparitions of community
a communion
with sea citrus milk of sheep
and olive
in a dawning waning earth
fragile trophy of my quest

1993 (slightly revised 2000)

(‘Broken Heart’ has been previously published in Blue Moon and Other Poems, Kochlias 2005)
LARNACA ORANGES

from the sea of Larnaca many years ago
you set off on a dream for me and you
and took me by the hand onto a ship
for my first crossing of a sea;
and now to this same sea you have returned for your
last dream
once my father you return and become my child
so that now I must dream your dream for you
while I dispatch you in a casket
as you leave behind for the last time
the city of Lazarus and of Zeno
and cross the sea to your funeral pyre.
Before preparing for departure
you bid me find you Larnaca oranges.
Why are they late this season? you asked
eager to sweeten your blood
and become the school child you once were
jostling through the date-palm promenade;
no mourning no black no bearded priests you oft declared;
keep the windows open and let all the light come in you said;
and now you have relinquished your memory to me
giving me your final gift;
your body abject becomes once more a rhythm in your
mother’s womb
while I pursue the taste of your dislocated oranges.

2000

(‘Larnaca Oranges’ has been previously published in Blue Moon and Other Poems, Kochlias 2005)
ARCHAEOLOGY OF A TOOTH

In memory of Giorghos Taramides, my dentist

New tooth clinging to a strong jaw
Shattered in a child’s joy
A leap from a witch’s hat
One sunny day in darkest Manchester
A juncture of memories with jagged edges
Filed smooth and comfortably concealed
Crowned and protected
Armed to bite back the words that cursed it

Years later Giorghos taps it with his instruments
Contemplating its archaeology and its fate
Strong roots nurtured with spring water
In halcyon days of Trikomo he says
May I not be the one who lives to pull them out
I think about words to write
But the ache recedes into silent putrefaction
Sealing its quiet mourning undetected until memory takes revenge
In a cyst demanding discharge of its pain
Giorghos now a spectre of a kind smile
Sends his emissaries who announce the extraction
Let out the stench and pull out its root
The suffering must end
I think of my grandmother’s toothless smile
My father’s sunken cheeks
As he lies horizontally during his wake
Where is memory anyway?
But in the shadow of a shadow
And where is memory’s beginning?
Is it in fragmentation and deracination?
In the labours of birth the throes of death?
In Elizabeth’s gift, an effigy of
A huge tooth in wax — to be consecrated on an altar
Or hung upon a tree as I rehearse words
That will bridge the gap my tongue slips through
As it feels for words that steal the air

I am in need of a monument
A porcelain smile to hide memory’s holes
To trap the air in words that bite and hiss
To pacify the pain in a memento for an empty space

June 2003
SENTIENCE

For Aşık Mene

So what shall we do for the dead, to whose conch-bordered
Tumuli our lifelong attraction is drawn
As to a magnetic empire
(Derek Walcott *Midsummer* XVI)

I know this day of May will be the day
The dead will awaken only once
Next spring will be too late
Next month the fragrance of spring
Will fade away into the summer drought
Even the dead do not wait forever
We have prayed one too many times
And if this is to be the day it is to be the day
We feel it in the shudder of the skin
In the redness of the poppy
Everywhere the dead send their messengers
But many turn their heads away in dread
We cannot show our passport
To cross the gate they say
Yet I have to take the road to find you
With my eyes open
Today I know you will not come
In my silent meditation nor in my sleep
But in the exact spot in the sea
Where we feel the sensual bosom of our dead mother
In the aroma of the bush our grandmother used to burn
To bake the bread in her clay oven
Today you will send a stranger to tell me my story
He will first give me fresh lemonade to quench my thirst
And with a key open the door of the room
Where I was born and where you dreamed your dreams
As you stood on this green balcony
With the sea-breeze in your hair
Looking over rooftops, bell-towers, and minarets
At the road with the acacias and eucalyptus trees
And I will hear you speak in the movement of the wind
Your voice traced by an absent hand
Aşık will kiss me on the cheeks
To tell me he too saw the dead
And with a touch of the hand
I will know I have found the brother
In milk and blood
I had relentlessly forgotten.

*June 2003*

(‘Sentience’ has been previously published in *Blue Moon and Other Poems*, Kochlias 2005)
ARS POETICA: SACRED OR DAEMONIC

à tel prix appaiser
Ma chaleur Cyprienne,
(Élégie XIX. Pierre de Ronsard [1524–85])

Do not be deluded
I have a split tongue
Moving between reluctant whispers
And inaudible pulse articulating peace
You know you will never find
In the lull of your dead muses
And the platonic lambda
How to reach pure sound?

No matter if the signs are Greek or Turkish
I lose my way
Even when there is only one way to go
The police sniff and tell me
My hallucination is out of order
And their dogs label me ‘under control’
I slip away looking for relief
In everlasting summer or everlasting death
And when I find you
I strip you naked
In reckless desire for your disease
(or was that only in my dream?)
I do not know if it’s your malady I want
Or if I am diseased by your desire
I negotiate the pullulating mirage
And my body sizzles in my Cyprian heat
And rolls in flames into the blue of the sea
Embers evaporate in the clarity of the moon
And the tempest of the stars
Weaves halos fudging stories
Of roaming phantoms in an overlay of cities
With statues of your damaged fantasy
Who lost their heads and genitals
In impetuous recklessness
Or in the world’s tormented ideology
And I pound your words
Chasing poetry of merely mind or merely sexuality
Two pure white butterflies
Paying off this lack in broken stone

So don’t believe me
For different daemons speak within me
All looking for their missing parts

(‘Ars Poetica: Sacred or Daemonic’ has been previously published in *Blue Moon and Other Poems*, Kochlias 2005)
REQUIEM FOR TRIKOMO

For daemons and creatures roaming Mesaoria especially between Trikomo and Salamis: those named and those unnamed but who I know are watching

Do I come to sing your requiem?
At the checkpoint
I do not see the five flags flutter
History has never been
Only creatures hovering
With the instinct of seven humming birds
Drawing me near
Light as an apparition

Forgive me if once you felt eternal
There were three towns here where three roads meet
And church between cinema and coffee shop
Hailing departures and arrivals
On old camel caravans to Karpas slow as buses
Above the Han Chrysanthi the old teacher
Reads my journey in the coffee cup

In my smallness I catch sight
Of fractured Aphrodites and redolent Madonnas,
And on screens wavering with night breeze
I filch glances of the sacred in ruinous passion
Melina’s husky melody in black and white
Sophia wet and surging from the blue
Rescuing my totem the dolphin
And the boy ready to ride away
I stretched in all directions
Rolled off into the plains
Up to the mountain and the skies
Then the seas
Stole me away
Without warning nor farewells
Only stories
To carry with me
Eleni retelling
How she lured Stephanos of Alexandria
With her swing song
Bore him ten children
Milled the wheat on the day he died
Dissolved time in her longing

In his silence I travelled with the name
Laid my body out in the immensity of the earth
Exposing it to oracles
Looking for a special divination
Voices saying don’t forget
Let memory decompose
Spread like a virus
In the intent look of strangers
Filling crevices moistening protrusions
Rehearsing to absorb and expel the world
Experience its infinite flesh without words
Degenerate in the scattering
Seek ablution with the multitudes
In rivers lit with smell of camphor
Undress the deity
Smelling her secretions
And smothering her with multihued hibiscus
Probe the meaning of her residue
In the moaning of your excess

Today Kathy shoots photos for the post-mortem
To seize the lost house in my voice
Does it still breathe?
The last rite slipped through a hole and
I stand defrocked
Inert in my forgetting
Feeling the fingers breeze
Touching me with diesel and jasmine
And heat of stones
Sending me running
To the random sensuality of seas
Tanju and Jenan
In twin priesthood of intoxicated purity
Pass round the shell
And gesture its extravagant geometry and dream
Life exploding from the stones
While a friend looks on from faraway
Eyes green of lemon yellowing with the wheat
And Mesaoria wild flowers
Sprouting like hair from the belly to the neck
Desire of my body mourning
Stretching in all directions

December 2004

(‘Requiem for Trikomo’ has been previously published in *Blue Moon and Other Poems*, Kochlias 2005)
AUGUSTAN DAYS

The First Goodbye for Katerina
(After Derek Walcott)

Days as august and as large as the sea
And nights as wide as the rooftops
Here I lie
No use for the shirt on my back
Nor the walls of my house
Spread before a relentless sky
That will brood and puff up
A tease or a promise of rain
The lion raised to the stars
A daze with a spray of fierce light
As Perseus climbs high, or hangs low
In tears, for the days we will lose
For the days — sun burnt red with moon
And the month passes by
The cat slips away
And the marigolds fade
Leaving only a touch
Like tender dust
And a daughter ready to fly
And with Derek I sing
Days I have held
Days I have lost
Days that outgrow like daughters
My harbouring arms

August 2008

(‘Augustan Days’ has been previously published in Cadences, vol.4 2008.)
 EXPECTING NIGHTINGALES

At the smallest hour
I awake and wait
In expectation
The nightingale will sing.
The roar of the sea
Absorbing whistles
Of the passing trains
Hoodwinks me into slumber,
So I do not even sense
The rooster’s crowing.
The pink light eludes me
Stealing silently through slats
To soften Kathy’s sleep
And I hear a warm smell of fresh focaccia
In Rafaela’s buzzing at the door

Villa Rincon, Bogliasco, Liguria, March 2009

(‘Expecting Nightingales’ has been previously published in The Grove, University of Jaen, 2009)
KARPASSIA

For equus asinus, careta careta, and the other
rare species who accompanied me on the journey
or who I met along the way

Do you remember
when the sun moved into Virgo
and we were pulled against gravity

To a thin place
careful not to tread the rhizomes
of the calamint by the rock

Where the Holy Friend found his sacred spot
and where there is too much sky
as sea swallows the sun

And in the purple hue
turtle midwives come from far away
to bring the science of nature

To the nature of departure protected
as the whorl of shell in liquid turquoise
embraces a flesh of fragile green

And when night fell with a torrent of rain
and the lightning struck
the defi drum

while the candle flame
danced the leilalim
And in response

our bodies swayed
as the island’s hull was turning
till day cleaned the fields fresh

For the wild and wide-eyed donkeys
bashful as they sing to us their kin
Olmaz Olmaz να με πεθαίνεις πολεμά

And with gravity we turn to ask
is this the homeward way
toward a fertile Mesaoria lying fallow
The air, so thick you cut it with a knife
and houses waste like time itself
or space ships that have lost the ground

not sure if in this place
their time is long or short
this plain was once

the old sea
between two islands
was once

my dwelling
till the horizon lifted
to let us through

so I still wonder
how to write thick poetry?
how to chant for a thin place?

(‘Karpassia’ has been previously published in *The Grove*, University of Jaen, 2009)
Towards an Epistemology of Longing: Gender Disruptions and Resistance in Cyprus Narratives of Displacement

There is something of the other that cannot be transmitted unless there is a political revolution such that a masculine man will let go of his phallic position and accept, even without understanding, the possibility of something else. (Hélène Cixous 27)

Thus, the telling of refugee stories is at least sometimes also a radical reconceptualization of the very different definitions and ground rules of community or nation and of the roles of those who claim to speak for and from them. Refugee stories reconstitute, with a difference that is often ignored in official political discourse, boundaries and official and unofficial rules for crossing over them in ways that are only arguably unimaginable or impossible. (Mary Layoun 66)

INTRODUCTION
Cyprus saw a troubled passage from British colonial rule to postcolonial statehood. Created in 1960, after the signing of the Zurich-London agreements, the Republic of Cyprus became an independent country that, ironically, developed an anxious and irascible dependence on its ‘ethnonationalisms’ (Bryant 3). In fact, the very independence of the island was loathed by those Cypriots of the Greek and Turkish communities for whom the only acceptable political settlement was union with the ‘mother country’: Greece for the Greeks and Turkey for the Turks of Cyprus. Indicative of the unease and, for some Cypriots, resentment at the birth of a republic out of Cyprus is the fact that Independence Day was not celebrated for thirty years after the event (Papadakis 2005 45). October 1 (and not August 16) was set as the national holiday and the celebrations on the Greek Cypriot side continue to include flags of Greece and the Greek national anthem since Cyprus does not have its own (Papadakis 2005 46). The two predominant communities of the island each have their own landmark years: 1963 for the Turkish community and 1974 for the Greek — years when inter-communal strife flared up and led to hostility, atrocities, and great suffering (Bryant 2004; Layoun 2001). Following the violent and bloody clashes of 1963 and 1974, large numbers of Cypriots (Greek and Turkish) had to flee their homes and become refugees on their own island. In 1975, Greek Cypriots who had not been forced out of their homes by the war left their land in the north and came to settle in the areas administered by the
Republic. Similarly, Turkish Cypriots who stayed in the south were moved to the north side of the island to be under Turkish Cypriot administration. This population exchange was a ‘diplomatic manoeuvre that severed the very important Cypriot ties to land, and altered social relations within each community’ (Bryant 3).

The island’s division has been persistently referred to as ‘the Cyprus problem’ in the arena of international politics and by Cypriots themselves (Layoun 74). This problem remains not only unresolved but seems to lock itself even more tightly at every attempted turn. Even though in this introduction I cannot dwell extensively on the historical developments that led to the division of the island into a Turkish north and a Greek south, I will mention details useful in elucidating certain strands of my argument. The politics that I will discuss will be those apparent in the literature produced on the theme of losing one’s home and being forced to live the life of a displaced person in a place that will always remain foreign; indeed, has to remain foreign since the displacement inflects one’s memory in ways that come to determine one’s identity and relationship with place. In my exploration I will turn to individual modes of embodying refugee pain in Cyprus, focusing on how these modes negotiate the large scale national and patriarchal imperatives. ‘Patriarchal’ is a term that resonates anxiously in my thinking and my approach in this article. Having grown up in a family without a father, I have experienced patriarchy as an oppressive system in which I felt forced to operate and develop as an individual whose gender embodiment had to comply with particular parameters; masculine behaviour. Therefore, I understand patriarchy as an oppressive social imperative and as a system of hierarchical social organisation where masculinity is hegemonic and determines relations within the family, social groups, work environments, and personal relationships (Hadjipavlou 22–23). However, also pertinent to my argument here is patriarchy’s agency in shaping the language and performance of national identity. In fact, patriarchy has considerable control over the discursive topos of identity embodiment in contemporary Cyprus. Because I find this control often debilitating, I search for voices and images that offer possibilities that go beyond the established norms of national identity.

Motivated by my own oppression by patriarchal structures in Cypriot society and culture, I am interested in gender strictures and their close alignment to the workings of patriarchy. More specifically, I care about how gender negotiates strictures and how it performs various figurations but also its longing in narratives of loss and displacement; longing for home (nostos) and return, but also longing for psychic and even erotic fulfilment. Ultimately, I want to connect these narratives by Cypriots who have struggled to re-invent themselves as they flee, emotionally and sometimes physically wounded, from the whirlwind of crisis. By ‘gender figurations’ I am not implying some distinction between the way that women, Cypriot and non-Cypriot, feel the loss and displacement compared to the way that men feel them. Such implication would engender the risk of essentialist trappings. My understanding of gender in this discussion hinges on
two disparate but conceptually related fields: one informed by Judith Butler’s incisive, enlightening and also provocative theoretical assertions on gender and its performativity and, two, by Cypriot national politics and their disparate negotiations in literature. Butler’s assertions have proven extremely useful not only because they unsettle ideas of gender flowing ‘naturally’ from biological sex, but also because they underwrite gender’s performativity and historical contingency. In other words, following Butler’s ground breaking *Gender Trouble* we examine circumstances that surround the development of acceptable and unacceptable gender embodiments, with the confidence that its conceptualisation is not intrinsic but the product of a shifting historical context. This is a well-known argument with fascinating theoretical implications that I find applicable in this examination of gender in a literature of displacement. Cyprus’ national crisis (perhaps inevitably) resulted in a crisis in terms of gender embodiment and expression, and what are considered respectable modes of being a Cypriot man or woman. These modes have been decisively adjusted by the larger national issues.

In fact, contemporary Cypriot literature, very much like contemporary politics, has been plagued by nationalist narratives (Bryant 2004; Layoun 2001). I find that this necessitates an exploration of how gender is embodied in relation to desire; desire for re-membering the body and recounting narratives, as well as desire for creative re-negotiations of the dominant and oppressive paradigms of hostility and racism (certainly predominant in the case of Greek and Turkish Cypriot refugees). In the words of George Mosse, ‘Nationalism and respectability assigned everyone his place in life, man and woman, normal and abnormal, native and foreigner; any confusion between these categories threatened chaos and loss of control’ (16). This is a cogent articulation of my point here. In these narratives, the adversity, that is invariably a corollary of forced displacement, occasions new approaches to gender embodiment with an eye to disrupting the dominant narrative that wants performance to stay on the path that agrees closely with the nationalist paradigm. As a Cypriot male who has done two years of military service, I have been inculcated with set ideas of masculinity and how to embody pride in my Greek heritage (these are components of what I call here ‘nationalist paradigm’). Subsequently, I struggled to unlearn these ideas and this embodiment and my reading of this literature is part of an effort to escape dominant nationalist logic, split open the closure of dogmas and revel in the possibilities of open-ended textuality (I am borrowing here from Toril Moi’s discussion of Hélène Cixous’ theoretical work, 106).

Even on the level of national representations gender plays a crucial role. The island has been associated with the goddess Aphrodite, an association with orientalist overtones and great touristic currency that has been cashed-in many times over in Cyprus’ cultural transactions as a postcolonial republic. However, Aris, the god of war, would make a more appropriate divine representation of this troubled and troubling island since, sadly, the story of the Republic of Cyprus is
Towards an Epistemology of Longing

one of strife, violence and division. The island being the mythological birthplace of Aphrodite, her connection enjoys constant circulation because of the female gender of this divinity and her amorous nature. No male god of the Greek pantheon could generate the same discursive ornamentation that Aphrodite, as beautiful and scandalous sex goddess, is able to generate. In the masculinist imagination, her femaleness opens up great potential for manipulation. It bespeaks a desire to maintain the island’s patriarchal order while employing a female goddess in the service of a profitable industry, indulging in a complacent auto-exoticisation and spurious ‘autoethnographic expression,’ to use Mary Louise Pratt’s term (7). Because I find this particular indulgence objectionable and somewhat troubling, I am particularly taken by the Turkish Cypriot poet Gür Genç’s lines where any possible images of a laughing and amorous goddess are checked by a sobering critique:

To Cypriot Poets

Since Aphrodite this island has turned into a rubbish dump of love.
Our feet tangled in the roots of invaders
bone piles crack as we move
under our weight.

The earth so over-saturated with death syrup
the only escape
is not poetry…
water!


The poet uses water as an agent of transformation, refusing the promises of a poetic tradition that cannot relieve the dryness and hardness of state politics. Aphrodite’s land is not an idyllic mythical landscape as depicted in so many tourist guides that orientalise the island in the process of making it attractive to Western tourists. It is, rather, a landfill of grief and inane discourse on love. Moreover, the sad results of Cyprus’s bloody confrontations are alluded to in the poem’s hard images. Revitalisation needs to happen through a flood that will change the course of the numerous destructive narratives that plague the land. The Greek Cypriot writer and critic Stephanos Stephanides aligns this quest for water with a ‘desire to be remembered by the sea, which is nostalgia for the permeability of borders’ (2007 10). ‘Borders’ is a term that may evoke all kinds of nightmares for the Cypriot subject. Apart from the more obvious and contested geographical border between the North and South sides of the island (that we were forbidden to cross for twenty nine years, 1974–2003), I interpret ‘borders’ as the discursive limits of gender and I search for those moments in refugee literature, Cypriot and other, when gender borders appear permeable allowing a large range of expression that takes us away from narratives that are religiously observed by the nationalist imagination — narratives such as military parades, huge flowing flags on the roofs of buildings housing football teams, national anthems and national holidays where the ‘glory of our past’ is reiterated with persistence and urgency. These
narratives, so common in the everyday life of the island’s communities, impose a stalemate in our understanding of loss and dislocation. In fact, they do not allow any space for contemplating ‘the possibility of something else’ as Cixous puts it in the epigraph.

**Nostalgia for the Future**

In this critical exploration of Cypriot literature of displacement, I will focus mainly on the texture and scope of pain and longing as these imbue the literature produced by the Greek and Turkish Cypriot refugees of the island. On the emotional side, the memory of home still erodes the psyche of the older generations of Cypriot refugees who have never accepted their violent uprooting. Indeed, their new place has to remain foreign since the pain of loss becomes the ultimate marker that references an origin elsewhere, a home whose memory delineates the boundaries of imagining and, as such, it inflects any form of longing and aspiration for the future. Strangely, in Cyprus this lost home also bestows an odd form of bruised privilege in its detachment from the displaced person’s present life. Nevertheless, what I find most noteworthy in the literature produced on this theme is that often the nostalgia that colours the images is not some longing for the past, predictable in the texture, intensity, and expression of its pain. As Inga Tatolytë observes in a discussion of Cypriot poetry, ‘so much unusual nostalgia, paradoxical, ironic and encouraging to evaluate critically the trajectories marked by one’s memory… It is nostalgia for the future in the poetics of displacement’ (71). In the process set up by this agonised longing for the future in looking to the past, gender often determines whether the narrative will open up artistic and political possibilities or shut them down.

Stephanides offers a cogent articulation of this concept of a blossoming nostalgia and porosity in gender embodiment that rejects a rigid, nationalistic posturing. In his critical introduction to *Cultures of Memory/Memories of Culture* he clarifies that, ‘nostalgia need not signify real longing for a real state of affairs, for the past, but can be a coherent critique of the present and a call for a different future, a nostalgia that enables the future’ (2007 10). In Stephanides’ poem ‘Requiem for Trikomo’ I discern a divergence from masculine tropes of nostalgic reminiscence anchored to place. This anchoring is anticipated in Cypriot literature of displacement where the connection with the land is religiously evoked as a defining agent of subjectivity. ‘Requiem for Trikomo’ projects an openness to experience that flows through the male body imbuing it with a richness of emotions and sensations. Trikomo is the poet’s village in the north of the island and was completely inaccessible to the poet for several decades (it still remains inaccessible today in the sense that the poet would not be allowed to resettle in the house where he was born). In this important poem, the poet narrates memories from his childhood in the village, his subsequent departure, and the various narratives that became the confluence of his own world consciousness. I quote a long excerpt:
I stretched in all directions
Rolled off into the plains
Up to the mountain and the skies
Then the seas
Stole me away

…

Eleni retelling
How she lured Stephanos of Alexandria
With her swing song

…

In his silence I travelled with the name
Laid my body out in the immensity of the earth
Exposing it to oracles
Looking for a special divination
Voices saying don’t forget
Let memory decompose
Spread like a virus
In the intent look of strangers
Filling crevices moistening protrusions
Rehearsing to absorb and expel the world
Experience its infinite flesh without words (2005 23)

In this moving poem, with the term ‘moving’ deployed in its multiple agencies, the male body journeys through its experiences in a spirited and adroit manner and in complete defiance of traditional masculinist tropes that often harden the texture of so much of Cypriot poetry. Cypriot poets, male and female, often assume a posturing that is quite rigid and create images that contribute to and further strengthen those parameters of gender expression that are deemed acceptable by the dominant narratives of national identity.

**THE POSTURE OF GRIEF: PENTADAKTYLOS AND MALE PAIN**

I will illustrate my point here with a paradigm that is absent from Stephanides’ poem but is very popular and dominates much of the poetry produced by Greek Cypriot refugees. The northern mountain range of Pentadaktylos often appears in verse as a revered subject of apostrophe. The name literally means ‘Five Fingers’ (‘Beşparmak’ in Turkish) and refers to a rock formation of five peaks that resembles the fingers of a hand. Indeed, it is a magnificent and compelling geographical feature of the landscape and the site of interesting folklore. Tragically, it is also the place where battles were fought and many people lost their lives. Greek Cypriots always gaze at this mountain range with a sense of loss and longing. No other frame of reference could be possible and the enormous Turkish flag that dominates the mountain side — a clear sign of Turkish nationalism — directs Greek Cypriot sentiment with great precision. Demure and mournful, the poet sees him/herself reflected against the imposing mountain range that becomes emblematic of the
enormity of loss; a bleeding, doleful, and tragic giant with the wound of the enemy’s flag on his side. I can demonstrate this relationship with the mountain with a brief mention of a collection by Claire Angelides, a contemporary Cypriot poet who is particularly fond of Cyprus’ Greek past. Ubiquitous in Angelides’ poetry are particular images and characters, mythological and historical, whose function is to evoke a heroic and valiant past that is distinctly Greek and Christian Orthodox. This past contrasts bitterly with the present occupation of the northern part of the island by Turkish troops. Angelides was so inspired by the mythopoetic possibilities of the mountain that she imagined a poetic persona that, like an archetypal mother, gave birth to the mountain itself; hence the title of the long poem, *Pentadaktylos My Son* (1991, reprinted in 1994 in a bilingual edition):

My son was open-hearted;
Shaggy-breasted Mount Pentadaktylos
Offers a home to the wolf
Lined with down feathers of snow.

‘I laid my son to sleep on down feathers,
I danced him in my arms,
How I spoiled him!’

Digenis the hero came
And seized the boulder
Standing with one foot here on Mount Pentadaktylos
And the other on the highest peak in Crete;
And the trees smiled
When they awoke at dawn. (1994 21)

Costas Montis is another Greek Cypriot poet who finds in Pentadaktylos the ideal metaphor for articulating a recurring theme in his work: the enslavement of his motherland. Montis is one of Cyprus’ most acclaimed Greek Cypriot poets, a Nobel Prize nominee, and a ‘Corresponding Member of the Academy of Athens, the highest honour conferred upon intellectual creators living outside Greece’ (http://www.costasmontis.com/index.html). One of the poems in his 1975 collection *Πικραινόμενος εν Εαυτώ* (translated as *Grieving Inside Myself* on the official Montis website, http://www.costasmontis.com/books.html) is particularly representative of what has become a tradition in contemporary Cypriot literature of the post 1974 period. The poem is part of a series entitled ‘Moments of the Invasion’ with ‘invasion’ being an obvious reference for all Greek Cypriots of the Turkish military operation of July 1974 (that followed the coup d’état organised by the Athenian junta and assisted and supported by EOKA B, the right wing Greek Cypriot nationalist group):¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Είναι δόσκολο να πιστέψω</td>
<td>It is hard for me to believe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πως μας τους έφερε</td>
<td>That they were brought to us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>η θάλασσα της Κερύνιας</td>
<td>By the sea of Kyrenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>είναι δόσκολο να πιστέψω</td>
<td>It is hard for me to believe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πως μας τους έφερε</td>
<td>That they were brought to us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>η αγαπημένη θάλασσα της Κερύνιας</td>
<td>By the beloved sea of Kyrenia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Towards an Epistemology of Longing

Towards an Epistemology of Longing

The poetic devices are plain and straightforward: simple language to express unspeakable pain caused by an un-namable male enemy (in Greek the pronouns are male); repetition as an element from folkloric poetry that renders an incantatory but also mournful quality. Furthermore, the poet’s familiar seascape of Kyrenia (the port city on the island’s north coast where the Turkish warrior ships landed in 1974) is violated by this disgraceful deed but also inadvertently and innocently implicated in it. And, of course, the most prominent force in the poem expected to counter balance this tragedy is the giant and cherished mountain range. Pentadaktylos is forced to become the unwilling host of invaders and the poet calls upon him to employ his might and simply shake them off; tear them off so that Cyprus will be rid of them. Albeit plain, the poem’s language and structure delineate strongly the dichotomy between ‘them’ and ‘us’; the un-namable invaders and, on the other side, us, the children of Kyrenia and the brothers and sons of Pentadaktylos. Even the poet’s great disbelief that the sea of his beloved town acted as the passage of the enemy’s ships implies that this sea is only good and the evil travelled here by force.

In my estimation, Pentadaktylos as a heroic character with might and grandeur who is not defeated, only mournfully subdued and thought capable of shaking off the enemy, is a product of a masculinist imagination that employs prefabricated images in order to secure great support and circulation in the Cyprus Republic because of their ideological currency in Greek Cypriot nationalism. In simple terms, it is easy to write about Pentadaktylos in a mournful mode that recalls a pain that must remain ‘pure’ (meaning loyal to established national ideologies) and immutable. These poetic efforts remain impermeable to any creative and sophisticated re-workings of sadness, loss, and nostalgia. Rather, this masculinist imagination (exercised not only by male but female poets who imagine archetypal mothers giving birth to the mountain) attempts no ideological critique and, instead, remains invested in a perpetuation of the same points of reference and a consciousness that has to be preserved in the face of change.

Stephanides resists these uncomplicated binaries with their straightforward patriotic, heroic and orthodox pronouncements. He is deeply mindful of the tragedy of the island but he also resists Pentadaktylos’ anthropomorphic posturing. In striking contrast to poetic depictions of the mountain, the male body in Stephanides’ ‘Requiem for Trikomo’ is keen to dissolve and flow through experiences with striking flexibility. This is not a male body that seems encumbered by set patriarchal imperatives — heroism, orthodox tradition, sternness — but a male body that longs for exposure to the elements of experience, eager to ‘absorb and
expel the world’ in rigorous processes of shifting, growing, amassing memories, and shaping present and future. Trikomo, the village of origin, although enslaved and inaccessible, does not inflict a debilitating sorrow and does not provoke the inertia of a sober and nationalist posture. Rather, this specific geographic, emotional, and anamnesiac location engenders a listening and acting male body that choreographs its exploration of the world in a mode that remains fully permeable to the translational dimension of sensibility; in contrast with a hairy chested mountain of a son.

HAGS AND A QUEST FOR HOME

Turkish Cypriot writer and critic Mehmet Yashin offers an intriguing articulation of the Cypriot’s concept of displacement. Yashin writes about his homeland skewed by a border that marks violence. However, in ‘The Wednesday Hag’, he scripts nostalgia in an attempt to recreate a writerly home: ‘I was hoping to meet my writer in the buffer zone. But then I decided that what I was doing in this textual realism framework was searching for my home’ (14). In this profoundly political piece, the metafictional character of the narrative creates a multi dimensional possibility for the expression of violence and conflict in a striking blend of contradictory images, at once comic and horrifying; and circling the heart of this narrative are images of deserted homes and their screaming ghosts stranded in the gothic environs of abandonment. Here the writer sets up a residence. In alignment with my argument here, Yashin explores gender possibilities in order to escape from the dominant modes that lock subjectivity into specific frames that eschew the potential for creative and alternative embodiments. In fact, Yashin’s piece seeks to veer away from literary patterns that might indicate some dependence on literary orthodoxies. Rather, he ventures into a postmodern realm where borders of gender, genre, and language are creatively unsettled:

The Wednesday Hag opened the door before I knocked. In the quivering light of the gas lamp she held in her hand she looked like an apparition. She turned the knob gently to make the wick slightly bigger. Holding the now brighter lamp up to my face, she said ‘You must be Misail Oskarus, the character in the late Mehmet Yashin’s novel’. (4)

This striking introduction signifies in multifarious ways. The Wednesday Hag is herself a character that defies a solid form or ‘real’ identity and suggests a trans-ordinary embodiment. The opening of the door indirectly references the threshold, a liminal space of expectation and prospect, and marks the opening of a mythopoetic process with a promise for an unusual journey. The quivering light and the image of the apparition introduce an equivocation in the narrative, which is necessary for the incantatory tone that allows for possibilities. But, it is the character of the Hag, with her strange and unorthodox femininity, and disruption of all acceptable tropes of female representation, that allows for the imaginative possibilities the writer longs for in order to rethink the past and, in the process, re-configure his present and future. In another sense, Yashin’s character negotiates
between formidable contraries thus becoming an at once frightful and comic manifestation. This process of becoming also reveals a certain absurdity in the interethnic conflict that continues to keep the island divided.

**Hanneh**

My final literary illustration concerns the work of Lisa Suhair Majaj, a poet and short story writer with roots in Palestine and the United States who has been living in Cyprus for a number of years. Majaj went through the misfortune of experiencing and subsequently writing with great acuity on the politics of exile and dislocation, introducing a much-needed dimension to this particular theme in the contemporary writing of Cyprus. She is one of the island’s most poignant poetic voices thematising displacement, loss and conflict. Her lines draw the geographical contours of the region but also of the politics, personal and international, that the speaker contends with in the poems.

In a short elegiac prose piece, ‘Hanneh’, Majaj tells the story of a ‘tiny, ferocious woman’ (76), her physical smallness in sharp contrast with her cultural significance and great humanity. Hanneh, who is displaced from Palestine to Jordan, is at once a repository and purveyor of culture. She offers to teach the author Arabic, the language itself being a home and a place of belonging. The piece is autobiographical and the author openly regrets her lack of attention to these lessons that deprived her access to this place. Not only is Hanneh a purveyor of culture and tradition, she also gives a stern example of excellent housekeeping that fully respects all available resources, as opposed to a materialistic appetite for selfish exploitation of resources. And what a gracious paradox that Hanneh embodies all these while being an unmarried woman, a state that remains aberrant and unforgivable in many Middle Eastern cultures, including Cyprus. As if spinsterhood is not enough, Hanneh is also an avid traveller at a time when ‘women often stayed home’ (76).

She was a Palestinian from Jerusalem; living in Jordan, where she spent much of the year, was a compromise. She never forgot where she came from, or where she belonged. From her I learned about both dignity and caution. Occasionally she would tell stories about the history she’d lived through, offering details that were few but chilling; how survivors of the Deir Yassin massacre were paraded through Jerusalem streets on trucks; the devastation of napalm. But when I arrived in Jerusalem from the U.S. on a lecture tour, she took me to the side and admonished me to watch what I said in public. ‘We have to live here,’ she said flatly, not needing to say the rest: that I did not. (77)

Hanneh’s circumstances bring home the tragedies and horrors of historical contingencies that motivate much of refugee literature where they become hardened sediments. However, Majaj’s portrait is so lyrical, so personal, so replete with compassion and also admiration for a figure that profoundly impacted her imagination, that what she offers is an account of memories where the gender performance appears familiar and urgent but also gestures towards a futuristic investment. The woman she writes about emerges from the narrative as someone
Cypriots know and have some kind of relationship with. She is bound by the exigencies of a hard life, but emanates a certain didactic disposition whose value is in revising our present and expanding the potential of various identity and gender embodiments. Hanneh is single, thrifty, caring, wise, austere, and loving.

When the news came that she had died, I was on my way to an airport in a foreign country. Perhaps it was fitting that knowledge of her passing reached me in that liminal space between borders, the space Palestinians are so often forced to call home. From the departure lounge I dialled Jerusalem unsteadily. The familiar voice on the other end of the receiver confirmed my sense of loneliness, the knowledge of a generation slipping irrevocably away. (77)

This moving passage underscores the loss of a significant person, yet it also seems as if Hanneh herself has come to represent a home, a place of belonging despite the paradoxes, or perhaps, precisely because of the paradoxes of her identity (single, unorthodox, uncompromising, set in her ways and ecological in her everyday conduct). Her passing, therefore, comes to signify a loss that is reminiscent of the pain of homelessness.

**Conclusion**

On the level of official state politics, the refugee issue has brought about the creation of a complex government apparatus involving special funds and parliamentary committees passing various forms of legislation that protect but also set the limits to refugee entitlements. Greek Cypriot refugees have been issued with special identity cards that signal the ontological nature of refugee status: it is not just what has happened to you but what you have become. Although motivated by a desire for crisis management and fair treatment of afflicted people, these mechanisms and policies imbricate intriguing gender politics. For example, until quite recently (June 2010), the children of a second generation father with refugee status were entitled to a state subsidy for the building of their home. Patriarchy, in other words, endowed male refugee status with a validity and entitlement denied to females, since a second generation female refugee with children married to a non-refugee man was not eligible for state support for her children. In 2011, thirty-six years after the 1974 tragedy, the issue of second generation refugee entitlement was brought before the Cyprus parliament where it was legislated to be extended to refugee mothers as well.²

The passage from ‘Hanneh’ quoted above speaks to my concerns in this paper: that refugee literature existing in an in-between site achieves its greatest potential when it reveals ways to transcend the various ideological strictures and reach beyond the pain of a stagnating nostalgia. By stagnating nostalgia I am thinking of, for example, the repeated broadcasts of images of villages in the occupied north of the island, a slide show of sorts, accompanied by nostalgic music and the slogan ‘I don’t forget’ (Stephanides 2007 7). This offered very little in terms of a creative reworking of pain or coming to terms with history and understanding.
Towards an Epistemology of Longing

the complex events that brought about the destruction of 1974. As it negotiates its pain and physical relocation, literature of displacement has to resist such visual articulations of loss. In the words of Djelal Kadir, a Turkish Cypriot of the diaspora, it is ‘the bulwarks of migration and memory management who calibrate and control the movement of peoples on the basis of biometrics and ethnicities in today’s world’ (55). Ethnic hatred and religious and racial intolerance force people on the move almost every day. In this article I have tried to veer away from national(ist) and patriarchal directives and their vigilant and intransigent ethnocentric agendas that have brought such suffering in Cyprus. These do not take us further in our thinking, serving rather to cement a consciousness that hardens and resists possibilities.

Nearing the conclusion of this article I feel more acutely the pressure of a certain frustration that I have suppressed till now. I have raised issues that relate to posturing (a term that I favour because I can imagine it as creatively histrionic and even campy), nationalist imperatives, normative nationalist gender embodiment, and the potential to transgress these. However, I am concerned that I may not have offered the reader ample clarity and I have resisted the most immediate way to do it: a detailed telling of my own participation in military parades where ‘nationalist posturing’ comes alive in a manner that I find crude and violent. I have also refrained from relating my experience as an army recruit where I have to attend military training in regular intervals and learn how to assemble and disassemble guns. There are also the national holidays with the overload of slogans about a heroic people and the usual litany of terms about the ‘sacred land’ that birthed us, ‘morality and values’ defined against an enemy always depicted as barbaric and insolent, our fathers’ ancient and revered traditions and so forth. This exploration into the literature I have read is motivated by the anecdotal desire of Cypriots to tell their problem in a ‘dreaded history lesson’ (Papadakis 2006 231), that involves a general unwillingness to listen to an other’s story, imagine other possibilities, or accept that the issue is more complex than this ‘history lesson’ outlines. The Cyprus of the Armenian, Maronite, Greek, and Turkish Cypriot communities (there may be more) has been turned into a tragic and divided island that insists, at least in the south where I live, on a monolithic identity: Greek Cypriot. Often on the radio I hear discussions about how Greek Cypriots are fast becoming extinct because of the influx of migrants and their children and the mixing that inevitably takes place. This nationalist paranoia presumes that Cypriots have always been an essentially pure, Greek race, and have not mixed with the Arabs, Lusignan, Venetians, Ottomans, and others who have passed through the island.

In reaction, then, my reading tries to explore the literary journey of those refugees whose writing has deployed idiosyncratic subjectivities able to illuminate pathways of resistance and reconfigure the body’s articulation in relation with its gender expectations and its new environment. These idiosyncrasies and reconfigurations are not the concern of merely the refugees writing their plight into...
existence. They are immediate and in possession of cultural arsenal useful in the ongoing battles against some of the fronts I outline in the previous paragraph. I am fond of the idea of Aphrodite and I am not troubled by the Orientalist associations. But, if the goddess is to be invited for more entrances then she must not serve the inane needs of a patriarchal designation. Rather, she must emerge fresh as a goddess of hope, not in harmony with existing oppressive structures, those that also determine gender strictures, but disruptive and beautifully discordant.

NOTES


2 This problematic gender-biased construction of refugee status and its privileges became the subject of controversy. The announcement about refugee entitlements being extended to mothers met with opposition because of its financial burden on the state economy in 2011, a year of financial crisis of global dimensions. There was a fear that it would tax the state apparatus by a significant increase in the volume of refugee entitlement.

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Miranda Hoplaros

JA JA

To my ears, Afrikaans has a long, heavy sound. The straat in Pretoria are full of Vans. Van Reeseman, Van Riebeeck, Van Heerden, Van Der Hoff, Van Der Stell. The straat vowels are like the stretched avenues that part the city — Daspoort, Haarhoff, Moot, Root, Bloed. The Voortrekkers had scattered Afrikaans inland, away from the English Cape, away from their 1902 defeat, where I was to find it and where the pupils in the Black townships were forced to learn it. The Afrikaners had a National Party and wanted a national language. It was a powerful language, a tongue that crushed anti-Afrikaans demonstrations in Soweto. To hell with Afrikaans. Do not want Afrikaans.

Ja Ja is locked behind bars on the sixth floor, confined to her cell and limited by speech; her Cypriot dialect. Besides, Pretoria is a deadly place. There are break-ins, murders, muggings and rapes. So she defends herself in her apartment, apartheid, apartness. She guards her prison from the inside, protecting the reminders, the remainders from Cyprus — coffee cups and saucers, silver trays, hand-made lace table cloths and a small bottle filled with hurried sand from her now occupied village of Morfu, which Chris calls morphine sand just as he calls his grandmother Ja ja (yes yes in Afrikaans instead of yiayia). There’s a small stuffed donkey from Cyprus at the entrance and behind the black bars it looks like a grey zebra.

Ja ja hovers above the hob while her daughter and son-in-law are out slapping spoonfuls of pap and meat onto empty plastic plates at their café. When they bring their purple veined legs home they complain that business is slow, that workers haven’t got money for food. They worry that their business will close. ‘I’m worry about that man,’ Eleni says in her broken English, in whatever English she managed to save from what she heard in the café. ‘What man?’ asks her husband balancing bulgur wheat and home-made yogurt on his fork. ‘That man Dela on Robinson Crusoe Island. I feel problem.’ They never eat what they sell in the café, it’s not theirs. Hot home-cooked food, tastes of the island, waits for them — stuffed vine leaves, broad beans in tomato sauce, meat balls and fresh vegetables brought from the Portuguese greengrocer.

During confession, Ja ja lets Father Anastasi know that she refuses to die in South Africa, to be buried next to strangers, to be buried a foreigner on African soil, forgotten. She wants to go home, return to Cyprus where her husband had been put to rest, heartbroken. Her son has been shattered to pieces driving over a landmine in Rhodesia, fighting another country’s war, defending a country for other people. There was nothing left of him to put in the earth. He was missing a body like 1619 others in Cyprus. He missed the invasion. He missed his own history. He was missed.
THE GREAT TREK

Here we are, uprooted, unsettled in Sunnyside, Pretoria, South Africa with a permanent permit of residency. *Welkom in Suid-Afrika*. We are wanted here in the Capital, welcomed refugees. We fall neatly into the White European category. No doubts, no questions, plain and simple, black and white. We are settlers, we are fighters, we are survivors and good breeding stock. Our comforting relationship with our supportive South African neighbours in our war against an independent Zimbabwe makes it easy for us in this foreign yet familiar land. We were here during the sanctions, raiding the well-stocked shopping centres, then driving back satisfied through the border crossing at Beitbridge. The grass was always greener on the other side.

And my father, the pioneer, is wearing his suit and holding his elephant hide briefcase from Rhodesia. He’s moving into the diamond business, putting his Rhodesian shopkeeper days behind him. We have been trekking in reverse, from Cyprus, to Rhodesia to South Africa. We have made our way from Salisbury, Cecil John Rhodes’ capital city southwards, against his Cape-to-Cairo dream. Now we have landed ourselves in the heart of another struggler’s territory; a place where the wagon wheels of the Voortrekkers came to a grinding halt. Our new beginning starts where the Great Trek ended. My father was full of admiration for the early South African colonial fore-trekkers. In Greek, he would say, ‘Look, this is Pretorius’ city or this is Johannes’ city’ when we drove past Pretoria or Johannesburg. Perhaps it was because his insignificant island of Cyprus had been conquered so many times in the past that he now wanted to identify with the mighty, conquering side or perhaps he admired the Boers’ courage and hopes for a better life and their drive north. His faith lay south, in the words of his school friends who had left Cyprus in the ’60s and ’70s to settle in Rhodesia and South Africa.

He gives us a brief history of our new homeland, starting with the *Ntotsi*. He calls the Afrikaners, *Ntotsi* because it sounds like the English word Dutch. He forgets that the Dutch have been here longer than him and they are now called Afrikaners. In South Africa we are named after our language; Greek. His short account begins and finishes with the Europeans. ‘The *Ntotsi* landed in the Cape in the 17th century. They were like us Cypriots who came into conflict with the English.’ At this point he starts confusing his story and talks about his school days in Cyprus and how he would often throw stones at the English as a form of resistance. By the time he comes back to talking about the *Ntotsi* there is little else to say. ‘So they tried to escape the British Colonial administration by mass migration northwards.’ He doesn’t know the whole story, so he keeps it simple. There is too much history to remember, layer upon layer. He has too much history to remember.
There are only two views to choose from. It’s a two bedroom flat. I choose the past. When I squeeze my head through the bars of my bedroom window, I can see Monument Hill, home of the towering Voortrekker Monument. It lies just beyond the jacaranda trees that line the streets and past the segregated railway line that brings workers from the township into the city, like arteries pumping life to the centre. This colossal, cold, granite memorial is a daily reminder of a past. It is an Afrikaner past, a past for Blacks, for the Zulu, the Ndebele, the Coloureds, the English, the Portuguese, the Indians, the majority, the minority, the victors, the victims, the slaves, the ancestors, the oppressed, the onlookers, the tourists. It even serves as a reminder for the Cypriot refugees in Flat 102 who never forget.
The Little Land Fish: Experiencing Place, Homeland, and Identity in an Exhibition of Contemporary Cypriot Art

‘Penned by Samad Behrangi, *The Little Black Fish* is the story of an old fish telling his 12,000 children and grandchildren a tale themed around justice, equality, questioning dogma, and swimming against the tide. The tale concerns the efforts of the little black fish in his troublesome voyage to the sea and eventual freedom’ (*The Little Land Fish* 9). Taking Behrangi’s tale as the starting point, two Cypriot artists’ associations (Turkish Cypriot EMAA and Greek Cypriot EKATE) put out a call for artists to submit works for an exhibition that took place between June 19th and July 19th, 2010 at the Sanat Liman space, within the framework of the ‘Portable Art’ project of Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture. The works were selected by the author and Zeynep Yasa Yaman, who also co-curated the exhibition.

The little fish of Behrangi’s story served as an allegory for the island of Cyprus, so the exhibition was titled *The Little Land Fish*. The little black fish had to resist the long-entrenched ideas of its family, neighbours and wider community about the ‘proper’ way of life, the very space of existence, and the fixed identity of the individual as a member of a specific group, in its effort to transcend physical, mental and ideological borders, so as to establish an identity for itself. Cyprus, a ‘floating’ land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean has had a turbulent history; its fortunes and notions of identity have largely been determined by geography, and decided upon by agents other than itself. Its recent past and its present are marked by conflict and division, and by ideologies of collective (‘ethnic’) difference and of separation. The works in *The Little Land Fish* offer counter-narratives and alternative visions to such ideologies. They negotiate space — both in actual and symbolic terms — as a ‘homeland’ that is fluid; and identity as a shifting, rather than fixed, concept. They visually deconstruct the vocabulary of dominant political rhetoric, and they subvert discourses of ‘us’ and ‘others’. At the same time, they counter-propose narratives of commonality, either by constructing a space of shared experience, or by focusing on the individual experience of the greater historical forces, as a process that resists the constructs of hegemonic ideology.

Two of the artists incorporated the actual figure of the little fish into their takes on the exhibition’s theme: Adi Atassi (b. 1962) created an *Untitled* painting triptych [Fig. 1], in which the outline of the island is transformed into a lone fish at first, and then into a whole swarm of them, within the parameters of the canvases
that, in turn, ‘float’ on a sea of text — the opening lines of *The Little Black Fish*. Lia Lapithi (b. 1963) gives a humorous twist to a more literal visualisation of the topic: in a one-minute video loop aptly titled *The Little Land Fish* [Fig. 2] — the background is taken over by the bare, rocky volume of the Pentadaktylos mountain range. This mountain — one of two on the island — has become an iconic image for Greek Cypriots ever since the 1974 military invasion by Turkey that has separated the country into two halves: Pentadaktylos dominates the skyline of the ‘occupied’ (in the eyes of Greek Cypriots) territory. In her video collage, Lapithi shows the mountain as it is seen from inland — the way it is seen from the South (from the dominant Greek-speaking Republic of Cyprus) — yet she has placed in the foreground the sea: a view possible only if one were to look from the North (such as, from the southern coast of Turkey), but for the ‘wrong’ side of the mountain! To the sound of the water, several fish are ‘swimming’ in mid-air (above the sea) while a spoon net is chasing after them unsuccessfully!

The playfulness of sight and sound in Lapithi’s video, and the impossible reversals of viewpoints contribute to feelings of uncertainty and displacement, while hinting at the degree of absurdity that is one of the ingredients that have gone into the making of the so-called ‘Cyprus problem’ in the past sixty or so years. The work by Nicos Kouroussis (b. 1937), on the contrary, constitutes a sombre look at the current state of affairs. His *Protagonists* is a ten-metre long and three-metre wide carpet [Fig. 3], the surface of which carries digital prints of leading politicians from Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, the USA, the UK and the UN, who have, in the second half of the 20th century, been somehow involved in the scheming and intrigues of the island’s politics and overall fortunes. Kouroussis’s work amounts to an accusation, directed at both external and internal entities and personae (the ‘negative’ photo prints accentuate the ‘sinister’ character of those portrayed), that have ‘contributed’ to the modern-day plight of the Cypriot people, who are in turn invited to literally step upon them (their images).
Fig. 2: Lia Lapithi, *The Little Land Fish*, 2010. Digital video, 1 min loop
Unlike most of the artists in the exhibition, Kouroussis was already an adult during the 1974 political and military events (the Greek-junta led coup against Cyprus’ president Archbishop Makarios and the subsequent invasion by Turkey). At the other end of the age spectrum, the three members of the artists’ team GRUP 102, — Özge Ertanin (b. 1976), Oya Silbery (b. 1979) and Evren Erkut (b. 1985) — were not yet born when these events took place. In an intriguing coincidence, the three young Turkish Cypriot artists utilised imagery and symbolism that are similar and parallel to Kouroussis’. But instead of the solemn and rather straightforward negotiation by the Greek Cypriot artist, GRUP 102 offer a more distanced
yet more subversive take on the images and the emblems of the ‘protagonists’, the institutions and the collective symbols that have been involved in Cypriot politics in recent decades. In Tester [Fig. 4], they are turned into labels for perfume bottles, which are lined up as if on shop shelves. They are images and symbols that have been among the ingredients of hegemonic narratives, which have perpetuated their validity time and time again; it is finally time for their de-construction and de-mythologisation.

All of the iconographic material used in the above two works has been contributing to a discourse of conflict, of division and of difference among the two main ‘ethnic communities’ in Cyprus. A number of works in the Little Land Fish exhibition strive, by using other imagery, to emphasise sameness and togetherness, and to expose the artificiality and suspect character of the rhetoric of separation and otherness. We Are Identical [Fig. 5], by Serhat Selişik (b. 1975) and Doğuş Bozkurt (b. 1981), makes a direct, almost ‘in-your-face’ statement about the inability of Cypriot peoples to acknowledge their sameness: multiples of the same headshot are engaged in a shouting match, one that is both futile and absurd.

Some of the other works employ subtler means of constructing narratives of sameness and/or sharing, such as by the charting of a common space and culture, in opposition to official discourses of division. In CMYK: Colour Separation [Fig. 6], Tatiana Ferahian (b. 1970) created a number of near cartoon-like drawings (reminiscent of images in schoolbooks), which portray scenes of religious and ‘national’ gatherings of the Greek and Turkish communities from the recent past, complete with corresponding emblems and architectural referents, such as flags, a
church, a minaret. The same five drawings are reproduced in four monochromatic rows — each employing one of the basic colours used in printing. By alluding to the process of colour separation, the work points to the ideological constructs of ethnic and religious divisions, just when the very mundane character of the scenes themselves, and people’s everyday life in general, point to the opposite effect. This is reinforced in the same artist’s *Turkish Coffee* [Fig. 7], where similar
views have been painted on the bottom of several coffee cups, aligned on a wall. These are cups specifically used for the traditional coffee drunk in Turkey, Greece and Cyprus, which is alternately referred to as Turkish, Greek, Cypriot, even, Byzantine. If the ‘banality’ of everyday architectural and other signs may arguably tend to reinforce — on a less conscious level — notions of national identity, the great similarities among supposedly distinct signs may well, according to Ferahian’s works, point to notions of sameness and of past experiences of co-existence between the now separate Cypriot communities.

A more subtle as much as unexpected form of commonality emerges from the installation *This Is How I Will Remember You* [Fig. 8] by Vicky Pericleous (b. 1976). A large Plexiglas box, lit with yellow neon lights from the top and the bottom, contains a great number of picture frames, all containing photographs of interiors — of rooms in Cypriot households. These snapshots of everydayness from a recent past, include copies of several variations of the same boy portrait, which
Fig. 7: Tatiana Ferahian, *Turkish Coffee*, 2009. Eight coffee cups, 7 x 9 x 5.5 cm each; ink and coffee on rice paper
were massively printed and framed in various sizes and shapes [Fig 8 details]. The original work was probably painted by Italian artist Bruno Amadio (perhaps, 1911–81; also known as Bragolin). These copies were widely circulating from the 1950s onwards, and a great many of them were decorating Cypriot houses in the 1970s (and even later). Framed as if in a time capsule, these glimpses of a nostalgic, melancholic domesticity foreground a wide sharing of visual codes — despite, or perhaps because of, the banality or kitschness of such imagery.
In three other works from the exhibition, there are different negotiations of (the Cypriot) space: as a fluid, not-easy-to-map environment, as an estranged ‘homeland’, and as an uninviting new land. In I LAND I: Possible Worlds, Melita Couta (b. 1974) reassesses the notion of ‘topos’ — geographical, physical, ideological — as a fluid, constantly changing map, one that resists fixity. This sense of fluidity is accentuated by the equally non-fixed installation parameters — the 100 ink drawings of ‘maps’ (on paper serving napkins) adjust to, and take over, any given site [Fig. 9].

In a series of Untitled photographic collages, Mustafa Erkan (b. 1959) has created palimpsests of recent Cypriot history. Emblems from the colonial era and the independent Cypriot republic are superimposed onto each other, along with fragments of Identity Cards and other visual cultural referents, in an allusion to the multiple and often conflicting forms of collective (state, ethnic or national) identities that Cypriots have been required to adopt in the twentieth century [Fig. 10]. The tensions and uncertainties of such ‘identities’ have generated a sense of estrangement from the homeland for many Turkish Cypriots, several thousand of whom have migrated abroad in recent decades — a state of affairs hinted at by the old suitcase fragments in one of Erkan’s collages. Many other inhabitants of the country, however, have been experiencing alienation of a reverse kind: the many thousands of settlers who have been brought from Turkey to the northern part of
the island during these same decades are regarded as unwanted aliens not only by the Greek Cypriots in the South, but also by many of the Turkish Cypriots in the North. *Untitled* by Özgül Ezgin (b. 1965) is about these people: a series of still
images [Fig. 11] is continuously projected while their voices are heard speaking of their own uprooting from villages in Turkey, and of their lives in a new place.
Fig. 11: Özgül Ezgin, *Untitled*, 2008–2010. Projection of still images with sound
Yet, while in Ezgin’s work the Turkish settlers experience life in Cyprus as a partly unwanted minority, the two *Untitled* pieces [Fig. 12] by Zehra Şonya (b. 1972) point not only to the conflicting attitudes of many Turkish Cypriots toward Turkey, but also to their experience as a ‘minority’ within the wider Turkish milieu, living under the threat of a cultural assimilation that many of them (want to) resist. *Untitled 2* consists of a piece of wooden container used for transporting goods from the Turkish mainland to northern Cyprus. To the stamped inscription ‘LEFKOSE / K. KIBRIS T.C.’ (‘Nicosia / Cyprus’), the artist has prominently painted ‘A’ over the letter ‘E’ — replacing the mainland spelling of the town with the one used by the Turkish Cypriots. The dense array of large nails placed around the inscription leaves little doubt of the poignant state of affairs.

In *Experimental Storytelling* [Fig. 13] by Klitsa Antoniou (b. 1968), the experiences of displacement and the corresponding trauma are given a more personal (autobiographical) character. In a four-and-a-half minute video, a girl’s dress, that the artist wore when she became a refugee in 1974, becomes the focus and the object over which a series of fortune tellers offer ‘insights’ as to the owner’s past, present and future. Their sayings, whether factual, correct or not, aim at a state of healing, one that however remains open-ended.

Equally elusive is the realisation of a catharsis, despite the agonising ritual in which a (now, adult) woman is engaged in *The Calm* [Fig. 14], by Yioula Hatzigeorgiou (1968). A four-minute video consists of a performance by the artist, in which she struggles to get rid of the heavy material (soil, stones, seeds?) with which her clothes are loaded, in a process that alludes to ancient rituals of mourning.

Parallel references to customs relating to mourning and the dead, but also allusions to the traumas and memories of the everyday and the banalities that also go into the making of our identities, are contained in *Anti-Funeral Gifts* [Fig. 15]
Fig. 13: Klitsa Antoniou, *Experimental Storytelling*, 2009. Digital video, 4 min 34 s
by Andreas Savva (b. 1970). In a juxtaposition to the funerary offerings that many ancient peoples placed in the tombs in order to accompany the dead for eternity, Savva ‘packages’ (using rope or wrapping foil) daily objects — clothes, toys and other common accessories — into long, snake-like formations: an allegory of the fluid and contingent nature of the human condition.
Fig. 15: Andreas Savva, *Anti-Funeral Gifts*, 2010. Readymade objects, rope and wrapping foil, variable dimensions
Yet, despite such fluidity and the contingency of human existence, people seek certainties, boundaries and fixed identities, all of which they acquire within the parameters of a group, a community, a state or a nation. These parameters offer a sense of security and of belonging, largely experienced in juxtaposition to those seen as ‘not belonging’ (with us), those outside (of our ‘inside’) — the Others. Fear is among the forces that perpetuate this discourse of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Yiannos Economou (b. 1959) created a video work entitled *Fear Is A Man’s Best Friend* [Fig. 16]. As the camera moves among the ruins of now obsolete military
fortifications that are scattered round the Cypriot countryside, a claustrophobic, visual and aural labyrinth emerges, one that gradually dissolves into white noise and illegible TV images.

If such a fear-laden uncertainty is the dominant element in the current state of affairs in Cyprus with regard to the island’s division, the attitudes of the two ‘ethnic communities’ toward each other, and their views of the future, what could be the breakout of such a deadlock? Art can hardly give the answers, let alone the solutions. But it can manifest alternative visions and other imaginings, thus
subverting the dogmatism of any givens, of the entrenched notions of space, identity and community — of ‘us’ and of the ‘others’ — much as the little black fish of Behrangi’s tale has to overcome. Katerina Attalidou (b. 1973), in conversation with another persecuted artist (the Turkish writer, Nazim Hikmet), created the cut-out animation Re Member! Remember ‘The Cloud In Love’ by Nazim Hikmet [Fig. 17]. Hikmet’s and Behrangi’s fairytales are the kind of alternative visions and imaginings that artworks can be; and, as such, they can have a lasting effect on people’s lives.

Calm and happy, the fish was swimming on the surface of the sea and thinking, ‘Death could come upon me very easily now. But as long as I’m able to live, I shouldn’t go out to meet death. Of course, if someday I should be forced to face death — as I shall — it doesn’t matter. What does matter is the influence that my life or death will have on the lives of others…’ (Behrangi online)

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All images have been reproduced with permission from the respective artists.

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The Little Land Fish 2010, exhibition catalogue, Istanbul, European Capital of Culture Agency, EMAA and EKATE.
Taner Baybars

MIU SEQUENCE I–VIII

I. Threshed Straw on Milk

My sole lantern in the twilight of dreams, the sallow sensuousness of her skin, she sleeps at the corner of her pillow, but her pout remains on mine, jasmine. Underneath her eyelids, galaxies shift, while she’s riding on wild quasars, spreading earthly straw to kindle a new nebula beyond the Milky Way, a sacrifice in soulless void, or a void of unseenables, the Theo and the Logo drift apart. Now she’s in her hive, her dreams smell of honey as I share them, the Queen. I enter her comb, the scent of hive dross, I confront the vision of love in her womb. Make the universe dark, her bright stars, the fluid energy, the soft magenta blood. But we must both wake up, lest this become our permanent voyage, eternal spiral, descending and ascending on different rungs. I whisper into her flesh: Your eyes have seen all, now come back to me, come back to your wilting chrysanthemum.
II. Dewclaws on Grass

The time-tripper returns to an archaeology of memoirs, to her past that was her future before she left, and I stayed in her womb, terrified to make my presence known, her endless orgasm as she milked her way. Back to Earth, deflowered camomile in her hair, mint-hue eyes. Celandine.

She bears me out, her space child, her lover centuries old, the bearded babe, dying of old age. My eyes are open, shot with her blood, I give her back her pout. She gives me her teat, the γαλατικ sustenance, life’s flow to the finite universe, to cure me of wrinkles, brittle bones and occluded eyes; the vibrating trough.

I ask Miu, my lover, my mother, my nurse, to tell me what she saw outside me, whether her path crossed with His, on the day of His Ascension. No, she’d gone to a time long Before, where Life was only a Thought, alone, face to face with God.
III. Pentecost in Centaurus

Miu has discovered her quantum corridor, the fold in fold, forever unfolding, star crumbs falling off stale spheres, baby galaxies smiling to celestial cameras… Miu has skipped away leaving me on a marooned rock to incant the Chung Fu, the truth in the second trigram, the nebulous Centre of St Augustine and Niels Bohr. Shabuoth harvest of hay at the Southern Cross, Christ preaches on Alpha Centauries; the harvest route is sabotaged by Saul, Miu finds him hiding in a cluster, Omega… *I am the Beginning and the End.* The Holy Spirit descends on the Centre. Quasar. There are no flowers in space, no birds, Miu’s tears cannot flow without graviton. We embrace on the red rock, zeal hot, but quiet and reasonless. Oh, such peaaaace! She puts me into her pouch to give me back my years gained or perhaps lost in space, but does it really matter where we end up, at what age? We are Alpha and Omega. Zut!
IV. Intimations of Summer

Young girls in polka dress or tight jeans, push their children to pavement cafés, prim husbands with a neat moustache. Miu unbuttons the spots of a ladybird as it creeps down the bough of a magnolia. Early June, white petals, waxy sheen. Singing nettles in its shadow, furry little teeth searching a better shade of green.

All gone, the night in gale, the swoosh of wind in tired almond blooms. The News continues relentless, unsettling seasons, death has no season or politics a summer. Miu calls from the kitchen, her voice like a feast, to wolf on, with long chopsticks. While we crunch, almond milk on her throbbing thighs, the cock nightingale’s screech.

Miu says, the universe hides in the seed of the hellebore, in the oyster’s glair, Let’s stay here, no need to go, see pretend happiness in cafés. Elves lie on dank grass teasing joy with nettle teeth, small garden infinite sky above, and choice air.
V. Hound Fire

Canicula, the hound. A wag-tail on the Canal du Midi picks at lunch crumbs on a house boat La Tramontane, still and sultry, the sky white with the heat. I lie on a concrete bench, cool, near the sluice gate, gushing water lulls the heart, the weir lock hisses, a dejected man sobs, I hear them both, my eyes closed.

Night dreams in noon-sleep, vagabondish, my time ship to Miu’s golden sheep, she’s fleecing stars and planets that float at the edges of the γάλα-xy searching for the secret of life or after life lived and begun again from the end of the infinite. I wake up as the weir lock shuts and the canal surges on the other side. She’s there.

I tell her my dream, how I follow her wherever she goes. My dream is my death and I can invent a world where I can will myself to be reborn, a corner in the multiverse… But I want to know where I come from, beyond the mother’s womb, before Miu.
VI. Treasure Chest

I fold my shirts for the chest, I remember each one, worn for whom and where; the day, and the night I took it off. So many shirts all washed in the Milky Way, yet the cotton fabric retains what is timeless, beyond space. Even the scent is intact. I spread them out on the bed, will those nights come alive? Quantic magic? Is Miu.

She will unweave nothing, she’ll take me nowhere in her chronocraft to visit old loves; suffer the joy again, or shed tears over sunken beds. Loitering in time is not her craft. Her marsupial pouch is not enough to contain me and my endless past, to swift through super dimensions. I wear all the shirts, and they vanish as I put them on, except the last.

Miu takes me on with her gift shirt, she’ll take me to Celestarock where my future ends, while she continues to Wu-Li dance across the hidden universe to another infinity. But she’ll come back to pick me up, my shirt in tatters. No stampede of Time on it.
VII. The Sound of Speeding Light

I search for the squirrel that hides all the hollow stars in the universe hoping to feast on them when sucked into a black hole. Poor soft tail! Then there are the Crabs in Twins, walking on feline Fire of ocean rocks, waiting for the unruly tide to float them back to their void in the sky.

Miu steals the sound of the speeding light, inverse Prometheus. Stolen oranges from the Black Hole, tossing between the juggle of now and never, scattering their pips at Plato’s feet. No longer in Pascal’s infinite silence, I throw yarrow sticks against fate, watch them fall endlessly on the *I Ching*, and hear the shrieking novae. Miu rounds them up, whistling, to their pen. Dwarf white dots, centuries in dying, crystal end. She cascades to our sleep-bag, beach end, on wet sand, to see them from below, the innocent chrononaut…
VIII. The Eclipse

The Ego is the eclipse of Self, and Self is in the eclipse of Love, there are no memorial candles to show the way to where they all belong. Which side of the universe, if not beyond, under — or a universe We dream up to console our loneliness, play-school cut-outs, in colour.

She’s off again, Miu, she now floats without her craft, sieving stardust, to let the small particles fall on our Selfs, or Egos, centric to some nebula, and every shake of her sieve shatters yet another hope, yet another belief, stars or their dust are not our destiny, they feed on our endless Love.

Come, now, star-filled Miu, fill our tent with your hegemony of celestas, the key to the sea, Poseidón’s vast den. Your astral midwifery is clapped by luminous nuggets of spheres still encrypted before the cast of Time.

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ABSTRACTS

DIANA WOOD CONROY

‘Stone Writing in Ancient Paphos: Theatre, Basilica and House’

Inscriptions in stone embed understanding intellectually through the interpretation of texts and also through eye and touch in the subtlety of their petrified materiality. Watching inscriptions emerge from the earth and documenting them has a poetic resonance for both scholars and artists in the Greco-Roman theatre in Paphos. Cyprus has a complex history of writing in stone, in various scripts, since the Bronze Age. Through the individual experience of an artist/archaeologist, this essay traces the impact of the past on the present through graphic and woven representations that refer to the resonance of the classical past in postcolonial Australia. By teasing out that poetic resonance, this study looks closely at inscriptions associated with the names Marcus Aurelius and Eustorgis from the Paphos theatre, and comments on the inferences of gender. The inscriptions, like the mosaic texts from nearby sites, refer not only to great imperial forces but also to an emotional and private individuality.

ANTONIS DANOS

‘The Little Land Fish: Experiencing Place, Homeland, and Identity in an Exhibition of Contemporary Cypriot Art’

The protagonist of Iranian author Samad Behrangi’s *The Little Black Fish* (1968) had to resist the long-entrenched ideas of its family, neighbours and wider community as to the ‘proper’ way of life, the very space of existence, and the fixed identity of the individual as a member of a specific group in its effort to transcend physical, mental and ideological borders, so as to establish an identity for itself. The story was the starting point for the exhibition, *The Little Land Fish* (Istanbul, 2010). The little fish served as an allegory for the island of Cyprus, a ‘floating’ land in the eastern end of the Mediterranean that has had a turbulent history, and whose fortunes have largely been determined by geography, and decided upon by agents other than itself. Cyprus’ recent past and its present are marked by conflict and division, and by ideologies of collective (‘ethnic’) difference and of separation. The works in *The Little Land Fish* offer counter-narratives and alternative visions to such ideologies. They negotiate space — both in actual and symbolic terms — as a ‘homeland’ that is fluid; and identity as a shifting, rather than a fixed, concept. They visually deconstruct the vocabulary of dominant political rhetoric, and they subvert discourses of ‘us’ and ‘others’. At the same time, they counter-propose narratives of commonality, either by constructing a space of shared experience, or by focusing on the individual experience of the greater historical forces, as a process that resists the constructs of hegemonic ideology.
STAVROS STAVROU KARAYANNI
‘Towards an Epistemology of Longing: Gender Disruptions and Resistance in Cyprus Narratives of Displacement’

The story of the Cyprus Republic is one of strife, violence, and division. While the memory of home still erodes the psyche of older generations of displaced Cypriots, the master narratives that have incited ethnic and religious hatred continue to have currency in the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. These hatreds are often performed in a posture that is rigid and invariably patriarchal. Because Cypriot literature has been plagued by these narratives and this posturing, my goal in this article is to read literary moments when gender disrupts various ideological strictures and reaches beyond the exploitative pain of a stagnating nostalgia. Through a deployment of idiosyncratic narrative subjectivity and a reconfiguration of the body’s relation to orthodox gender embodiment, the poets I explore creatively re-negotiate the dominant and oppressive paradigms of ethnic hostility and relentless patriarchal imperatives. Ultimately, in their work the body resists and re-invents itself in ways that extend its existence beyond the oppressive regimes of master narratives.

GABRIEL KOUREAS
‘Nicosia/Istanbul: Ruins, Memory and Photography’

This essay will investigate the use of photography in recent mixed media artistic production in Cyprus. In order to do so the essay will attempt to bring together two cities, Istanbul and Nicosia, and argue that Orhan Pamuk’s juxtaposition of photography and text in his Istanbul, Memories of a City (2005) reveals the aesthetics of ruins in the spatiality of the city in order to uncover the transcultural memories that are buried deep under the ruins of the city of Istanbul. The essay will then move to the city of Nicosia in order to argue that another writer, Niki Marangou, in collaboration with the photographer Arunas Baltenas in their book Nicossiences (2006), adopt a similar relationship to the ruins of the dividing line through the juxtaposition of text and photography, in order to reveal the layers and possibilities of histories that ruins, memory and photography can expose in a space that is marked by the abject and death.

CHRISTINE PAGNOUILLE
‘Past into Future: Cyprus’ Undivided Literature — Aydin Mehmet Ali and Stephanos Stephanides’

Cyprus has long been associated with strife and division. British colonial occupation aggravated ethnic tensions that led to the actual partition of the island in 1974. Atrocities were perpetrated on both sides and history books perpetuate mutual but one-sided grievances. Yet whether they use Turkish, Greek or English,
Abstracts

most Cypriot writers (as indeed most Cypriot artists) offer comprehensive insights into the island’s past, a duty of remembrance which is the only way forward. Using studies on literature and trauma (Caruth, Kaplan, La Capra, Cohen) and historical-anthropological approaches (Bryant, Papadakis) as theoretical background, the article develops a close reading of two stories by Aydin Mehmet Ali and four poems by Stephanos Stephanides, two Cypriot authors writing in English. The article also explores the crucial role played by Cadences: A Journal of Literature and the Arts in Cyprus.

IRINI SAVVIDES

‘Cypriot Women Poets Cross the Line’

Stephanos Stephanides suggests that ‘it is the border anxiety of the city that gives originality and value to its literary expression’. This essay will look at the representations of this topos in relation to the last divided capital in Europe: Nicosia, Cyprus. I will examine the representation of the city in the poetry of Andriana Ierodiaconou, Niki Marangou, Nora Nadjarian and Neshe Yashin. Considering the confinements and longings associated with living in this divided city and the shifting views on the symbolic presence of the line, I will give an account of the shift in responses of Cypriot women to the division over time, examining how poetry may re-conceive ‘No Man’s Land’.

STEPHANOS STEPHANIDES

‘An Island in Translation’

This essay discusses how translation in Cyprus has been impacted by the geographical position and complex multicultural history of the island. Language and trans-cultural relations have been marked by inequalities due to conquests, colonialism, and changing demographics, and translation has been an indeterminate encounter among heterogeneous cultures. Depending on the historical moment, differences result in creative engagement not only in conflict. During the first decades of British rule, colonial rule with Cypriot diasporic consciousness yielded a form of colonial cosmopolitanism. The 1880s brought the first printing press and the first newspaper (published in Greek and English) to the island, serving as catalysts for the advent of Cypriot literary modernity, the production of local literature, translation and criticism. The re-territorialisation of ethnic origins in the ’50s and the separate national teleologies in the post-colonial period have been strong in defining cultural and literary practices including the translation mode. Nonetheless, the first decade of the millennium witnessed the renewal of forms of cultural cosmopolitanism stimulated by radical demographic changes due to immigrants, repatriates, and settlers, and the relaxation of north/south crossings since 2003. This has opened the affect and habitus of writers and translators to new potentials, confrontations, and literary experiments.
MARIOS VASILIOU

‘Cypriot English Literature: A Stranger at the Feast Locally and Globally’

Although English generally opens gateways to literary acknowledgement, Cypriot-English literature remains unknown for the most part both locally and internationally. Yet, its location at the crossroads of various linguistic and cultural systems, and the tensions that are begotten by this shifting position, which can be understood within the frame of ‘minor literature’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1986) have engendered syncretic aesthetics that this essay explores. By looking at Ierodiaconou’s Margharita’s Husband and Hoplaros’ Mrs. Bones, as well as at Stephanides’ short memoir The Wind Under My Lips, the essay demonstrates that the syncretic aesthetics that emerge from such shifting literary locations warrant examination in their own light, instead of being theorised under literary terms of global resonance.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ALEV ADIL has been widely published in academic journals, poetry anthologies and literary journals internationally. Her first collection of poetry, Venus Infers, was published in 2004. Alev’s poetry has been translated into Albanian, Azeri, Greek, Lithuanian, Romanian and Turkish. She has performed at a number of venues in London and has appeared at international poetry festivals. Alev’s photographic work, multimedia performances and film-poems have been exhibited in galleries in London, Baltimore and Nicosia. She also curates http://www.MemoryMap.org.uk, an online digital memory project and exhibition space for film, photography, writing and music. Alev has reviewed for The Times Literary Supplement, The Independent, The Guardian and The Financial Times and lectures at the University of Greenwich where she teaches visual culture and creative writing and is Head of the Department of Communication and Creative Arts.

AYDIN MEHMET ALI was born in Cyprus and educated in Cyprus, USA and Britain. She set up and managed Arts-based empowerment projects in Cyprus and the UK amongst different ethnic and language communities, focusing on young people and women. Aydin is an award-winning author whose short stories and poetry have been included in numerous anthologies, journals, festivals and as art installations. She has performed at venues throughout London and Cyprus and on state radio and TV in north and south Cyprus. A documentary about part of her life by Arte TV was shown in France and Germany (2004). Her publications include: Pink Butterflies/Bize Dair (short story/poetry collection, 2005); Turkish Speaking Communities & education — no delight (2001); Turkish Cypriot Identity in Literature (ed./trans. 1990); and a new collection of short stories is due toward the end of 2011. Aydin is also Assistant Editor of Cadences, a trilingual literary journal in Cyprus.

DIANA WOOD CONROY is Professor of Visual Arts at the University of Wollongong, Australia with contributions across art and archaeology. Her tapestries and drawings explore relationships between classical and personal worlds and are held in national and international collections. Her book, The Fabric of the Ancient Theatre: Excavation Journals from Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean (Moufflon Publications, Cyprus, 2007) is an imaginative journey through ancient and modern sites.

ANTONIS DANOS received his PhD from the University of Essex, UK, and is currently a Lecturer in Art History and Theory at Cyprus University of Technology. His research interests include nationalism and post-colonialism, Modern Greek and contemporary Cypriot art, art criticism and historiography, and issues of gender and sexuality in art. Antonis has published on Modern Greek and contemporary Cypriot art and culture, in journals, a two-volume book (Cypriot Artists: The Second Generation, 2010), articles in edited volumes, and texts in
Cypriot artists’ monographs. He has curated exhibitions of Cypriot art in Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and the UK, and his most recent project is a documentary on the life and work of Christoforos Savva 1924–1968 (2011).

GÜR GENÇ was born in 1969 in the village of Stavrogonno, Cyprus. After the division of the island in 1974, he was evacuated with his family and resettled in northern Cyprus in the region of Mesaoria where he grew up. Gür lived for many years in Turkey and England, but now lives once again in Cyprus. He has recited his poetry in various countries of Europe and his poems have been translated into all major languages. Gür’s many publications include volumes of poetry — *Yarımlık* (1992), *...ψε!* (1994), *Yolyutma* (2000), *Augur* (2005) and *Kelebek Tekmelemek* (2011) — and a short story collection entitled *Yağmur Yüzünden* (2008). He has translated a volume of collected poetry by Taner Baybars (2007) and an anthology of Cypriot Greek poetry (2010), and has edited *Short Stories from Modern Turkish Cypriot Literature* (2009) and the *Complete Works* of Kaya Çanca (2010).

MIRANDA HOPLAROS was born to Greek Cypriot shop owners and grew up in a small, secluded town in Zimbabwe, then known as Rhodesia, in the 1970s amidst political turmoil, sanctions, shortages and civil war. *Mrs Bones*, her first novel, is a collection of short stories set against an African landscape, which recounts her experiences at boarding school, life as an immigrant, her attempt to understand an invisible bush war and her struggle for an identity. Miranda has a Masters degree from the University of Cyprus in English Literature and Contemporary Cultural Studies.

ANDRIANA IERODIACONOU was born in 1952 in Nicosia, Cyprus. She is bilingual in Greek and English and writes in both languages. Her poems and short stories have appeared in a wide range of literary magazines in Cyprus and abroad and are included in several anthologies; her work has been translated into English, Swedish, Turkish and Lithuanian. Andriana’s first novel, *Margarita’s Husband*, written in English, was published in Cyprus in 2007 by Armida Publications. She currently lives in France with her husband and son.

STAVROS STAVROU KARAYANNI has published on culture, gender, and sexuality in the Middle East. He is the author of *Dancing Fear and Desire: Race, Sexuality and Imperial Politics in Middle Eastern Dance* (Wilfrid Laurier UP 2004) and co-author of *Sexual Interactions; The Social Construction of Atypical Sexual Behaviors* (Boca Raton, 2006). Since 2007 Stavros has been Managing Editor of *Cadences: A Journal of Literature and the Arts in Cyprus*. He is Associate Professor of English Literature and Cultural Theory, and Chair of the Department of Humanities at European University Cyprus.

RUTH KESHISHIAN was born in 1944 in Nicosia. She is a bookseller and publisher.
GABRIEL KOUREAS completed his PhD at Birkbeck, University of London (funded by a three year AHRC grant) where he has been teaching since 2000. Gabriel’s research interests are in the relationship of memory, conflict and commemoration in the construction of National and gender identities. His past research and published monograph *Memory, Masculinity and National Identity in British Visual Culture, 1914–1930*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) concentrate on the commemoration of the First World War in relation to the visual culture of the 1920s. Current research interests focus on issues of representation of conflict and its commemoration in the museum space, the city and memorial sites with special emphasis on postcolonial memory and gender as well as the possibilities of reconciliation offered through visual culture and the senses.

NIKI MARANGOU was born in Cyprus. She has published three novels, poetry, short stories and children’s fairy tales and won state prizes for her literary work. In 1998 she won the Cavafy prize for poetry in Alexandria. In 2004 her poem ‘Roses’ was chosen to be hung in waiting rooms in NHS Hospitals in the UK. In 2006 she received the Athens Academy poetry award for her book *Divan*, and in 2008 a story from her collection *The Demon of Lust* was nominated as one of the ten best short stories of the year for the Diavazo awards in Athens. Niki’s poems are included in the ‘European constitution in verse’ of the Brussels Poetry Collective (2009) and her books have been translated into many languages. Niki also has had seven exhibitions of her paintings. She lives in Nicosia and has a daughter who is a painter. More at www.marangou.com.

NORA NADJARIAN is a poet and short story writer from Cyprus. She has published three poetry collections, two books of short stories (*Ledra Street*, 2006, and *Girl, Wolf, Bones*, 2011) and a micro novel (*The Republic of Love*, 2010). Widely published online and in print in the UK, USA, Australia and elsewhere, Nora has also won prizes and commendations in the Commonwealth Short Story Competition, the Binnacle International Ultra-Short Competition and the Seán Ó Faoláin Short Story Prize. Her story published her, ‘Sparrow’, was Highly Commended in the the Seán Ó Faoláin Short Story Competition 2010. Her work was included in *Best European Fiction 2011* (Dalkey Archive Press) and the poetry anthology *Being Human* (Bloodaxe Books, 2011).

CHRISTINE PAGNOLLE teaches English literatures, comparative literature, and translation at the University of Liege, Belgium. As a scholar, Christine has published on African and Caribbean writers (particularly Kamau Brathwaite) as well as on British writers (Geoffrey Hill), and on translation issues, both as author of articles and as editor of collections of essays (most recently *Sur le fil — traducteurs et éthique, éthiques du traducteur / Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea — Translators and Ethics, Ethics in Translation*, 2010). She particularly loves translating poetry and has published a long poem by David Jones (*Le livre de l’ânesse de Balaam*, 2003) and a collection by Michael Curtis (2009); her
IRINI SA VVIDES is a second year PhD student at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. Her thesis ‘No Man’s Land’ is comprised of a novel set in Cyprus during the 1974 Turkish invasion and an exegesis that examines representations of ‘the Cyprus problem’ in poetry. She is interested in how stories might act as a means of symbolic repatriation and how women’s stories in particular can be used to speak back against official history. Irini is also a published Young Adult author. Her first novel Willow Tree and Olive, received several awards including a White Raven in Bologna 2002 and she was named one of the finalists in the Sydney Morning Herald Young Writer of the Year. Her second novel, Sky Legs, won the 2004 Peace Award. Other titles include: A Marathon of Her Own; Aliki Says; Hide and Seek; and Against the Tide.

STEPHANOS STEPHANIDES was born in Trikomo in northeast Cyprus in October 1949. He went to the UK as a child, where he lived until finishing his education at Cardiff University. He has travelled widely and has lived in several countries; he has worked and lived using English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and as such his native language ceased to be his dominant tongue. Stephanos writes in English but other languages reverberate in his writing. As well as a poet, he is a literary and cultural critic, ethnographer, translator, all with a commitment to, and interest in, cultural translatability and memory. Years in Guyana (South America) in the 1980s had a profound impact on his life and work, especially his close friendship with communities of descendants of Indian indentured labourers in villages and sugar plantations. Selections of his poetry have been translated into more than ten languages. His publications include: Translating Kali’s Feast: The Goddess in Indo-Caribbean Ritual and Fiction (2000); Beyond the Floating Islands (2002); Blue Moon in Rajasthan and Other Poems (2005); Cultures of Memory/Memories of Culture; and he has produced two documentary films, Hail Mother Kali (1988) and Kali in the Americas (2003). Stephanos is now Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Cyprus where he has worked since returning to his native island in 1992.

MARIOS VASILIOU is a PhD student at the University of Cyprus. His thesis topic is the study of the link between home and identity in Cypriot-English literature and he is in the second year of his study. Thus far, he has presented a paper (developed into his present contribution) at the ACLALS 2010 conference on Commonwealth Literature that took place in Nicosia. He has also presented a paper titled, ‘Cypriot Anglophone Literature: a Paradigm for Re-inscribing the Literatures of Dislocation’ at a post-graduate conference at Bristol University in May 2011.
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