The Discourse of Refugee Trauma: Epistemologies of the Displaced, the State, and Mental Health Practitioners

ANNA M. AGATHANGELOU AND KYLE D. KILLIAN

Abstract

This paper explores the discourse of refugee trauma, analysing ways the displaced, the state, and mental health practitioners think about displacement and other war traumas. Narratives were obtained via in-depth qualitative interviews with displaced Greek Cypriots, newspaper accounts and press releases by elected officials, and through an examination of assumptions and practices of the traditional, medical model. Following a discussion of a range of epistemologies regarding the meaning of displacement, the authors offer a systemic epistemology for practitioners and activists interested in an alternative to the current ontology of fear and insecurity dominating our everyday institutions and social relations. In deconstructing the narratives of traumatisation, the authors suggest that dichotomous, essentialised, and atomistic understandings of self and other, displacement, nation, and health sustain in place "unhealthy" conditions that precipitate further traumatisation. Instead of pills and ethno-nationalist interpretations, the therapeutic witnessing of family dialogues around trauma is suggested for the facilitation of a process that relinquishes the desire to set it "right" and makes room for listening to our restless dead about another mode of living, a current struggle for peace, truth and justice.

Keywords: epistemologies, refugee, trauma, discourse, displacement, affect, systemic, mental health

Introduction

20 July 2008. From a Nicosian veranda, the Turkish flag can be seen burning brightly on the Pentadactylos Mountains commemorating what many in northern Cyprus view as the Turkish "peace operation" on the island thirty-four years ago. While the north-south buffer zone has opened, allowing Greek and Turkish Cypriots to move back and forth, barbed wire and UN troops remain on this segregated island. On 24 April 2004, the north and south communities of Cyprus held a referendum to decide whether or not to accept the Annan plan. Leading up to the crucial vote, the Greek-Cypriot political leadership did one of two things: went on television, tearfully imploring citizens to vote "no", or, alternately, sat silently, waiting for a socio-political firestorm to subside. Both the vociferous debates, and strategic silences, speak volumes about the tensions and the futures that were denied them on both sides of the divide. In each of these

communities, "remains" of the series of violences perpetrated upon their bodies persist. For instance, it may be argued that the north, unable to mourn past losses, has been structured in a manner that sustains in place representations of subjects who need to right past wrongs (i.e. by focusing on the chosen trauma). In the south there is a community that refuses to forget (e.g. I DO NOT FORGET) and has yet to commemorate fully what has repeatedly been called the catastrophe that has become so integral to our lives. The Annan Plan Referendum reopened old wounds, fears, and experiences of violence, including foregone and irreproducible orientations toward the future in both the north and south associated with the conflicts of 1955-1959, 1963, 1964, 1967, and 1974. Many of us carry memories, some our own and some intergenerationally transmitted, and frequently there are disjunctures between inherited collective memories and the personal experiences we ourselves have lived – the memories as articulated in the public domain and those in our most intimate places.

This paper engages with the narratives of the displaced (i.e. the refugee) in order to rigorously interrogate the methods and the kinds of political claims that can be mobilised on behalf of the displaced (refugees, those in enclaves, the dead, and the missing) in the political present. This paper is not an accounting of the displacements and other losses in order to remember and rework historical trauma. As both communities albeit in differential ways try to address violences such as conflict and war and their aftermath, it is crucial to think about it anew with justice instead of calling for fundamentalist revenge or even a commitment to memory of the past without accounting for the ways this "past" itself consolidates our own capacity to embody and engage in living, current struggles for peace, truth and justice. We pose the question of the Cypriot series of displacements as ongoing struggles, a judgement on the forces that animate such displacements while countering alternative memories, the contours of which outline still to be realised alternatives to violence (i.e. continued displacements and violations including the exploitation, the torturing and killing of peoples all in the name of capitalist colonial development and neoliberal projects). In this paper, we are more concerned with the contemporary possibilities of transformation and the ways such possibilities are still tethered to this past of displacement as violence and death. So, questions for us here are the following: what are the epistemological and political questions in writing histories of the present without squarely engaging the problem of life orientations and visions embodied within them? What are the stories about the displaced, (i.e. the refugee to just name one), that continues to inform who we are today – a present in which violence and terror is not contained and/or gone, a present in which persons are daily stripped of their energies as they are violated, a present informed and mediated by ongoing violence?

In this paper, specifically we ask: 1) What traumatic narratives and epistemologies do the state, refugees themselves, and mental health practitioners draw upon and to what consequence regarding redress with justice? 2) Who or what benefits from public re-productions of feelings such as hypermasculine impotentilisation, bereavement, loss, or anger? 3) What kinds of interventions, therapeutic and otherwise, can improve the quality of life within conflict-war-torn communities? To answer these questions, we explore the narratives that emerged from twenty-five

ethnographic interviews and focus groups conducted with Greek-Cypriot refugee families in 2002, 2004, and 2006, and newspaper accounts of statements made by the Greek-Cypriot political leadership. In addition, we engage some narratives that emerged out of a mixed village in the north where we were able to talk to both Greek and Turkish Cypriots still living there. After discussing the theoretical assumptions that guide this article, we present the narratives of refugees and the state, critique linear-causal-nationalist-developmentalist epistemologies, and then offer up systemically informed alternatives to traditional, medical model treatments and practices with displaced peoples.

Epistemologies of Trauma: (Neo) Colonialisms Anew?

> "Haunting is a constituent element of modern social life. It is neither premodern superstition nor individual psychosis; it is a generalizable social phenomenon of great importance. To study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it"
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> (Gordon, 1997)

Since "the end of the 1980s, 'trauma' projects appear ... alongside food, health and shelter interventions" (Bracken and Petty, 1998, p. 1) which has led to the emergence of trauma treatment programmes as if to "tame the unimaginable" (James, 2004, p. 131). As more and more of the language of trauma becomes part of the vernacular by being more accessible, familiar, and normalised in the society (i.e. stress, anxiety, trauma), violences such as warfare waged against civilians unimaginable in the scale of their brutality are less challenged (Bracken and Petty, 1998, p. 1). Challenging such violences becomes even more difficult when the discourse of trauma becomes an organising modality that motivates new forms of technocratic practices. Examples of such practices include the restructuring of states and humanitarian apparatuses designed to manage newly articulated categories of states and people within a social field, i.e. "failed states", "states in crisis", "victims of human rights' violations", victims of war especially with the War on Terror and the brutalities in the Balkans (Agathangelou, 2000), in order to alleviate the suffering of victims and transform their experiences, identity, and "political subjectivity" (Aretxaga, 1997). However, such practices themselves may engender other kinds of violences that reassert social power asymmetries, which inform acts and policies leading to the killing of working class, black and other racialised subjects, and women and children (Agathangelou, 2009). The series of state and other humanitarian projects, which secure in place these power dynamics, require us to ask questions that reject the notion that these asymmetrical social relations are just "business as usual".

With the end of the Cold War, many of these state and humanitarian regimes have asserted their power involving new technologies that would legitimise their interventions in those sites which are undergoing post-conflict reconstruction and/or are desiring to "fit" into the nations of civilisation and integrating themselves in regions like the European Union. In relationship to those states in "crisis", these technologies of governance enable the unfolding of a series of intervention practices such as social rehabilitation and economic change (James, 2003). These

practices are, as James (*ibid.*) claims, reminiscent of what Foucault refers to as bio-power: "techniques of power present at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them" (Foucault, 1990, 141). Similarly, discourses of trauma could themselves also be methods of securing and making possible global-power practices (Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira 2008; James, 2003; Povinelli, 2000; Basu, 2004) especially for those sites seeking to become "more civilised", their conflict-ridden genes expunged, and to become more competent and accountable to their citizens (James 2004, p. 131). Such demands and practices in the global realm depend extensively, however, on specific epistemologies that are guided by a transcendental politics of relations, including class, gender, sexuality and justice, and also politics that draw on discourses and forces with a continuous historical, colonial logic. For instance, much of the experience of violence, such as displacement and suffering, is appropriated or alienated from the subject and transformed (Das, 1995; Kleinman and Kleinman, 1991) into a series of documentations that articulate persons, families and whole nations into "victims", "killers", etc. (see *Calling the Ghosts* – a film made in 1996; Mandami 1996; Povinelli 2002). Much of this documentation also becomes part of seeking funding and political capital in order to promote persons, families, ethnic groups and nations' institutional security within the international system of states even as they promote the "protection" and "security" of their citizens (Agathangelou, 2009, 2000; James, 2003; Agathangelou and Spira, 2007). While such political contestations are part and parcel of structures and institutional and personal formations, one may ask what are the criteria that make some traumas more legitimate than others and/or more urgent than others? What is at stake in centralising some traumas over others and what does it really do for us politically if we can begin any kind of interrogation of political projects by merely focusing on the "suffering of others" instead of the violent conditions and social relations that make possible their political subjectivity, including their suffering? How do such engagements and political recognitions draw on historical violations such as warfare, exploitation, oppression and also existential denials, and for what purpose?

Gender, sexuality, class, race and (re)production were explicit factors in the mode of violence in Cyprus during and after the many years of conflict both covert and overt since 1960 when the island won its independence from the British colonisers. As the state began its integration in the international structure, many enduring problems remained, such as the accomplishment of a workable Cypriot state, the transformation of dependent subjects/workers to "free" workers within this newly formed state, and the build-up of bureaucratic institutions to facilitate these processes. To this series of questions, the viability of the state, the "conflicts" and the Turkish "peace operation" and/or what has come to be articulated and consolidated temporally in 1960, 1963, 1967, and 1974 as the Cyprus question, provided the appearance of an ethnic problem instead of the many displacements and its contingent traumas, the constant shifts unfolding and the alternative imaginaries defined in conjunction with that violence and its "freezing" (i.e. biomedically reducing

relations) as a form of transformation.

Violence (and more specifically here displacement) can be understood within a context of the formation of a modern state and its contingent epistemic notions about its own power, social order, and health. In the past two decades, an important body of feminist theory has emerged that examines the complicity of nationalism with gender and sexual hierarchies (McClintock, 1995; Anthias and Yuval Davis, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1994; Suàrez-Orozco, 2000; Aretxaga, 2001; Wilce, 2004). McClintock has critiqued extensively how the nation is constructed in terms of familial and domestic metaphors and how "woman" represents the symbolic site, as well as a boundary marker of the nation as "home" and "family". Kandiyoti (1994, p. 382) argues that the project of nationalism draws upon the idea of woman as associated with the private sphere, thus, connecting the nation/community with "selfless mother/devout wife":

> "The very language of nationalism singles out women as the symbolic repository of group identity. As Anderson points out, nationalism describes its object using either the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, patria) or home (heimat) in order to denote something to which one is 'naturally' tied. Nationness is thus equated with gender, parentage, skin color -- all those things that are not chosen and by virtue of their inevitability, elicit selfless attachment with sacrifice. The association of women with the private domain reinforces the merging of the nation/community with the selfless mother/devout wife" (p. 382).

According to Kandiyoti, the nation-state presumes that women biologically reproduce national collectivities and embody a nostalgic communal past and tradition (Gopinath, 1997, p. 488). In collapsing women with "home" and "nation" and, in turn, feminising and domesticating that space which is also understood as one of purity and sacred spirituality (*ibid.*, p. 468), nationalist projects end up naturalising women's productive activity. Simultaneously, this dichotomous/essentialised understanding of women as biological reproducers merges models of sexual reproduction (biological and natural) with those of cultural production (social). According to these conceptualisations, membership in the nation is prioritised and it is gained through biology. Of course, this understanding is gendered and ethnicised and further naturalises and heterosexualises the (re)production of the nation by expecting women to produce and attend to the children and men to attend to work. In sum, it silences, with a series of violent interventions, the struggles and labour of producing a home, a family and a nation. Those outside these frameworks (e.g. other ethno-nationalist groups, migrants and workers) cannot achieve membership (Agathangelou, 2004; Trimikliniotis, 2004), the suggestion being that their productive activity does not contribute toward the reproduction of the nation-state, or more specifically, the social relations that constitute it. Thus, their experiences of violation within the borders of the nation can, and with difficulty, be described and articulated as moments of violence. In not examining and disrupting the understanding that the nation imagines itself as a stable and fixed, biological and heterosexual hypermasculine entity (Agathangelou and Ling, 2009; Alexander, 1997; Gopinath, 1997) we end up further producing other kinds of violence. By

imagining that the nation is the "mother", the state is the patriarchal father, and the majority of the people are the children of this union, one can then imagine how some of these children must be sacrificed for the purposes of the national and now the transnationalised/neoliberalised development of Cyprus (Agathangelou, 2006; Robinson, 2004).[1] Nevertheless, this sacrifice is ridden with a major paradox: while the state prefers and works to incorporate productive and "healthy" subjects into a burgeoning international bourgeoisie that consequently could enable its reproduction, its dominant practices and laws depend on violence, including the displacement and their asymmetrical effects within its territory. Engaging with these violences and their mourning practices, could possibly provide insights into other orientations and possibilities of whose recalcitrance and registered defeats (i.e. traumas) could enable us to trace the openings of the "past" to those of the present for an altered vision constituted out of the damaged and defiled livelihoods within Cyprus. What must be "remembered", therefore, is that what make the present are a "composite of present formations" (*ibid.*, p. 180) and the pasts from which those have emerged. Thus, such a remembering requires a memory of the displacement, dispossession, of the struggles and conflicts and, of course, those alternatives that have not been realised due to these violent shifts.

Much of the work on memory and trauma that has emerged lately has focused on "remembering" as well as the ways this process is transmitted across generations (Leys, 2000; Caruth, 1996). The study of trauma developed first within medicine and then through the emerging field of psychoanalysis and was intensified and expanded throughout a number of other disciplines in the twentieth century. According to Ruth Leys, trauma refers to "a surgical wound, conceived on the model of a rupture of the skin or protective envelope of the body resulting in a catastrophic global reaction in the entire organism" (2000, p. 19). Although there is disagreement about the methods through which trauma is experienced and remembered, trauma is generally defined as an overwhelmingly life-threatening experience, accompanied by feelings of extreme fright and helplessness. The major epistemological assumptions that guide much of this work are remembering to forget and/or remembering and memorialising the event by adding to the community's knowledge. In *Trauma: A Genealogy* Ruth Leys substantiates that many of the therapeutic approaches to treating survivors of trauma operate within a paradigm that valorises remembrance. Genealogically tracing this development from the era of Freud and Pierre Janet she argues that traumatic memory has become a dominant theoretical approach to our understanding of contemporary trauma discourse (Herman, 1992; Felman and Laub, 1992). Drawing on Pierre Janet, who assumes an epistemology of linearity – a dichotomisation of ordinary and traumatic

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1 Arguing that transnationalisation is a defining feature of globalisation, Robinson states that the rise of global production is changing the relation between production and territoriality. "The relationship between nation-states, economic institutions, and social structures becomes modified as each national economy is reorganized and integrated into the new global production system" (p. 34). Robinson further argues that the globalisation of production "provides the basis for the transnationalisation of classes" as well as the transnationalisation of the state into "the transnational state apparatus" (Robinson, 2004, p. 34).

memories – Herman argues that "traumatic memories are not encoded in the brain like normal memories. Unlike traumatic memories, the ordinary memories of adults form a verbal, linear narrative that is assimilated into an ongoing life story" (Herman, 1992, p. 37). Traumatic memories, however, freeze in a timeless state and await cues in the environment to trigger sensory and motoric impulses. As Pierre Janet suggests, it is crucial to lead the "traumatized patients" to convert their traumatic memories into narratives by telling a story:

> "Normal memory, like all psychological phenomena, is an action; essentially it is the action of telling a story ... A situation has not been ... fully assimilated until we have achieved, not merely an outward reaction through our movements, but also an inward reaction through the words we address to ourselves, through the organization of the recital of the event to others and to ourselves, and through the putting of this recital in its place as one of the chapters in our personal history" (Janet cited in Herman, 1992, p. 37).

Similarly to Freudian psychoanalysis, Bessel van der Kolk, Onno van der Hart, Janet Herman, Caruth, and others argue that through a narrative action the survivor can process and know fully what took place. Through telling "the story of the trauma again ... completely, in depth and in detail ... Out of fragmented components of frozen imagery and sensation, the survivor slowly reassembles an organized, detailed, verbal account, oriented in time and historical context" (Herman 1992, p. 175). It is only then that the survivor would no longer suffer "from the reappearance of traumatic memories in the form of flashbacks, behavioural re-enactments, and so on. Instead the story can be told, the person can look back at what happened; he has given it a place in his life history, his autobiography, and thereby in the whole of his personality" (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1991, p.176). Much of this work is useful in the sense that it centralises agency by arguing that once memory is "converted" into a narrative form then the person is able to "own" control and master his own story in a "flexible" manner (*ibid.*, p. 178). However, as Leys (2000, p. 109) argues, this epistemological approach is ridden with an "entrenched commitment to the redemptive authority of history ... even if the victim of trauma could be cured without obtaining historical insight into the origins of their distress, such a cure would not be morally acceptable". Leys argues that it becomes crucial, for these theorists, that the person who experiences violence bears witness to her experience because "telling the truth has not merely a personal therapeutic but a public or collective value as well. It is because personal testimony concerning the past is inherently political and collective that the narration of the remembered trauma is so important" (*ibid.*). Hence, bearing witness is not just about the person but it also becomes important for the restoration of the social order (Leys, 2000, p. 109 citing Herman, 1992, p. 1). Ley's problematisation of these works highlights that much of the literature on trauma remains epistemologically circumscribed within the modernity projects. As Kaplan (2005, p. 68) states "trauma and modernity are inherently intertwined". She proceeds to ask a series of crucial questions that we think may enable us to ask questions that could engage with the "shocks" produced through different modernisation projects. What symptoms can be found on our bodies and lives that can

point to the shocks registered, and perhaps, negotiated and controlled? How did cultures manage to not "know" the history they had participated in? How are we seduced into remembering mere privatised fragments? (p. 69).

In Cyprus, violence comes in different forms, some emerging out of different development and governance projects (i.e. development of the sovereign state; even in its newer and more neoliberal form; nationalisms; imprisoning people during the junta; relegating people into refugee camps and enclaves). Thus, we locate memory and trauma within contemporary economies of violence such as displacement, enclaving, killing, and the dynamics of naming "trauma" and its valuation. Following Spillers (2003) we begin engaging the narratives of Cypriots and of state political leadership to show the link of trauma, the role of the family in Cyprus with regards to engaging and "dealing" with the displacement, and the methods that health practitioners deploy to appeal to the "national family". More so, we are interested in showing systematically how the time of the present is still ridden, constituted and made possible with violence and trauma or, as Spillers calls it, "death" which is re-enacted and transmitted generationally.

> "Even though the captive flesh/body has been 'liberated,' and no one need pretend that even the quotation marks do not matter, dominant symbolic activity, the ruling episteme that releases the dynamics of naming and valuation, remains grounded in originating metaphors of captivity and mutilation so that it is as if neither time nor history, nor historiography or its topics, show movement, as the human subject is 'murdered' over and over again by the passions of a bloodless and anonymous archaism, showing itself in endless disguise" (Spillers, 2003, p. 208).

In drawing on the narratives of Cypriots we proceed to show that the traumas of the past (and the struggle to remember and to engage with the losses, direct and/or inherited) are not over. They continue today, and the referendum marked it once more as the "sore spot". That moment recentralised again that the ravages of colonisation are not over. The decolonisation of Cyprus (i.e. liberation from the British Empire) did not seal the past and its incompleteness. Rather, colonial episteme such as patriarchal rule, racialised logics (i.e. the Greek is superior and belongs to the West whereas the Turk is the "sick man of Europe"; ultimately, Greeks and Turks are "ethnic" groups whose whole history is marked with conflict and violence; the Cypriot failed state[s]) still dominate many of their practices and activities and much of the valuation of the "other" both within and between the two communities and internationally. The dominant ruling episteme of subordination and mutilation of themselves and of each other are ultimately not over either. Such an episteme becomes mobilised at "opportune moments" to make political claims for projects that could sanctify them in the demonisation of the other, and even in their sacrifice for the nationalist and formation of state family. Furthermore, such political claims sustain in place these displacements and relations of violence, and above all, they lock in them again and again those possibilities that defy notions that the dominant social formations are not the only possibilities. We read the stories people carry about violence – the conscious horror of terror, traumas and death

that allows us to hold the destruction (i.e. material, ecological, corporeal, psychic) long enough and in constellation with the ongoing traumas of our moment – as *refusals to mourn and move on*. Such readings can enable us to imagine ongoing movements (in an Epicurean sense) that link us in the present with those who still suffer in our communities, and those who died in struggle for our communities.

Bodies in Pain: Enduring, and Carrying, Nationalist Injuries

> "The mind that attempted to repair – to compensate for the trauma becomes the trauma itself. The mind, in other words, becomes the patient's cumulative – in fact, accumulating – trauma" (Phillips, 1997, p. 102)

Cyprus won its independence from the British in 1960 and the elites of the Greek and Turkish ethnic communities worked together towards consolidating their power in Cyprus. Three years later, however, this national project of progress, democracy, and development did not resemble the form it had taken in Western Europe. Producing a common "national fantasy" was impossible because the nationalisms of both communities had originated elsewhere and their goals, values, interests, and agents conflicted due to historical political relations and their location in the formation of the international order. In Cyprus, the leadership whose interest was to make the process of two "national fantasies", the Greek and the Turkish, local circulated "images, narratives, monuments, and sites" and "personal/collective consciousness" (Berlant quoted in Elley and Grigor Suny, 1996), stories which ultimately entailed a series of violences and violations. In December 1963 a major crisis between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots erupted when Makarios III, the Archbishop and Primate of the autocephalous Cypriot Orthodox Church and first President of the Republic of Cyprus, proposed constitutional amendments to improve the functionality of the Cypriot state. After the rejection of the constitutional amendments by the Turkish-Cypriot community the situation escalated resulting in severe fighting between extremists from both sides, which lasted throughout 1963 and 1964. Turkish Cypriots, either of their own volition or by force, began retreating from isolated rural areas and villages into enclaves, often giving up their land and houses for security from enemy extremists. In 1974, when the Greek junta invaded, the military of Cyprus (re)organised socio-political and economic power on the island by trying to kill President Makarios and imprisoning and threatening the lives of Turkish Cypriots and Greek-Cypriot men who belonged to parties on the left (communists and socialists). Turkey, claiming its role as guarantor for the Turkish-Cypriot minority, militarily invaded to protect the Turkish ethnic minority from the Greek junta. A firm military presence was established by Turkey which remains on the island even today. Other kinds of violence were sexual violations, and the killing of many on both sides. Such types of violence as embodied through displacement (forced and/or otherwise) were many in Cyprus and yet, this article does not claim to "recover" all these moments. On the contrary, on drawing on the narratives of Cypriots we also engage in tracing their regrets and traumas – in story telling, as feelings and as *modes of analysis*. Through these stories, it seems that

regret and trauma produce a structure that is simultaneously stable and dynamic, which fills us with a set of fictional possibilities or alternatives.

As Cho (2008) states in her experimental piece describing the violence that Korean women experienced transnationally, many years have passed and "thoughts are absented of words that would make any sense to you (or to me, for that matter)", and yet the wounds remain open and the two states in north and south Cyprus still find the language to articulate the "catastrophe" that continues to segregate the island. Its thrust of DO NOT FORGET is not only a way of redressing the violence and displacements that have occurred but it is also an orientation that simultaneously draws on the body as method in gendered, racialised, sexualised and classed ways. The state's attempt to deal with the trauma that "shocked" its power acknowledges at least implicitly that the conflict and series of displacements including the use of gendered and sexualised forms of torture and terror was intended to destroy the productivity and (re) productivity of persons (i.e. Greek-Cypriots); to rupture the social bonds between the direct target of violence and his or her family and community through the use of physical pain, threats, and other coercive acts, and while desiring "healthy" subjects it also paradoxically, through a series of enactments of dominant practices and laws, redirects people to a mourning process that consequently, could possibly heal them. Yet, the many stories themselves become a living witness to the incessant call in codifying people as national subjects, always the potential subjects of nationalist sacrifice, while at the same time calling for a project that could sanctify them in the demonisation of the other.

Scarry (1985) suggests, that power and productivity were stripped from the targets of violence and transferred to the torturer(s), and to the Greek junta apparatus as a whole as it sought to consolidate its hold over the nation. The efficacy of violence used in Cyprus during this period, however, lay beyond its use against the "body" in the short-term. The forms of torture perpetrated were effective in controlling social space and the subjectivity of their targets over time. Beyond the initial attempt to extract legitimacy and power from victims' physical bodies through the use of pain, the purpose of these horrific acts was to inculcate what Patterson (1982) has described as the "social death" of the victim and "natal alienation" from his or her social network of accountability through the violation of moral norms. In this respect, the psychosocial sequelae of torture effects and leaves their traces on the individual psyche or self over time, on the extended family and all the associated communities.

Several Cypriots whom we interviewed prompted an understanding, albeit with contradictions, of the mechanisms by which national belonging is internalised in the process of their own constitution as national subjects. They brought up the issue of how the past, and more specifically, the violations they suffered at the hands of the "enemy", cannot be forgotten.[2] A 30-year-old, middle-class Greek-Cypriot female had this to say about the relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots:

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2 The concept "enemy" must be unpacked. Within an ethno-national imaginary, "enemy" is being understood as anybody who is outside the biological continuation of a specific ethno-nationalism.

"It is *they* who invaded us, who invaded our lands, and our homes. We cannot forget their violence and just go on as if nothing happened. If we forget our lands, it means that we forget our past and our ancestors who fought for us to even [be] here."

Unpacking this short segment of a narrative in order to understand the epistemologies that inform its constitution, we are confronted with a series of complicated issues: a stringing together of a complex commission of violence, including the invasion of land (either through forced relocation; withdrawal; relocation with compensation during for instance, the Ottoman Empire) and home. The relocation, the loss of and/or withdrawal from lands cannot be forgotten because that would mean shutting out both the past and our ancestors who made our lives possible, including those relations of the land and home. In emphasising the connection between Greek Cypriots and their ancestors who fought against the invading enemy, the narrator pushes to locate herself in this larger collective national project that ultimately demands that the "loss" be not forgotten. Yet, this narrative within a larger context that is informed by a collective ethno-nationalist story presumes a subject whose major project is making political claims (i.e. documenting through story telling) about the violence that the other (i.e. the Turk) committed upon herself, national territory and above all on one's home. It is not that the collective ethno-national story is not intertwined with the personal but that the narrator seems to be expected, at least partially, to tell of the ethno-national violence, and to provide a proof that requires essentialising oneself as a national subject (i.e. being and constituting oneself as Greek Cypriot).

The complexity here is also the way one is expected to detach oneself from his/her own personal memories and experiences of violence, such as the uprooting of all social relations, including the relation of self with land and home[3] to tell the story from the logic of the executioner of the violence (even one's ethno-nation). In story telling, there seems to be an articulation and a recitation of an archive of violence (i.e. how the other used all military hardware at his disposal to displace the Greek Cypriot from his home, his land, and above all, rid him of his political power). Such story telling – with a beginning, a middle, and an end – requires a complete re-orientation of one's life about the other, including the production of abstract facts that can be claimed in the story to contain and even gloss over the traces of not merely the injuries of relocation, conflict and war but also connection and collective. Relocation, conflict, war, and the injuries become the evidence to consolidate a story about the ethnic other, the hyper-masculine violator, and above all, the one who stole property from him in the form of land and home. Indeed, this kind of memory seems to albeit contradictorily collude with a nationalist project that desires to preserve a fixed past.

Read how a 35-year-old, middle-class, displaced male Greek Cypriot tells of the wounds of the nation:

"Our nation has been wounded since 1974. Our people and our lands are lost in the hands of the Turks. As long as our missing [kin] is not given to us and our lands are not returned

3 This foreclosure violently expels the struggles which are not always about inside/outside racial (i.e., ethnic) relations, but also about the ways these struggles are mediated through class, gender, sexuality, etc.

> to us there is no way that this conflict can be resolved. Our duty is to have back what we lost and have been waiting for [over] the last 27 years."

In this narrative, this Greek Cypriot draws upon collective memory to talk about the victimisation of the nation and individual wounds through the loss of land, property, and people. Implicit in his narrative is the actual event of displacement even though he does not name it. His narrative of displacement ultimately names the crime that gives rise to the compulsion to prove, and primarily the desire to decide a-priori, what the resolution of it would entail. It ends up foreclosing, albeit contradictorily, the possibility of naming that violence destroys people's lives, communities, and also the complex and frequent asymmetrical struggles embodied within them, which no law or legislation can dutifully and cathartically resolve.

Conceptualising the conflict within the two Cypriot communities as a moment of injury and stealing of one's people and land may be a "useful" strategy in that it can potentially explain, in the short term, one's pain and displacement. However, the effect of such a narrative is problematic. It presumes that a kind of hetero-masculine power has been lost in the theft of property, land, and disruption of intimate relations, and thus, the only way to "heal" and "resolve" conflict is by restoring one's property and land, and to demand compensation for lost members of the nation-state. It also avoids thinking that displacement is not only a consequence of war, but a central strategy in the formation of global power, including the shaping of national projects and state relations which are themselves ridden with contradictions, especially in moments of war and conflict, ethnic, gendered and class relations.

A 55-year-old working-class man living in a refugee settlement in Cyprus shared another narrative that linked self and nation, both in injured and traumatised states:

> "Do you see this box [indicates a shoe box]? In it is what keeps us going. I have pills for falling asleep, pills for my stomach, pills for when I get anxious. I also have papers from the doctors stating that my nerves are 'shattered'. These pills are a symbol for the ways the state and other institutions deal with problems. We have been under this constant, low-level pressure for the last thirty years. Every time you turn on the TV or read the newspaper you wait to hear if the politicians have come up with a solution. You end up wondering if they are interested in a solution."

Epistemologically, this man's narrative gestures to the "shock" that shattered him and the nation-state. His "shock"[4] or what this man claims to be his trauma seems to be a much more intertwined question. It is about giving but also *withdrawing sense* and imagination from a

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4 According to Leys (2000) "modern understanding of trauma began with the work of the British physician John Erichsen, who during the 1860s identified the trauma syndrome in victims suffering from the fright of railway accidents and attributed the distress to shock or concussion of the spine. Claiming that the traumatic syndrome constituted a distinct disease entity, ... Berlin neurologist Paul Oppeneheim subsequently gave it the name "traumatic neurosis" and ascribed the symptoms to undetectable organic changes in the brain"(p. 3).