War Museums and Photography

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1. Introduction

Museums and photography seem to have one thing in common. They are both considered unquestionable reflections of reality, that is, objective, authentic and credible sources of knowledge. Museums are repositories of real material testimonies of the past, and construct narratives, which are believed to be academic, historical and, as such, indisputable.[1] Thus, their voice becomes authoritative and influential. Photographs are also considered a "transparent" window to the truth,[2] or, in the words of Susan Sontag, a "species of alchemy",[3] representing unmediated and unbiased reality.

However, this is not exactly the case for either of them. Museums may hold *authentic* pieces of the past, but these are organised, arranged, and set in place as a result of a complex network of personal, social, political and economic circumstances and decisions. Photography is not much different. Just as museum professionals and academics make complex choices on what to include and exclude from an exhibition, photographers make similar choices on what to include and exclude from their photographic frame. As Sontag put it, "to photograph is to frame and to frame is to exclude".[4] Furthermore, photographers decide on which events to cover, and what images to share and with whom.

In this paper, we are going to discuss the use of photography in five, *young*, war-related museums – two in the Republic of Cyprus and three in the northern part of the island, which currently goes under the name of the *Turkish Republic of Northern*

1 | Richard Sandell (2007): Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference. London, New York: Routledge.

2 | Kendall L. Walton (1984): »Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism«, in: Critical Inquiry 11(2), pp. 246–277.

3 | Susan Sontag (2003): Regarding the Pain of Others. London: Penguin Books, p.41.

4 | ibid, p.41.

Cyprus. We are going to focus on the categories of photographs used in these museums, the context in which they are presented, and how this influences their meaning, as well as the relationship between photography, memory and history. We are going to argue that a close comparative study of the use of photographs in museums can reveal how the *transparency* of photography and the authority of the museum interact with the subjectivity and the political (in the broad sense of the term) construction of historical narratives.

2. Images of War

In less than two decades, from 1955 to 1974, the island of Cyprus experienced several conflicts: an uprising against the British colonial regime (1955-59) which resulted in the island's independence in 1960; an inter-communal conflict between the two main communities of the island, i.e. the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities in the 60s; a military operation by Turkish troops in 1974, which ended in the division of the island in two parts: the southern (Greek Cypriot) and the northern (Turkish Cypriot) part. To this day, UN forces patrol the Green Line (the line dividing the island in two) and Nicosia remains the "last divided capital in Europe". In 1983, the Turkish administration of the northern part formalized itself as the *Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus* (TRNC), which is not recognized as such by any state (except by Turkey) or by any international organization. In 2003, an agreement was reached between the two parts that allowed crossing points to be created, so that people could move between the two parts. This access has led to major emotional trauma for people on both sides.

In direct response to these events, several museums and memorials have been created on both sides. In this discussion, we are going to consider the following: (a) the *Struggle Museum* (opened to the public in 1962, South Cyprus), (b) the *Museum of Barbarism* (opened in 1966, North Cyprus), (c) the *Museum of National Struggle* (opened in 1982, North Cyprus), (d) the *Peace and Freedom Museum* (opened in 2010, North Cyprus) and (e) the *Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus* (opened in 2010, South Cyprus). These museums seem to promote official, national(istic) views of what has happened and why, and they aim to reinforce national narratives and corroborate their views through the authenticity of the display and the accuracy of the presented facts. In these museums, as we will argue, photography is used as a means to construct strong national narratives by assuming the role of factual information and by appealing to emotions.

Museums of this kind, i.e. war memorial museums, usually hold three categories of photographs: (a) documentary/ photojournalistic images of events that took place during a particular war (such as killings, destructions, displacements etc.); (b) portraits of heroes or martyrs; and (c) images of military and political events as well as images of soldiers in social situations. The first category usually consists of

photographs taken by third parties, journalists or reporters more often than not, from countries not involved in the conflict. The second category consists of photos coming from periods before the events, when the soldiers were preparing for war, celebrating various family or other events, or sending back mementoes to their loved ones. Finally, the third category differs from the first in the sense that it aims to celebrate the military and its contribution, rather than present the tragedy of war.

All three categories are present in our case studies. Apart from the National Struggle Museum (in the north), which also uses colour photographs, the other four museums mainly use black and white images in their exhibitions. These are usually labelled, but more often than not are unattributed. Information about the photographers, their intentions, their alliances, their employers, or the original context of the picture or the circumstances of their shooting are usually not available. Placed in the museums as part of their narratives, these photographs serve as *currency* and visual proof, endorsed with the aura of the museum's authenticity.[5]

2.1 Documentary Photography as Proof

War museums often display a significant number of photographs as visual testimonies of the events described by texts and other exhibition media. Documentary photography, which is considered a mechanical reproduction of reality at a specific time and place, seems to exclaim: "See with your own eyes! It happened and it looked like this". This ostensible truth is the reason why the Museum of Barbarism in north Nicosia uses its iconic photograph.

The Museum of Barbarism is a small museum in the northern part of divided Nicosia, which aims to commemorate not an act of war, but an atrocity inflicted on innocent victims. It thus aims to emphasize the cruelty and cowardly behaviour of the other group and thus create the sense of the victimization of a community (the Turkish Cypriot one) for the purposes of nation-building. It is located in the former residence of Dr. Nihat Ilhan, a major, who served in the Cyprus Turkish Army Contingent in the 1960s. According to the museum narrative, his wife and three children together with a neighbour woman were killed in the bathroom of their home by Greek fighters during the inter-communal conflicts of December 1963. The house remained as it was until 1965 when it was opened to the public as a memorial space, and officially became a museum in January 1966. Repairs were made in 1975 and 2000, and the exhibition as it is today was inaugurated on 14 February 2000. Apart from the personal belongings of the victims, the museum narrative is constructed of photographs and a few artworks. Accompanying texts in Turkish and English quote

5 | Paul Williams (2007): Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities. Oxford, New York: BERG.

from the international press reporting on the event just weeks or days after it occurred – and thus become *impartial* testimonies of brutality and *barbarism*.

The selection of photographs is indicative: mutilated bodies, refugees, mothers and their children in despair. The most shocking photograph though is a bland snapshot of Dr. Ilhan's wife and her three children dead in the bathtub of their home (Figure 1). The bodies are stacked one on top of the other and the faces of the three young children are clearly visible. The photograph, framed in a gold frame like a family portrait, hangs on the wall just outside the bathroom of the house and thus invites the viewer to recreate the scene. This rather cruel photograph is the only image in the visitor handout available at the entrance. The repetition makes the photograph the visual highlight of the museum, demanding recognition of the event and thus the atrocities inflicted on Turkish Cypriots.

After overcoming the initial shock, research on the particulars of the photograph reveals some interesting information: this is one of a series of similar photographs and videos that were shot on the scene, days after the actual event. Apparently, the bodies were not removed immediately, so that international reporters had the chance to document and broadcast the event. Even though there are colour versions of it, the black and white photograph has been chosen for display. Most documentary style photography of the period appeared in black and white due to the fact that colour films were considered inferior to black and white ones and, therefore, many professionals avoided them. Furthermore, black and white photography was commonly used in newspapers, became synonymous with photojournalism, and thus lent it the aura of authenticity. The reason why a black and white photograph was chosen for display instead of a colour one is not known. Nevertheless, the chosen photograph seems more newspaper-like and therefore more *authentic*.

The display of dead bodies, the aura of authenticity black and white photography lends to the image, as well as the fact that the photograph is framed like a family portrait and displayed in the house of the victims, creates feelings of confusion, uneasiness and repulsion in visitors. Sant Cassia compared the images found on Greek and Turkish Cypriot propaganda material (published by their respective Public Information Offices) and suggested that Turkish Cypriots highlight the dead body more than Greek Cypriots.[6] Images of dead bodies are described by the author as wounds that "transform the body into an impossible object, and thus a barely recognizable subject".[7] This particular image of the dead woman and her children is present in almost every Turkish Cypriot museum dealing with the war as well as in the Cyprus/ Korean hall of the Istanbul Military Museum.[8] This is not

6 | Paul Sant Cassia (1999): »Piercing Transformations: Representations of Suffering in Cyprus«, in: Visual Anthropology 13(1), pp. 23–46.

7 | ibid, p.37.

8 | Yiannis Toumazis (2010): »Pride and Prejudice, Photography and Memory in Cyprus«,

Figure 1: Framed photograph of a murdered woman and her three children, Museum of Barbarism, Photo by the authors.

surprising since it offers the iconic image of suffering, a wound able to reinforce a collective Turkish Cypriot memory that justifies division as well as proves the experience in the international media.

2.2 The Human Face of Tragedy: Heroes and Martyrs

While the Museum of Barbarism and other museums we will examine in later sections are populated with images of evictions, captives, victims, executions, bodies, bombings, burned and burning sites, the following two museums choose to highlight a different kind of photography: portraits of martyrs and heroes. The Turkish Cypriot *Museum of Peace and Freedom* (opened in 2010 in its present form) and the Greek Cypriot *Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus* (opened in 2010) are war museums in a more straightforward fashion. They display military equipment; the military has been involved in the creation of the first one, while a regiment is responsible for the creation and management of the other one. The Peace and Freedom Museum also pays tribute to Turkish and Turkish Cypriot soldiers who died in

in Elena Stylianou (ed.): Proceedings of the 1st International Conference of Photography and Theory, Limassol, Cyprus.

Cyprus during the events of 1974, while the Commando Museum commemorates the fights and fighters who defended the Greek Cypriot side.

The Museum of Peace and Freedom commemorates the most controversial historical event of modern Cyprus, i.e. the arrival of the Turkish army on the island in July 1974, what Greek Cypriots call the Turkish invasion, and what Turkish authorities prefer to call the *Peace Operation*. The museum is located quite near to the actual site of the event and right next to a cemetery where soldiers/victims were buried. The museum consists of a small building, an open-air display of military vehicles (*trophies of war* as we learn from the labels), a monument and a cemetery. The main building houses an exhibition devoted to the events and the leader of the operation, Colonel Ibrahim Karaoglanoglou, and has been there since 1975/6. The museum complex though, entitled *Museum of Peace and Freedom*, both as a reference to the operation's title and to its perceived consequences, was not inaugurated until July 2010 and, according to its staff, has since become a major tourist destination, mainly for tourists from Turkey. Responsibility for the site is divided: the main building is run by the Department of Antiquities, whereas the open-air part of it and the monument is managed by the military.

The Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus is the most recent war-related museum on the island. An initiative of the Cypriot Association of Commandos, it opened its doors in 2010. It covers the period from 1964 (when the association was created) till today with special highlights on the years 1964 and 1974. According to the museum's website, its aim is the: "... collection, preservation and exhibition of Commandos' objects, the study and archiving of their history, and the promotion of their ideas throughout the centuries. According to ICOM's classification, the Commando Museum belongs to the category of historical-technological museums that examine and exhibit a particular human activity in all its manifestations".[9]

The photographic material used in both museums is quite similar since special emphasis is given to portraits of soldiers and important military and political figures. In some cases, a person is singled out because of the role he played (not a single woman is highlighted) in the war efforts or, more often, the individual photographs are grouped together to provide a mosaic of personal and collective sacrifice. For example, in the Museum of Peace and Freedom, two separate grid arrangements display the portraits of the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot soldiers respectively who died during 1974. The number of headshots in both displays seems to be similar. The separation of the photographs of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot soldiers implies that both communities fought side by side, but also that *motherland* Turkey made equal sacrifices as the local population.

Usually portraits of heroes and martyrs consist of sober black and white headshots of soldiers in uniform or photographs their families have provided, in which

9 | Free translation from Greek, Cyprus Association of Commando Reserves (n.d). Retrieved from http://www.psek.org in August 2010.

the deceased is often smiling. Theses images seem to pursue more emotional than photojournalistic purposes. According to Barthes, the power of these portraits emerges from the fact that these people were not dead when their photographs were taken. The viewer knows that they are going to die and that they are already dead.[10] Furthermore, the viewer is asked to compensate for the lack of information, to consider the soldiers' lives cut short, their mourning families, their sacrifice and their bravery. This "imagined memory"[11] can be stronger and more effective than historical memory. However, the grid arrangement can depersonalize this personal and emotional feeling. According to Williams, "Although memorial museums typically aim to put a 'human face' on tragedy, the end result can be depersonalization, insofar as the person or people depicted are often received as little more than representative sacrificial victims of historical narrative".[12] From personal tragedy, the grid arrangement transports the viewer to abstract ideas such as sacrifice, history, memory and duty.

2.3 Celebrating Military Operations

The other kind of photography displayed in both the Museum of Peace and Freedom and the Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus is photographs of military and political meetings, organized operations performed by groups of soldiers, as well as soldiers in social situations. These photographs present either a well-organized and efficient army ready for everything or how the local population welcomed the military actions.

Since the Museum of Peace and Freedom celebrates the 1974 victory of the Turkish army, the overall message is that of a victorious army who helped liberate the suffering Turkish Cypriot community. A photograph of (we assume) a Turkish Cypriot child offering a glass of water to a Turkish soldier along with two other photos showing the arrival of the Turkish army hang above a map which marks the route of the army's landing (Figure 2). This photograph of the child, a potent symbol of the future, successfully summarizes the overall message of the exhibition. Similar images are displayed in other war museums. For example, Toumazis observed that a photograph of a Turkish soldier affectionately holding a Turkish Cypriot baby hangs in the Cypriot/ Korean hall in *the Istanbul Military Museum,* while a photograph of a Greek soldier holding a Greek Cypriot baby hangs in the Cyprus hall of the *War*

10 | Roland Barthes (2009): Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography, London: Vintage Classics.

11 | Paul Williams (2007): Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities. Oxford, New York: BERG.

12 | Paul Williams (2007): Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities. Oxford, New York: BERG, p.73.

Figure 2: Arrangement at the Museum of Peace and Freedom, Photo by the authors

Museum in Athens.[13] Such images reinforce the belief that the Turkish and Greek armies respectively arrived in Cyprus in 1974 in order to protect and fight for their people and were received with gratitude and hope.

Perhaps not so surprisingly, the photographic material at the Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus tells a similar story. Portraits of soldiers and photographs of military leaders and groups are favoured over images of death, displacement and destruction. The general feeling is again that of a well-organized military group ready for everything, something that the tour guide, a commando veteran who fought in 1974, makes sure to emphasize to visitors. Even though the war in 1974 ended with Turkey occupying a large part of the island, the overall feeling in this museum is an optimistic one since, according to the museum's narrative, the fight is not over yet.

3. Contextualizing Photography: Image and Text

How images work depends largely on how they are linked with text, the context they are found in or what the audience expects to find in a museum. All images are *polysemous* since they can imply different meanings, which usually depend on the viewers'

13 | Giannis Toumazis (2010): »Pride and Prejudice, Photography and Memory in Cyprus«, in: E. Stylianou (ed.): Proceedings of the 1st International Conference of Photography and Theory. Limassol, Cyprus.

knowledge of national, cultural and aesthetic characteristics which are embedded in the image.[14] Similarly, the meaning of photographs found in war museums can depend on the nationality and political views of the viewer, as well as cultural and social factors. To avoid this *polysemy*, museums use labels and text to direct the messages emitted by the photographs. According to Barthes, "the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle dispatching, it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance".[15] We will examine how captions and the museum's context can *remote-control* meaning by favouring one interpretation over other possible ones. Let us take as an example the photographs found in two similar museums, which, nevertheless, offer very different narratives: the Greek Cypriot *Struggle Museum* in south Nicosia and the Turkish Cypriot *Museum of National Struggle* in north Nicosia.

The Struggle Museum in south Nicosia was established on 26 January 1961 by the Assembly of the Hellenic Community. The aim of the museum has been to "keep alive the memory of the struggle for liberation of the Greek Cypriots against the British, which was organized by the National Organization of the Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) from 1955 to 1959".[16] The direction was undertaken by an ex-EOKA fighter, Christodoulos Papachryssostomou, and was initially housed in a building donated by another fighter, Zinon Sozos. In 1966, the Museum was transferred to the Old Archbishopric Palace, where it remained for the next 30 years. The collection was re-arranged and the museum, as it now stands, opened to the public in April 2001. It has an active collecting policy and is simultaneously an archive of the memories regarding the liberation war.

On the other side of the Green Line of Nicosia, a different museum bearing exactly the same name describes a different version of the story. The National Struggle Museum in north Nicosia was established in 1978 and is currently housed in a building constructed in 1989 for the "purpose of immortalizing, displaying and teaching the generations ahead the conditions under which the Turkish Cypriot people struggled for their cause from 1955 till the present".[17] In this case, the museum, which was slightly rearranged a few years ago (in 2002), presents the national struggle of the Turkish Cypriot community in three stages: from 1878 to 1955, from 1955 to 1974 and from 1974 onwards. Even though the story starts with the arrival of the British on the island, the main emphasis is given to the two subsequent phases, in which Greek Cypriots emerge as the primary enemy.

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14 | Roland Barthes (1980): »Rhetoric of the Image«, in: Alan Trachtenberg (ed.): Classic Essays on Photography, New Haven, Conn.: Leete's Island Books, pp. 269–285.

15 | ibid, p. 275.

16 | Aristidis Michalopoulos (2004): The Museums of Cyprus, Athens: Erevnites.

17 | Museum Guidebook, n.d., p.4.

Figure 3: Turkish and British Vandalisms, Struggle Museum, south Nicosia, Photo by the authors.

Although both museums have changed since 2000, their main stories, and even texts, remain unchanged. Both have been created for building community identity and as part of politically master-minded nation-building. Both attempt to represent the past as a continuous historical narrative with photography as one of the main ingredients for supporting this narrative.

The role of photography is clearly acknowledged by Papachryssostomou, the first director of the Struggle Museum: "The greatest success of the Museum, which fulfils its most vital aim, is the photographic salvation of the memory of the Struggle. Many thousands of original photographs save the memory of events and people. Most important among them are those saving the memory of events, which are exhibited in separate panels (Figure 3), each of which displays in a satisfactory manner one page of the Struggle. The most important of these panels are the following: 1. Actions of women, 2. Actions of youth, 3. Shelters / safe houses, 4. Arrests, 5. Sabotages, ...8. Actions of EOKA, 9. Turkish actions, 10. Turkish vandalisms, ... 12. The massacre at Kionelli, 13. Mourning, ... 15. The Secret school, 16. Holocausts, ... 19. Military operations, 20. Funerals of heroes, 21. The end of the struggle, 22. Revision of the history of the struggle, 23. The funeral of digenes (military leader of the liberation war)".[18]

18 | Christodoulos Papachryssostomou (1977): Guide of the Museum of National Struggle, Nicosia: National Struggle Museum (in Greek), p.10.

Figure 4: A photograph found in both the Greek Cypriot Struggle Museum (north Nicosia) and the Turkish Cypriot National Struggle Museum (south Nicosia), Photo by Robert Egby, 1956

The approach is quite indicative: the pre-eminence of photographs, both as documentary sources and as instructive media is evident. They are grouped in eloquent *pages*, each of them illustrating a particular event. And, if "one photo equals a thousand words" as the saying goes, each of these pages is considered equal to a narrative much longer and detailed than that of any number of words. The headings of the panels are enough to provide the framework for understanding the photographs and direct the meaning for visitors. The rest of the story is told via the violence of what is seen. The importance of this method of display and of the photographs themselves as evidence is further demonstrated by the prominent role these boards retained in this museum in its new exhibition of 2002.

On the other hand, in the National Struggle Museum of the north, the same medium is used to present the opposite story. The use of photography is similar here, although the number of photographs exhibited is not as large and each of them has its own caption. Still, the visual information is overpowering as small and large black and white photographs are displayed on almost every wall. Only one room in the museum displays colour images. The last section of the museum includes a brightly lit area, which has been designed to make the visitor feel"... the air of freedom and peace breathed by the Turkish Cypriots"[19] since 1974. The walls display colour photographs of progress and peace such as images of universities, hotels, natural land-

19 | Museum Guidebook, n.d., p.4.

scapes, cultural attractions etc. The rest of the rooms are filled with black and white photographs of war and destruction. Colour photography is equated here with progress and a bright future while black and white photography with the painful past.

The most fascinating observation though, when examining these two museums, is the fact that they use the same type of photography (documentary/ photojournalistic) to tell their different stories. Only one image is common to both museums: it is the photograph of a busy market street, with a dead body right in the middle of it (Figure 4). The caption in the National Struggle Museum reads "Our people cruelly murdered in the streets by EOKA". Therefore, the dead body is identified as that of a Turkish Cypriot and the enemy who is responsible as Greek Cypriot fighters. The same photograph is framed differently in the Struggle Museum of the south. It is included in a panel of similar photos entitled "Executions of British Intelligence Service Officers". In this case, the dead body is identified as a British officer and, therefore, a member of the *Other*, the enemy. Those responsible are still EOKA fighters. Within the context of this museum, though, this is an act of bravery, an act of protection of our *own* against the *traitors*, a justifiable and even commendable act. The nationality of the officer is not mentioned, as being of no importance, since it was not that which determined his fate. In other words, in the first case, the same photograph is used to prove the cruelty of Greek Cypriots, and the threat EOKA posed to the Turkish Cypriot community, while in the second, it is used to indicate the bravery, efficiency and righteous fight of EOKA for the liberation of an island tired of foreign rulers. Therefore, the meaning of the photograph changes significantly, according to the changes in the context of its display.

In both cases, history is told (or written) through images, which eventually form and reinforce a collective memory. But, since the use and framing of them is selective, a particular narrative is reinforced at the expense of another, a partial story is told, choices are made and silences are ensured. Since school visits in both museums are mandatory, a perpetuation of certain beliefs is ensured; both museums thus assure that collective memory will remain alive and uncontested.

4. Photography, Memory and History

The war museums examined so far use photography as a form of memory that is taken over into the realm of history. These visual traces of place and time are displayed in institutions invested with credibility, labelled as *history museums*, and, therefore, become sources of historical *truth*. However, Nora (1996) warns that memory and history are far from being synonymous. He explains: "Memory, being a phenomenon of emotion and magic, accommodates only those facts that suit it. It thrives on vague, telescoping reminiscences, on hazy general impressions or specific symbolic details. It is vulnerable to transferences, screen memories, censoring, and projections of all kinds. History, being an intellectual, nonreligious activity, calls for analysis and critical

discourse…Memory wells up from groups that it welds together, which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs observed, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple yet specific; collective and plural yet individual. By contrast, history belongs to everyone and no one and therefore has a universal vocation."[20]

The use of photographs as discussed in the five museums resemble Nora's concept of memory, and, more specifically, of a public collective memory, more than that of history. The photographs are carefully selected to represent, express or (re-) create the memories of specific communities (Greek or Turkish Cypriot) and they function in a more symbolic and emotional manner than an intellectual and critical one. After all, "groups talk about some events of their histories more than others, glamorize some individuals more than others, and present some actions but not others as 'instructive' for the future".[21] Usually photographs are pre-selected because they have something to offer in terms of a predetermined narrative. Those that do not fit the narrative are usually omitted. Communities are interested in promoting certain collective memories because these memories can influence the present.[22] As a matter of fact, they can provide a history, which will help communities make sense of their world, provide beliefs and opinions and a basis for future decisions.[23] The following section presents the story of one photograph in particular, in order to highlight the selective power of memory.

One of the most famous photographs taken during the inter-communal conflicts in 1964 is by the British photographer Donald McCullin. The photograph shows a Turkish Cypriot woman in agony, her hands clasped to her chest, two women supporting her and a young child reaching for her (Figure 5). Even though the Cyprus conflict in the 1960s was the first major assignment for the Magnum photographer, he managed to become the first British photographer to be awarded the first prize in the annual World Press Photo contest in 1964.[24] This particular photograph received extensive international publicity, is repeatedly used by the Public Information Office

20 | Pierre Nora (1996): »General Introduction: Between Memory and History«, in: Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.): Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Part, Vol.1, Conflict and Divisions, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 1–20, p. 3.

21 | Greg Dickinson/Carole Blair/Brian L. Ott (2010): Places of Public Memory: The Rhetorics of Museums and Memorials, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.

22 | John Urry (1996): »How societies remember the past«, in: Sharon Macdonald/Gordon Fyfe (eds.): Theorizing Memory, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 45–68.

23 | Barbara Misztal (2007): »Memory Experience: The forms and functions of memory«, in: S. Watson (ed.): Museums and their Communities, London, New York: Routledge, pp. 379-396.

24 | Paul Sant Cassia (1999): »Piercing Transformations: Representations of Suffering in Cyprus«, in: Visual Anthropology 13(1), pp. 23–46.

Figure 5: Arrangement of the 1964 photograph of a Turkish Cypriot woman in agony taken by Donald McCullin, Museum of Barbarism, Nicosia, Photo by the authors.

in the north of Cyprus,[25] is instantly recognizable by most Turkish Cypriots and is displayed in both the Museum of Barbarism and the National Struggle Museum.

In the National Struggle Museum, the caption under the photograph reads "Pleas and tears from the mothers of the martyrs and the missing people of the 1963 conflict." Interestingly, the woman is not named nor is the photographer. Thus, it becomes a generic image of pain inflicted on the "mothers of the martyrs and the missing people" that characterizes a specific period. On the other hand, in the Museum of Barbarism, the caption names the woman and her lost husband, but also offers a different time frame than the one mentioned in the Struggle Museum: "The drama of Nevcihan Niyazi, the wife of Hüseyin Niyazi who was lost during (the) 1958–1960 incidents and never heard (of) again". The specificity of the caption might be due to the fact that the Museum of Barbarism is dedicated to the personal drama of a specific family and thus more personal information about the woman depicted is more appropriate. Then again, the British *Imperial War Museum North*, which also

25 | ibid.

uses the same photograph, names the photographer, while offering yet another date for the event it depicts. The accompanying caption on the museum's website reads: "A distraught woman flees the village of Gazabaran with her family after the killing of her husband, Cyprus, 1964. Photograph © Don McCullin". In this case, the photographer is named, and factual information like the name of the village and the exact date are mentioned.

The different captions reflect the different perspective of each museum and clearly display how context influences how a photograph is perceived. The National Struggle Museum offers the most general and vague description since the photograph is used among many which illustrate and support a broader perspective on historical events and their interpretation. The museum is interested in the *pain of our people* as a collective subject, and *our* suffering during a particular period. In this sense, details are not important; not when this happened or to whom in particular, but that this did happen to one of us, and therefore to all. The Museum of Barbarism adopts a more personal stance: the pain becomes something inflicted on each and every one, even the anonymous common people. So, it is through their pain that the anonymous become eponymous and the involvement of the community personal. Finally, the Imperial War Museum North takes a more factual and distanced perspective, while attributing the photograph to its author also means an appreciation of the photographer's individuality and possibly his artistic expression.

The vagueness of the dates of the photograph as presented in the three captions does not hinder the power of the image: the exact date though is not important in the first two cases, since it is not the event per se which is illustrated, but the suffering, the victimization of *us* because of the *others*. In the last case, though, the accuracy of attribution to both author and date claim a historical perspective and take distance from memory. In others words, whereas the two museums in north Cyprus use the photograph to create emotions and recall memories, the museum in Britain makes a claim to history.

This photograph, despite the fact of being well-known both in north Cyprus and internationally, is virtually unknown (or not used) in the south of Cyprus. The familiarity of a photograph and its display is a political decision. Communities choose what to remember and what to forget, and which photographs their members (and offspring) should be familiar with and which not.

Memories that might be too dangerous to activate are usually omitted. According to Misztal, "to remember everything could bring a threat to national cohesion and self-image. Forgetting is a necessary component in the construction of memory just as the writing of a historical narrative necessarily involves the elimination of certain elements".[26] The museums examined, in order to avoid the threat to national

26 | Barbara Misztal (2007): »Memory Experience: The forms and functions of memory«, in: Sheila Watson (ed.): Museums and their Communities, London, New York: Routledge, pp. 379–396, p.386.

cohesion, become collaborators in a collective remembering and forgetting by including certain photographs and excluding others.

Furthermore, photographs, as well as other objects displayed in war museums, are *read* according to the visual database one has in mind along with the context of the exhibition. After all, when confronted with images, we tend to remember what is familiar to us because it makes more sense to us.[27] If Figure 5 was presented in a Greek Cypriot museum and marked with the date *1974*, there is no doubt that it would have been identified by Greek Cypriots as Greek Cypriot refugees mourning the loss of their loved ones. If the audience expects to see the suffering and struggle of a specific community, it will unavoidably read the images in this context.

Papadakis (2006) demonstrates this point when he talks about some of the photographs he saw during his visit at the Museum of Barbarism: "Then I saw the photos of Turkish Cypriots refugees from 1963, tent after tent in long lines. They had been settled in an area of Lefkosha still called *Gochmenkoy* ('Village of Refugees'). The people were sitting outside, cold, ragged and sad, among puddles of rainwater. Children with their heads shaved were lining up with metal containers waiting for food, looking at me with black, empty, eyes in those familiar pictures. Had I seen them elsewhere, I would have thought they were Greek Cypriot refugees from 1974".[28]

For Papadakis and other Greek Cypriots, these images are indeed familiar. Not these *specific* images but this *type* of image. The Republic of Cyprus has long promoted images of refugees in order to highlight the *Cyprus Problem* locally and internationally. Similar images are embedded in the collective memory of both Turkish and Greek Cypriots, although they refer to a different conflict (1963 for the former and 1974 for the latter). Therefore, in the absence of text and context, the visual collective memory and political point of view of the viewer controls the meaning of photography.

5. Conclusions

Despite the fact that all the photographs displayed in the case study museums of this paper present a repertoire of similar events (refugees, murder, heroes/martyrs etc.) and follow a similar aesthetic (photojournalistic style or portraits), the messages communicated change according to the accompanying text, the context, the museum's central narrative and the preconceptions of the viewer. Similar images in both Greek and Turkish Cypriot museums seem to serve as reminders of the suffering and struggles of the people they represent, create symbolic boundaries between

27 | ibid.

28 | Yiannis Papadakis (2006): Echoes from the Dead Zone: Across the Cyprus Divide, London, New York: I. B. Tauris, p.84.

us and *them*, and become an efficient didactic tool for young school children who did not experience any of the events.

By examining the five case studies it became apparent that each museum focuses on different categories of photographs. One reason for this might be that they address different audiences and have different aims. The main audience of the Struggle Museum, the National Struggle Museum and the Museum of Barbarism is the local population, school children and tourists. The photojournalistic style is therefore more appropriate in order to promote an official view to tourists (they are also addressed in the labels, which appear in the respective national languages and English in all cases), and reinforce the attitudes and the opinions of future generations. The portrait style is chosen in the case of the Struggle Museum to combine commemoration with information.

On the other hand, the Museum of Peace and Freedom caters to the needs of Turkish visitors, who do not need to be convinced about Turkey's contribution. Similarly, the Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus, housed in the Association's headquarters, caters to the needs of veterans and the education of current commandos. Again, the need to convince an already convinced audience is minimal. In this case, the museums focus on commemoration and payment of tribute and thus portrait photographs and celebration scenes. According to Sant Cassia, "the image, and more specifically photography, has been used extensively in Cyprus to convince, facticize, demonise, and evoke".[29] However, this is not a uniquely Cypriot experience. Similar museum experiences can be found in other countries where history and heritage are closely connected to the dominant political system.[30] As we have seen, presenting issues from a critical historical perspective that is considered too political or sensitive appears to be *dangerous business*[31] for any museum. Especially in countries where conflict is still fresh and unresolved, museums appear to present straightforward narratives with the help of photography. In these cases, photography functions as a form of memory; a selective, emotional and vague form of memory that is vulnerable to changes in the text and context of the museum. In the catalogue of the Greek Cypriot Struggle Museum,[32] under a photograph of a British soldier

29 | Paul Sant Cassia (1999): »Piercing Transformations: Representations of Suffering in Cyprus«, in: Visual Anthropology 13(1), pp. 23–46, p.26.

30 | For Croatia see Christina Goulding/Dino Domic (2009): »Heritage, Identity and Ideological Manipulation: The Case of Croatia«, in: Annals of Tourism Research 36(1), pp. 85-102. For Cape Town see Charmaine McEachern (2007): »Mapping the Memories: Politics, place and identity in the District Six Museum, Cape Town«, in: S. Watson (ed.): Museums and their Communities, London, New York: Routledge, pp. 457–478.

31 | Dawn Casey (2007): »Museums as Agents for Social and Political Change«, in: S. Watson (ed.): Museums and their Communities, London, New York: Routledge, pp. 292–299.

32 | Gianni Demetriou (2008): The Struggle Museum: a simple wandering. Nicosia:

holding a gun amongst a group of children, instead of a descriptive caption, we read the popular saying "a photograph, a thousand words" (translation from Greek). In the case of war museums, it is worth asking "Whose thousand words?"

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Struggle Museum (in Greek).