

Imperial (Re)assemblages and Reconstructions: Intimate Terrors and Ontological Possibilities

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Zone 1: Surplus and Buffers

*The jade eucalyptus trees stand in the centre of the village of Aphania, holding secrets, gently exuding their soft scent. The aroma strikes deep chords within me, invoking images of my many walks with many important persons in my life (friends, father, mother, grandfathers, grandmas, aunts and uncles, cousins). This small village was constituted by many different struggles, joys, the sweat of so many ancestors that brought it to life again and again even when it was supposed to disappear. I am remembering as I walk today in the midst of the eucalyptus scents, this village of approximately a 1000, full of life, its cobbled streets walked daily by all peoples, Muslims, Christians, Greek, Turkish, maronites, rich, poor, roma peoples, black, olive-skinned peoples, **us**. It is in this village that the imperial-sovereign machine ground some of us, and our land, into its surplus, that vital energy that would make possible its most anxious desire,*

the creation of buffers: ethno-national conflicts. The village next door kicked out much of its population, those Turkish Cypriots who were deemed contaminants to a purist ethno-nationalist project of Greekness.



Figure 1: Our homes



Figure 2: Eucalyptus Tree



Figure 3: Our home

Zone II: Geopolitical (Neo) Imperial-Sovereign Adjustments

The population has decreased tremendously since 1974. The two dominant ethnic groups of Cyprus' constitution (Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots) engage in a major conflict centred on the demand for territorial sovereignty. The foundations, the ground, upon which these major territorial conflicts erect themselves, depend on ontological violence, antagonisms, prior and foundational to their emergence. The major structuring positionalities of Cyprus institutionality (Ottomans, British, Jews, Arabs, subsequently, Greek and Turks) have been expressed in the following antagonisms: the imperial

demand for expansion, the demand for return of the land (i.e., property relations), and the demand for the excavation of the bodies of the martyrs and the missing (i.e., the bones) that were murdered during different conflicts. These antagonisms are emblematic of irreconcilable and opposing forces simultaneously unimaginable in the libidinal and political economy of conflict and more specifically, ethnic conflict. The ethnic conflict discourses seem fortified against questions of socio-political ontology: questions that could disrupt the dominant state of affairs which ultimately reinvigorates the ontological death of that subject whose genealogical corporeal tracing is that to the slave and of the slave (that could be either, Greek, Turk, linobambakos, Maronite, etc). This structural position of invisibility/unspeakability, of slavery, is not just exploitation and alienation in Marx's sense, but it is predicated on modalities of fungibility, that is the capture of the black body, its abstraction, its emptying and its making "vulnerable to the projection of others' feelings, ideas, desires, and values; and as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master's body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power" (Hartman 1997: 21). This is the body used with impunity for the whims and purposes of whites (Agathangelou 2009; Neal 2007). As long as ethnic conflict theories and their articulation of the Cyprus problem become bounded/bracketed merely on the register of conflict (i.e. nationalist narratives, sovereign contestations, exploitation, us/them, the

Greek/the Turk) while presuming reconcilable forces among "intrasettler discussions" (Trask 1999), these end up colluding and remaining accomplices to political (in) stability. Hence, seeking political stability does not reconcile the antagonisms even when conflicts subside. As Fanon argues in his Wretched of the Earth (1967: 41) "the destruction of the colonial world is no more and no less than the abolition of one zone, its burial in the depths of the earth..."

[3] *The sovereign contestations in Cyprus began long before 1974, but the Greek coup marked another moment of political instability. The coup leaders' major desire was to re-assemble imperial-sovereign-territorial possessions not only through exploitation and alienation but also directly through force. Another round of intra-settler disputes is only adequate as a technology of re-assembling but not as a technology of reconstruction that depends on captivity, fungibility and above all, gratuitous violence. Like in many others parts of the world where fascists drew on force extensively to consolidate imperial reassemblages in the world, perhaps, what some of us, have come to know as neoliberalism (i.e. Chile, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Portugal, etc), the village's constitution changed dramatically. The Greek and Greek Cypriot fascists led by the Greek colonels in Greece not only tortured and killed many Greek Cypriots, they also planned to execute Turkish Cypriots, which, ultimately, opened the door to another imperial sovereign actor in world*

politics, Turkey to participate in these disputes, to reassemble its international structural position by staking its claims on the island and its peoples. But such imperial-sovereign adjustments require more than territorial shifts. They require and depend on a gratuitous violence on bodies. And which bodies?

Zone III: Murders and Massacres

Ali Hüseyin (49) Baf-Mandria yolu 25.7.1967

Mehmet Mehdi Ziba (51) Baf-Mandria yolu 25.7.1967

Fuat Mulla Salih (49) Baf 25.7.1967

Rahmi Hasan (49) Livera Köyü Ocak 1964

Ayşe Rahmi (32) Livera Köyü Ocak 1964

Hasan Rahmi (15) Livera Köyü Ocak 1964

Zahide Rahmi (12) Livera Köyü Ocak 1964

Ahmet Rahmi (7) Livera Köyü Ocak 1964

perife Rahmi (5) Livera Köyü Ocak 1964

Mustafa Rahmi (2) Livera Köyü Ocak 1964

Mehmet Kaşif (28) Tokhni köyü 15.8.1974

Münir Kasým (31) Tokhni köyü 15.8.1974

Yusuf Cuma (26) Tokhni köyü 15.8.1974

Sevgi Hasan (10) (1974)

Mehmet Hüseyin (22) Zyyi köyü 15.8.1974

Sevgül Mehmet (18) (1974)

“How might we ...mourn ...an event that has yet to end? When the injuries not only endure, but are afflicted anew?” (Hartman 2002: 758).

[5] Hartman asks how is one to mourn those violent events of slavery and colonization in the United States that have not ended but are still enduring and also at the same time trouble greatly. In Cyprus, slavery and colonization are not over even when these contestations are turned into intrasettler disputes. The mobilizing of those extreme forces on the island to carry out the ruthless terror of colonizing powers creates havoc in hundreds of Turkish Cypriots lives in 1963, 1965, 1967, 1974. The contestations by these colonizers to reassemble powers sees no other viable option but the exploding of bombs and burning of so many Cypriot bodies: Greek, Turkish, roma and Maronite. “Slaughter which spares neither women nor kids” (Giorgio Bocca, *Ýl Giorno*, 14 January 1964) takes place in so many villages such as Küçükaymaklý, Ayvasýl, Aredhiou Köyü, Tokni, Livera, Polis, Ktima, Kyvisili, Kofinou.

[6] As I walked in *Aphania* (meaning “disappearance”) in 2008, I still find the remains of the *reassemblage processes that not only forced the uprooting of its people from this piece of land but also uprooted so many others to reassemble anew power. Greek Cypriots were forced out, Turkish*

Cypriots "moved" to their "old homes" and others moved to other villages pursuing homes (that used to belong to Greek Cypriots) and jobs and even others came from Turkey to fulfill the policy of demographic change. According to the imperial-sovereign leadership these adjustments were crucial if the Turkish Cypriots were not to find themselves again outside the institutional power of the state/s, if the Turkish Cypriots were to accumulate sovereign power they had to follow the Turkish policies. All the Greek Cypriots were forced violently out with airplane and tank attacks and violent rapes and murders. The rapes and murders are discussed here and there as if ghosts of the imagination. Other speculations of who murdered whom and the places that they were thrown in as pieces of meat as if to forever forget the gratuitous violence circulate. Straining to see as much as I could there — striving to understand so much more than I could in 1974 when the Turkish airplanes started dropping incendiary devices on the village so that our life there could really disappear, once and for all, exploding their shells on the land and bodies — I found myself compelled by many voices. The pull got stronger and stronger, as I was pulled into the centre of the storm, and I found myself walking faster, hearing the echoes of the shouts, the screaming artillery, running towards the shards of memory — as if my meeting them again would allow me, and them, to rest at last.



Figure 4: Medusa



Figure 5: Graves



Figure 6: Margarita Savva



Figure 7: Paraskevoula Demetriou

Zone IV: The Missing, Graves and Ontological Slaughtering



Figure 8: “Undeclared Prisoners and Missing Persons in Aphania”ⁱ

Many of the sacred places remind one of those violences of those actors who carried out the policies in an imperial-sovereign intrasettler conflict. Yet, these conflicts, the symptoms of accumulation and genocide cannot be merely resolved by mere legal and other kinds of national and class struggles. This conflict spills over and becomes intertwined in that

significant relation that "colonizers" have desired and continue to disavow and elide: the ontological distinction between the living and the dead. The land upon which this cemetery is made, a Greek-Cypriot one now, breaks in on this foreclosure and registers symptoms of lingering trauma. The pillars of the graves have been destroyed systematically and are thrown here and there on the dry soil and many bones of the skeletons have emerged out of the ground and are haphazardly writing a skeletal grammar that disrupts the assumed ontological grammar of suffering in the ethno-nationalist war between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. There is no order in the ways the stones are speaking. Actually, of the corpses, some whisper and the majority are shouting incessantly. They are shouting back to me, to us, again. They want justice and they want us to re-animate them by bringing back to life their/s, their village's revolutions that do not seem to be seduced into mere nationalist dreams and into their disappearance. The dead that have been buried in this soil remember and are calling us to remember too that their deaths, even when violently disrupted, want us to resuscitate and re-ignite their dreams. Their voices are loud and clear: (Y)/ours revolutions are still alive within (y)/our midst, but that it is up to you to actualize anew. Afaneia/Kazikoy is not a site of appearance and disappearance. These segregations are no kind of solution. Afaneia/Gaziköy/... stands strong, and with pride awaiting for us to disrupt not only the intensity of the ethno-nationalist conflicts whose seductive intensity draws us even further into

forgetting and foreclosing what it does for us. In their desire to subvert a memory that is longer than ethno-nationalisms the intrasettler leadership engages in disputes. In the morning they call us to prostrate to the bricks, at midday, to turn the tax evaders in to the state, in the hopes of becoming the commissioners of our parish, and at night to hide behind our fear (Liantinis)ⁱⁱ and ultimately, consolidate ontologically that corporeal reification and mutilation that is not supposed to be our dilemma: it is a slave Thing. But it is our dilemma, of all inside and outside Cyprus, it is our making sure that we hear in the night the drums of those whose death make this land calling us: "to hear mornings among hapu'u: a purity of cardinals, cunning bees in shell-covered sleeves of honeysuckle, ...the aqua undertone of cooing doves" (Trask 2002).



Figure 9: "We are here" Original art by Nicholas Panayi

ⁱ These photos are all taken from the *Missing Cypriots Page*, supported by the Pancyprian Organization of Parents and Relatives of Undeclared Prisoners and Missing Persons. <http://www.missing-cy.org/home.html>

ⁱⁱ <http://aristodimos.pblogs.gr/2008/11/afanizomai-orthios-stibaros-kai-perhfanos.html>

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