A ditch that has been long dead/inactive

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Figure 1: The (half) Cyprus Forest © Maria Antoniadou

All the names in this article have been changed, except from Mustafa.

In this essay I will narrate the murder of a Turkish Cypriot named Mustafa, by the Greek Cypriot Nikos Kiprianou. His killing took place in 1964, the period in which the Bi-Communal violence between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots reached its breaking point. The recounting of this story is based upon two oral history interviews I conducted in March 2015. The first one is with Yiannis and the second one with Andreas Vasiliou. The difficulty of this narration relies on the absence of an accurate archive which could tell the story of Mustafa, either in the form of an auto-biographical life-story, either through the recounting of a person who was close to him. I aim to show that this form of difficulty in the narrative could be confronted only through the process of letting the "brackets" and the "ellipsis" of the oral history recounting to speak by means of their vacancy.

Keywords: Cyprus, violence, conflict, Oral History.

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"Union! Even if our blood [$\gamma\alpha i\mu\alpha$] becomes a ditch". This is a very popular nationalistic slogan that is written until today on the first page of a far-right Greek Cypriot (from now: G/C) newspaper called "Enosis" (Union). Another slogan, which is popular since the 1950's says "[We want] Union! Even if we get hit by rocks [in order to achieve it]". The word Enosis (Union) is very popular in both, the G/C and the Turkish Cypriot (from now on: T/C) Communities in the island of Cyprus. Enosis has been, and for some far-rights still is until today, the nationalistic project of G/Cs, which aims to unite the island of Cyprus with the Greek State (Heraclides, 2010: 70). This project is justified on the basis that G/Cs belong to the Greek nation, and they should be citizens of the Greek State. On the first half of 20th century G/C communists and leftwingers opposed this project, which undermined the independence of both the G/C and the T/C Communities. Of course, T/Cs opposed this project as well, because it threatened their well-being and their life in general (Papadakis, 2005: 82, 85, 88).

"After they shot him, they found him sitting on a rock, full of blood [$\gamma\alpha\iota\mu\alpha\tau\omega\mu\acute{e}vo\varsigma$]" (A. Vasiliou, interview by author, Cyprus, March 13 2015). The words my informer used in order to describe Mustafa's condition after he was shot by two G/Cs nationalists in 1963 was " $\gamma\alpha\iota\mu\alpha\tau\omega\mu\acute{e}vo\varsigma$ " (gematomenos). [Γ] $\alpha\dot{\iota}\mu\alpha$ is the G/C word for "blood", the same word is used in Greek, without the first letter " γ ", it's called " $\alpha\dot{\iota}\mu\alpha$ " (ema). When I first heard the story of the murder of Mustafa, I thought about these words "full of blood". Meanwhile, I thought of that popular nationalistic slogan "even if our blood becomes a ditch". And once again I wondered: Whose blood filled the Cypriot ditches? Was it Mustafa's blood?

The Archive

No one mentioned Mustafa's blood. His blood is hidden, into the ditch. "A ditch that has been long dead/inactive" (Vasiliou, 2015). Apparently, Mustafa's death was known to his relatives, friends and possibly it became known partly in the T/C Community. In the G/C Community Mustafa is just another name, the name of another dead person, which no one cared to mourn. Like so many other names of the T/C Community.

As Saidiya Hartman argues, the archive of the colonised is silent and unknown. Hartman claims her view on the basis of black slavery in 19th century (Hartman, 2008: 13). Black slavery on the one hand and colonialism in Cyprus on the other is of course two incomparable paradigms. Hartman's work focuses on the violence, rapes and deaths that black girls and women suffered on board the slave ships of the Middle Passage (the slave trip from Africa to the U.S.A). She ultimately claims that the death of those girls cannot be narrated anew, and this is partly due to the lack of auto-biographical archives. This lack shoved their lives unto the darkest corner of history. In the context of Cyprus, the most marginalised life-stories and auto-biographies are those of the T/Cs, and especially the sufferings that were imposed on them from 1955 to 1974.

"After all, if someone is lost, and that person is not someone, then what and where is the loss, and how does mourning take place?" (Butler, 2004: 32). I am thinking about Mustafa's father, I was thinking of him all along, from the first time that I took the interviews about Mustafa's death. Did Mustafa's father mourn his son after he was informed about his death? Did he have the time and the space to mourn? In the next chapter of this essay I will let my interviewee speak, in order to place down the difficulty of mourning and most of all the trap that Mustafa's father was led into in order for the killing to take place.

The only archive that I have in my possession is the narrations coming from two G/Cs. The fabulation created by those narrations does not support the practice of mourning that Mustafa deserved. The unfolding of those stories have nothing to do with lament, mourn, anxiety or fear: all of these are emotions and affections related with the sufferings which are being posed when perpetual violence becomes the "norm of the political life" (Butler, 2004: xiv). Since I conducted those two interviews about Mustafa's death, I have never met anyone else in my life who knew or heard about the existence, life and death of Mustafa. I approach in a critical manner those two narrations, and this is not because I suspect the trace of lying into them. They simply state the facts about the murder of a T/C, Mustafa. My critical position derives from the circulation of emotions and affections in those narrations. The incident is recounted without any emotion or/and affection. Although, the importance of those narrations derives from the positionality that my informers occupy onto the spectrum of the bi-communal (G/C and T/C) Conflict.

Positions

The Conflict between G/Cs and T/Cs started in 21st of December 1963, and it is remembered until today as the *Kalni Noel/Matomena Christugenna*/Bloody Christmas. The Conflict inaugurated because of an incident in the centre of the capital city, Nicosia, on *Ermou*/Hermes Street, where the United Nations Forces imposed for the first time a spatial division between the two Communities. That night a G/C policeman killed two T/Cs, and the violence didn't end, literally, until the Coup and the War of 1974. In November 1963 the G/C President of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), Archbishop Makarios, proposed the in/famous "13 Points for Constitutional Change", via which he suggested that the T/C Community shouldn't enjoy so much power and benefits in the RoC. In a nutshell, he wanted to rip off the Constitutional guarantees that the T/C minority enjoyed. However, this wasn't a new project for G/C nationalism. The Minister of Interior, Polykarpos Georkadjis, a G/C, in 1961 established the para-military group that is known by the name *Akritas*. Of course, the name of this Organisation was very familiar to

²Akritas literally means "the frontiersman". Since the constitution of the Megali Idea/Big Idea, the main nationalist project of the Greek State which was active proximately from late 19th century until 1922, people who were recognised as "Greeks" by the State and used to live in the areas that were recognised as the "external frontiers" of the Greek State, which the State didn't yet manage to occupy and takeover were called Akrites/Frontiersmen. The pseudonym of the leader of E.O.K.A. Georgios Grivas Digenis was Digenis Akritas. Digenis Akritas is a famous character of early Greek literature, which was written approximately in the 9th or 10th century. Akrites/Frontiersmen was the name given to the "guardians" of the Eastern frontiers of the Byzantine Empire, which separated the Empire from the Bagdad Caliphate (Jeffreys 1998: xli).

both G/Cs and T/Cs. Akritas was the nickname of the military leader of the nationalist guerrilla organisation named E.O.K.A. (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters) that G/Cs founded, firstly in Athens, Greece, and then in Cyprus. The real name of Akritas was Georgios Grivas Digenis, a former military officer of the Greek Army, who fought in many nationalistic wars of the Greek State in the 20th century and he was also a known anti-communist who fought in the Greek Civil War (1945-1949) The explicit project of E.O.K.A. was to unite the island of Cyprus with the Greek State, a project which is known until today by the name Enosis. This nationalistic project, featured as an anti-imperialist and anti-colonial imperative against the British command in Cyprus, however it ultimately ignored and omitted, by the very least, the T/C Community. The goal of Enosis was the dominant national project of the G/Cs from the eve of the 20th century, which, like every other national project, expressed itself very violently against the "enemies of the nation" the communists, the T/Cs and the left-wingers. Thus, the Akritas Organisation, incited as well by two other known politicians of the G/C Community, Tasos Papadopoulos and Glafkos Clerides, affected the politics of the RoC and pushed the situation unto the Bloody Christmas. The "Akritas Plan", a project that became public as late as 1966, wholly organised the steps that the G/C should follow on an institutional and para-military level in order to marginalise the T/C Community and declare the repeal of the RoC's Constitution and therefore Union with the Greek State.

However, they failed to complete their agenda, although different political agents, everyone motivated by the same nationalistic motives, tried to impose it up until 1974. The last failed moment of this history is the Coup d'état organised by the Greek dictatorship, Junta and G/C nationalists, right-wingers and fascists, which was answered with the invasion of the Turkish Army in Northern Cyprus.

This is, however, only a very brief summary of what happened during those years. The flow of this historical narrative makes its way from moment to moment unleashing different forms of violence, marginalisation and exclusion towards the T/C Community. So, I must reproduce the historical periodisation of this history. Here, we have three different moments of Conflict. Firstly, the *E.O.K.A.* period of 1955-1959, secondly the 1963-1974 period, also known as *Fasaries/*Troubles, which is formally acknowledged as a period of bi-communal violence (between G/Cs and T/Cs) and which ended when the T/Cs were obliged to live in the 3% of the total territory of RoC in enclave-villages that were surrounded by G/C villages (Papadakis et al, 2006: 2). And thirdly the years between 1967-1974 which led to the War and division of the island into two different States, the RoC in the South and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the North (from now on: TRNC).

Both of my informers were members of *E.O.K.A.* Also both of them were co-workers of Mustafa, in the Control Tower of the Nicosia Airport, which today is located into the Buffer Zone/Dead Zone, the area that divides the two States and it is controlled by the United Nations. Yiannis Papadopoulos (from now on: Yiannis), was also member of the *Akritas* Organisation. Although, he distanced himself from the Organisation and its goals: Union with the Greek State and marginalisation of the T/Cs. Yiannis from 1960s until now has rejected the G/C nationalistic project. He refers to the 1960's decade as the period that the

G/Cs tried to repel, silence and eventually kill the T/Cs. Today he supports the Bi-zonal and Bi-communal Federation Solution of the Cyprus Problem (Y. Papadopoulos, interview by author, Cyprus, March 1, 2015). My second informer Andreas Vasiliou (from now on: Andreas) resigned from the civic aviation of the Nicosia Airport in order to become a Christian Orthodox priest. Yiannis told me that Andreas built a church in his village using only his bare hands. As he argued, Andreas built the church in order to cleanse for his old evildoings. Probably he recounted the story of Mustafa for me in order to cleanse himself once again, before he dies. I conducted the interview in his room inside a retirement home.

The killer of Mustafa, Nikos Kiprianou (from now: Nikos), was also a co-worker of Mustafa and of both of my informers. He was also a member of *E.O.K.A.* As Andreas claims, he was member of the *Akritas* Organisation as well. Yiannis didn't mention anything that shows a possible relationship between himself and Nikos.

We don't know anything about Mustafa. We only know that he came from the village $\Delta \dot{\epsilon} \nu \epsilon \iota \alpha/D$ enia. I was also informed that the T/Cs inhabitants of the village evacuated their homes in 1964. Persecution, pogroms and evacuations became the norm of T/C everyday life during the Fasaries/Troubles period, 1963-1967 (Papadakis et al, 2006: 2). Andreas told me that the elder inhabitants of the village stayed behind, they didn't evacuate the village, because they had troubles moving. One of those men and women was the father of Mustafa. He probably stayed alone in the village. He apparently didn't have the company of his son. He must have worried about his son's well-being. Mustafa chose to stay into the Airport, where people worked 24/7, both T/C, British and G/C used to work there. It seemed like a safe option. He was wrong. But he didn't know what was coming. He must be worried. He must be cold. He must be alone. I am just imagining his last days. The last days of Mustafa. But in reality, I do not have a clue how he lived those last days. What I have is just the steely-eyed narration of Yiannis, and a narration lacking in eyecontact with Andreas who was lying in his bed during the interview. What I really have is the absence of Mustafa's feelings and emotions. Am I doing justice to Mustafa if I imagine his feelings and emotions? And how is my imagination legitimate towards Mustafa? If the G/C violence and pain condemned him to silence isn't it better to leave it that way, than to reopen his grave once more? And again, my positionality as a G/C myself is to imagine the death of the other, my responsibility is to embrace that death, my obligation as an oral historian is to try and listen his groaning and moaning while he was sitting on the rock, by the ditch, the same ditch that the G/C imagined that it was filled with their blood, but ultimately was filled with the blood of the others. I can't visit this particular ditch, or the Nicosia Airport where he lived the last days of his life, neither his village Denia, because all of them are located into the Dead Zone/Buffer Zone. I can only visit his story and invite this particular story into the history of Cyprus.

Bracketing

Probably Nikos organised the murder days ago. Probably he organised it in order to get a better job into the civic aviation of the Nicosia Airport (A. Vasiliou, 2015). Probably he organised it in order to climb the hierarchy of the *Akritas* Organisation (Y. Papadopoulos, 2015). We don't really know the individual motives of Nikos We surely know the social and national incentive.

Yiannis isn't a really religious person. He is pro-secularism and in general he thinks that the clergy is a fraud. He never uses religious language, Christian or any other, in his narrations. He is obsessed with truth and History, capital H. He speaks in order to shed light, he is an "Enlightened" person. He could be a revolutionary from the French Revolution. Surprisingly, when he recounts the murder of Mustafa he uses religious language in order to describe what happened to his killer, Nikos (Y. Papadopoulos, 2015). "Nikos never went back to his old job the day after he killed Mustafa" (A. Vasiliou, 2015). Yiannis informed me that Nikos the years after 1964 "became a chanter for the Archbishopric of Cyprus". He managed to reach a high rank in the ecclesiastic hierarchy of chanters. "Some years after he died from larynx cancer. As if Providence acted upon him" (Y. Papadopoulos, 2015). The same larynx, throat that he used in order to speak for/from God, killed him. As if God killed him through the medium of their communication. God knew what he did, S/He punished him. Yiannis never believed in Divine Judgement throughout his life, and he neither does now. However, the lack of justice, the absence of stories which would try to communicate the suffering and violence of the others, led him to construct this narration. He deep inside knew that the T/Cs lived in a godless world, in a world without justice.

Nikos approached my informer, Andreas he said to him "I have to kill Mustafa. I have to kill him because he is a Turk. It's an order". A.V continued saying to me "Where was this order coming from? Was he a member of *Akritas*?". Yiannis told me that he pretended or tried to be a member of the para-military group of Nikos Sampson (Y. Papadopoulos, 2015). Nikos Sampson was "the person the coupists [Greeks and G/Cs in 1974] appointed as president" (Papadakis, 2005: 106). My grandmother, Thekla Nikolaou, told me "Sampson was a known *pistolero* [gunman]" (T. Nikolaou, interview by author, Cyprus, December 12 2014). After the 1974 Greek-G/C coup against Archbishop and President of the RoC Makarios Nikos was trying to collect support signatures for Nikos Sampson's presidency. After the invasion of the Turkish Army in 1974 he warned Andreas "'you should never say that I tried to do such thing [collect the signatures]'. And he used to be super, super supportive of Makario's presidency" in the past (Y. Papadopoulos, 2015).

Andreas asked Nikos "have you seen Mustafa [these days]? 'No, I haven't. But I will get him out of there [the Airport] and kill him'" (A. Vasiliou, 2015). "Nikos conjured this plan because he had an evil mind" (A. Vasiliou, 2015). His plan was based on the intimacy of the relationship he had with his co-worker and villager Mustafa. The plan was the following: he agreed with his brother-in-law, Christos, to help him. Christos would be standing in the middle of the road which connects the Airport of Nicosia with the village of Denia, the distance of this trip is approximately 12.57 km/7.81 miles. On the 10.64th km there's a

crossroad, from which Nikos should have turned right in order to go to the village of Denia. But he turned left. On the 8th km they found Christos standing on the road. Nikos reassured Mustafa that the man standing was his brother-in-law. When they arrived at the crossroad and the car didn't turn where it supposed to go, Nikos once more reassured Mustafa that they will firstly take Christos to his home and then they will take the road to the village. Christos was sitting in the back seat, and Mustafa was sitting next to Nikos Christos took out a gun and placed it on Mustafa's head, he immediately said "Mustafa, this is homeland [$\pi \alpha \tau \rho i \delta \alpha$], and you are going to go wherever we will take you" (A. Vasiliou, 2015). They drove 7 km until they arrived to the village Ayioi Trimithkias. "Then they took the road to Nicosia, they turned again left and took the road back to the Airport" (A. Vasiliou, 2015). There they found the ditch, the old river, "a river that has been long dead/inactive [...] They forced Mustafa to sit on a rock, they told him that this was an interrogation [...] they asked him whether he was involved into the T/C groups, if they possess guns and where they hid them" (A. Vasiliou, 2015). "So, this was a theatre" (Y. Papadopoulou, 2015).

"This was a theatre. Eventually he shot him on the head [...] he stood behind him, he placed the gun on his head, and they questioned him [...] He shot him on the head [...] they left him there and they went to the [nearby] village in order to bring a shovel and a hoe so they could hide him [...] they found [Niko's] groomsman who was a strapping man $[\pi\alpha\lambda\lambda\eta\kappa\dot{\alpha}\rho\iota]$ to help them dig the whole and bury him [...] they went to the village and [when they came back] they found him [Mustafa] sitting on a rock. Full of blood $[\Gamma\alpha\iota\mu\alpha\tau\omega\mu\dot{\epsilon}vo\varsigma]$. According to his [Niko's] narration he was sitting on the rock, the bullet got him here, and it got out from here, the pistol was a 22 [mm] [...] 'You fucking dog are you still alive' [Niko's] said to him. He kicked him and he felt down. And the rock was this big, he took the rock and he dissolved his head. He squashed his head. They buried him offhand" (A. Vasiliou, 2015).

Reprise

In the brackets and the ellipsis you will (not) find the feelings of Mustafa. There, lies the story how it should be narrated by him. The life-story of his killing. But you can never get to it. The brackets and the ellipsis will (not) tell the story of Mustafa. I haven't used the words Andreas used in order to describe the feelings and emotions of Mustafa during his travel with his killers, during his "interrogation" and while he was being killed.

Nikos approached Mustafa's father. Mustafa's father, whose name I have never learned, the moment he saw Nikos he stood up, he hugged him, and he said:

"'God's sake is in your hands, where is Mustafa?' 'You know' [Niko's] said 'Uncle³, he stayed there [in the Airport] and I told him to come with me and he didn't come, because he is afraid to get out on the road'. [Mustafa's father:] 'Why is he scared, he is going to be in your car, who is going to hurt him?' [Nikos:] 'Write me a letter to give him'. He wrote on a paper, he gave him the letter written in Turkish

³ The word "Uncle" is used in Cyprus in order to address to a person who is older than you.

and [Nikos] found Mustafa and he told him 'I saw your father, he is crying and weeping he wants you to go over there'. He convinced him, he got in the car in order to go there". (A. Vasiliou, 2015).

When they encountered Niko's brother-in-law Mustafa said:

"'Nikos!' [...] Mustafa was reassured for a second. [...] When Nikos turned left Mustafa told him 'Nikos where are you going? [...] We should go back, we will get in trouble over here' [...] he was sitting on the rock, the gun was behind his head, Mustafa couldn't see him [...] Mustafa fell". (A. Vasiliou, 2015).

This is the reprised story of Mustafa, as its being recounted through the brackets and the ellipsis.

Reconciliation

Andreas searched for reconciliation at the end of our interview. He suddenly started talking about another story. About a G/C, Yorgos, that went missing during the same period. Also, about a T/C, named Ahmed who was also missing. He told me that a T/C public official of the TRNC, some years before of our interview, contacted the brother of Yorgos, a G/C, and he told him to find the grave of Ahmed. The G/C found Ahmed, and then the T/C gave him the corpse of his brother. The exchange of corpses is a rare and difficult practice of mourning in these sites of violence.

Is the story of Ahmed and Yorgos related to the story of Mustafa? Mustafa, as far as I know was never found by anyone. No one ever looked for him. Although everyone knew where he was buried.

"I was in the house of my groomsman and I was saying this story [of Mustafa], everyone knew this story, that there in Kozopoula they killed Mustafa. I told him [my groomsman] 'Theodoros who owns that field?', he replied 'It's mine'. I was impressed, there, where the ditch/river is, they filled it with rocks, there were no rocks into the ditch/river, but they picked them and they placed them inside. [...] Theodoros told to his father-in-law [who owned the field] 'father, there in Kozopula did you place rocks into the ditch/river?' 'No I didn't'. Theodoros said 'The guy that Nikos killed he was placed into our field' and they went there and they saw the rocks. I said to Theodoros 'Let's go over there I want to see it'. And we went. [...] We arrived, he showed me the field, this is for sure" (A. Vasiliou, 2015).

After this recounting he suddenly started telling the story of Ahmed and Yorgos. That story was a story of reconciliation, two corpses were exchanged, both sides got their relatives. The story of Mustafa was a story of non-reconciliation. Everyone knew about him and no one tried to find him. It is an incomplete mourning. But really, how can you complete the process of mourning? "I am not sure when mourning is successful, or when one has fully mourned another human being. [...] I do not think that successful grieving implies that one has forgotten another person or that something else has come along to take its place, as if full substitutability were something for which we might strive" (Butler, 2004: 20-21). Derrida arrives at a different conclusion regarding mourning, inaugurating from a Levinasian position. He speaks about the

impossibility of mourning, the impossible mourning towards the other qua other, "[w]hen we say 'in us' or 'between us' to recall ourselves faithfully 'to the memory of', of which memory are we speaking *Gedächtnis* or *Erinnerung*? The movement of interiorization [of the other] keeps within us the life, thought, body, voice, look, or soul of the other, but in the form of those hypomnemata, memoranda, signs or symbols, images or mnesic representations which are only lacunary fragments, detached and dispersed - 'only' parts of the departed other. In turn they are parts of us, included 'in us' in a memory which suddenly seems greater and older than us, 'greater', beyond any quantitative comparisons: sublimely greater *than* this other that the memory harbours and guards within it, but also greater *with* this other, greater than itself, inadequate to itself, pregnant with this other. And the figure of this bereaved memory becomes a sort of (possible and impossible) metonymy where the part stands for the whole and for *more than* the whole that it stands and it exceeds" (Derrida, 1986: 37).

The death of the other is visible in most of the urban and rural sites of Cyprus. Her and his death dwells inside of us and at the same time it exceeds us. We cannot contain it, therefore we are trying to talk about it. What language shall one use in order to speak for the death of the other? Are we going to use the language of the other? We must speak, we must learn her/his language. I am translating my interviews from the Greek Cypriot language to English, trying to find the language of Mustafa. It seems impossible to reach it. There is no reconciliation through this process of translation. There is only this "metonymy", a perpetual translation from language to language, from the other to another. Mustafa is the metonymy of the violence we contain "in us". The violence that led Mustafa to his death is simply the metonymy of our history. If we dare to say "Mustafa" we say "violence", and if we say "violence" we are saying "history".

"Now" I live

Sali, a T/C interviewee from Yannis Papadakis book, *Echoes from the Dead Zone*, told him that "[w]hen people ask me my age I subtract four years, those years from 1963 to 1967 when we were in the enclaves. That was not life. *Now* I live" (Papadakis, 2005: 88).

For many T/Cs there is no "Now", only the past exists. The past in which they died. "A past that has yet to be done" (Hartman, 2008: 13).

This is the predicament of oral history. To open the possibility to know and come closer to the death and the violence which the others suffered from, this is a very precious historical archive. In the meantime, we must imagine and come closer in a critical manner to these deaths: an archive which has been constructed through power. This is the history and the story narrated by those that have the privilege of narration in general. But how else am I going to learn how the death of the other sneaks into the life, the norm and the narration of those who are powerful? How am I going to understand in which way the power which founds this narration becomes deconstructed, while it's trying to support its right and the

preconditions of this right, ends up in affirming the retraction of this same power? This history, and this narration are founded upon this ditch, inside of which you will not find the blood of the nation flowing, but instead the blood of those who were sacrificed in order for this nation to exist.

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