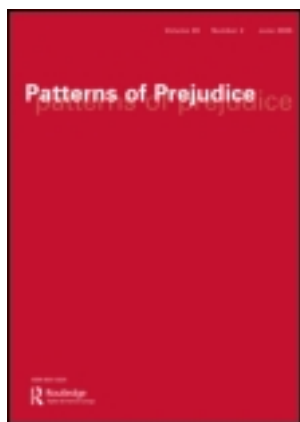


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## ‘Struck by the Turks’: reflections on Armenian refugeehood in Cyprus

OLGA DEMETRIOU

**ABSTRACT** A large part of the Armenian community in Cyprus descends from survivors of the 1915 genocide in Anatolia who initially settled in neighbourhoods of the capital Nicosia. Following the independence of the island from British colonialists in 1960, these neighbourhoods fell under Turkish-Cypriot administration. As the ethnic conflict unfolded between Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots from 1963 onwards, these Armenians became displaced from their homes for a second time, seeking refuge in the Greek-Cypriot sector. Demetriou analyses the experience of this displacement and the entanglement of the legal, political and subjective spheres that constitute it. She examines the legal and administrative measures that classified those fleeing from Turkish-Cypriot administered areas as *Tourkóplikti* (struck by the Turks), a label that reinforced the distinction between Armenians and Greek-Cypriots, the majority of whom were displaced in 1974, and were officially classified as ‘refugees’ or *prósfiyes*. By looking at the difference between *Tourkóplikti* and *prósfiyes*, Demetriou interrogates the location of the Armenian minority within the Greek-Cypriot community. She argues that the silencing of minority experiences of the conflict does not merely impoverish our understanding of it, but also perpetuates a blindness to subtle structures of discrimination. Understanding these structures can show how victimization may turn into a domination strategy (such as through the production of a hegemonic rhetoric of refugeehood). Attention to such processes, which develop through and in the aftermath of conflict, might offer a better grasp of the complex patterns of post-conflict prejudice and exclusion.

**KEYWORDS** Armenian community, Cyprus conflict, internally displaced persons (IDPs), minority subjectivity, oral history, refugees, Turkish-Armenian dispute

‘We are not refugees’, Arpik said with regret when I asked her about the government support her family received after her displacement in the 1960s. She had been describing how the family moved from their native home in the northern part of Nicosia to the southern part of the city. Their move took place after the outbreak of inter-ethnic violence between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots in late 1963, and the installation of the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in 1964 that divided the capital city into a Turkish-Cypriot northern sector and a Greek-Cypriot

southern sector. 'We have been "struck by the Turks"', she went on to explain: therefore, no, her family did not receive refugee benefits when they sought refuge in the Greek-Cypriot sector. The denial of refugeehood was not about the experience but about the terms used to describe it: hence her regret.

The term Arpik used to describe her situation in displacement, *Tourkóplikti*, is a legal category used by the state to differentiate between members of the Greek-Cypriot community who were displaced before 1974 and those who were displaced in that year (legally classified as 'refugees' or *prósfiyes*). Arpik's use of this term in the narrative about the experience of refugeehood underscores the entanglement of the legal and political spheres in the experiential and subjective constitution of 'refugeehood'. That entanglement is the focus of this paper.

The terms *Tourkóplikti* and *prósfiyes* essentially differentiate temporal displacements (1964 as opposed to 1974). In doing so, though, they foreground the significance of 1974 in the Greek-Cypriot discourse of victimhood. In the summer of that year, Turkish troops landed on the northern shores of the island and occupied the area that has since been declared under Turkish-Cypriot administration. The conflict that came before, and by most accounts precipitated this invasion, had mainly displaced Turkish-Cypriots into self-administered enclaves dotted around the island. The distinction between *Tourkóplikti* and *prósfiyes*, then, is chiefly structured by the major ethnic divide that pertains in Cyprus. In this article I want to outline some of the ways in which this temporal distinction between statuses of victimization translates into multiple ethnic differences and perpetuates processes of political marginalization that have been ongoing since Cyprus's independence. In doing so, I show how refugeehood, and victimhood more generally, cannot be taken for granted as a category of experience: it is not only that people experience 'being a refugee' differently, it is also that legal and policy structures seeking to ameliorate their suffering proceed on assumptions about what constitutes such experience and therefore about who is a 'proper' refugee. It is thus the implication of the legal in the moral, and the political in the subjective, that I investigate here.

From interviews carried out in 2011 with members of the Greek-Cypriot community who were displaced during different phases of the conflict, it has become evident to me that the timing of displacement is a salient factor in the experience of victimization and survival. It has been made apparent through many studies that this temporal factor is strongly correlated with ethnicity: the overarching structure of this correlation is one in which Turkish-Cypriots were displaced from 1963 onwards, and Greek-Cypriots were displaced in their majority in 1974. This correlation has in fact dominated studies of refugeehood in Cyprus, where the collapse of the temporal distinction into the ethnic has permeated not only the classic studies of the 1970s and 1980s

but persists to this day.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it is known that not all members of the Greek-Cypriot community who were internally displaced were driven from their homes in 1974. Yet the Greek-Cypriots who were adversely affected by the conflict prior to the watershed of 1974 have been treated differently by official discourse and practice. This differentiation is most dramatic in the case of the ‘missing’, the description of those who are believed to have perished in the conflict but whose bodies remain undiscovered and whose fates therefore remain ‘unknown’. As the ‘missing’ became an arch-symbol of Greek-Cypriot victimization in the official discourse that developed post-1974, the missing of the 1960s have been persistently discounted from the record.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of the displaced, this has important ramifications for the framing of refugee identity and the patterns of victimization and exclusion in Cyprus. It is the confluence of the two that I want to explore here. Armenian displacement in Cyprus, I will show, has dovetailed with approaches to Otherness that have refused to acknowledge an equality of loss. A serious examination of the mechanisms involved in this double process needs to take account of a series of dynamics that demand a nuanced reading of the Cyprus conflict.

Adding such nuances is not simply a trope for going ‘deeper’ and ‘adding more detail’ to the analysis of the conflict. It is a crucial factor in seeing the connections between the perpetuation of structures of domination in Cyprus and their interrelation with structures of exclusion and annihilation in the region. The Armenian genocide of 1915 can be said to have initiated a set of political and social dynamics in the Middle East and beyond.

- by creating multiple Armenian communities and amalgamations of ‘diaspora’ (a term that often carries its own assumptions and prescriptions), and
- by providing a script that, among other things, has guided the distinction between ‘friends’, ‘enemies’ and ‘allies’ on the basis of

1 See Peter Loizos, *The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981); Vamik Volkan, *Cyprus: War and Adaptation: A Psychoanalytic History of Two Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 1979); Roger Zetter, ‘Reconceptualising the myth of return: continuity and transition amongst the Greek–Cypriot refugees of 1974’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1999, 1–22; Roger Zetter, ‘The Greek-Cypriot refugees: perceptions of return under conditions of protracted exile’, *International Migration Review*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1994, 307–22; Tasoulla Hadjiyanni, *Housing, Refugee Consciousness, and the Meaning of Lost Places: The Children of Cypriot Refugees* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1999); Tasoulla Hadjiyanni, *The Making of a Refugee: Children Adopting Refugee Identity in Cyprus* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger 2002); and Rebecca Bryant, *The Past in Pieces: Belonging in the New Cyprus* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2010).

2 See Paul Sant Cassia, *Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory, and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books 2005).

which the interaction between Turkey and other countries has been shaped.

Cyprus is one example of the effects of these dynamics, but it is also more than that. It is a location where the Turkish-Armenian dispute has been exceeded by another (the Graeco-Turkish one), and where the two sets of conflicts have created alliances between victims, just as they have created a clash. Moreover, these two opposing dynamics (alliance and clash) have not been shaped on different levels of politics—say, state and lay, top and bottom—but have been configured on similar levels of legal, policy and public discourse. Cyprus therefore offers us a location from which to look at the legacy of the Armenian genocide within the complexities in which it is enmeshed.

Chief among these is the complexity of understanding ‘the Cyprus conflict’ beyond the ethnic binary ‘Greek/Turkish’.<sup>3</sup> The Armenian experience is arguably not the only stake in this complexity. Other minority groups who, alongside Armenians, have been officially counted as members of the Greek-Cypriot community post-1960, as well as—more recently—a growing population of migrants, have been experiencing specific patterns of exclusion on the island. Among such migrant groups are also Armenians who fled the Lebanese civil war between 1975 and 1990, and Armenians migrating from Armenia after 1989. The patterns of exclusion these groups experience have developed out of the view of the conflict as a binary affair between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, yet it is precisely these understandings of ‘Greek-Cypriot-ness’ and ‘Turkish-Cypriot-ness’ that attention to these experiences calls into question. If, for example, particular citizens have officially been classified as ‘Greek-Cypriots’ post-1960, yet have been excluded from the symbolic constitution of this identity, then it is to the premise on which ‘Greek-Cypriots’ have been constituted as political subjects in the postcolonial polity, and the structures of domination inherent in it, that we have to return.

In examining the Armenian experience of displacement in Cyprus, it is also difficult to overlook the flight that preceded it, and that established the Armenian community in the Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Nicosia. Thus seen as a second displacement—following the genocide that dislocated Armenians from Anatolia half a century earlier—the displacement of 1963–4 introduces the particularities of communal minority experience to this analysis of refugeehood. Note that, at that point, the genocide was an event that many in the middle-aged group of those displaced from northern Nicosia still remembered as a first-hand experience that had taken place in their childhood. The relations between Armenians and Turkish-Cypriots prior to

3 See also Costas M. Constantinou, ‘Aporias of identity: bicomunalism, hybridity and the “Cyprus problem”’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2007, 247–70; and Costas M. Constantinou, ‘On the Cypriot states of exception’, *International Political Sociology*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2008, 145–64.

the Graeco-Turkish conflict on the island have been analysed as exemplary of how linguistic affinities overrode the politics of ethnic enmity in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide.<sup>4</sup> The story of the Armenians' subsequent displacement in Cyprus bears testament to a different phase in the politics of identification. It shows how, post-1960s, displaced Armenians have had to tread a fine balance between identification with Greek-Cypriots and marginalization within that community. The experience of genocide was an important constituent of the management of this balance, but also a determinant in the way Armenians were viewed by Greek-Cypriots. What some might perceive as the 'self-marginalization of Armenians in Cyprus' (as one reviewer of this article put it) cannot be interrogated outside the parameters of the political and legal instruments of exclusion.

This brings into perspective the complexities of victimization by drawing attention to the ways in which survivors of persecution find themselves reconstituting 'community' in environments of discrimination and minoritization processes. The experience of internal displacement in Cyprus is a particularly poignant case in this regard. However, widening the focus also calls attention to post-genocide community-making elsewhere, where we might also ponder similar processes that may have developed among migrant Armenian communities.<sup>5</sup> The processes of marginalization within states that are otherwise considered 'friendly' to the Armenian cause thus emerge as more complex than political science analyses might suggest.

Together, these strands constitute the focus of my analysis here. I take my interview with Arpik as my point of departure for exploring the formation of Armenian refugee subjectivity in Cyprus, a subjectivity shaped within the contours of law, political rhetoric and minoritization.<sup>6</sup> Arpik—a pseudonym adopted for this article—may be considered 'representative' of a number of Armenians in Cyprus in that she articulates experiences common to many (location of residence, descent from 1915 survivors, membership in community associations, links to diaspora and so on). However, it is not on the basis of this 'representation' that I focus on her interview here: such 'representation' would indeed be problematic in presuming to standardize 'an' Armenian

4 See Susan P. Pattie, *Faith in History: Armenians Rebuilding Community* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press 1997); and Susan P. Pattie, 'New life in an old community: Armenians in 20th century Cyprus', in Andrekos Varnava, Nicholas Coureas and Marina Elia (eds), *The Minorities of Cyprus: Development Patterns and the Identity of the Internal-Exclusion* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009), 160–74.

5 See also Sossie Kasbarian, 'The Armenian community in Cyprus at the beginning of the 21st century: from insecurity to integration', in Varnava, Coureas and Elia (eds), *The Minorities of Cyprus*, 175–91.

6 On the politics of minoritization, see Jane K. Cowan, 'Ambiguities of an emancipatory discourse: the making of a Macedonian minority in Greece', in Jane K. Cowan, Marie-Bénédicte Dembour and Richard A. Wilson (eds), *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001), 152–76.

experience.<sup>7</sup> My interest in her narrative stems from the way in which she articulates the entanglement of the legal and the political in the subjective, which is in fact a much more universal story than an 'Armenian identity' frame might posit.

### Refugeehood as a legal category

Whereas Greek-Cypriots displaced in 1974 are officially recognized by the state as 'refugees' (*prósfiyes*), those displaced prior to this date are categorized as *Tourkóplikti*, literally meaning 'those struck by the Turks'. Post-1974 'refugees' have been the subjects of a number of legal instruments employed by the Republic of Cyprus to regulate access to rights that enable those displaced in 1974 to rebuild their lives in the southern part of the island by alleviating some of the burden of the material losses they had suffered. By comparison, the category of *Tourkóplikti* has been almost absent in legal documentation: it was a term used in the Greek-Cypriot press to refer to Greek-Cypriots affected by intercommunal conflict since 1960 but it was not transferred to the legal sphere. Moreover, prior to 1974, few provisions were made for the rehabilitation of those displaced by the conflict, and these were policy decisions that were never codified into law. Following 1974, this category has in most instances been subsumed under the laws targeting refugees. By this time, however, the majority of the pre-1974 displaced had already rebuilt their lives and were exempt from the rehousing scheme at the heart of refugee rehabilitation policies.

But it is not only *Tourkóplikti* that is a problematic legal category in Cyprus. The very category 'refugees' (*prósfiyes*) is something of a legal misnomer. This is because the people it has been applied to are in current legal convention 'internally displaced persons' (IDPs), having been displaced from homes in the northern part of the island to the southern part. Following the demarcation of the 1974 ceasefire line as the boundary between the northern part of the island administered by Turkish-Cypriot authorities and the southern part administered by Greek-Cypriots, the Republic of Cyprus has successfully argued in international forums that the 'Green Line', as it is widely known, should not be viewed as a border between states. Instead, its status awaits designation after an agreement has been reached that will formally end the conflict and determine the status of the two territories in terms of international law. Consequently, refugees in the south cannot be considered to have crossed an international border, which under international law is the legal determinant of 'refugees' as opposed to IDPs. Yet, as the war in Cyprus pre-dated the formulation of 'IDPs' as a category in international

7 For a more detailed discussion of the problems entailed in such concepts of 'representation', see Olga Demetriou, *Capricious Borders: Minority, Population, and Counter-Conduct between Greece and Turkey* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books 2013), 181–9.



law, reference to those displaced in 1974 as ‘refugees’ is found everywhere, including in the oft-cited United Nations Council Resolution 361 of 30 August 1974 that reads:

[The Security Council] Expresses its grave concern at the plight of the refugees and other persons displaced as a result of the situation in Cyprus and urges the parties concerned, in conjunction with the Secretary-General, to search for peaceful solutions to the problems of refugees and take appropriate measures to provide for their relief and welfare and to permit persons who wish to do so to return to their homes in safety.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, the legal framing of refugeehood in Cyprus is made problematic not only by the term *Tourkóplikti*, but also by the term *prósfíyes*. What is more, *prósfíyes* is a problematic term for precisely the same reason: its implied temporal reference. The difference is that the term ‘refugees’ has become problematic in the international context of redefining the ‘refugee’ label,<sup>9</sup> while the term *Tourkóplikti* appears problematic in the local context of the conflict’s development. This difference may also account for the fact that, in official discourse, ‘refugees’ have also been labelled *ektopisthéntes*, meaning ‘displaced’. And public discourse has drawn on the faulty application of the ‘refugee’ category to present 1974 ‘refugees’ as exceptionally victimized because they are ‘refugees in their own homeland’ (*prósfíyes stin ídhiá tous tin patrídha*), an otherwise contradictory designation meant to underscore the unfathomable logic of the Cyprus conflict. Yet this definition of ‘displaced’ has also been constructed to the exclusion of *Tourkóplikti*, who are not thought to fall in this category. Hence, legal instruments that apply to both categories (for example, laws that regulate benefits) do not make reference to the ‘displaced’ as an umbrella term but refer to ‘those displaced, those harmed, and those struck by the Turks’ (*ektopisthéntes, pathóntes, Tourkóplikti*) as separate categories. Moreover, these instruments are often reviewed and approved by a parliamentary committee (the Epitropí Prosfíghon-Englovizménon-Aghnoouménon-

8 United Nations Security Council Resolution 361 (1974), §4, 30 August 1974.

9 See Roger Zetter, ‘Labelling refugees: forming and transforming a bureaucratic identity’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1991, 39–62; James C. Hathaway, ‘What’s in a label?’, *European Journal of Migration and Law*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2003, 1–21; James C. Hathaway, *The Law of Refugee Status* (Toronto: Butterworths 1991); James C. Hathaway and Michelle Foster, ‘Internal protection/relocation/flight alternative as an aspect of refugee status determination’, in Erika Feller, Volger Türk and Frances Nicholson (eds), *Refugee Protection in International Law: UNHCR’s Global Consultations on International Protection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), 357–417; Marc Vincent, ‘IDPs: rights and status’, *Forced Migration Review*, no. 8, August 2000, 29–30; and Eftihia Voutira, ‘Refugees: whose term is it anyway? *Emic* and *etic* constructions of “refugees” in modern Greek’, in Joanne van Selm, Khoti Kamanga, John Morrison, Aninia Nadig, Sanja Spoljar-Vrzina and Loes van Willigen (eds), *The Refugee Convention at Fifty: A View from Forced Migration Studies* (New York: Lexington Books 2003), 65–80.

Pathónton) mandated to oversee matters relating to 'refugees, the enclaved, the missing, and those harmed', but not those 'struck by the Turks'.

Another point that needs to be taken into consideration is that the translation of the temporality of refugeehood into an ethnic differentiation within the Greek-Cypriot community is not confined to the Armenian community. The other two minority groups that were, along with the Armenians, officially rendered into 'religious groups' belonging to the 'Greek-Cypriot community', when the island became independent of British colonial rule in 1960, were also affected. These are the Maronites and Latins, who for different reasons have experienced displacement arising from the conflict in ways that have made them distinct from the Greek-Cypriot majority.

Most Maronites were displaced in 1974 from their villages clustered in the northwestern tip of the island. Yet a significant number of them were also enclaved within that area, choosing not to relocate following the establishment of Turkish control there. In these enclave areas the control of the Turkish army has been particularly strong. Since the Turkish-Cypriot administration claimed sovereignty over what it has declared as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983 (a state that remains unrecognized by the UN), the rights it has granted to the Maronites have been minimal. As a result, a number of those Maronites who stayed in the enclaves moved to the southern part of the island controlled by the government of the Republic, and became displaced there long after 1974. Indeed, this is also the case for Greek-Cypriots enclaved in the region of Karpasia. Under this regime of enclavement, Maronites have had easier access to their properties since 1974 and many have repossessed them following the opening of the checkpoints in 2003. However, because of it, they have also been viewed with suspicion among both the majority Greek-Cypriot population and the Turkish-Cypriots.

Even Latins, who otherwise appear to have been almost completely integrated into the Greek-Cypriot population, have in some instances experienced refugeehood differently. A member of the Latin community whom I interviewed spoke extensively of the opportunities she was given to visit her home on several occasions following the war; she was also allowed to recover items from it at the same time as other homes in the neighbourhood were being looted in a more or less organized manner. On these occasions she was reminded, by the Turkish-Cypriot policemen who escorted her to the house, that she was being granted this opportunity only because she was different to Greek-Cypriots: that is, because she was a Catholic.

All this points to the need to approach refugeehood in Cyprus as a condition that is far from self-evident. Instead, it is a condition of subjectivity that is thoroughly invested in the political. The legal structures that have framed this political subjectivity have been constructed out of social understandings of difference and sameness, and the insertion of 'victimhood' into that differentiated matrix of 'the Greek-Cypriot community'. The legal framing has thus worked to prop up interlinking processes whereby

displaced Cypriots from minority groups come to experience their displacement and resettlement as a corollary of the nationalist prioritization of the two main communities. It is from this perspective that I approach the story of Arpik as indicative of Armenian refugee political subjectivity.

## Experiencing displacement

Arpik, in her early sixties in 2011, was born in Nicosia and was raised in one of the neighbourhoods in the north of the town. Her parents had themselves moved to Cyprus as children, after being displaced from their native town near Kayseri in central Anatolia. Arpik's family lived in the neighbourhood—which became part of the Turkish sector after the separation of municipalities in 1958—until 1964, when intercommunal violence broke out. At that point, her parents joined other Armenian neighbours who were moving out and into the Greek sector of Nicosia.

To Arpik, the difference between 'refugees' (*prósfiyes*) and *Tourkóplikti* (those struck by the Turks) signals a qualitative separation in the minds of both the state and other Greek-Cypriots with regard to the conceptualization of her displacement experience. I had the impression by the end of the interview that Arpik claims a share of the trauma and loss of displacement that is equal to that of other Greek-Cypriots, and resents the insinuation that, because she is *Tourkóplikti* and not a *prósfighas* (a refugee), she has somehow lost less. This impression builds up throughout her narrative, as discussed below.

Arpik remembers from an early age the neighbourhood as changing in make-up.

After the genocide Armenians thought it natural to settle in Turkish areas because this was the language they spoke, they did not know Greek. In our area there were Armenians but also [Greek-]Cypriots: it had a Greek breadmaker, a flour mill, a cigarette business, big enterprises, not small shops. Then slowly, whoever sold, the Turks would buy. By 1963 there were almost no [Greek-]Cypriots. But the bakery was there.

Arpik remembers moments of happiness that would become materially impossible after they moved.

I remember that, in the house, we used to sit around the table at dinner times and talk. My grandmother would share stories from life in Turkey, my father from his job, and now I realize that this is something we did not do afterwards. We didn't have conversations because first of all we did not have space to fit. We would eat one at a time and in a hurry so that the next person could eat.

Her memories of the kitchen in the house she had left helped Arpik to recognize it when, with the help of a Turkish-Cypriot colleague, she was

allowed to visit it before the opening of the checkpoints in 2003 (which made such return visits possible for the majority of displaced).

It was winter, and raining, we knocked on the door and she [the old woman now living in the house] would not open it. Then she looked through the window, and my friend explained I wanted to see the house because I was, well, the owner. She didn't like that at all, but she opened up. She did not invite us to sit and started asking me questions to check [that I was who I claimed to be]. They had come from Paphos and they had stayed in the house before we moved. They were being put up in a neighbouring house around the time we were leaving and our neighbour thought that, since they were taking over the house after we left, we should meet. I remember she asked me whether my mother was still as pretty and whether she was a dressmaker. Only then was she convinced of my identity, and invited us to sit down. The house looked much smaller, but it was still huge. I asked to go to the kitchen and I remembered the cupboard [from my childhood] and the three steps that went down to the kitchen.

Arpik's parents had decided to leave the house as inter-ethnic violence escalated in 1963. They saw the move as a temporary one, at least in the beginning.

My parents would leave us with my grandmother in the morning and go to look for a place. They would go and come back not having found anything because my father thought it would be a month-long arrangement and then we would return, so he did not want to draw up [long-term] contracts ... We left on 6 January, Christmas Eve I remember. We brought with us clothes, our carpets, some furniture of value and such things. And we sold them all. Because financially, between the rent and the school fees, it was impossible [to make ends meet]. My mother took up sewing full-time: she used to do it for family and friends up to that point. For as long as my father could pass [the Green Line], with UN permission it was, he would go back to the house and bring stuff. Then one morning they told him he could not go any more, this would be his last visit. He then took everything out of the house, packed it neatly in the garage, which he first cleaned well, and locked it up. There is of course no garage left now, never mind a lock! But that's why, for example, I don't have anything to show from my life there, that I can say was my toy or something. I have nothing from there. Everything brought over was sold.

Up to this point, Arpik's narration differs little from the narrations of Greek-Cypriot interviewees. The details about the architecture of the house, and the mapping of the memory of those details on to the structure encountered later, parallels the descriptions I collected from Greek-Cypriots who were able to visit their former homes after the opening of the checkpoints in 2003. One differentiating factor is the opportunity of repeated visits following the displacement, and the rescue of valuables under the supervision

of the UN. This was not often the case with those displaced in the war of 1974, who generally fled their houses overnight and never returned. Yet it is striking that the care taken to 'secure' those valuables left behind, which in the event proved futile, is something that Greek-Cypriot refugees dwell on, describing how they had locked cupboards, front doors and gates behind them, how they worried about their gardens not being watered in the first weeks of displacement, or how they had spent their last moments in the house collecting whatever valuables could be collected. The gendered nuances of memory are also common to Greek-Cypriot women refugees, who recall how displacement threw into disarray the ordering of the domestic, as well as how they were forced into work to make ends meet.

The financial hardship experienced after displacement is the point at which Arpik's account begins to diverge. The financial difficulties the family faced at the beginning marked Arpik's late teenage years.

We rented some backyard shack at the beginning and it didn't fit much. We were six people in two rooms with a corridor in the middle. It was very difficult to make ends meet but my father sent us to private schools to give us the chance in life he did not get. But I understood the circumstances under which we ended up there and why we were there, so I sympathized. If he couldn't afford, he couldn't afford. I did not take it too much to heart. Then we went to a slightly bigger place, still two rooms, but with a hall instead of a corridor. Then a better place still, then other ones and so on. We also grew by that point, we were able to contribute to the family budget and it got better.

This divergence from the accounts of Greek-Cypriots grows and becomes a marker of ethnicity, when the subject of state support is discussed.

My mother received some support for the rent at some point, but I cannot remember when it began. It was 50 CYP [Cypriot pounds]. It was not immediately after, it was later ... perhaps after 1974 ... Unfortunately we are not considered *prósfiyes*. We are *Tourkóplikti*. Those from 1963 are *Tourkóplikti*, 1974 *prósfiyes*. And we did not receive any of the advantages, whereas for you [Greek-Cypriots] there are various options. Sometimes I hear Greek-Cypriot refugees talk about 1974, especially younger people, and I tell them, 'hey, I've lived this since 1963!', and they are surprised, they don't know. This is a big mistake and it's one thing I really want to emphasize: that the Armenians need to be heard, that they lost too ... Take our neighbour, Mrs Anna, from Kyrenia, for example: when we would say to her that we lost too, she used to say, 'oh, but this is something else (*állon doúdon*)!'. We did not understand at first, then we realized she didn't count our loss as much as hers. What does this mean? Property is property!

And the distinction between Arpik's experience and those of Greek-Cypriots becomes even more pronounced when Arpik ponders the displacement of

1974. With personal lives slowly having been rebuilt by the 1970s, the war of 1974 had little effect on her and her family.

By 1974 we were all married, the children growing, the family was developing. How did it affect us? It did not affect us. Because we had nothing else to lose. And this is not nice to say, but in 1974 they [Greek-Cypriots] got a taste of their own medicine. Because from the Greeks, in 1963, there was no sympathy for us. No housing: my mother was eventually, and after many years, offered a house in Latsia [a suburb on the southern outskirts of Nicosia] where she had no connections. In 1963 they used to tell us, 'you came over from the genocide and you went to live with the Turks again?' [as if to suggest that Armenians deserved what they had got]. They did not understand us ... Now they realized that they could also lose things, Kyrenia, Varosha, for example. As long as the loss was ours, there had been no help. And one thing my father said once that I thought was very, very clever: when a [Greek-]Cypriot told him, 'well, why did you go and live there?', my father replied, 'well, you went to live in Kyrenia, didn't you think that the Turks were only forty kilometres away? Why did you build apartment blocks there?' The other person shut up.

Considering the situation now, when the setting up of the Immovable Property Commission (IPC) by Turkish-Cypriot authorities in the north has made it possible for those displaced to claim compensation for their properties, Arpik returns to the ethnic differentiation that has marked her refugee experience. She is not hopeful about a settlement and has no trust in politicians. She no longer visits her former house and has slowly come to understand the financial stakes for her family.

One morning I suddenly woke up and realized that we do not actually have title deeds.... I went to the commission (IPC) and filed an application. I said to myself that my father spit blood to build this house, it is obvious that a settlement will not come: if I don't do something, our children have no interest in doing anything. They are all abroad now. If it is not me who does something, who has lived there and knows, we will lose it. And I do not want to give it away, neither to the Turks, nor to the Greeks, sorry, it's my father's sweat. They lost it once in Kayseri when they left, and it was gone. I am not going to lose it a second time, only five kilometres away. I will not allow it.

In saying this, Arpik is making reference to the dispute over the legitimacy of the IPC, which the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) refuse to recognize on the grounds that it is an institution of an 'illegal state'. On these grounds, the RoC government has been advising Greek-Cypriot refugees not to apply to the IPC, as their property rights would not be respected through such applications. Following a controversial verdict by the European Court of Human Rights that accepted the legitimacy of the IPC in 2010 as a 'domestic remedy' (in the *Demopoulos v. Turkey* case), the RoC has been highlighting the fact that the IPC does not grant reinstatement rights in most cases, and is

essentially a compensation-awarding mechanism, and, indeed, an ungenerous one at that. Arpik, like many Greek-Cypriots, is resentful of the ways in which her rights to property are being compromised by both sides in this dispute. And, like many Greek-Cypriots, she rationalizes her decision to apply to the IPC on personal grounds. At the same time, she is acutely aware of the political implications of this decision and does not shy away from framing it as a political act. Her rationalization thus draws simultaneously on a communal discourse of exclusion and on a matter of individual decision-making. This also parallels Greek-Cypriot refugee appeals to the IPC, which may be rationalized on the basis of righting the wrongs that they suffered in distribution of benefits, housing and economic wealth. The difference is that, for those Greek-Cypriots, their exclusion from the material benefits they believe they deserved through the years is staked against the non-refugee population, who have not suffered the loss of property they did. Arpik's discourse, however, verbalizes a total exclusion from a system that has quantified other people's losses (even if erroneously) but not hers.

### Minor losses?

The resentment that Arpik feels towards Greek-Cypriot attitudes to loss is part of what renders her a 'smaller' minority group member in a context in which the majority/minority dichotomy has been set up in reference to Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots respectively. This 'small' minority subjectivity differentiates her from particular structures of hegemonic victimhood that have eclipsed and delegitimized other experiences in southern Cyprus. Within that frame, the loss of lands in the north has become a symbolic feature of what I have argued elsewhere is a generalized sense of refugeehood,<sup>10</sup> whereby all Greek-Cypriots, refugees and non-refugees, are thought to have lost these lands. Yet Arpik reminds us that this affective sharing is ethnically delimited: as Mrs Anna put it, her loss, as an Armenian, is 'something else'.

The Armenian experience of refugeehood in Cyprus that Arpik describes thus deflects the priorities of state discourse that qualifies displacement as an ethnic attribute and relegates Others to non-victim (for example, Turkish-Cypriots) or lesser-victim (Armenians) status. In official discourse the category *Tourkóplikti* obviously excludes Turkish-Cypriots and their flight from the experience of displacement. In this discourse, Turkish-Cypriots are rendered aggressors and nothing else, even though scores of them were killed by Greek-Cypriots in the escalating violence of December 1963 and early 1964. History textbooks still describe these events as *Tourkoantarsía* (a Turkish mutiny), and pay scant attention to the reasons why Turkish-Cypriot

10 Olga Demetriou, 'Situating loss in the Greek-Turkish encounter in Cyprus', in Vally Lytra (ed.), *When Greeks and Turks Meet: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Relationship since 1923* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate 2014), 45–64.

parliamentarians resigned their posts and called on 'their' fellow Turkish-Cypriots to leave their homes and crowd into cramped enclaves. The pertinent point here is that this period of violence is being projected in nationalist discourse (which, crucially, is also the state's) as a period of Greek-Cypriot victimization when, in fact, the vast majority of displaced, killed and wounded were Turkish-Cypriots. Naming victims *Tourkóplikti* (struck by the Turks) makes the victimization of Turkish-Cypriots a historical 'blind spot', as it categorically excludes from the conceptualisation of 'victim' those who have most claim to the status.<sup>11</sup> And it draws Armenians into this historical blockage. Arpik's insistence on claiming her loss (affectively and financially) works explicitly against this prioritization, and it is to these politics of working within and against structures of governance and sentiment that her story speaks.

What the Cyprus case thus shows, in the frame of this collection, is that the grand ordering of Greek-Turkish antagonism, just like that of Armenian-Turkish antagonism, cannot predetermine positionings of Armenian subjectivity. The 1915 genocide may have been the originary event following which Armenian survivors rebuilt their lives in Cyprus, but it did not predetermine the nexus of personal and communal allegiances in which they operated. Instead, presuppositions about what these allegiances should look like have meant that the rebuilding of their lives has been scrutinized and attended by political priorities that have subsumed Armenian-ness into a single political positioning (siding with Greek-Cypriots). When individual (and indeed collective) lives stray from this, the moral ground of victimization recedes: their loss of home is 'different' from Greek-Cypriots' because they chose to live 'with the enemy'. The answer that Arpik's father gave to this argument shows that Armenians—like other communities—are aware of this perspective and the power dynamics it assumes, and that they resist it. This resistance, and indeed the complexities of living with other conflicts post-1915, has often tended to be de-prioritized in the literature on Turkish-Armenian relations in which the genocide is often the only point of focus. In other words, within the frame of the grand 'political game' taking place on an interstate level, versions of Armenian-ness as a minority identity may develop that compel us to think how victimization is both very complicated and also always subject to

11 This, in a sense, parallels denialist strategies that, for example and albeit in cruder form, draw on the battle of Van in 1915 to present Armenians as aggressors against Turks and deny the genocide. According to this perspective, Armenian attacks on Turks prove that a) what occurred in 1915 was inter-ethnic violence and not genocide, and b) the killing of Armenians was brought on by Armenian aggression. See, for example, Justin McCarthy, Esat Arslan, Cemalettin Taskiran and Ömer Turan, *The Armenian Rebellion at Van* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 2006), and Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press 1996). By the same token, the discourse of *Tourkoantarsía* silences aggression and discrimination against Turkish-Cypriots and implies that the suspension of their political rights that preceded 1974 was a justifiable defence of 'order' on the part of Greek-Cypriots who were faced with a 'mutiny'.



processes of closure. And it is to both of these aspects that we, as analysts, should attend.

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