



*On This Island*

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on this island:

the  
physical fences are

not as powerful

as

the mental ones

*I*t was a long car ride and we had driven out of town to do a photoshoot. I saw the highway slowly turn to narrow streets and then transform into vague dirt roads. We stayed in the countryside for about 5 hours taking pictures, then packed our things and prepared to go home. There was a light sunset, making the landscape glow a comforting orange and allowing the shadows to give out light shades of blue. As we were getting back into the car, he pointed his finger towards a mountain in the visible east and said “You see those barriers?”

We aren't allowed there. Neither are they." I heard what he had said without fully comprehending it. I was aware enough to understand that up until that moment I didn't understand the weight of it all. The whole way back, from dirt to stone to cement, the statement ran circles round my head. How could his words strike me so? Finally reaching home, I locked myself in with the task of figuring out why his observation affected me in that way. After a while, the thought crystallised and through its clarity it became apparent that despite the impressive amount of fences that exist in Cyprus, the most powerful ones are in the minds of its inhabitants, including myself.

The initial hurdle was determining how this phenomenon would be approached. An island in the eastern mediterranean; Cyprus gained independence in 1960 and was invaded in 1974. Both cases have given merit to the separation of the territory into many different zones, all separated by fences. Even if only those in the older generations experienced the latter, and a small number of them are able to vividly recall the former, it seems as though even the newest of generations are born with inherent awareness to the situation, as if an additional sense alongside sight and sound. The youth continues to bare the weight of circumstances and events through which it never itself lived. Still, to the majority of people abroad, the conflict that has been developing for decades presents itself as a complete unfamiliarity, and those that know of its existence assume that the struggle has already been resolved. However, even though the tragedy is not in the same state that it once was, that does not mean that it has disappeared: it has simply developed. Perhaps unrecognisable to what it initially was, but not by any means gone. It is necessary to first look into a

very abbreviated history of the island, for it seems to have been left as nothing more but a footnote in many historical recounts. Despite this, what is for some a footnote is for others a very grave reality. Additionally, as a result of the faith that much of this research puts in abstract and generally unspoken circumstances, it is necessary to depend on experiences, both first-hand and those acquired from others. In these types of phenomena, recollective accounts shine more light on the vagueness of the unknown than academic sources. Memories, personal encounters, passing conversations—they all contribute to the formation of a whole that leads to how we individually place ourselves in our collective surroundings, however we choose to perceive them. It is important to not disregard the valuable insight that resonating accounts hold. My grandmother and mother who both became refugees abroad (the former also having lived through the colonial era), a singer who has for the past four decades been externalising her refugeehood through the medium music, a politician fighting to move beyond the shadow of her jailed father who at one point led the island, and my older brother who was raised during a time when the island was beginning to look to the future. These are the people approached to share their thoughts, emotions and recounts. They are ultimately also just some of the hundreds of thousands of Cypriots who were forced to form a new life following the series of spiralling events.





we

wanted to

be free

After having been under the control of the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Venetians and Ottomans; Cyprus found itself as part of the British Empire from which it eventually gained independence in 1960 in the midst of the decolonisation period. This came after a series of revolts against the occupation, mainly by the paramilitary organisation E.O.K.A. (Εθνική Οργάνωσις Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών: “National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters”), which led to a constitution being drafted and signed the year prior in Zurich. My grandmother, born in 1937, is part of the older generation that lived to see the island ousting the overt influence of the British. She is generally very reserved and detached when speaking of the past, perhaps as a result of all she has lived to see. It was nonetheless important to connect with her through a zoom call and listen to her describe her headspace during that period. When asked about the days leading to the independence, she replied:

I was married when Cyprus became independent. It was not necessarily terrible, but we wanted our freedom from the English. We wanted to be free. To be able to have our own government. Under the English we had to faithfully follow the English mindset, which for me was not horrible, but others wanted to be liberated. We couldn't vote, our government was run by the occupational force, and they were in charge of everything: if you wanted to open a business, build a home, or get a job. So because all the others wanted it, I was also for the liberation.

*Παντρεύτηκα όταν έγινε ανεξάρτητη η Κύπρος. Δεν ήταν απαραίτητα απάισια, αλλά θέλαμε την ελευθερία μας από τους Άγγλους. Θέλαμε να είμαστε ελεύθεροι. Να*

*μπορούμε να κάνουμε τη δική μας κυβέρνηση. Κάτω από τους Άγγλους έπρεπε να ακολουθούμε πιστά την αγγλική νοοτροπία, που για εμένα δεν ήταν άσχημη αλλά οι άλλοι ήθελαν να ελευθερωθούμε. Δεν είχαμε το δικαίωμα ψήφου, η κυβέρνησή μας λειτουργούσε από την κατοχική δύναμη, και ήταν υπεύθυνοι για τα πάντα αν ήθελες να ανοίξεις επιχείρηση, να χτύσεις σπίτι, να πάρεις δουλειά. Οπότε από τους άλλους ήμουν κι εγώ υπέρ της ελευθέρωσης.*

Of importance is that for half a decade up until the formation of the republic, she was employed as a hairdresser at the Ledra Palace Hotel, at the time the island's most prestigious hotel that was built and managed by the English. As a result, she does hold sympathies and sentiments towards the colonial period, making it somewhat difficult to attain critical recounts from that era. Regardless of that, her input remains precious within the context of this paper, if not for precise information, then for the purpose of illustrating how every generation within a single family has been forced to face a different iteration of the same struggle.

People on the island were hoping that the British would leave and full sovereignty would be given over the entirety of the land and its future. However, they, in addition to their coastal military bases and the fences that surround them, remained. Majority rule granted to most of the territory, with the exception of those bases, essentially leading to two countries administering on an island half the size of metropolitan Paris. The will and interest for forces to keep themselves present in Cyprus dates back to ancient times, serving then as a docking harbour for tradesmen and merchants of the neighbouring states. In modern times, its geo- politically strategic position between

Europe, Africa and Asia, above Egypt, below Turkey, close by Greece, beside Lebanon, Israel and Syria, presented and continues to present itself as an object of desire for the greater powers. Britain may have lost its total legislative control, but it was by no means prepared to let go of its grip on this little dot on the map. It is for this reason that they, beyond their bases, employed the famous “divide and conquer” strategy and applied it here as well. The ideal technique to break a population to such a degree that it will not have the time to deal with your continued influence.

Cyprus is very much melting-pot of people originating from all its neighbouring countries, the biggest demographic being the Greek-speakers, followed by the Turkish-speakers. On the evening of December 21st, 1963, inter-communal riots broke out between the two ethnic groups, resulting in the death of 174 of the former, and 364 of the latter. It began when Greek-speaking police men stopped a vehicle driven by three Turkish-speakers, two men and a woman, to be checked. This led to an argument which encouraged a group of Turkish-speakers to join the scene, with escalations leading to one of the passengers firing a gun. A short shoot-out brought about the killing of one of the officers and one of the passengers. In the morning that followed, armed Turkish-speakers began to uncontrollably circulate the main streets of the Nicosia, and by the afternoon, this extended to other parts of the capital, with the aim of forming mono-cultural enclaves. The day after, similar circulations took place in all but one of the six major towns of Cyprus. Of such a scope was the violence that Turkey threatened to intervene, a fact that gave Great Britain an excuse to impose one of its old plans: a separation of the island between a Greek and a Turkish state. An agreement was signed on the 30th of December, 1963, in con-

sultation with Athens and Ankara, to put an end to the hostilities. The result of this agreement was the formation of a separating barrier that extended to the capital of Nicosia. The Green Line, it is still called to this day. It was dubbed as such because the British Major who drew it up on the map did so with a green pencil. Innocent naming convention for what offered dire consequences. The capital was thus divided into two sectors, separated by a fences. Tensions largely eased in 1968 when bi-communal talks took place between the leaders of the two groups and two of Nicosia's main streets were opened for crossing.

On the surface, it seemed as though the situation was slowly improving, and the managing of tensions did its work to slowly lead to free travel once more. In reality however, the greater powers nearby and beyond had other plans for the Cypriots.

On the 15th of July, 1974, a coup d'état orchestrated by the Cypriot National Guard and the military regime of Greece, Junta, took place, seeking to replace the then-leader of the island, Archbishop Makarios, with a ruler in favour of a Union between Cyprus and Greece. Mina Sampson, born in Nicosia in the late 1960s, is a Cypriot journalist, politician and mother of three. Prior to the invasion, her father, Nikos Sampson, was a member of parliament and also a journalist in addition to being a publisher. He was a prominent member of the aforementioned E.O.K.A. organisation. In the summer of 1974, *he* was the man appointed by Junta as the de-facto leader of Cyprus following the coup. The opportunity was given to speak with her personally and ask questions regarding her father:

On the day of the coup, my dad, with the help of some soldiers who were there, went to the Hellenic Army General Staff, which were the headquarters for the Greek army when the coup had taken place. The coup broke out at, say, 8:15a.m. and my dad was at home. At 10a.m. he went JOURNALISTICALLY and as a member of parliament to see what was going on. The Greeks there were trying to gather four to-be presidents, as planned, because Turkey was threatening to intervene. But they couldn't find anybody, and my dad, who was a well-known campaigner, was told "Sampson, we're in danger and we're entering an invasion right now. Come take over" and so he did. So there was a coup at 8:00 in the morning, my dad took over at 13:00 in the afternoon.

*Όταν έγινε την ημέρα το πραξικόπημα, ο μπαμπάς μου με τη βοήθεια στρατιωτών που βρίσκονταν εκεί, πήγε και βρέθηκε στο Γενικό Επιτελείο Στρατού, που ήταν το αρχηγείο του στρατού όταν είχε γίνει το πραξικόπημα. Το πραξικόπημα έγινε ας πούμε η ώρα 8:15 το πρωί και ο μπαμπάς μου ήταν σπίτι. Η ώρα 10 πήγε ΔΗΜΟΣΙΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΑ και ως βουλευτής στο Γ.Ε.Σ. για να δει τι γίνεται. Προσπαθούσαν οι Έλληνες να βρουν τέσσερεις προέδρους όπως είχαν συμφωνήσει διότι απειλούσε η Τουρκία ότι ήταν να επέμβει. Δε βρίσκανε κανέναν εκείνοι, και ο μπαμπάς μου που ήταν γνωστός αγωνιστής, τού είπαν "Σαμψών, κινδυνεύουμε και μπαίνουμε σε εισβολή αυτή τη στιγμή. Έλα να αναλάβεις" και ανέλαβε. Δηλαδή έγινε το πραξικόπημα η ώρα 8 κι ο μπαμπάς μου ανέλαβε η ώρα 13 το μεσημέρι.*

Spontaneously chosen and placed as the head of a provisional government, Nikos Sampson was forced to face the expected invasion from Turkey. Outwardly declared as an abrupt action of peace for the sake of the Turkish-speakers, the reality is that the attack was much more orchestrated than the public

is still lead to believe. In a televised interview with Mina and her brother, they elaborated on documents indicating that the Cypriot leader overthrown from the coup had struck a deal with Turkey that an invasion should take place and he should be reinstated as the head of the island, regardless of which power it was ultimately under.<sup>1</sup> Despite internationally declaring his worries that a union with Greece would present a great threat to the Turkish-speaking population, what he was more worried about was what the union would have entailed for his leadership. A call from Ankara to Washington and the permission granted by Henry Kissinger was all that was necessary for the Turkish military to strike.

The invasion was carried out in two phases: Attila I and Attila II. The first took place on the 20th of July, and the second about three weeks afterwards on the 14th of August. In Attila I, the Turkish captured only about 7% of the island, and it was in Attila II that they penetrated deeper and occupied 36%. These are the consequences on geographic terms. The toll on humanity was the death of up to six thousand Cypriots and injury to twice the amount. An indeterminable number of people have also gone missing through the conflict, and even in present times are bones and other remains found and identified as those who disappeared in that period. The first part of the deal was completed as planned, however the Archbishop found himself in a predicament when Turkey refused to give him leadership of the occupied land. Simultaneously, Greece was already reluctant to fight alongside the Greek-speakers, and a call from the United States warning Athens that involvement would mean another Greco-Turkish war left no doubt persist. And so, Cyprus was left to its own

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<sup>1</sup> Extra Tv Cyprus. ΣΥΝΝΕΤΕΥΣΗ ΑΠΟ ΤΑ ΠΑΙΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΝΙΚΟΥ ΣΑΜΨΩΝ, ΣΩΤΗΡΗ ΚΑΙ ΜΙΝΑ. 20-07-19. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQnElhRf0bA>

devices and people to defend itself. The result was the island suddenly splitting further into the four zones that exist today, each controlled by a different power. Nikos Sampson was branded as a traitor by the people and the returning government. He was thus set a jail sentence of twenty years for collaborating with Junta and 'causing' the invasion.

Currently, one can find the British bases present from colonial times, the land occupied by Turkey following 1974, and the territory still under the control of the Cypriot Republic. In response to these new circumstances, the Green Line, originally drawn in 1963, was accordingly extended to a length of 300 kilometres and made into a demilitarised zone, separating the occupied and free areas. Throughout the zones are fences controlled by the individual forces of each of these powers. For nearly forty years, the people living in the occupied north and government-controlled south had minimal contact with each other and were only on very special occasions allowed to ever cross between the two.



wake up,  
kids:

we're at war

Due to how recent in history this invasion is, it is close to impossible to not come across someone on the island who has either experienced it themselves or knows somebody close to them that has. Many of them remember the moment it became clear that the invasion was the reality to which they suddenly had to adjust, and some can even recall the atmosphere that set the stage for it all. The elderly shop-keeper sitting on a wood-woven stool at the front of his businesses smoking cigars, that middle-aged woman walking her dog, and this old lady sweeping fallen leaves off her porch; they have all lived through the harsh period around which the current government and modern society continue to revolve. There is admittedly a bittersweetness in the fact that there is such a large number of people available with which to speak in wanting to gather first-hand anecdotes on these tragedies.

For this research, I had the honour to interview a particular one of them. Cypriot vocal artist and song-writer Alexia Vassiliou was throughout the 1980s and 1990s amongst the best-selling artists in the music industries of Greece and Cyprus. To this day, she is still one of the most well-known performers in these countries. Born in Famagusta in 1964, she was ten years old when she became a refugee after the takeover of her hometown. Among the first questions in the two hour telephone call was if there was anything in her environment in the days leading up to the Attila I that gave the impression that it was going to breakout:

It was around the time the coup happened. The grown-ups were talking: grandmothers, grandfa-

thers, aunts, uncles, our parents. They were all talking. About something terrible that was going to happen. As children: we see it all, we hear it all, we COMPREHEND it all. So we knew SOMETHING was going to happen.

*Ήταν όταν έγινε το πραξικόπημα. Μιλούσαν οι μεγάλοι: γιαγιάδες, παππούδες, θείες, θείοι, οι γονείς μας. Μιλούσαν. Για κάτι τρομερό που πρόκειται να συμβεί. Εμείς τα μωρά όλα τα βλέπουμε, όλα τα ακούμε, ΟΛΑ τα αντιλαμβανόμαστε. Οπότε ξέραμε ότι ΚΑΤΙ επρόκειτο να συμβεί.*

She then goes on to describe the day itself more detail:

We were playing on the porch, as usual. I was playing with jigsaw puzzles with my glass of milk and listening to music, since it was summer. And the official announcements from the radio began. And then EVERYTHING started to fall apart. Our life, care-free and beautiful: It just fell apart. That announcement signalled the change of our then-life. That is, we had to stay at home, forbidden to turn the lights on JUST IN CASE we were bombed by planes. So that day, I thought I was going to die from the anxiety up until my dad came home, you're a child and you just don't understand what's happening. He finally returned, and then came the first phase of the invasion. My sister and I woke up at 6am from alarm sirens. My mum came into the room and said "Wake up kids, we're at war."

*Παίζαμε στη βεράντα όπως συνήθως. Έπαιζα jigsaw puzzle με το γάλα μου και άκουγα μουσική, αφού ήταν καλοκαίρι. Και αμέσως άρχισαν τα ανακοινωθέντα από το ραδιόφωνο. Και άρχισαν να χαλάνε ΟΛΑ. Η ζωή μας, η ξέγνοιαστη η όμορφη: Χάλασε. Εκείνο το ανακοινωθέν σήμανε την αλλαγή της τότε ζωής μας. Δηλαδή είχαμε αμέσως κατ' οίκον περιορισμούς, απαγορεύονταν να ανάβουμε φώτα ΜΗΠΩΣ*

μας βομβάρδιζαν τα αεροπλάνα. Οπότε εκείνη την ημέρα, όσπου να έρθει σπίτι ο μπαμπάς μου νόμιζα πως ήταν να πεθάνω από την αγωνία, είσαι και τότε μωρό και δε ξέρεις τι γίνεται. Τελικά ήρθε, και μετά έγινε η Πρώτη Φάση της εισβολής. Ξυπνήσαμε 6 το πρωί από συρίνες συναγερμού, εγώ και η αδελφή μου. Ήρθε στο δωμάτιο η μαμά μου και είπε “Ξυπνήστε παιδιά, έχουμε πόλεμο.”

Delving into the psychology of her ten year old self, she also shared the thoughts that ran through her head as the world around her was collapsing:

We thought we were going to die because you just don't understand - what does “war” mean? How would we know? And is this terrible thing ever going to end? If it does, will we be alive? Will someone kill us? Will we be wiped out? Will we be able to eat? Will we freeze? What about a place to sleep? The people we know and love? Will they still be with us? My uncle and dad went to fight. My grandmother, grandfather, mom, aunt, sister and I stayed behind. And then they started bombing us with planes. What can I tell you, we're talking about VIOLENCE. VIOLENT things. Terrifying. I was one of the blessed because I always had my parents by my side.

Νομίζαμε πως ήταν να πεθάνουμε γιατί δε ξέρεις- τι σημαίνει πόλεμος; Πού να ξέρουμε εμείς; Και αυτό το πράγμα το τρομερό θα τελειώσει ποτέ; Αν τελειώσει, θα είμαστε ζωντανοί εμείς; Θα μας σκοτώσει κάποιος; Θα μας αφανίσει κάποιος; Θα έχουμε να φάμε; Θα κρυώσουμε; Κρεβάτι; Τα πρόσωπα τα οποία αγαπάμε και γνωρίζουμε; Θα είναι μαζί μας; Πήγαν να πολεμίσουν ο θεός μου και ο μπαμπάς μου. Έμειναν η γιαγιά, ο παππούς, η μαμά μου, η θεία μου και, η αδελφή μου και εγώ. Και άρχισαν να μας βομβαρδίζουν μετά τα αεροπλάνα. Τι να σου πω, μιλάμε για ΒΙΑ. ΒΙΑΙΑ πράγματα. Τρομακτικότητα. Ήμουν από τις ευλογημένες γιατί είχα τους γονείς μου πάντα δίπλα μου.

Alexia's hometown was the second most developed on the island at the time, and became engulfed by the Turkish forces, remaining occupied to this day. Her family moved to the town closest to Famagusta: Larnaca. Initially under the roof and care of friends in that area, they eventually bought a new home having lost the right to their previous one. Over in the capital of Nicosia at that time was my mother, born in 1965. She was raised and was living with her parents and older brother in an area that did not end up getting absorbed by the incoming forces. Not able to dig out 'concrete' memories, she recalled her own emotions of the same period:

On one hand I was afraid but on the other hand I was also unaware of the danger because I was so young. I was very excited because the whole neighbourhood was sleeping in a basement so I thought of it as a party. But I do remember that dad would put on his military uniform every day and would go to the field to find his soldiers to go to the war, but there was a shortage of firearms so they'd send them back home. So, every day we cried and said goodbye to dad and every afternoon we were happy that he returned.

*Από τη μία είχα φόβο αλλά από την άλλη είχα και την άγνοια του κινδύνου γιατί ήμουν μικρή. Ήμουν πάρα πολύ ενθουσιασμένη γιατί κοιμόμασταν όλη η γειτονιά σε ένα υπόγειο άρα εγώ το θεωρούσα σαν πάρτυ. Θυμάμαι όμως τον μπαμπά που κάθε μέρα έβαζε τα στρατιωτικά του και πήγαινε στο ΓΣΠ να βρει τους στρατιώτες του για να πάει στον πόλεμο αλλά δεν είχαν όπλα και τους έστελναν πίσω. Άρα, κάθε μέρα κλαίγαμε και αποχαιρετούσαμε τον μπαμπά και κάθε απόγευμα χαιρόμασταν που έρχονταν.*

It became clear while transcribing the interviews that two contrasting outlooks are presenting themselves. Alexia's is of a child that was suddenly forced to adapt to a harsh reality and become accustomed to living conditions previously unthinkable. My mother's is of a child that is almost unaware of the severity of its surroundings, continuing to view situations through the filter of innocence that a child of her age tends to have. What certainly played a big role in the formation of their perceptions is the fact that the former had to accept the instability of depending on others while having the community she once knew be scattered, while the latter continued to live alongside her neighbours and not have her home under the control of a foreign power. Though this has produced differing results on the surface, trauma nonetheless manifested within them both.

Though for many the announcement of and the invasion itself came as a complete shock, it did not come as a complete surprise to some. It is said that a decent number of Turkish-speakers were informed by Turkey beforehand, and were asked to remain in their homes and communities on the dates of Attila's I and II. On this, my grandmother added:

The lady that would come and clean our home was a Turkish-speaker, Nasim. Before the invasion happened, she wanted to notify me but they were threatened not to say anything to the rest of us. She would come every Monday and Friday, and one Friday she told me "Ma'am, I won't be coming in on Monday." I asked her "Why, my dear? You're happy and I'm happy, why won't you come?" And she replied "I can't tell you. I'm taking my baby

to the doctor on Monday.” And then the invasion broke out.

*Η κοπέλα που μου καθάριζε το σπίτι ήταν Τουρκοκυπραία, η Νασίμ. Κοίταξε, πριν γίνει η εισβολή, ήθελε να με ειδοποιήσει η κοπέλα αλλά τους είχαν εκβιάσει να μην πουν τίποτα από εδώ. Έρχονταν κάθε Δευτέρα και Παρασκευή, και μία Παρασκευή μου λέει “Κυρία, δε θα έρθω τη Δευτέρα.” Τηρωτάω “Γιατί αγάπη μου; Αφού είσαι ευχαριστημένη και είμαι κι εγώ ευχαριστημένη γιατί να μην έρθεις;” Και μου λέει “Δεν μπορώ να σου πω, θα πάρω το μωρό μου στον γιατρό τη Δευτέρα.” Και ξέσπασε η εισβολή.*

Was Nasim aware of what was to come, or was she really going to take her child to the doctor? The take-away from all of the above are the state of shock, horror and suspicion that the invasion bred, towards both those outside of the community, and those very much within it. The events and how they unfolded both factually and on an anecdotal-basis are a matter that can be indefinitely discussed. Stories such as the ones above are not in any way uncommon or very much unique in the tone they set for that period. Every person who was there has their own film-roll of such moments, playing repeatedly in their minds to remind them of what has happened to them and those around them.

When asked to share memories of the war, my grandmother was similarly to my mother unable to give many anecdotes. Pushing for answers, I asked if she was afraid of what might happen to her and her children. She admitted that they knew the connections that her husband had with the British unintentionally resulted in him not getting sent off to fight, as he was supplying food and drinks to the bases through his import company. Evidently, those that were chosen for the fight were

specifically selected for being politically involved with the coup that preceded:

We just weren't getting ourselves involved, we did also have two kids at the time. I didn't get myself entangled with those who were active. My husband wanted to serve but because it was all arranged, there wasn't any sort of betrayal towards us. They would tell him "My son, just go home. There's nothing for you to do here." He was serving the English at one of the military bases and told me to take the kids and go to his cousins in England, and then see how the situation goes.

*Δεν ήμασταν ανακατομένοι, είχαμε και δύο παιδάκια τότε. Δεν ανακατατέυτηκα με τον άλλο κόσμο που δραστηριοποιήθηκε. Ο άντρας μου τότε ήθελε να υπηρετήσει αλλά επειδή ήταν κανονισμένο, υπήρχε κάποια προδοσία σε εμάς. Τού έλεγαν "Πήγαινε γιέ μου στο καλό. Δεν έχει τίποτα, δεν έχει θέση για εσένα." Τροφοδοτούσε τους Άγγλους στη Δεκέλια ο παππούς σου και μού είπε να πάω να πάρω τα παιδιά στα ξαδέλφια του στην Αγγλία και να δούμε πώς θα πάει η κατάσταση.*

Perhaps the tone of my grandmother is also explained by the fact that, similarly to my mother, her own childhood home was never occupied, albeit now located two minutes on foot from the demilitarised zone.

In her autobiographical book "Το κουτάκι της καρδιάς!" (*The little box of the heart!*), wherein which she details moments from various points in her life, Mina reflects on the transition she experienced in her life through the way society treated her father before and after the invasion:

You are always surrounded by people. (...) Whenever we go, they talk to you. They kiss you. They hug you. Sometimes they chant out your name. (...) And suddenly, in but a moment, everything



changes. Parents lose their children and dress in all black. (...) And the crowd we were talking about is now pointing its finger to only you. Our home suddenly becomes barren. (...) “Visiting centre”, the new word that enters our life. Your new environment is that of the prison. You wear a grey uniform and have since lost your glow. This will be your uniform from now on, they explain to me. (...) Curses directed at you. At us. This is just the beginning and the power of the angry mob, a life lesson that can never be forgotten.

*Είσαι συνέχεια περιτριγυρισμένος από κόσμο. (...) Όπου και αν πάμε, σου μιλούν. Σε φιλούν. Σε αγκαλιάζουν. Κάποιες φορές φωνάζουν ρυθμικά το όνομά σου. (...) Και ξαφνικά, σε μια μόνο στιγμή όλα αλλάζουν. Γονείς χάνουν τα παιδιά τους και ντύνονται στα μαύρα. (...) Και το πλήθος που λέγαμε δαχτυλο δείχνει μόνο εσένα. Το σπίτι μας ξαφνικά ερημώνει. (...) “Επισκεπτήριο”, η νέα λέξη που μπαίνει στη ζωή μας. Το νέο σου περιβάλλον, αυτό της φυλακής. Φοράς μια φόρμα γκρι και έχεις χάσει πια τη λάμψη σου. Αυτή θα είναι από δω και πέρα η στολή σου μου εξηγούν. (...) Κατάρες για σένα. Για μας. Αυτή είναι μόνο η αρχή και η δύναμη του οργανισμένου οχλού, μάθημα ζωής που δεν μπορεί να ξεχαστεί ποτέ.*

Though her father may have endured the most physical consequences of the circumstances, what is of interest when interpreting the text is how she, along with the rest of their family, was nonetheless psychologically affected. Being made to witness her father, once placed in such a high position, subsequently thrown down to be locked away.

No matter what class or faction the people above and beyond belonged to at the time, this event produced a plethora of results which can be most generally grouped together to form two cate-

<sup>2</sup> M. Sampson. Το κουτάκι της καρδιάς!, Nicosia: Εκδόσεις ΗΛΙΑ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΙΟΥ, 2018, p. 25-28.

gories. One are the physical results, the other are the psychological ones. Highly related and intertwined while still separate, they are what has shaped the people, and by extension, the society of Cyprus into what they are today. Though the public gives more attention to the first due to it being the easier of the two to spot with a glance, the second is what has produced the more complex and ever-developing outcomes. It would not be wrong to say that they are very much symbiotic in how the presence of one enlarges the existence of the other, resulting in a constant growth that is seemingly unstoppable.

peace

in the homeland,

peace in the

world

As if enabled parasites, fences found various ways to pierce the land of Cyprus and remain fixed, with no signs of budging. The British military bases were always fenced off, the English residing there in gated communities with their own supermarkets and cinemas to this day. This was quite normalised by the time the invasion occurred. However, following 1974, yet another fence 'came to the rescue' in the form of a demilitarised zone separating the two ethnic groups into distinct areas to which neither could cross. One territory controlled by Turkey and one by Cyprus itself.

Initially, people tried to test the brutality of their circumstances by crossing over the fences, resulting in incidents between the Greek-speakers and the Turkish-speakers. The most serious and documented one occurred in the summer of 1996 when Greek-speaking demonstrators entered the demilitarised zone despite the ban of entry. They were attacked by Turkish-speaking civilians and police officers, resulting in a 24 year old being beaten to death. This was followed three days later by the murder of his 26 year old cousin, who was killed by the gunfire of Turkish nationalists as he tried to climb a mast and lower a Turkish flag in mourning for the death of his cousin. Predictably so, these two cases are unforgettable in the mind of the Cypriot society, fuelled part by the way the government controls their exposure. In a number of locations across the barrier, one can still find big posters showing the corpses of the two men. This is of course on the area of the island still under the control of the Cypriot government. What is perhaps more interesting is the contrast presented by what is exhibited on just the other side of the barrier.

Within the occupied territory, large signposts read out “Peace in the homeland, peace in the world” (*Yurtta sulh, cihanda sulh*), alongside images of Kemal Atatürk.

Some spots along the fences provided more leeway for contact between the two sides, and those tended to be the battlegrounds of protests, particularly those run by students. Greek-speakers dressed in all-blue waving Greek and Cypriot flags, singing traditional Greek songs and chanting slogans in their mother tongue, calling against the occupation. Right on the other side, the Turkish-speakers do very much the same only in favour of the Turkish colour palette, flag, songs and slogans. A fitting parallel wherein one is channeling the hate of the other. To think of these ethnic tensions as a flame would not be incorrect. If placed together in a mixed society, there is not much space for the fire to become greater and spread, yet the presence of the fences has allowed for air to enter the equation and encourage unprecedented growth. Indeed, they have been divided, and they have been conquered.

1974 was the year where nearly the entirety of the Greek-speaking population was displaced from its native north to the south, which was propped up post-tragedy as the territory meant to appeal to them most. Suddenly, they were led by a hastily re-established government, betrayed by the British, invaded by the Turkish, and abandoned by the Greeks, welcoming them to a ‘homeland’ that few of them had ever even seen before. In a similar state was the arrival of Turkish-speaking refugees from the South to the North. Overnight, both were limited to their regions, sold to them by the mouths of their politicians as lands liberating their homogeneity from the burden of others. Us VS them. There were however those that decided that, in spite

of their new circumstances, would not leave their lives behind, regardless of whether or not it now lied on the side of the fence belonging to the occupier. The consequence was discrimination and harassment from the settlers that were sent by Turkey, as they were given the right to any home that became vacant from its legitimate owners. My great-grandparents were among those who stayed behind while the familiar faces were forced away and new ones positioned themselves in their place. They may not have wanted to leave their old lives behind, but the way of life they were accustomed to was still taken away from them. My mother recalled:

They stayed there, trapped. They didn't want to leave and abandon their home and their belongings. When the settlers went to my grandfather's and grandmother's house, they held the title deed to their home and would tell them "Grandpa, when are you going to leave so we can take the house?" But they stayed there, and afterwards the Turks started doing bad things to grandpa and grandma. They would steal their food, make noises to scare them. Not very horrible things, but as elderly people who were helpless; they were afraid. And when grandpa died they did a *lot* of bad things to grandma to make her leave. Any person who came also had the title deed to the house that they wanted to enter.

*Έμειναν εκεί εγκλωβημένοι. Δεν ήθελαν να φύγουν να αφήσουν το σπίτι τους και τα πράγματά τους. Όταν πήγαν οι έπικοι στο σπίτι του παππού και της γιαγιάς, κρατούσαν τίτλο ιδιοκτησίας του σπιτιού και τους έλεγαν "Παππού, πότε θα φύγετε για να πάρουμε εμείς το σπίτι;" Και μετά έμειναν εκεί, και μετά οι Τούρκοι άρχισαν να κάνουν κακά πράγματα του παππού και της γιαγιάς. Τους έκλεβαν τα φαγητά, κάνανε θόρυβο για να φοβούνται. Όχι πολύ άσχημα*

*αλλά για τους γέρους που ήταν ανήμποροι φοβούνταν. Και όταν πέθανε ο παππούς έκαναν πάρα πολλά κακά πράγματα της γιαγιάς για να τη διώξουν. Άρα ο κάθε ένας που έρχονταν είχε και τον τίτλο ιδιοκτησίας του σπιτιού που ήταν να μπει.*

She also elaborated on the atmospheric differences that formed and grew greater overtime between the two zones. She was able to visit the North before it became publicly possible, in order to attend the funeral of her trapped grandfather:

When grandpa Nicolas died in '91, we made an arrangement through the U.N. for the children and grandchildren to be able to go and bury him. Back then you could really see the difference in civilisation, as in it's like going to Paris and then going to Syria. There were still holes in the streets from the war, you would be going with your car and there would be goats coming out with the shepherds. A huge difference in the capital depending on which side you were. Now you don't see that much of a difference between the North and South. But in '91 when we went, the difference was shocking.

*Όταν πέθανε ο παππούς ο Νικόλας το '91, κανονίσαμε μέσω των Η.Ε., και μπορούσαμε να πάμε τα εγγόνια και τα παιδιά να θάψουμε τον παππού. Εκεί μπορούσες να δεις τη διαφορά του πολιτισμού, δηλαδή είναι σαν να πηγαίνεις στο Παρίσι και μετά να πηγαίνεις στη Συρία. Υπήρχαν ακόμα τρύπες του πολέμου μέσα στους δρόμους, πήγαινες με το αυτοκίνητο και είχε κασιόκες μέσα στους δρόμους που έβγαιναν με τους βοσκούς. Τεράστια η διαφορά στην προτεύσομα ανάλογα με την πλευρά που βρισκόσουν. Τώρα δε βλέπεις διαφορά μεταξύ Βόρειας και Νότιας. Αλλά το '91 που πήγαμε εμείς ήταν σοκαριστική η διαφορά.*

Once people are separated and left to their individual devices, the subtle differences that once existed are given the opportunity to come to the sur-

face and grow to an extent more rapid than previously permitted. Since nobody would be there to stop you as they would before, why *not* head in your own direction? It is very much like isolationism. It provides the chance to form a new identity that is more your own, simultaneously leading what was once someone else's homeland becoming completely foreign to them. This is much more simple in theory than in practice, and in the case of the Turkish-speaking Cypriots, matters are not only complicated by the fact that they found themselves run by a government based in Ankara, but also from the settlers that were sent by that same government to permanently move to the occupied territory. The aim was to lessen the disparity of its population from that of the area still under Cypriot control. The settlers that would move into homes, which ones belonged to natives, had the tendency to also completely repaint the exterior. Years ago, I asked my grandfather, a refugee from a coastal village in the deep north up until his death, what he thought of that fact. He shrugged and commented about how the new inhabitants made a poor decision to paint the exposed brick pattern on the outside a vibrant shade of mint. Similar stories are not uncommon. Alexia's childhood home was cut in half and new walls were placed straight through the middle of the construction to make use of a single building as a living space for two different families. This can be interpreted as a ritual of claiming something and erasing the presence those who were there before. Would it be cruel to say that this destruction was necessary for the new inhabitants, no matter what their origin or reasons of entrance are, to create a new community?

Despite all the aforementioned, fences in Cyprus do not on their very own physically harm the body on the surface. They do not cause wounds, fracture bones, nor twist organs. No, what they do



in this particular place in the world is something much more underlining and subtle: giving way to the success of their implementation. This man-made construction spanning hundreds kilometres has the power to clearly distinguish what is yours and what is not. Their presence does not even inflict a scratch on one's skin, but it disfigures, dismembers and dismantles one's soul. The perfect instrument to further penetrate the psychology of a broken population and remind them of what they have collectively endured. A physical manifestation of their tragic history. Alexia explained:

It's the issue of prohibition. The whole: Can you get in? No, you can't. Is it allowed? It is forbidden. Police everywhere. The other guy's in control of yours. Yours is no longer yours. Because somebody decided so. And you're OUT of yours. This can become too much, too confusing. Because you can then feel out of your body, and out of your house in whatever house you live innext.

*Είναι το θέμα της απαγόρευσης. Το: Μπορείς να μπεις; Δεν μπορείς να μπεις. Επιτρέπεται; Απαγορεύεται. Παντού αστυνομικοί. Ο άλλος έχει τον έλεγχο του δικού σου. Το δικό σου δεν είναι πια δικό σου. Επειδή έτσι αποφάσισε κάποιος. Και είσαι ΕΞΩ από το δικό σου. Αυτό μπορεί να γίνει πάρα πολύ, να μπερδέψει πάρα πολύ. Γιατί μπορείς μετά και από το σώμα σου να αισθάνεσαι, και από το σπίτι σου σε όποιο σπίτι και να μένεις μετά.*

As did my mother:

They symbolise the reminder that we have conquered your country. Like a power game. A psychological one. That I am giving you permission to pass over to your own land.

*Συμβολίζουν την υπενθύμιση ότι κατακτήσαμε τη χώρα σας.  
Σαν ένα παιχνίδι δύναμης. Ψυχολόγικο. Ότι σου δίνω την  
έγγριση να περάσεις στη χώρα σου.*

Beyond the psychological warfare waged by the existence of the barriers, there were some who took passive activity into their own hands. As a my grandmother, who beyond trying to cross the fences with her body, did so with frequencies:

I would send in messages through radio stations for those on the other side to hear, that we're okay, that we miss them, and I would also ask for a song to be played. You know, just for them to hear it through the radio. Once a week, or so.

*Έβαζα μέσω του ραδιοσταθμού τα μηνύματα να τα ακούσουν οι εγκλωβισμένοι, ότι είμαστε καλά, ότι τους πεθυμίσαμε, και τους έβαζα και κανένα τραγούδι. Έτσι για να τα ακούν μέσω του ραδιοσταθμού. Μία φορά τη βδομάδα, κάτι τέτοιο.*

In 2003, the seemingly impossible took place. A checkpoint was opened in the demilitarised zone, allowing people to travel between the occupied and free territories for the first time since the invasion took place nearly forty years prior. Though this once again came out of the blue for Greek-speakers, the action was prompted by intense protests that were carried out by the Turkish-speakers. As the Republic of Cyprus was finalising its steps to enter the European Union as a member state, those living in the occupied area realised they would be left out of the agreement and benefits of admission if the territories continued to be separated. Much like how it only took a single call to receive approval for the invasion, Ankara only required a single communication from the leader

of the Turkish-speakers to grant permission for the action.

Much like Attila's I and II, the opening of the checkpoint is an unforgettable moment for the islanders, and they all remember where they were when they were first opened and where they first went to. Unlike 1974, this year was one of hope and reconciliation. Alexia recalled:

I was in Thessaloniki when I found out. A friend of mine called to tell me. I didn't expect that they were going to open. I didn't expect that we were going to be stepping on the street of our house, that I was going to enter our home. I didn't EXPECT it. And so I immediately rushed from Thessaloniki to Cyprus. I went together with my dad, mom and sister.

*Όταν το έμαθα ήμουν στη Θεσσαλονίκη τότε. Με πήρε μία φίλη μου να μού το πει. Δεν το περίμενα πως ήταν να ανοίξουν. Δεν το περίμενα πως θα πατήσουμε στο δρόμο του σπιτιού μας, που θα μπω στο σπίτι μας. Δεν το ΠΕΡΙΜΕΝΑ. Και έτρεξα αμέσως από Θεσσαλονίκη προς Κύπρο. Πήγαμε εγώ, με τον μπαμπά, τη μαμά και την αδελφή μου.*

What quickly followed for many like Alexia, and coincided with the sensation of joy, was the feeling of grief:

I couldn't believe it, my dear. The happiness, but the PAIN. And the happiness of entering my home, but also the PAIN. I can't explain to you how it felt that I went to my elementary school, that I was in my Famagusta again.

*Δεν μπορούσα να το πιστέψω, Θανάση μου. Την ευτυχία, αλλά τον ΠΟΝΟ. Και την ευτυχία που μπήκα στο σπίτι μου αλλά και τον ΠΟΝΟ. Δεν μπορώ να σου εξηγήσω το πώς ήταν που πήγα στο δημοτικό μου, που ήμουν πάλι στην*

*Αμμόχωστό μου.*

For others, the crossing of the checkpoints carried a religious connotation, almost like a pilgrimage. One of those was my mother, who went alongside her father who was a refugee from the northern tip of the island:

They opened on Thursday, I think. So on Sunday, me, you, your brother and dad, and your grandfather, went to the Saint Andrew's Monastery in the deep North. At the time you had complications with your blood and I prayed for you and vowed you to Saint Andrew. It was very, very reverent, and touching that I completed my vow.

*Άνοιξαν Πέμπτη, νομίζω. Την Κυριακή, εγώ, εσύ, ο Δημήτρης και ο Τάσος και ο παππούς ο Δημήτρης πήγαμε στον Απόστολο Αντρέα στο Ριζοκάρπασο γιατί είχες προβλήματα στο αίμα σου και σε είχα τάξει στον Απόστολο Αντρέα. Και ήταν πάρα πολύ ευλαβικό, και συγκινητικό το ότι έκανα το τάμα μου.*

My brother, born in 1991 and currently still living in Cyprus, was present in the above journey. Being a child at the time, he formed a perspective of the trip that was shaped much more strongly around the social views of the time towards them:

When the checkpoints opened, it was really something ground breaking. It was the first time we could do something that previously was forbidden and something you didn't know when you'd ever be able to do. It was also really strange, passing through a checkpoint in your homeland and suddenly having everything in another language, your phone not working because of the network cutting off, being isolated with people around you that you saw as your "enemy", that came to and took your home, displaced and killed people.

*Όταν είχαν ανοίξει τα οδοφράγματα ήταν κάτι το συνταρακτικό. Ήταν η πρώτη φορά που θα μπορούσαμε να πάμε που μέχρι πριν λίγο καιρό ήταν αποτρεπτικό και δεν ήξερες πότε θα μπορούσες να κάνεις αυτό το πράγμα. Επίσης ήταν κάτι πολύ περίεργο, να περνάς ένα οδόφραγμα στον τόπο σου και ξαφνικά τα πάντα να είναι σε άλλη γλώσσα, το τηλέφωνό σου να μη λειτουργεί επειδή διακόπεται το δίκτυο, να είσαι απομονωμένος με κόσμο γύρω σου που ένωθες σαν τον «εχθρό» σου, που ήρθε και σου πήρε το σπίτι σου, και εκτόπισαν και σκότωσαν κόσμο.*

Others like Mina did not have the opportunity to visit the land. She remembers the event, but being to this day unable to form new memories as a result of the past, refusing present and future sentiments from being formed:

*I remember that day very well. I was overcome with emotion but there was also a sadness: For both our lost homeland and the fact that I, due to my name, am still considered a persona non grata and cannot visit our own land.*

*Θυμάμαι εκείνη την μέρα πολύ καλά. Ένοιωσα τεράστια συγκίνηση αλλά και μια θλίψη. Και για τη χαμένη πατρίδα μας αλλά και γιατί εγώ λόγω ονόματος θεωρούμαι μέχρι και σήμερα persona non grata και δεν μπορώ να επισκεφθώ τα εδάφη μας.*

Despite the progressive direction that the checkpoints seemed to give, criticism of them is still very common. Growing today to a total of five, each of them is controlled by police and a customs office, where checks are performed to make sure products were not bought from the side visited. It is also required to show your passport in order to pass, something which stirred controversy amongst the Greek-speakers claiming that the process gave the occupied territory a form of legitimacy as an

independent state. My brother shared:

It's a necessary evil that I must do in order to be able to see my homeland. I am of course against it, I would rather there not be any checkpoints and not need to show my passport to go see the home where my ancestors grew up. It was very much a taboo since there were a lot of people who believed that Greek-speakers shouldn't cross the checkpoints as it legitimised the occupiedland.

*Είναι ένα αναγκαίο κακό που πρέπει να κάνω για να πάω να δώ τον τόπο μου. Θα προτιμούσα να μην υπήρχαν οδοφράγματα και να μην χρειάζεται να δείξω το διαβατήριό μου για να πάω να δω το σπίτι όπου μεγάλωσαν οι δικοί μου. Ήταν επίσης και κάτι πολύ αμφιλεγόμενο καθώς υπήρχε πολύς κόσμος που πίστευε ότι δεν πρέπει να διασταυρώνουν τα οδοφράγματα οι Ελληνοκύπριοι επειδή αυτο θα νομιμοποιούσε το ψευδοκράτος.*

In spite of the controversies and frequent checks for goods purchased from the occupied zone, many Greek- speakers took advantage of the opportunity to exploit the cheaper products sold in the north. This was the case from the very first opening of the checkpoint, owed to to the economic imbalance of one side using the Turkish Lira and the other the Euro, the latter having a much stronger purchasing power. A fifteen minute drive and a showing of documents is all that is necessary for them to buy all of their month's groceries at a much lower price. Some take a trip as short as five minutes to refuel at a gas station. On this Mina added:

I find it difficult to comprehend our fellow-Greek-speakers who visit our occupied homeland-for recreation, for shopping imitation brands, or for a little fish in the port of occupied towns. This, I will not hide from you, bothers me alot.

*Δυσκολεύομαι όμως να κατανοήσω συμπολίτες μας ελληνοκύπριους που επισκέπτονται την κατεχόμενη πατρίδα μας για αναψυχή, για ψώνια fake τσαντών για παράδειγμα ή για φαράκι στο λιμανάκι της Κερύνειας. Αυτό δεν σου κρύβω με ενοχλεί πολύ.*

Indeed, many casinos opened in the occupied land in order to satisfy not only the needs of the richer settlers who arrived from Turkey, but also those of the natives from Republic of Cyprus. Many shopkeepers protested for further checkpoints to open after seeing the potential of a wider audience for their products. This has had the adverse effect of funding the occupying forces, as explained by mymother:

You could see the difference from '91 to 2004. Things were better, there were no potholes from the invasion like the ones we saw in '91. Now, you barely see any difference at all because people do their groceries there, they gamble, they buy cheaper cigarettes. We're giving them our money for their own growth.

*Μπορούσες να διακρίνεις τη διαφορά από το '91 μέχρι το 2004. Ήταν καλύτερα τα πράγματα, όχι όπως είναι τώρα, αλλά δεν είχε τις λακούβες που είδαμε εμείς ότι είχε το '91 από την εισβολή. Τώρα δε βλέπεις σχεδόν καμία διαφορά επειδή όλοι πηγαίνουν και κάνουν τα ψώνια τους εκεί, πηγαίνουν στα καζίνο, αγοράζουν τα φτηνότερα τσιγάρα. Τους δίνουμε τα δικά μας λεφτά για τη δική τους ανάπτυξη.*

It is true that Turkey was the one setting up the checkpoints, beyond the financial benefits, as a means of legitimising the occupied land as an independent territory. News articles proclaiming “Every time a checkpoint opens, the form of the occupied territory is further solidified and the occupation consolidated” (Κάθε φορά που ανοίγει ένα οδόφραγμα, τσιμεντώνεται ακόμα περισσότερο

το κατοχικό μόνρφωμα και εδραιώνεται η κατοχή)<sup>3</sup> are not uncommon, and despite the large number of Greek-speakers who pass between the two areas on the daily, there are many who boycott the system until a full unification takes place. Likewise, the people interviewed do not offer exceptional views. In fact they are very much representative of how many Cypriots feel. Ever-present throughout all the recounts is a strong sense of us- VS-them. The people from one side of the fence speaking about those on the other. A concept that was spurred, birthed and further enabled by the very existence of the fences.

Despite the an opening through the fences being realised in the form of the checkpoint, and beyond the optimism and doubt that spurred from its implementation; still fully present and firm are the psychological fences that find themselves well settled in the minds and lives of the Cypriots.

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<sup>3</sup> Σάββας Ιακωβίδης. Τα κατοχικά οδοφράγματα ως Δούρειος Ίππος αναγνώρισης του ψευδοκράτους. 10-05-20 <https://simerini.sigmalive.com/article/2020/5/10/ta-katikhika-odophragmata-os-doureios-ippos-anagnorises-tou-pseudokratous?>



No

other

life

The invasion and continuing occupation have produced an offspring in the form of fences. They have solidified themselves not just in the pages of history, but also within the minds of the people. My mother and Alexia have already expressed that the fences serve a heavily symbolic presence; A constant reminder of all that has occurred, and a warning of what more may follow. Everyone on the island was in some manner displaced, if not physically then certainly mentally. If needed to be categorised on a scale, it would certainly be a horizontal expression of grief as opposed to vertical. My mother, grandmother fled to England and became refugees abroad, whereas Alexia was among the many who became a refugee despite remaining in her country. Mina is forbidden from ever entering what amounts to half of her homeland. What spurred beyond political turmoil is trauma and internal conflict.

For those who found themselves right in the midst of all the chaos, the effects of the tragedies were present on the very surface, forming instincts that shape the manner wherein which they behave. As previously explained, Alexia was one of them, and had the following to say when asked to describe how her outlook of the world shifted as a result:

As a displaced Cypriot refugee, I felt like I didn't belong anywhere. That really stuck with me for years. This is one of the outcomes of the invasions. Feeling like you're being pulled from your roots. It becomes an obsessive idea, that you don't belong anywhere. You're afraid of having, of owning things, just in case they are AGAIN TAKEN from you. Or perhaps being prohibited from your things.

Of course, you're left now with a fear forever, and it takes a lot to work on that within yourself. I've discussed this with other childhood friends of mine, some of them were affected differently from others. We suffer various traumas: having something and then me snatching it from you, being forbidden to go somewhere, having your lifethreatened.

*Εγώ ως Κύπρια πρόσφυγας εκτοπισμένη ένοιωθα ότι δεν άνηκα πουθενά. Μού έμεινε χρόνια αυτό. Οπότε είναι ένα από τα κατάλοιπα της εισβολής. Να αισθάνεσαι ότι ξεριζώνεσαι. Σού γίνεται έμμονη ιδέα αυτό το πράγμα ότι πουθενά δεν ανήκεις. Φοβάσαι να έχεις, να σου ανήκουν πράγματα, μήπως σου τα ΞΑΝΑΠΙΑΣΟΥΝ. Μήπως σου ξαναπαγορεύσω από τα δικά σου. Βέβαια, σου μένει φοβία πλέον για πάντα, και χρειάζεται πολλή δουλειά με τον εαυτό μας. Το συζήτησα και με άλλες μου φίλες παιδικές, τις άλλες τις επιρέασε διαφορετικά, άλλες από εμάς διαφορετικά. Παθαίνουμε διάφορα τραύματα: το να έχεις κάτι να σου το αρπάξω, το να σου απαγορεύω να πάεις, να απειλείται η ζωή σου.*

She then elaborates:

And you are OUTSIDE of what's yours. This can really confuse you. Because then you can feel like you're outside of your own body, and out of your home regardless of which house you're living in afterwards. This changes how you see yourself in the world. In a society. You can be left with the obsession that you don't belong anywhere, like I did. It happened to me.

*Και είσαι ΕΞΩ από το δικό σου. Αυτό μπορεί να γίνει πάρα πολύ, να μπερδέψει πάρα πολύ, Θανάση μου. Γιατί μπορείς μετά και από το σώμα σου να αισθάνεσαι, και από το σπίτι σου σε όποιο σπίτι και να μένεις μετά. Μπορεί να σου γίνει- κατάλαβες; το να έχεις κάτι να σου το αρπάξω, το να σου απαγορεύω να πάεις, να απειλείται η ζωή σου. Αυτό*

*σου αλλάζει το πώς βλέπεις τον εαυτό σου μέσα στη γη. Σε μία κοινωνία. Μπορεί να σου μείνει η έμμονη ιδέα ότι δεν ανήκεις πουθενά, όπως έπαθα εγώ. Το έπαθα.*

A feeling beyond abandonment, leaning towards betrayal and distrust. Having lost her home and experiencing the impossibility of seeing her community in the way and place she once did has instilled a sense of constant anticipation for loss. Loss as a whole is a common trend within the varying degrees of trauma. It could very well become a possibility once more, seeing as how people on the island appear mentally prepared for the possibility of having everything taken from them, as they have seen it happen before. For others, it manifested as a loss of innocence in a very underlying way, disturbing their peace in a manner they never knew was possible. My mother added:

In '95 we'd gone to London. I was sleeping on the couch in the apartment and the English were celebrating something. They had planes with propellers that had the same sound as the planes of the invasion. I was sleeping and woke up and started shouting "The Turks, the Turks, the Turks! They got us, they got us!" I was in a state of panic because that's where it was revealed just how unconscious this trauma and fear from the invasion had resided in me. Until then I hadn't realised it.

*Το '95 που είχαμε πάει στο Λονδίνο. Κοιμόμουν πάνω στον καναπέ στο διαμέρισμα και κάτι γιόρταζαν οι Άγγλοι. Είχαν κάτι αεροπλάνα με τους έλικες οι οποίοι είχαν τον ίδιο ήχο με τα αεροπλάνα της εισβολής. Και εγώ κοιμόμουν και ξύπνησα και φώναζα "Τούρκοι, Τούρκοι, Τούρκοι, !Επιάν μας, επιάν μας!" Ημουν στον πανικό γιατί εκεί βγήκε το πόσο υποσυνείδητα μού έμεινε το τραύμα και ο φόβος του πολέμου. Ως τότε δεν το είχα συνειδητοποιήσει.*

Her father (my grandfather) though not a very outspoken and emotional man, had once spoken to me about his childhood home. The same one his parents decided held too much sentimental value to be left behind. In that conversation, I recall him sharing his thoughts on the choice of the settlers to repaint the exterior after taking it over:

I do sometimes wonder if they can feel our memories through the bricks behind the paint.

*Έχει φορές που αναρωτιέμαι αν μπορούν και νοιώθουν τις αναμνήσεις μας στα τα τούβλα πίσω από την μπογιά.*

The house as a construction is a case for memories, feelings and experiences. One step inside is enough to bring back moments of a bygone era. Being taken over by settlers, all those sensations are kept away, locked and limited to only the extent to which he on his own is able to recall. In this instance, lament is what comes to the surface.

For some, it manifested as very intense feelings provoked by the surroundings having been morphed by the the painful past. Mina expressed:

Seeing Pentadaktylos illuminated and passing by the tumulus where dozens of men who gave their lives and got buried for an invasion that was betrayed and unequal from the very beginning; I truly feel a sense of shudder and awe. And anger.

*Κάθε μέρα βλέποντας τον Πενταδάκτυλο φωτισμένο και περνώντας από τον Τύμβο όπου βρίσκονται θαμμένα δεκάδες παλικάρια που έδωσαν τη ζωή τους σε ένα εξ' αρχής προδομένο και άνισο πόλεμο πραγματικά νοιώθω ρίγος και δέος. Και θυμό.*

The Pentadaktylos mentioned is a vast mountain range currently under the possession

of Turkey. In the early 1980's, the Turkish flag, in addition to that representing the occupied zone were painted to the scale of approximately twenty football fields. Noted for being one of the biggest flags on earth, it is illuminated at night and its placement was so deliberate that those living in the Republic are able to see it from a range of twenty miles. Even more ironic is that the electricity used to light them up is the same one that is provided by the government of Cyprus for the sake of the entirety of the northern territory. It is one of the most recognisable sights attesting to the continuing provocation and political separation that looms over the island, and acts as a reminder of what has pierced the land and its conscience.

Despite the anger she outwardly expressed in the question she was asked, her previously mentioned book gives insight to a completely different struggle that she has had to endure throughout her life. Speaking of her father:

You leave while I'm a little girl. (...) You return many years later when I've since become a woman. We don't know each other almost at all and that hurts you so badly. Our fights are homeric. I feel like you love me so much, just in a different way. You don't know anything about my friends, about the things I like, about the boy I'm going out with. And you certainly don't know how many times I needed to defend you and even slap (my) kids for calling you a traitor. And right when we began getting to know each other from the beginning again, you're fed up with the people and their lies. You can't stand the hypocrisy, their cowardliness. So one night, you tell me, and I know inside that you are going to leave again. This time however, indefinitely.

Φεύγεις όταν είμαι κοριτσάκι. (...) Ξαναγυρνάς πολλά χρόνια μετά όταν είμαι πια γυναίκα. Δεν γνωρίζομαστε σχεδόν καθόλου και αυτοσσεσκοτώνει. Οικαυγάδες μας είναι ομηρικοί. Αισθάνομαι πως μ' αγαπάς τό σπολύ μέενα τρόπόμωσ αλλιώςίκο. Δεν γνωρίζεις τίποτα για τους φίλους μου, για τα πράγματα που μ' αρέσουν, για το αγόρι που βγαίνω. Και σίγουρα δεν ξέρεις πόσες φορές χρειάστηκε να σε υπερασπιστώ και να ρίξω ακόμη και ξύλο σε εκείνα τα παιδιά που σε φώναξαν προδότη. Και πάνω που αρχίσαμε να γνωρίζομαστε και πάλι απ την αρχή, κουράζεσαι πολύ με τους ανθρώπους και τα ψέματα τους. Δεν αντέχεις την υποκρισία, τη δειλία τους. Έτσι μου λες ένα βράδυ και μέσα μου ξέρω πως πάλι θα φύγεις. Αυτή τη φορά όμως οριστικά.<sup>4</sup>

Mina and Nikos Sampson were not refugees, and they did not lose their home. What lost was their bond. It must not be easy to have her father taken away from her while in adolescence and to have to constantly defend him from the slander in adulthood. He had changed during his time in prison, she had too while living in the divided Cyprus that he was framed to have instigated. On a separated island, their new lives clashed.

Mina has also publicly spoken of how the reputation of her father finds ways to creep in her life. Most recently, the release of a television series, produced in Turkey and recounting the events that have separated Cyprus, has caused Turkish nationalists to directly contact her, along with her children, through social media with death threats and hateful messages. This is the result of the series portraying the events from a biased pro-Turkish angle, through

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<sup>4</sup> M. Sampson. Το κουτάκι της καρδιάς!, Nicosia: Εκδόσεις ΗΛΙΑ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΙΟΥ, 2018, p. 28.

the filter of propagandism and historical inaccuracy. The question is: Why should Mina live in the shadow of what her father was coerced to do? It is safe to assume that is a thought that has crossed her mind in the past, too.



If we hug

our

trauma,

it will

save us

in

the end

The trauma undoubtedly manifested within the people, and some of the Cypriots realised that sooner or later it would need to be faced. If not to propel themselves out into the new world, then at the very least to operate and function within it. Some have taken on the challenge of channeling their fears and insecurities. Having the trauma of non-belonging instilled in her, Alexia spoke of overcoming that weight:

For the past ten years I have been working on getting back to myself. Now I am calm, and peaceful. But it took me my whole life to get back to the state I was on that day where I was sitting on the porch. But: we are here, we are healthy. AND thankfully it has made me more sensitised towards my fellow human beings. I think if we hug our trauma and make it drive us, it saves us in the end. For me, my trauma becomes my way of expressing myself. But I wanted and chose joy. Not letting it bring me down, but to direct me throughcreativity.

*Τα τελευταία δέκα χρόνια δουλεύω εγώ στο να επανέλθω, και τώρα είμαι ήρεμη, και γαλήνια. Αλλά μού πήρε ολόκληρή μου τη ζωή να ξαναέρθω στην κατάσταση που ήμουν, την ημέρα εκείνη που ήμουν στη βεράντα. Αλλά: είμαστε εδώ, είμαστε υγείς/ ΚΑΙ εντυχώς αυτό με έκανε πιο ευαισθητοποιημένη προς τους συνανθρώπους μου. Νόμιζω ότι άμα αγκαλιάσουμε το τραύμα μας και το κάνουμε να μας οδηγήσει, μας σώζει στο τέλος. Για εμένα, το τραύμα μου να γίνει ο τρόπος έκφρασής μου. Αλλά ήθελα και επέλεξα τη χαρά. Όχι να με καταβαρυνθώσει αλλά να με οδηγήσει μέσω της δημιουργικότητας.*

One of the initial inspirations to write this text and motivation to reach out to Alexia was one of the works crafted through said creativity. Ti-

tled “Happy Birthday” (Χρόνια Πολλά) and released as part of her 1989 album, the song delves into the expression of longing for her forming lover, and resenting the relationship he now has with another woman.<sup>5</sup> The opening lyrics read:

We’d celebrate a day like this together, with you.  
But you’re away now, a stranger is keeping you  
from me. You’re embraced, disorientated, by two  
foreign hands.

*Μια τέτοια μέρα γιορτάζαμε μαζί, με ‘σένα. Μα τώρα  
λείπεις, μια ξένη σε κρατά μακριά μου. Σ’ αγκαλιάζουν, σε  
ζαλίζουν, δυο χέρια ξένα.*

It is in the music video where the narrative finds context and depth. Beginning with the singer looking in the distance, abstract shots of windmills on a sunset-infused landscape are shown before switching to footage of Famagusta. The strange hands are no longer those of another woman, but of another nation. It is no longer a song about resentment over losing her lover, but yearning for her homeland. Everything turns all the more personal: from homeland, to hometown, to childhood home. In her eyes, and those of many other Greek-speakers, even though free travel is now possible, the land is just as inaccessible. Even more so considering the track came out nearly fifteen years before the first checkpoint opened. During the interview, Alexia was asked specifically on this music video and how it came about:

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<sup>5</sup> Alexia Vassiliou. Alexia Vassiliou - Hronia Polla (Official Music Video). 12-12-07. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoDfw-ZHeug>

It was my idea. I never like to sing about break-ups. I believe that reproducing the negativity of the world and the whole “he got up and left me” doesn’t benefit anyone. So I tried to spot my own connection. I won’t sing something if I can’t find MYSELF in it, and for me it meant that in my mind I had to change what the lyricist wrote. I agreed to make the record, but it didn’t have much substance. So, I interpreted it in the way that was truest to ME. I changed the meaning of it within myself. I asked for it to be filmed near Famagusta. I felt that I was true to the song and, when we went to Famagusta, that I was true to myself.

*Ήταν δική μου ιδέα. Ουδέποτε δε μου αρέσει να τραγουδώ για χωρισμούς. Θεωρώ ότι το να αναπαράγεις το αρνητικό της γης και να αναπαράγεις το “έφυγε και με άφησε” δεν οφελεί κανέναν. Οπότε εγώ προσπάθησα να δω τη δική μου σύνδεση. Δε θα τραγουδήσω κάτι αν δεν βρω EMENA μέσα, και για εμένα σήμαινε ότι στο μυαλό μου έπρεπε να αλλάξω εκείνα που έγραψε ο στιχουργός. Δέχτηκα να κάνω το δίσκο, αλλά δεν είχε πολλή ουσία. Οπότε, το ερμήνευσα με τον τρόπο που ήταν πιο αληθινός για EMENA. Άλλαξα το νόημα μέσα μου, των στίχων, για να είναι ουσιαστικό. Εγώ το ζήτησα να γίνει κοντά στην Αμμόχωστο. Ένοιωθα ότι ήμουν αληθινή απέναντι του τραγουδιού και, όταν πήγαμε στην Αμμόχωστο, ότι ήμουν αληθινή απέναντι του εαυτού μου.*

Alexia often performs at concerts that focus on the struggles of refugees and raise funds that are delivered to the shelters that house them. She also works at shelters herself through a collaboration she formed with the United Nations in Cyprus and Greece, in addition to having developed an educational and creative program, titled Re:Be. Approved to enter all public schools within the Republic, it aims to cultivate a sense of community and environmentalism within the students, encour-

aging them to positively contribute to society. For Alexia, the fuel to live beyond the tragedy is channeled in the form of helping others experience their own tragedies at a lesser degree, as well as bettering their environment so that it may head towards a more self-caring direction. Having dealt with her own feelings of displacement, it is no wonder she aims to make others feel at home, wherever they may be.

So varied is the trauma as are the methods by which people respond to them. Some accept the circumstances they are faced with and deal with the fences by constructing further barriers, crafting an abstracted form of reality as a coping mechanism. An example is that of my mother:

If it happens that I go to the occupied territory, I now view it as going to another country. I don't view it as my country nor that it will ever be again. Nor that we could ever have it again. It's good if you can't change something to accept the facts, I within myself have accepted the fact. Alright, here are times when I get frustrated, especially if I run into Turks that have an attitude, then yes; I do get frustrated but I can't react because I don't have the means to. But I'm telling you that when I cross over and go there, I view it as going to an Arabic country. I enter that sort of a psychology and I don't get upset. A bit like a defence.

*Εγώ πλέον όταν είναι να πάω στα κατεχόμενα, θεωρώ ότι είναι να πάω σε μία άλλη χώρα. Δεν τη θεωρώ ότι είναι χώρα μου και ούτε ότι θα γίνει ποτέ ξανά. Ούτε μπορούμε να την έχουμε ξανά. Είναι καλά αν δεν μπορείς να αλλάξεις κάτι να αποδεκτείς τα γεγονότα, εγώ από μέσα μου τα αποδέκτηκα τα γεγονότα. Εντάξει, έχεις φορές που όταν πάω ενοχλούμε, που εκνευρίζομαι, ειδικά αν πέσω σε*

*Τούρκους που έχουν και ύφος, εκεί ναι εκνευρίζομαι αλλά δεν μπορώ να αντιδράσω διότι δε με παίρνει να αντιδράσω. Αλλά σου λέω πως όταν εγώ σταυρώνω και παύω εκεί θεωρώ ότι πηγαίνω σε μία αραβική χώρα. Μπαίνω με εκείνη τη ψυχολογία και δεν ενοχλούμαι. Κάπως σαν άμυνα.*

If you believe you cannot change the situation, why not accept it and form a new outlook on it all? It is then perhaps less painful. This connects to what my grandmother noted when talking about Cyprus right after the invasion. Despite having nearly half the island taken away, the economy was rapidly restored to how it previously was:

Those that stayed behind did nothing but work and quite a lot of those that left kept economic ties with the island, sending money to their families. But it wasn't as though we were intentionally working to resurrect our economy... I guess we just didn't want to see our situation for what it was and turned to work and labour as a distraction. Somehow, it was more convenient than staying home all day and letting the chaos sink in.

*Εκείνοι που έμειναν δεν έκαναν τίποτα άλλο απο το να δουλεύουν, και αρκετοί που αυτούς που έφυγαν κράτησαν οικονομικές σχέσεις με το νησί. Αλλά δεν ήταν λες και δούλευαν σκόπιμα για να επαναφέρουν την οικονομία... Νομίζω απλώς δεν ήθελαν να δουν την κατάσταση μας όπως ήταν και στρέφονταν στη δουλειά και εργασία για περισπασμό. Κατά κάποιον τρόπο, βόλευε περισσότερο από το να μένουμε σπίτι μας όλη μέρα και να αφήσουμε το χάος να κάτσει.*

Likewise for her husband, work was the chief escape from the tragedy. Ironically enough, it was said work that further separated families. In the case of my mother, she along with her mother and

brother were sent to England while my grandfather worked and provided them with money from Cyprus. Oppositely, Alexia and her family remained on the island, whilst their father worked from Athens to sustain them.

Mina's own father was taken from her, and she was told he was to blame for everything that went wrong. However, that did not match her own view nor experiences of him. In the same book previously referenced, she writes:

When I said goodbye after visiting you at the Central Prison, you teared up. From that moment, our relationship changed forever. That afternoon, I stopped being a little girl and decided to protect you forever.

*Την ώρα εκείνη που σε αποχαιρετώ μετά την επίσκεψη στις Κεντρικές Φυλακές Κύπρου, δακρύζεις. Από τη στιγμή εκείνη η σχέση μας άλλαξε οριστικά. Το μεσημέρι εκείνο παύω να είμαι μικρό κοριτσάκι και αποφασίζω να σε προστατεύω πάντα.*

Her circumstances forced her to deeply look into the history of what went on, and was amongst the first high-profile individuals on the island to publicly speak of the conspiracy to separate Cyprus. A plan orchestrated by the English in collaboration with Greece, Turkey, the United States and Cyprus itself through its leader at the time, it is evident that from seeking to dispel her confusion, she is now in a position to reach retribution. It is no surprise that she herself has entered politics and is active within the party, aiming to clear a past that has been rewritten for political convenience. She has taken part in various interviews for that purpose, but is at the same time adamant in not

allowing herself to remain in the shadow of her father's image. Yes, she is the daughter of an important historical figure, but she is her own person, and thusly does express that her political motives are not a move to replicate her father, but rather to move beyond it and be proactive in the community to allow it to progress past the point where it has found itself running in circles.



It's

my home,

too

My grandmother was born during the colonial period. My mother, Alexia, Mina grew up on the island while it was still unified. My brother was raised in a separated Cyprus without free travel between the zones. From as far back as I can recall, I was brought up the society to which the checkpoints gave hopes that, perhaps, a resolution could be possible. When looking back at it, that in any ways seems both far from the truth and also the basis of all that I was exposed to and heard throughout that time.

What sticks out most when thinking of my childhood are the different ways we as kids played to deal with the climate of such a small island situated in the mediterranean. One of our favourite games would be running to the freezer to grab ice cubes, lining them up on the concrete sidewalks, and then betting on which one would be the first to melt under the afternoon sun. However, writing this paper and interviewing others on how they feel towards the situation made me realise that those around me then - my teachers, the parents of my friends, the doctors and policemen - all held views that did not radically differ from the ones that have been documented above.

Growing up in the outskirts of the Strovolos district that borders Nicosia, you are raised with the mindset of us-VS-them. "Us" being those living in the Republic and "them" the people living in the occupied territory. You become accustomed to being told "You have been cheated by these people. Your very existence and the safety of your family and friends has been threatened by them before - beware." Most likely speaking from their own

trauma, the result is growing into the mindset, that you are being held back by those outside your community, is much like growing into your new pair of shoes. According to the adults, those others will be very quick to bite you if you let your guard down. You consequently cannot fully open yourself up to the world because you are told left, right and all around that the world will tear you apart and rip those exposed innards outwards. An analogy to the betrayed history of the island. Perhaps, it's better just to stay inside your little shell?

Having been born decades after the separation, it is clear looking back that, even when I was growing up, it was a challenge for the government, and the community it governed, to learn how to expose the newer generations to the events of the recent past. Some experiments yielded better results than others. In art class, we had fill in the outline of the shape of Cyprus that was handed to us on a paper. We were free in how we wanted to draw around that outline. In that regard there were no particular demands from the teacher. Within the shape, however, we were told that we needed to colour in the space occupied by Turkey as red. The government-controlled land was also strongly advised to be filled in with yellow or blue. The yellow representing the neutral colour also present within the design of the flag of Cyprus, the latter a strong preference for the Greek colour scheme. It would then seem safe to assume that the red corresponds to the colour of the Turkish flag, however there are more connotations related to this choice of palette. A common trope in the depiction of the island separated into 2, within the Greek-speaking world, displays the North bleeding down towards the South.

Open to interpretation, it most directly signifies the literal blood shed from the invasion and continued occupation. It can additionally mean that the suffering of those once living in the North continues to haunt them despite fleeing to the south, that the pain has spread throughout the whole island and has become the pain of all - only to be healed if the blood is wiped away and "healed". An image so familiar to us; we did not think much of it and the class progressed as normally as the one before where we were asked to paint a fish. One tragic incident that a primary school teacher felt the need to share with us was that she refused to bring a Greek-speaker in to describe his life as a refugee. The year before, they had gone through with the idea, the outcome being him bursting in tears in the midst of his talk, and the kids not showing up for class in the days that followed. This then allegedly led to an influx of phone calls to the school from angry parents. Could it be the insecurities and doubts of a possible unification that caused so much of the angst and frustration towards the "others" that mystified us so? Regardless of the cause, there was clear disorientation on how we as children were meant to learn about what had happened in the years before our conception.

I got into contact with my brother to give his recount of what it was like growing up on the island at a time closer to the date of the invasion:

You heard personal stories from women during the days of the invasion, where everyone was, how they ran for protection, how they found themselves living abroad because of the fear of life in

Cyprus. Also in schools we had notebooks that wrote “I do not forget” and had photographs of occupied areas. On the news there were often discussions about the missing persons. You could see on TV the mothers of missing individuals begging the state to do something to find out what happened to their families, whether they were alive or dead. There was a much stronger element of invasion and occupation. There were events, marches, protests at the barricades, some of which included people killed by the Turks because they had crossed the buffer zone and were moving towards the occupied areas.

*Άκουγες προσωπικές ιστορίες απο εκείνες τις μέρες του πολέμου, που ήταν ο καθένας, πώς έτρεξαν να προστατευτούν, πώς βρέθηκαν να ζούν στο εξωτερικό λόγω του φόβου που υπήρχε για την ζωή στην Κύπρο. Επίσης στα σχολεία είχαμε τετράδια που έγραφαν «Δεν Ξεχνώ» και είχαν φωτογραφίες από κατεχόμενες περιοχές. Στις ειδήσεις υπήρχαν συχνά συζητήσεις για τους αγνοούμενους. Έβλεπες στην τηλεόραση μητέρες αγνοουμένων να εκλιπαρούν την πολιτεία να κάνει κάτι για να μάθουν κάτι για τους δικούς τους, αν ζούν ή αν πέθαναν. Υπήρχε πολύ πιο έντονο το στοιχείο της εισβολής και της κατοχής. Διοργανώνονταν εκδηλώσεις, πορείες, διαμαρτηρίες στα οδοφράγματα εκ των οποίων σε κάποιες υπήρχαν και ανθρωποι που σκοτώθηκαν απο τους Τούρκους επειδή είχαν περάσει στην νεκρή ζώνη και κινούνταν προς τις κατεχόμενες περιοχές.*

At times it was uncertain to us if we were meant to feel empowered by our history and seek retribution, or if we were supposed to see ourselves as incapable of doing absolutely anything on our own. In the form of posters and paintings throughout the town, we were exposed to the personification and depiction of Cyprus in a state of pure vulnerability. Always weak, frail and in need of

help: for it is always in danger. It is a small island, unable to defend itself from any threat that looms in the distance. In comes Greece, tall, fair-skinned and firm, prepared to to save the incapable Cyprus. With arms wide open, the island awaits. What is there to be taken from this image? As children, we were hardly perplexed, it was that we would be doomed if not absorbed into a greater power. Perhaps Greece, perhaps any other in the nation, but certainly a power that actually would be strong enough to stand up to the terrorism. Rather than have the will to fight for this union however, we simply stood there with our metaphorical hands similarly stretched ready to be absorbed. The island as a geographic phenomenon in and of itself acted as a barrier for many of us at the time, and in many ways continues to. The surrounding sea becomes a fence, preventing them from ever being part of the greater homeland, which for some is Greece and for others Turkey. Too far to truly unite in a smooth manner, too close to fully be its own entity. The question still arises: what sort of a union would be satisfactory for all the islanders? The reality that must constantly be faced by all citizens and politicians is that there is no definitive answer. We can never truly fully unite with a greater power, so some people like myself thought the next best move would be to befriend those on the otherside.

Throughout the entirety of this text, the people of Cyprus have been referred to based on their mother tongue. This is a very conscious decision fuelled by the will to rebel against the system

of classifying the inhabitants of the island based on their ethnic group or where they are presently located on the island. A Turkish-Cypriot would imply that both the parents come from Turkey, which is not the case for many who have been living on the island for generations and deserve to be referred to as just “Cypriots”. A Muslim-Cypriot would imply that their faith is what fully sets them apart. Besides the fact that not all of the Turkish-speaking Cypriots define themselves by their religion, fewer and fewer as generations go by in fact, there are also thousands of muslims living in the Republic as well. “Northerner” would also not quite satisfy. My grandfather was from the deep north, yet he didn’t associate with the people that later settled in his village. It is thus the language, in my view that separates the people of Cyprus most. In my case, it is what has alienated me from forming bonds with others. Nowadays, almost none of the youth is fluent or even conversational at both Greek and Turkish. The colonial era has given the advantage of English becoming commonplace in communication, however that simply does not suffice when wanting to deeply connect with one another. The strongest bond with a Turkish-speaker I have ever in my life had in Cyprus was with a high school classmate who also happened to be fluent in Greek. Long phone conversations, endless streams of texts and sitting besides each other in every classroom seemed as proof that our bond was eternal. However even in that case, the linguistic differences ended up overtaking us when trying to expand our friend circle, and the cultural ones took further grip when we realised we were both aiming to study at institutions located in the greater powers from

which our languages originate. Even for this text, no matter how hard I tried to contact the Turkish-speakers who were once around me, of varying relations and closeness; there always appeared a gap created by the lack of communication between us. In this instance, the fences have succeeded in their aim to separate us.

This limitation of language is on the other hand used very consciously as a means for Cypriots to form a new identity beyond the greater powers. They turned to more regional aspects, namely: the dialect. Cypriot Greek retains a lot of features that overtime faded from the standard language spoken in mainland Greece, and its isolation from the current boundaries of Greece, prevented its local lexicon from being suppressed and slowly phased out in favour of standard vocabulary. The Ancient Greek “Ἀγαπῶ σε” (*I love you*) would appear slightly off to speakers of the modern “Σ’ αγαπώ” spoken in Greece. Cypriots however would feel right at home with its structure and classical intonation. One teacher in high school went as far as to use it as a confirmation that Cypriots are their very own ethnicity:

We’re not Greek, we’re CYPRIOT. Why would we have this distinct of a dialect otherwise?

*Δεν είμαστε Έλληνες, ΚΥΠΡΙΟΙ είμαστε. Διαφορετικά γιατί έχουμε τέτοια ξεχωριστή διάλεκτο;*

Personally, with my father originating from Athens, I always found it challenging to speak the dialect whilst retaining fluency in its expression. The mixture of local, Greek and English vocabulary threw me off too far, and I still find difficulty in expressing myself when it comes to mixing the three,



as is so regular to do. Even entering the accent brings a confusion with its varying consonant lengths and liaison of words. So much so is the dialect considered a central part of the island's identity, that I still find myself being asked "Where are you really from?" when I revert to standard Greek pronunciation, or even a softer Cypriot one. Ingrained in me was this thought that your placement in the world of Greek speakers depended on your accent that, when I arrived to the Netherlands at the age of nineteen; it came natural to me to say that I came from Greece and not Cyprus. My accent just fitted the former more so than the latter.

Returning to the introduction of this text, it has become clear that it was necessary for me to detach myself as far as possible from Cyprus in order to be able to see the severity of the situation. I grew up there, and so that way of life was my basis for normality. The only life I knew. It was not as shocking how little people knew about Cyprus as much as how little they talked about their neighbouring countries and their conflicts. Are the Dutch not afraid that Germany could invade at any moment? How about an attack from France? A provocation from England? To add to that, you can go anywhere in the country and not have to once show your passport. I had to be away from the island long enough to lose my national identity in order to see it for what it was. To have the blocky yellow product come to my mind when hearing the word "cheese", rather than the soaked, white feta or haloumi. The trip to the countryside mentioned in the beginning took place in my first month-long stay in Cyprus after being away for three years. That is when it all became apparent.

We are filled with fences, we constantly talk about what the elected politicians of the neighbouring countries might want to do to us, and we are always on the look out from where the next attack may come. It quickly made sense, though. They don't even have settlers strategically sent from abroad in the Netherlands.

Even on the topic of the settlers does my generation feel conflicted. Though by past generations they are unanimously disliked and unwanted, we find ourselves bathing (and at times drowning) in a waterfall of conflicting emotions. We are angry for how they illegally moved to the land, but at the same time fascinated by their presence. Since settlers cannot cross between the checkpoints, they exist as a sort of curiosity and unknown to the youth. We are more understanding that they themselves are products of their own circumstances, rather than being the absolute enemy that has come to demographically replace us. As a second opinion, my brother added:

I think the people who are the most part not involved in the situation in Cyprus, they probably don't know a lot of things. They are people who were given aid to move to the occupied territories (to refugee houses!) and that's why they are here. That doesn't mean that I believe they should be here after the Cyprus settlement, if it ever happens. With Turkish Cypriots I find a lot of similarities in our culture, way of life and nature, which we do not share with the settlers as we are more different, demographically.

*Οι έπικοι νομίζω είναι άνθρωποι που επι το πλείστον δεν έχουν να κάνουν με την κατάσταση που επικρατεί στην Κύπρο, πολύ πιθανών να μη γνωρίζουν και πολλά*

*πράγματα. Είναι κόσμος που τους έδωσαν βοηθήματα για να μετακομίσουν στα κατεχόμενα (στα σπίτια προσφύγων!) και γι' αυτό βρίσκονται εδώ. Αυτό δεν σημαίνει ότι πιστεύω ότι πρέπει να μείνουν εδώ μετά την λύση του Κυρπιακού εάν γίνει ποτέ αυτό. Με τους Τουρκοκύπριους βρισκω πολλές ομοιότητες στην κουλτούρα, τον τρόπο ζωής και την φύση μας, κάτι το οποίο δεν μοιραζόμαστε με τους Έπικους αφού δημογραφικά είμαστε πιο διαφορετικοί.*

Reaching this far, I suppose in many ways this text is also my means of dealing with my own trauma by identifying it through that of others. I fortunately did not have to leave my home behind, hide from bombs falling from planes, and see my friends and family run for their lives. I did however live in a society maintained by those that did, and in a society where the pain of one accounts for the pain of all; I feel pain.



At least,

be hopeful

From far-left to far-right, and everything in between and beyond, there is no party in Cyprus that campaigns without addressing the separation. However none of them ever go as far as to define how they will approach said conflict if they came to power. Indeed, despite a long line of presidents proclaiming that they will bring peace upon the island, it has not yet been done. Is it the aspiration of each new leader to bring about re-unification on the island, or to continue injecting false hope into the minds of people? In the words of the people and in the look in their eyes, one can tell they no longer have faith that any government will have the ability to produce a resolution. They might sound hopeful, but their tone emits a tone more akin to “Maybe this time the process won’t fall through as quickly as before,” rather than “Maybe this time it will work”.

Tensions have been eased, but that is in no way a form of peace. It is very easy for governments of both sides to keep their people in check by constantly presenting new hopes and announcing that indeed, this table talk will be the final one that will bring the land together. Fences have thus been treated as tokens by politicians, exchanging their misery for the hopeful vote of the people. It is easy to then think that no politician would ever be so self-sacrificing as to get rid of their ‘money-supply’ instrument of barriers in return for peace. This is because the power and influence that such a supply merits gives way to opportunities not easily otherwise achieved. People will allow for this new law, or that legislation to pass, if it would mean that they can step into their childhood homes once again.

Despite it all: direct and indirect warfare,

the subtle and ever-present violence, the conscious and subconscious trauma; the people of this island, caught in the past in a world constantly moving to the future, have their hopes, visions and demands for what is to follow for Cyprus. Alexia, as a refugee who had embarked on a long journey of self-healing, wishes for the society to shift towards a more self-supportive and caring direction, reflecting her own process of development:

Of course I want to return to Famagusta, to my home. To fill the place with familiar faces, those of the faces that are still alive because most of the older ones are dying. I want to go home anyway. I want the whole of occupied Cyprus to be occupied by its rightful owners. For Cyprus I have the DEMAND to create and to support the young generations, OUR children who study abroad, whatever the study may be: from the most creative to the most scientific, I want the support of the Cypriot youth. I demand that new positions, new ways, new companies, new platforms be opened up to support and utilise THEIR knowledge and talents. I see it in the musicians who come to Cyprus after years of study, and come and play in bars for nothing, peanuts. And our theatres, however many we have, only open for performances from abroad. Not from our people. And I don't accept that. I demand support. That's what I want.

*Εννοείται ότι θέλω να επιστρέψω στην Αμμόχωστο, στο σπίτι μου. Να γεμίσει ο χώρος με τα πρόσωπα τα οικεία όσα από τα πρόσωπα ζουν ακόμα επειδή οι περισσότεροι πεθαίνουν οι πιο μεγάλοι. Θέλω να πάω στο σπίτι μου οπωσδήποτε. Θέλω ολόκληρη η Κύπρος η κατεχόμενη να καταληχθεί από τους νόμιμους ιδιοκτήτες. Για την Κύπρο έχω την ΑΠΑΙΤΗΣΗ να δημιουργεί και να υποστηρίζει τις νέες γενιές, τα παιδιά ΜΑΣ που σπουδάζουν στο εξωτερικό,*

ό,τι σπουδή και να είναι: από την πιο δημιουργική στην πιο επιστημονική, θέλω υποστήριξη των νέων στην Κύπρο. Απαιτώ να ανοίξουν θέσεις καινούριες, καινούριοι τρόποι, καινούριες εταιρίες, καινούριες πλατφόρμες που να υποστηρίζουν και να αξιοποιούν τις γνώσεις και τα ταλέντα ΑΥΤΑ. Το βλέπω και στους μουσικούς που έρχονται στην Κύπρο μετά από σπουδές πολυετής, και έρχονται και παίζουν σε μπαράκια για τίποτα, ψίχουλα. Και τα θεάτρά. όσα και αν έχουμε, να ανοίγουν για παραστάσεις από το εξωτερικό. Όχι στους δικούς μας. Και δεν το δέχομαι. Απαιτώ υποστήριξη. Αυτόθέλω.

There are those who have opted to accept the political situation in its current state, and demand for improvements in the conditions of what has already been imposed. My mother, who has since recognized her own internal trauma, is opposed to fantasising about outcomes she is not certain are achievable:

Seeing as how Cyprus is split into two, I would like for there to be a three/five meter tall fence on all of the green line so that the settlers will not be able to come over to here. Either open the border and allow for free movement to exist for all without needing to show passports, without needing to show anything - or build more checkpoints to avoid having anyone who feels like it cross over. Let there be no openings. Now it's complete pretend. Bullshit.

Θα ήθελα τη στιγμή που είναι διχοτομισμένη η Κύπρος, να έχει τρία-πέντε μέτρα φράκτη σε όλη την πράσινη γραμμή να μην μπορούν να περνούν από εδώ οι έπικοι. Είτε να ανοίξουν τα σύνορα και να υπάρχει ελεύθερη διακίνηση για όλους χωρίς να δείχνεις διαβατήρια, χωρίς να δείχνεις τίποτα - ή να χτιστούν οδοφράγματα ώστε να μην μπορεί να διασχίσει ο καθένας από εδώ. Να μην υπάρχουν ανοίγματα. Τώρα είναι εντελώς προσποιητό. Κάθεσε δύο ώρες στη



*γραμμή και δείχνεις το διαβατήριό σου για να περάσεις από εκεί, και δέκα χιλιόμετρα μπορείς να περάσεις από εκεί και να περάσεις από εδώ σαν να μη συμβαίνει τίποτα. Μαλακία.*

My grandmother is now an elderly woman who has lived through all the stages of the island that have been discussed. Having experienced so much, her wishes are humble:

I hope that we will be calm, so that our children can grow up, our grandchildren. I can't predict other things. Let there be tranquility in this place, my love. Tranquility and safety.

*Ελπίζω να είμαστε ήσυχοι, να μεγαλώσουν τα παιδιά μας, τα εγγόνια μας, δεν μπορώ να προβλέψω άλλα πράγματα. Να υπάρχει ηρεμία στον τόπο, αγάπη μου. Ηρεμία και ασφάλεια.*

Mina is indeed a politician, but she is also a mother of three children, and an inhabitant of the island her entire life. Thusly, she answered:

I will answer you as a Greek-speaking citizen and not as a politician. Cyprus is indeed a paradise and we ourselves should first love it and appreciate its beauty and uniqueness. With proper investments and a common vision, Cyprus can become the most important centre of services, trade and tourism in the Eastern Mediterranean. But as long as the national issue persists and our country is under occupation, no matter how many projects and investments are made, we will always live under the lethal sword of Turkey and its expansionist plans. I truly hope that we can reach a solution that is, above all, fair. Or at least as just as it can be under the circumstances for us all. For both Greek-speakers and Turkish-speakers, which is unfortunately something that Turkey will not allow as long as our allies and the U.S. allow it

to do everything it does without sanctions and repercussions. In my opinion, a solution to the Cyprus problem will only come in the context of a comprehensive change in the geopolitical scenario of the surrounding region that will lead to radical reversals in Turkey and the regime of expansionism and neo-Ottomanism that rules it.

*Θα σου απαντήσω ως Ελληνοκύπρια πολίτης και όχι ως πολιτικός. Η Κύπρος είναι ένας παράδεισος πραγματικά και θα πρέπει πρώτα εμείς οι ίδιοι να τη ναγαπήσουμε και να εκτιμήσουμε τη μορφή και τη μοναδικότητά της. Με κατάλληλες επενδύσεις και ένα κοινό όραμα η Κύπρος μπορεί να γίνει το πιο σημαντικό κέντρο υπηρεσιών, εμπορίου και τουρισμού στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο. Όσο όμως υφίσταται το εθνικό θέμα και η πατρίδα μας είναι υπό κατοχή όσα έργα και επενδύσεις και να γίνουν θα ζούμε πάντοτε υπό τη δαμόκλειο σπάθη της Τουρκίας και των επεκτατικών σχεδίων της. Εύχομαι πραγματικά να καταλήξουμε σε μια λύση πάνω απ' όλα δίκαιη. Ή τουλάχιστον όσο πιο δίκαιη μπορεί να γίνει υπό τις περιστάσεις για όλους μας. Τόσο για τους Ελληνοκύπριους όσο και για τους Τουρκοκύπριους γεγονός το οποίο δυστυχώς δεν θα το επιτρέψει η Τουρκία όσο οι εταίροι μας αλλά και οι ΗΠΑ της επιτρέπουν να κάνει όσα κάνει χωρίς κυρώσεις και επιπτώσεις. Κατά τη γνώμη μου η λύση του Κυπριακού θα έρθει μόνο στα πλαίσια μιας συνολικής αλλαγής στο γεωπολιτικό σκηνικό της γύρω περιοχής που θα οδηγήσει σε ριζικές ανατροπές στην Τουρκία και στο καθεστώς επεκτατισμού και νεοθωμανισμού που τη διοικεί.*

The youngest of those interviewed, my brother offered the following perspective:

Now almost 50 years have passed. Many of the parents of the missing have now died, or have found the remains of their children. Also many of the refugees who have the most vivid memories of the invasion have either died or grown up, and memory has faded. People have therefore come to

terms with the idea, the younger people who have grown up in a divided Cyprus is the only thing they know, they have come to terms with this life and this idea in their everyday life. I would like the Cyprus problem to be solved, for the island not to be mixed and for us to not live separately. aybe it will never happen.

*Πλέον έχουν περάσει σχεδόν 50 χρόνια. Πολλοί από τους γονείς των αγνοουμένων έχουν πλέον πεθάνει, ή έχουν βρεί τα οστά των δικών τους. Επίσης πολλοί απο τους πρόσφυγες που έχουν και τις πιο έντονες μνήμες απο την εισβολή είτε έχουν πεθάνει ή μεγαλώσει, αρά και η μνήμη έχει εξασθενήσει. Ο κόσμος λόγω αυτού έχει συμβιβαστεί με την ιδέα, ο πιο νεαρός κόσμος ο οποίος έχει μεγαλώσει σε μια διχοτομημένη Κύπρο είναι το μόνο πράγμα που ξέρει, έχει συμβιβαστεί με αυτή την ζωή και αυτή την ιδέα στην καθημερινότητά του. Εγώ θα ήθελα να λυθεί το κυπριακό, να μην είναι μοιρασμένο το νησί και να μην ζούμε χωριστά. Ίσως να μην γίνει και ποτέαυτο.*

Their hopes can be described as a mix between the collective desire for a settlement and their personal coping mechanisms. The presence of doubt is also undeniable. Of course there exist the fanatics who claim to be better off separated and the idealists who claim that holding hands together for days on end will convince politicians to find a resolution. My own hope is very abstract for the island. In some ways I find myself still indoctrinated by the propaganda I was exposed to as a child, and see Cyprus being immediately taken over again as soon as it unifies. At the same time, I find it sometimes hard to imagine two regions that have been functioning independent of each other for decades to come together, but how it would play out is up to anyone's guess. Perhaps radical in

view, I would rather for the reunification to happen with one immediate step as opposed to gradually. At the very least then the politicians will have fewer pockets of opportunities through which to compromise the likelihood of success for their own economic benefits.

How can such a heartwarming homeland be so heartbreaking? Conversely, how do I and those around me live our lives knowing we are being fenced off? Or, are we being fenced in? Escaping to another place presents a bit of a paradox. You seek freedom through abandoning what you know, and escaping through hope: abandoning the patterns and possible logic of the past. You leave what was once your space of comfort and security, and reach what you are wishing will, eventually, be very much the same. You are fenced within your desires and aspirations. Much like how fences form shapes on land, they too form part of the identity that makes up these islanders, of which I am one. The land that one is brought up in shapes how one views the world. Land reflects the soul. Mistreatment of land is by extension a mistreatment of the soul of the people to which the land belongs. The next step would be to move beyond this mentality, personally and island-wide. Moving beyond is not abandonment. It is simply a development. Maybe even an advancement.

We are

looking towards

the future,

while still

looking at

the past

Enslaved Country of mine,  
we are still kids but within our hearts there is hope  
that soon there will be no books like these!  
For I want to see the Pentadaktilos clearly,  
without the flag of Turkey!  
For I want to meet a free Cyprus, in Famagusta,  
in Kerynia, in Morfu, in Karpasia!

My beautiful island of Cyprus,  
tortured island,  
you were taken by barbarians  
and they've enslaved you.

Oh. How I would like  
to see Famagusta,  
the ports of Kerynia,  
the monastery of Saint Andreas.  
Oh, I would like it so...

I do not forget my Cyprus,  
beautiful island of mine,  
even if they've taken half of it from me  
For I have it  
whole in my soul.

Σκλαβομένη μου Πατρίδα, είμαστε ακόμα παιδιά αλλά  
έχουμε στις καρδιές μας ελπίσα ότι σύντομα δεν θα  
υπάρχουν βιβλία σαν αυτά! Το Πενταδάκτυλο εγώ να το  
δω καθαρά, χωρίς την σημαία της Τουρκίας! Την ελεύθερη  
Κύπρο να γνωρίσω εγώ, στην Αμμόχωστο, στην Κερύνει στην  
Μόρφου και στην Καρπασία!

Κύπρος μου όμορφο νησί,  
νησί βασανισμένο,  
σε πήρανε οι βάρβαροι  
και σ' έχουν σκλαβομένο.

Αχ. Πόσο θα ήθελα  
να έβλεπα την Αμμόχωστο,  
τα λιμάνια της Κερύνειας,  
το Μοναστήρι του Αποστόλου Αντρέα.  
Αχ, θα το ήθελα πολύ...

Δεν ξεχνώ την Κύπρο μου,  
το όμορφο νησι μου,  
κι ας μού το πήραν το μισό.  
Εγώ το έχω  
όλο στην ψυχή μου.



Poems of Greek-speaking school children, found and collected from the website of their educational institution.<sup>6</sup> The header reading “I know, I don’t forget, I reclaim” (Γνωρίζω, Δεν Ξεχνώ, Διεκδικώ) and the title of the post, wherein which they were posted, is “Poems for Cyprus” (Ποιήματα για την Κύπρο).

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<sup>6</sup> Γ. Δημοτικό Σχολείο Ύψωνα. Ποιήματα για την Κύπρο. 29-11-17. <http://dimypsonas3den.ehno.weebly.com/piomicroniota942mualphataualpha-gammaiotaalpha-tauetanu-kappa-973pirhoomicron.html>

Interviews conducted with, in order of first appearance:

Chrysoulla Kalavana: grandmother, hairdresser.

Mina Sampson: journalist, politician, mother of three.

Alexia Vasiliou: vocal artist, song-writer, founder of Re-Be Program, volunteer for the United Nations.

Nicoletta Kalavana: mother, business woman.

Demetris Kalavanas: older brother, lawyer and charter accountant at EY.

## Colophon

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