

CHAPTER SEVEN

GRAND RUINS: LEDRA PALACE HOTEL AND THE RENDERING OF 'CONFLICT' AS HERITAGE IN CYPRUS

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INTRODUCTION

The correlation of 'conflict' and 'heritage' in Cyprus normally brings to mind images of looted or destroyed mosques and churches. It may also bring to mind examples of reconstruction projects where teams of Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots work together to restore historic buildings of cultural value (hamams, inns, mansions). Varied as these examples are, they converge on a notion of 'cultural heritage' that essentialises the difference between the two main ethnic communities on the island (Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot) and a rather orientalist view of 'culture' (Greek-Cypriot 'culture' as Christian, Turkish-Cypriot as Muslim). Attempts to think about the relation of 'cultural heritage' and 'the conflict' beyond these stereotypes immediately bring into view alternative possibilities. One may be sites that have been marked by the conflict, but that have nevertheless been 'neglected' in the staple discourses about conflict and reconciliation. Ledra Palace Hotel (or simply 'Ledra Palace') is such a site. In this chapter, I analyse it as a possible heritage site in an attempt to identify the mechanisms that foreclose this possibility. These mechanisms involve the difficulties associated with conceptualising 'the conflict', memorialising aspects of it, and dealing with the ruination of violence-invested sites. The neglect, contestation, and complexity associated with such 'difficult heritage' are precisely the questions being tackled here.

Ledra Palace Hotel is the quintessential building in the Cypriot UN-controlled Buffer Zone, signifying the division of the island. As a heritage site, it embodies

nothing less than the totality of notions with which the conceptualisation of ‘the Cyprus conflict’ has come to be associated, including the following:

- (i) the association of ‘the conflict’ with ethnicity (as a conflict between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots),
- (ii) its link to the island’s division (objectified in the institution of the Green Line as a Buffer Zone between two warring parties),
- (iii) the referencing of political divisions (right-left) in discourses tracing the development of the conflict and the prospects of its resolution,
- (iv) the affective structures (primarily relating to loss) that have become enmeshed in the conflict, and
- (v) the sedimentation of conflict and reconciliation imagery around a particular location (the Ledra Palace crossing point).

In short, the site of Ledra Palace Hotel has come to index all that which makes ‘the conflict’ part and parcel of Cypriot identity. Seen thus, concepts of ‘the conflict’ per se may be thought of as a kind of heritage which is notional and consequently Ledra Palace Hotel as a key site of such ‘notional heritage’. Yet although its status has been acknowledged through the official listing of the building as a ‘monument’ by local authorities in the 1990s, its location in the Buffer Zone has impeded restoration. In examining the processes through which it became a ‘ruined’ heritage site, the chapter investigates the congealing in one specific location of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction as notions and as practices.

Delving into the biography of Ledra Palace Hotel, the connections between the material and conceptual aspects of heritage-making can be shown in terms of how they influence and affect a particular place. These connections appear through the changing history of the Hotel, which emerges through archival work, oral histories, ethnographic information, and repeated site visits between 2006 and 2012. These data are complemented by longer ethnographic research on the Nicosia border, a review of references to the Hotel in popular literature (novelistic and journalistic), official documents related to the UN mandate on the premises, in-depth interviewing of the only surviving member of the Hotel’s original management team, as well as more informal interviews with people who have worked in or used the Hotel’s facilities at different moments. These data together allow a clear view of the changing meanings of the building and the processes and mechanisms behind them, as well as the power structures that have informed them over the years.

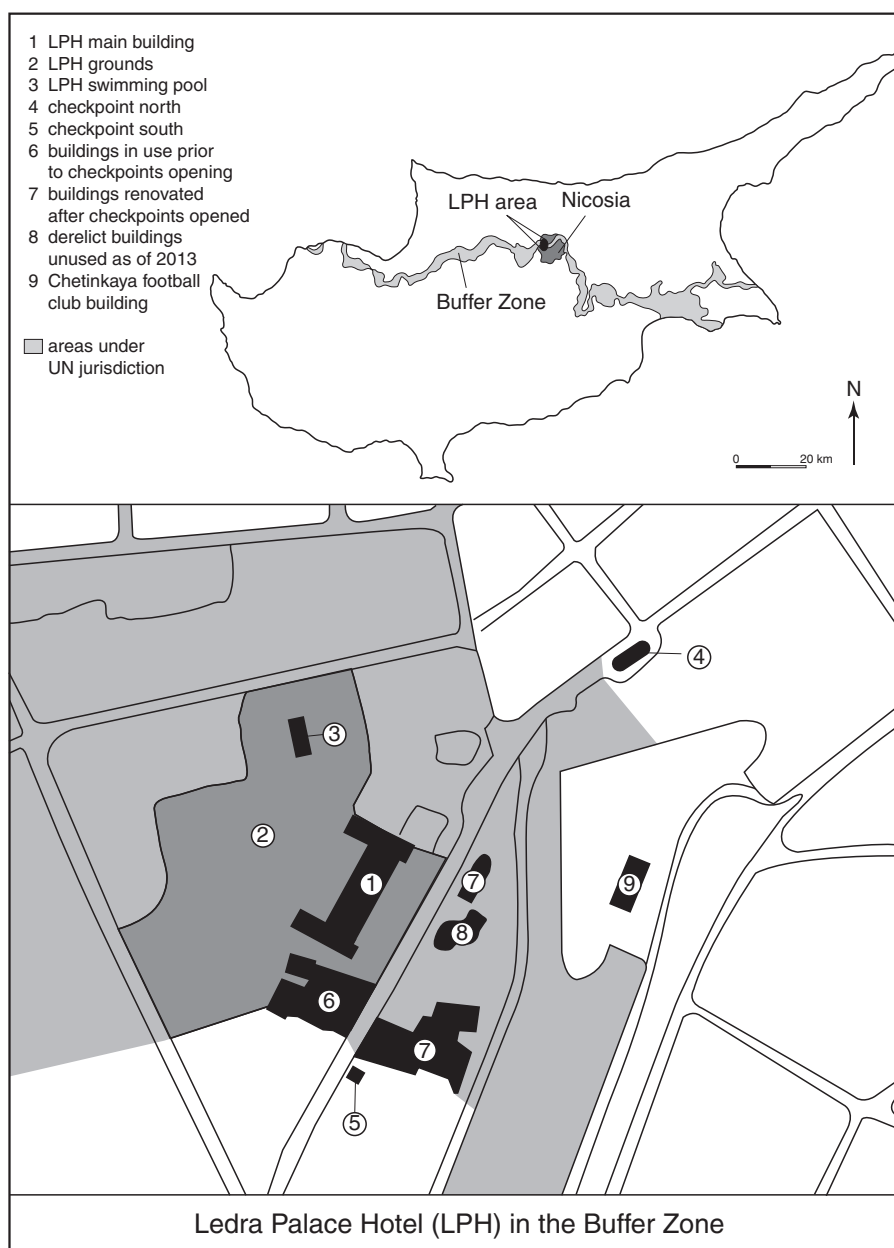
The chapter presents this in four parts, organised in historical sequence, with some overlaps. The first part explores the establishment in 1948 of Ledra Palace Hotel as an entrepreneurial innovation during colonial times (1878–1960), up to its sale in 1970 to the Cypriot Archbishopric. The second part analyses in

greater depth the Hotel's implication in the Cyprus conflict and the attempts to solve it, from the beginning of the anti-colonial struggle in 1955 to the attack by Turkish troops in 1974. Part three examines the period from 1974 to 2004, tracing the process of ruination that has overcome the site after the closure of the Hotel. The last part focuses on the period between 2004 and 2010, when a debate arose regarding the restoration of the site. While structured in historical progression, thematic foci are also followed: economic history in the case of the first part, militarisation in the second, the structuring of loss in the third, and the internationalisation of conflict in the fourth. The concluding section returns to this structuring concept of 'notional heritage', which is used to tie the materiality of the processes taking place on the physical site of Ledra Palace to the processes that have marked the different stages through which 'the conflict' has become a major constituent of Cypriot identity.

GRAND BEGINNINGS (1948–1968)

Ledra Palace Hotel is the best-known building within the United Nations' Buffer Zone in Cyprus, a 180-kilometre strip of land that separates the largely Greek-Cypriot-run southern part of the island from the largely Turkish-Cypriot-run northern part. Once a building exuding the grandeur of Middle East colonial cosmopolitanism, having accommodated Brigitte Bardot, Nana Mouskouri, Lyndon Johnson, Yuri Gagarin, and members of the Greek and British royal families, Ledra Palace is now an ornately façaded block of barracks housing a contingent of United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Originally a two-storey luxury hotel of seventy-eight rooms built in 1948, its grandeur reached palatial proportions after the end of colonial rule in the 1960s with the addition of two wings, a swimming pool in 1964, another two floors in 1968–1969, and additions shortly before its closure in 1974 that brought the room count to 240.

Throughout these changes, the building's main architectural features were maintained. One of these is the yellow sandstone, which has come to define 'colonial architecture' on the island, as it was used for all government buildings as well as most urban homes built in the first half of the twentieth century. Another are the pointed arches of the window frames. The architect, Benzion Guinsberg (or Ginsberg), a German Jew who settled in Israel after Second World War and commuted to Cyprus frequently to oversee the construction of a number of important buildings, meant for them to be reminiscent of the arches of the thirteenth-century Latin abbey of Bellapais in the Kyrenia mountains. Cypriots speaking of the Hotel often describe it as built in a 'modern oriental' style within a 'colonial architecture' frame because of the arches. Nicosians who frequented the Hotel at the time explained: 'its "oriental air" attracted the Middle Eastern



7.1. Map showing the position of Lendra Palace within the Buffer Zone.

crème-de-la-crème, but also gave a flavour of exoticism to European visitors' (the words of a Nicosian in his sixties on interview exemplifying similar comments by others belonging to the same age group).

This co-existence of modernity and orientalism is in fact what defined the politics and ideology of British colonialism in Cyprus. The island was

considered by the British colonists as at once ‘European’ and ‘backward’ (Varnava 2009), and many of their policies revolved around the paradox of civilising what should already have been civilised (Erdal Ilican 2011). The architectural design of the Hotel seems to internalise this perspective as the self-presentation of the local proprietors who commissioned (or at least approved of) the design – whether this was a whole-hearted identification with the colonists’ outlook of the locals, or whether it was used as a ruse for marketing is difficult to know. But if a combination of the two is assumed, this ‘modern oriental’ styling was an instance of Bhabhaesque ‘colonial mimicry’ (Bhabha 1994: 85–92), that is, local attempts to mimic colonial attitudes filtered through the internalisation of what colonisers consider the colonised to be – practices that carry the ‘menac[ing] double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority’ (Bhabha 1994: 88).

An ambivalent aspect of such colonial identity is also evident in the Hotel’s business structure. Its parent company, the first public company in Cyprus, was formed, as a journalist put it, as a ‘vision of Cannes on the Pedieos [the river dividing Nicosia]’ (Sheridan 2006). The idea of establishing the Hotel was credited to George Skyrianides, a Greek-Cypriot and partner in the Hotel’s parent company, who also owned the then-grand ‘Forest Park’ in the erstwhile cosmopolitan mountain resort of Platres, which remains the proud bearer of four stars, although bearing marks of decline, and is still run by the Skyrianides family (Forest Park Hotel 2008: 21). Ledra Palace Hotel shared clients with the Forest Park but was altogether in a different investment league. It required large capital that was sought both externally and internally. Demetrios Zerbinis, an Alexandrian Greek cotton-producing millionaire, was the biggest shareholder; the others included Egyptian, Greek, and Cypriot businessmen. They all bought shares in Cyprus Hotels Ltd, one of the earliest Cypriot public companies established with Ledra Palace as its goal. The colonial government also pledged £20,000 but reneged and the shortfall covered by Zerbinis. The third key partner was George Poulias, another Alexandrian Greek who migrated to Cyprus in 1922, and held amongst other posts the Nicosia vice-mayorship for twenty years between 1926 and 1958. Thus, Ledra Palace Hotel was founded, as an enterprise, on the coalescence of business interests around ethnicity (Greek ethnicity of the colonial Middle East) and the attraction of affluent colonial tourism to this imperial ‘Mediterranean outpost’.

The significance of the physical and conceptual locations (*topoi*) that marked this foundation has much to say about Cypriot subjectivity. The Cypriot businessmen who founded this pioneering public company had close connections to London and the colonial government. The failure of their bid for colonial endorsement strengthened ethnic ties bringing the Hellenism of colonial Egypt closer to the Cypriot one in an enterprise that mimicked the capitalist structures of the colonial centre. The adoption of a European

interpretation of ‘modern orientalism’ (and indeed the choice of a European-cum-Middle-Eastern architect to carry it out) follows the model on which the relationship between ‘Europe’ and the ‘Middle East’ was built. Finally, the underlying ease with which ethnic ties cemented the completion of the project points to the ‘obviousness’ of what sharing ‘common Greek roots’ meant. Thus, the Hotel’s establishment towards the end of colonial rule indicated a post-colonial Cypriot subjectivity already in formation, which looked to London as an imperial centre, to ‘Europe’ as the location of ‘the West’ and of ‘modern culture’, and to Hellenic centres variously defined (first Cairo, then Athens, from where much inspiration and clientele would be sought) as the location of material support.¹

The Hotel’s managing structure exemplified this orientation to the ‘West’, with the initial team, headed by an Italian, hired from abroad while local staff was being trained to take over. The directorship remained international throughout its operation, even if by its closure in 1974, with a Greek in the lead, Cypriot staff had risen all the way to the second-highest post. The deputy-director rose through the hierarchy by 1974 from the accountant’s position in 1950. Interviewed in 2009, he reminisced on how early in his career he was offered a training stint in Venice, a city which had a lasting impact on the Hotel.² Apart from training, Venice also provided the Murano chandeliers and inspired the naming of ‘the Venetian room’, one of the biggest meeting rooms, which remained open for civilian meetings until 2009 (in an interesting change in connotation it became known as ‘the bi-communal room’, in post-war times).

The ambivalent navigation of authority that characterised the Hotel’s colonial air included a valet who read all the guests’ telegrams he was tasked with relaying to the cable office. One former bellboy, who spent his summers at the Hotel, jokingly described how the valet acted precisely as the international correspondents expected him to do, illustrating how staff were occupying that space between legality and illegality that the ‘West’ preserves for the ‘native’ (Bhabha 1994: 100). The staff also included Stelios Sourmelis, the legendary inventor of the Brandy Sour. This was a cocktail particularly popular in the colonial period in Cyprus up until the 1980s, based on brandy and lemonade, and, as (oriental) legend has it, originally invented with the aim of camouflaging King Farouk’s alcoholic escapades at the Forest Park. In late- and post-colonial times, which coincided with Ledra Palace’s highpoint, the Brandy Sour became the culinary hallmark of Cypriot ‘modernity’ – highlighted in guidebooks and word-of-mouth internationally and consumed avidly locally. To the colonial eye of Lawrence Durrell, the Information Officer posted on the island in 1953–1956, Sourmelis’s Ledra Palace station was a ‘grim Tyrolean bar’, which in the brewing period of the EOKA³ struggle was teaming with international press in a moribund fashion – ‘circling over our [the British Administration’s] corpses like vultures’ (Durrell 1957: 163).

By the 1970s, and with the Brandy Sour firmly established as Cypriot 'liquid heritage', platformed and bell-trousered Nicosia youths sipped cocktails and flirted on the Hotel's patio, 'the Jasmine Garden', on Saturday evening outings. As Argyrou describes, the Hotel was also a key feature in the subsequent life cycle of Nicosian Greek-Cypriot society, and it was the main space for 'modern' weddings in the 1960s and 1970s. These rituals marked the emergence of a post-colonial modernity that emulated 'the West' (Argyrou 1996).

The clientele that both Argyrou and my informants were speaking about was decidedly Greek-Cypriot, and by this time (especially post-independence) the Hotel's grandeur emanated from mainly Greek celebrity guests, indicating a shift in the colonial orientation of Greek-Cypriot society following independence.⁴ Alikì Vougiouklaki, in one of whose films the Hotel featured, and George Dalaras, who in his later career held concerts in aid of the Greek-Cypriot military, were both remembered as important guests at the Hotel in its heyday (1950s through 1970s).

This orientation towards the ethnic centre (Athens) was obvious by the end of the 1960s. With the Egyptian shareholders pulling out in 1968 and agreeing to a hand-over to the British Forte group, the ethnic basis of the enterprise's existence came under question.⁵ According to the former accountant, whom I will call Mr Georgiou, 'The media made a fuss when they got wind of the deal with Forte, anti-British feelings flared, and reports claimed that control of the Hotel would be lost, possibly even turning to Turkish hands; the Church felt they had to step in and the contract with Forte was never signed'. After ensuring the annulment of the agreement with the Forte group, ownership of Ledra Palace passed over to the Greek-Cypriot Archbishopric by 1970, at that point headed by the President of the Republic Archbishop Makarios. Ledra Palace Hotel thus became a thoroughly Greek-Cypriot establishment. This was not only through ownership (the Orthodox Church being a majority shareholder), and location (in the divided capital's Greek sector since 1958), but also by comparison to the two other grand hotels of the capital: the Hilton, which 'represented American interests', as Greek-Cypriot informants recalled, and the Saray Hotel, built in the Turkish sector 'because the Turks wanted to have a hotel of their own as well', as Mr Georgiou reasoned. 'It wasn't just the Hotel', he added. 'The shareholders were the people who led the business class and as a first example of a public company it set trends for the later development of the whole business sector'.

The economic history of the hotel, therefore, attests to a process whereby a seemingly apolitical site of opulence became an ethnic marker, the grand hotel that 'belonged' in a taken-for-granted manner to the Greek-Cypriots so that when ownership came under question, capitalist concerns gave way to 'public interest', which was understood as 'ethno-national interest'.⁶ Whereas the 'public' company that built the Hotel was a collection of interested private

individuals for whom personal gain prefigured communal benefit, the biography of what eventually became Ledra Palace Plc, following the Archbishopric's purchase of the Hotel, profiles the emergence of a Greek-Cypriot business and political leadership class from colonial entrepreneurial networks and its development into an ethnic interest group. It attests to a process whereby an ethnically rooted cosmopolitanism (that looked to the global centres for inspiration and clientele) turned belligerent, exposing the underbelly of colonial cosmopolitanism (in the atmosphere that Ledra Palace's corridors exuded) where ethnic aggression found expression in the field of business – and was ultimately subsumed by the religious establishment rather than the state (which Archbishop Makarios at the time also headed).

The vision of 'Cannes on the Pedieos' that had guided the project was linked to an almost intuitive understanding that the cosmopolitanism of the French original could be cultivated in Nicosia by a mono-ethnic class of investors. When this intuitive understanding came under question its exclusionary bases became obvious (what if it ends up in Turkish hands via Forte?) in the climate of the violent ethnic antagonism that had by then developed. The buying of the ownership by the Church attested to the ethnic precepts that had guided the project from the beginning – only now the political context of inter-ethnic violence in which decisions were taken was openly acknowledged. This process of ethnicisation was accompanied by overt militarisation that defined the next period of the Hotel's history, which partly overlapped with the previous.

'THE CONFLICT' AS NOTIONAL HERITAGE AND LEDRA PALACE'S MILITARISATION (1955–1974)

Since opening in 1949, the Hotel had accommodated the Nicosian upper class and dignitaries and celebrities visiting the island. It had also housed reporters and correspondents covering events that punctuated the history of the conflict, local leaders and diplomats holding negotiation meetings, civil society representatives and members of the public attending bi-communal functions, and UN military personnel. With time, these groups of visitors have drifted through its hallways, coming in waves that due to historical accidents, mundane and extraordinary, momentarily caught up with each other. Like its clientele, the building appeared at first to eschew the conflict until its fate came to be determined by turn of events. Initially a marker of opulence (albeit an ethnic one) the building became the chief site for political meetings in the search for peace. This process has increasingly made it evident that whereas Ledra Palace Hotel is a site associated with political negotiations for working out a common ground between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, it has also in itself become a symbol of 'the conflict'.

This section examines the moment at which these signifiers of ‘peace’ and ‘conflict’ became intertwined with the Hotel’s history, beginning a few years after its opening, with the start of the anti-colonial Greek-Cypriot struggle for union with Greece in 1955 and ending with its closure following the war of 1974. Tracing this process shows that incidents and discourses of violence have to a large extent been ‘purged’ from the memorialisation of the Hotel. Yet traces of this violence still remain, helping the analytic re-positioning of ‘conflict’ within ‘peace’ at this specific site, and, in a metaphorical way, beyond it as well.

The former deputy-director’s account, in which inter-communal violence is not remembered as significant at all, is an indicative example. Looking at one of the photographs of men working to erect a wall to divide the two ethnic sectors of Nicosia in 1964, after the breakout of inter-ethnic violence and the arrival of the UN in the form of UNFICYP, Mr Georgiou was puzzled that he could not recollect the structure:

[T]his is indeed 1964, the Hotel has only two floors, and look, these [men putting up the sandbags] are *átakti* [‘unruly’, paramilitaries], they are not in uniform – [in disapproval] in fact this one is wearing a shirt as if he is about to go to the office! But I do not remember this ... the checkpoint was marked by barrels but they were placed on the other side of the Hotel’s entrance, further down the road. [After a moment’s pause] – Perhaps they [the sandbags] were indeed put there for a time and then removed.

In Mr Georgiou’s narrative, the Hotel functioned until the day Turkish troops landed on the island. There was information that Greek-Cypriot gunmen were stationed in the Hotel, and the UN received warning that the Hotel was to be attacked. They carried out a check followed by a visit of the Turkish ambassador to ensure the security threat was over, and they returned the next day to evacuate the guests. They have remained there ever since. In this narrative, decline has a definite starting point in 1974 and is an almost instantaneous occurrence. This narrative conforms to Greek-Cypriot official rhetoric on the conflict, which presents a view of life on the island as peaceful and serene up to the point of rupture in 1974, when Turkey invaded this serenity. Such views of peaceful co-existence tend to diminish the significance of inter-ethnic violence before 1974 under the definition *i Tourkoandarsía* (the Turkish mutiny) used to refer to the ‘unprovoked’ breakdown of the state mechanism that attended this violence. A number of researchers have critically analysed the formation of this discourse, arguing for the need to address the legacy of the silencing of this violence on the part of the state (Papadakis 1998; Philippou 2009; Constantinou 2008; Hadjipavlou 2007). The extent to which this discourse of serenity has been internalised by large parts of the Greek-Cypriot



7.2. Collage showing different phases of Ledra Palace. Clockwise from top left: 2010, 1963, 1974, 1970s. (Clockwise from top left, permissions have been granted by the author, the Politis Archive/Avdelopoulos, the Henry Dempster/Hulton Archive/Getty Images/Ideal Image, and CardCow.com.)

community is evident in this account. For many people of Mr Georgiou's generation this internalisation is reflected in the more frequently used term *fasaríes*, which most appropriately translates into 'troubles', bearing a telling resemblance to the term used in Northern Ireland to belittle the significance of the violence (Aretxaga 1997).

The discourse of serenity is widely resented by Turkish-Cypriots, who often draw attention to the hardship endured by their community between 1963 and 1974, when the majority of the population lived in enclaves. Popular Turkish-Cypriot narratives describe Ledra Palace Hotel as a battleground during this period. According to them, the Hotel provided the roof from which Greek-Cypriot paramilitaries exchanged fire with Turkish-Cypriot ones stationed on the opposite roof of the Turkish-Cypriot football club Chetinkaya in 1963–1964. The Hotel's roof has accommodated a UN guard post since 1964, when UNFICYP top officials were also installed in three of the Hotel's rooms as permanent guests on UNFICYP's budget. It also hosted Greek-Cypriot gunmen who opened fire against Turkish forces in 1974. Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash, who was arrested by Greek-Cypriot police in 1967 for gun smuggling, gave a macro-historical account of events leading to the violence of the 1960s in his testimony, making particular mention of the Hotel's top floor as the first location controlled by Greek-Cypriot forces on the night of 23 December 1963, when the gunning down of five Turkish-Cypriots by police marked the start of widespread violence (Tahsin 1999: 238). These conflicting recollections of the use of Ledra Palace thus reflect official discourses of 'peaceful coexistence' before 1974 (Greek-Cypriot) versus continuous Greek-Cypriot aggression necessitating Turkey's 'intervention' (Turkish-Cypriot). Current research on the history of the area suggests that the road on which the Hotel is located was the site of at least two ethnically motivated murders, one disappearance, a rape, and a suspected suicide, all incidents effaced from the narrative of serenity.⁷

During a tour of the Hotel with UN personnel in late 2009, the bullet holes left on the façade by such fighting were pointed out, yet their date was unknown. 'The marks point to a east-west direction, which means they came from over there', a Greek-Cypriot worker with the UN contingent explained, pointing to the general direction of the Turkish-Cypriot-controlled area. 'The Turks always wanted to take control of this place and this is partly why it was left to the UN – to keep it from becoming a political stake in the negotiations'. His narrative, punctured by the experience of the Hotel as a military space, contrasts with the serenity of accounts of earlier epochs.

This construction of serenity was by no means uncomplicated. Even the Hotel's management used the site's implication in the conflict for

branding purposes. A 1970 guest guide presented the Hotel's political legacy as a unique cultural feature:

In 1956, when the Eoka campaign was in full swing, talks were initiated at the Ledra Palace between Ethnarch Makarios and the Governor. . . . In December 1963 and in subsequent months, Ledra Palace was the Home of dozens of newspapers Corresponders, from all over the world who sent out reports on the unfortunate intercommunal troubles between Greeks and Turks. In 1968, intercommunal talks . . . were opened at the Ledra Palace. (Ledra Palace Hotel 1970 [errors in original])

A clearer tracing of this process of enmeshment in the conflict can be accessed through a series of reports in *Time Magazine* from 1955 to 1974. Authored by correspondents who lodged at the Hotel at different times and who reported on key events that marked the various stages of the political conflict, these reports provide valuable insights into the Hotel's location in the conflict. In these reports, Ledra Palace Hotel appears both as a physical site of conflict and negotiation and as a space within which 'the conflict' became an aspect of enculturation into Cypriot life for the transient communities of newsmen and women who found a temporary home there. A 1955 report reads:

Governor Harding telephoned Archbishop Myriarthefs [sic] Makarios, leader of the Greek Cypriot drive of enosis (union) with Greece, and arranged to meet him next day on the 'neutral ground' of Nicosia's Ledra Palace hotel. . . . [The Hotel] set aside its cardroom for the meeting. (*Time Magazine* 17 October 1955)

In the wake of failure to reach a compromise at this meeting, violence left six British officers injured and one Greek-Cypriot policeman dead. So six years after its official opening, Ledra Palace was already well established as 'neutral ground' for manly attempts (noting the gendered aspect that the political quest for settlement acquired) and failures to find political solutions for peace.⁸ This 'neutrality' was oxymoronic because in its very pronouncement it rendered the space of Ledra Palace as one of adversarial encounters. A slow process of militarisation, whereby the Hotel was becoming a luxury-clad battleground for negotiating bloodier battles on the ground, had begun. This militarisation was largely hidden, however, as the Hotel would continue to be considered a 'space apart' from the militarisation that gripped Cypriot society well into the 1960s:

At Nicosia's Ledra Palace Hotel, a new swimming pool was dedicated with a cocktail party. Not far away, a new Hilton was abuilding. Yet everyone knew that each evening, when the sun fell behind the Troodos Mountains, the smuggling of men and arms into the island resumed, making peace an ugly deception. (*Time Magazine* 1964a)

This ‘deception’ soon encompassed Ledra Palace as UN barbed wire, sandbags, and barrel walls were erected on either side. Registered as a ‘checkpoint’ location in what was fast becoming a ‘war-zone’, and thriving on press clientele, its ‘neutrality’ took on a decidedly military overtone, the comfort of opulence beginning to seem disconcerting:

Zooming about the island in rented M.G.s andSprites, correspondents covering the Cyprus fighting see something hidden from most war correspondents: both sides. Even the corps headquarters – the comfortable Ledra Palace Hotel – is located directly on the often violated Green Line dividing Greek and Turkish factions. (*Time Magazine* 1964b)

I was told by current workers at the Hotel that in this period (1963–1974) the basement was used by the Greek-Cypriot national guard to stock ammunitions, a point that further underscores the deception of serenity in the opulence exuded by the above-ground structure. The coincidence of militarisation and ‘neutrality’ reached its apogee in July 1974, with the launch of a Turkish offensive to save Turkish-Cypriots from the hands of Greek-Cypriot *enosists* who, having executed a coup d’état earlier that month, took control of the government. On the morning when Turkish parachutists formed the first attack,

most of the hotel guests ... were awakened ... by a long burst of weapons fire and found themselves in the middle of the fighting as a squad or so of Greek Cypriots ... uncertain about their role ... moved frequently from the front of the huge hotel to the back amid much shouting of orders and replies. ... Early in the day, Greek Cypriot soldiers carried a .50-cal. machine gun up to the roof ... they soon drew counterfire. A heavy shell, possibly bazooka, hit the northeast corner of the building, killing one Greek Cypriot soldier and fatally wounding a second. ... Later, when the Greeks removed their guns from the hotel and withdrew into the patio, they were loudly cheered by the much relieved newsmen and guests. (*Time Magazine* 1974b)

At this moment, when the tourists, soldiers, and reporters shuffled past each other, the meeting of three unlikely social groups epitomised Ledra Palace’s ‘extraordinariness’ and came to mark the afterlife of a hotel that has never resumed its hospitality function:

The Ledra Palace in Nicosia, acknowledged queen of Cypriot hotels, is a shell-pocked shambles. A construction program under which 35 additional hotels were to be built throughout the island has been suspended indefinitely ... as a UN official in Nicosia observed: ‘Cyprus will be economically marked for a generation, and psychologically scarred for two generations.’ (*Time Magazine* 1974a)

Nearly four decades on, the bullet holes sustained that day still mark the building’s front wall. In addition the wall added in front of the glass windows

of ‘the Venetian room’ (marking the formalisation of its name as ‘the negotiation room’) to protect the leaders from sniper fire was never torn down. With UNFICYP troops becoming the hotel’s permanent guests, Ledra Palace came to symbolise ‘the conflict’ that was inherited by future generations. ‘Ledra Palace’ became a synonym of the ‘Green Line’ and ‘division’, and future generations have come to know it less as a hotel and more as the meeting point of nationalist demonstrators and of post-nationalist peace activists.

The examination of this location as a heritage site, therefore, has much to say about the notional heritage that Cypriots at large growing up within ‘the conflict’ have inherited as part of their very identification. The protracted nature of the conflict in Cyprus, which has entailed a series of failed negotiations for the last five decades, spurts of violence, and an uninterrupted prevalence of nationalist rhetoric, has resulted in ‘the conflict’ becoming an important constituent of Cypriot subjectivity. ‘The conflict’ *per se* thus needs to be seen as part and parcel of Cypriot ‘cultural heritage’. It is this legacy that renders the Hotel a site marking ‘the conflict’ as Cypriot notional heritage.

Paradoxically, in the process of being militarised, Ledra Palace Hotel, as an emblematic site of the Cypriot Buffer Zone, was rendered ‘peaceful’. At the same time, the making of ‘peace’ became part and parcel of the development of the conflict. Thus, a structure was set up whereby militarisation and pacification sustained each other. As the central site for negotiating the conflict, Ledra Palace Hotel is thus a marker of the boundary between conflict and peace as negotiated in time, space, and conceptually. This is a site in which materiality serves to underscore the intangibility of ‘notional heritage’. Indeed, it may be asked whether protracted conflicts beyond Cyprus might similarly be thought of as markers of notional heritage. Work on the cultural dynamics of political subjectivity in Israel-Palestine (Jean-Klein 2000), Northern Ireland (Aretxaga 1997), and South Africa (Scheper-Hughes 2007), to name but a few, point in this direction. But examples of material structures that embody the ambivalence of such notional heritage (at once celebrated, revered, branded, and mourned, while also neglected) are yet to be fully analysed. This ambivalence of at once cultivated and neglected ruination inhering in Ledra Palace’s materiality is the subject of the next section.

CHANGING MEANINGS: CULTIVATING RUINATION (1974–2004)

Until 2009, an overgrown agave plant graced a white plaster structure in the building’s entrance yard, which was originally a water fountain, added on the initiative of a manager from Monaco. With its dry flower stem towering at nearly three metres, its rare bloom having flowered a long time ago, the

stem served as a measure of the time elapsed since the water in the abandoned fountain dried up (agave plants in Cyprus can take up to a decade to blossom).

Generally considered wild cacti in Cyprus, these ‘century plants’ (as they are commonly known in English) are normally associated with wilderness. The encroachment of nature on urban settings that they denote is associated with ruination, degradation, and dereliction: they grow in abandoned gardens, unvisited cemeteries, and unkempt roundabouts. Their presence is negative, marking only the absence of the more valuable and care-intensive alternatives that could bloom in their place. As an entrance marker, Ledra Palace’s century plant marked the absence of what once was. The contrast is seen in a John Hinde postcard of the hotel from the 1960s showing an ornate walkway between plush flowerbeds of green grass, roses, oleander, and young palm trees, already tall but now overshadowed by the even taller overgrown fence of cypresses. (Figure 7.2).

The presence and absence of specific flora serves to calculate Ledra Palace’s ‘losses’. Roses and oleanders were ephemeral plants, Mr Georgiou said, when I enquired about the image presented on the postcard; they came and went without marking the Hotel’s character in any lasting sense. By contrast, what Mr Georgiou lamented most about the floral losses of the Hotel was the jasmine garden, where celebrity musicians used to perform – ‘nothing left now, they’ve all dried up’. The patio, along with the back garden of the Hotel, is actually today one of the least-degraded areas. It is maintained as an open-air bar and



7.3. Collage of photos from Ledra Palace’s interior. (Photos author.)

cafeteria, the tennis courts and swimming pool around it are still used, and the palm trees lining the walkway in front are well maintained. Mr Georgiou explained that the palm trees were brought over fully grown from a coastal village, by the Monegasque director, who arranged the innovative transplant following a practice from the Côte d'Azur. Asked about their current upkeep by the UN, he reasoned that 'palm trees are easy, they'd survive anyway'. The Hotel's current occupants, he seemed to suggest, were maintaining the flora in the least care-intensive way, allowing what would 'survive anyway' to do so, the rest condemned to ruination.

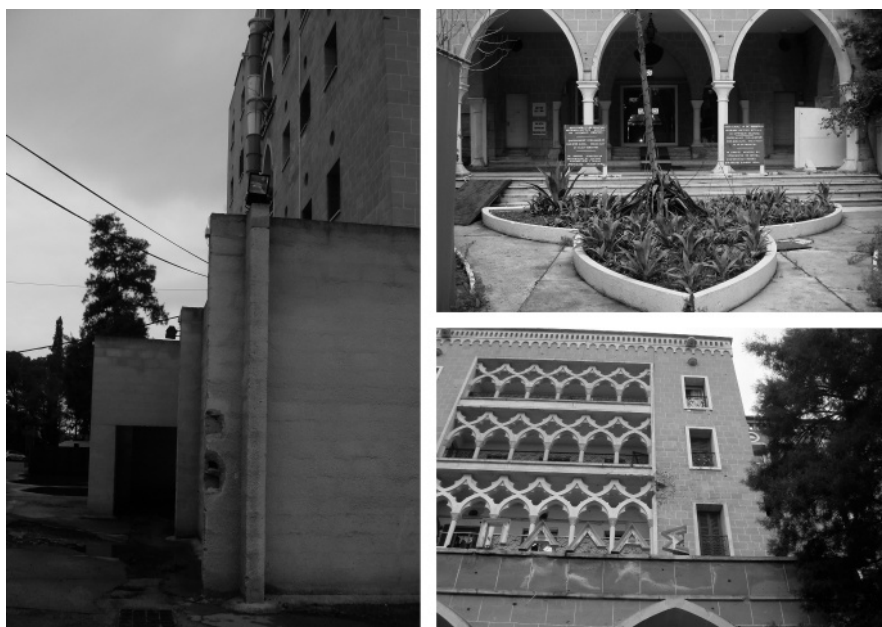
A veiled argument of blame seemed to be proposed by implication, the force of which unfolded slowly, and extended to the politics of restoration examined in the following section. During a visit to the Hotel, a newly arrived military officer claimed that no gardening took place on the grounds. Asked specifically about the obvious pruning of the palm trees, he reasoned it must be maintenance offered by headquarters, which he was yet to witness himself. His comments appeared to subscribe to the same notion of ruination as the 'natural' condition prevailing around the building, a condition of neglect. Care, even where present, seemed in both accounts to have been completely effaced, and ruination was normalised.

In this context of total ruination, Mr Georgiou's comments point to an evaluation of loss, where flora indicates the tension between permanence and transience. The affective effort that goes into making jasmine, but not oleanders, permanent, marks the difference between loss that is lamented and loss that is discounted. Affective effort also made 'the jasmine garden' the Hotel's jewel and underpins the evaluation of its loss as significant. In distinction to the oleanders that help frame one of the most well-known images of the Hotel in its glory days, the jasmine signifies a sense of community taking form in the 'backyard' rather than the public 'front' of the building. The names of famous Greek singers who sang in the jasmine garden were remembered with affection by Mr Georgiou, as members of a community of stardom that signified Ledra Palace's grandeur. Signed photographs and press clippings now kept in an album testify to both the construction of that community and the lamentation of its loss. They also indicate that the frame in which this social history is reconstructed through memory and forgetting (Connerton 1989) is also one of affect.

There is an exteriority to the subjective experience being communicated here that Navaro-Yashin (2012) argues needs to be anthropologically analysed beyond the subjectivity paradigm. I would argue for an interpretation of subjectivity that already includes more than the 'psychic' interior of the self, and I suggest this point is pertinent in drawing attention to the integration of the landscape (flora, artefacts, autographs) in explaining the workings of loss. I therefore propose that such objects are not simply 'used' to anchor memories, but are rather an integral part of the evaluation that gives subjective experience

its social meaning. The register of this evaluation is sentiment, in this case loss. Another instance of this is the interpretation of what the survival of palm trees at different points of the Hotel's history means. Thus, the fragility of palm trees in the transplantation stage and their durability in the abandonment stage serves to value the ingenuity of getting them there as 'care' and de-value their upkeep as lack of it. There is ultimately an implied evaluation here, shared by the vast majority of pre-1974 visitors of that period's flora as 'cultivated' which stands in stark opposition to the post-1974 'abandonment'.

This also holds for visitors today, as flora is one of the least-noticed features of Ledra Palace. Yet, it seems to frame in an imperceptible way the evaluation scheme that relates Ledra Palace to 'loss'. To many of the Cypriot users of its reconciliation-meeting facilities, Ledra Palace is an 'ugly' place. It is old, unkempt, tired, dirty, and boring. These features are attributed to its interior – curtains, walls, furniture. But they also inhere in the plant life, met before one even enters the building, but which none of the many participants to conflict-resolution events I have spoken to remembered noticing. This 'forgetting' is indicative of a certain way of historicising subjectivity. For as one bypasses plant life on entry to Ledra Palace Hotel, one also bypasses the paradoxical landscape of ruination – the plants that are still tended, the tennis courts still used, the agave that has been allowed to grow. It is not only that they are bypassed – in bypassing them, one forgets that they are even there (this was confirmed by many people questioned on the matter, who could not recall



7.4. Collage of photos from Ledra Palace's exterior. (Photos author.)

particular plants in the garden, but instead articulated a sense of abandonment, wilderness, lack of care). In constructing, much as in forgetting, such aspects of loss, we are reminded that ‘ruination’ is not simply a natural process – it is a cultural and political one and as such needs to be analysed beyond its overt indicators.

Another aspect of the cultivation of loss is seen in the recollection of particular artefacts from the Hotel’s interior. Like the participants in bi-communal events who located ‘ruination’ in the interior of the building (e.g., curtains and furniture), Mr Georgiou also nurtured the sense of ‘loss’ through recalling the high-culture artefacts from inside the building. ‘The ball room had two panels designed by [Menis] Agelopoulos [a leading figure in the Alexandrian Greek art community] ... and a lowered wooden dance floor ... a lot of work went into that room’, he said, pointing to old photos of intricate designs on the pillars.

The bar had cypress wood panelling around pillars sculpted by Paul Georgiou, a noted Greek-Cypriot artist. The pillars have since been painted black, Mr Georgiou noted with considerable bitterness (during my visit in early 2010, this treatment seemed to have been reversed, if indeed it took place).

Exhibitions were frequently held in ‘the Rotary room’ by acclaimed Greek-Cypriot artists throughout the 1950s to 1970s. Ledra Palace Hotel was the first to hold such functions, and the Hotel’s management considered them to be services to the community’s cultural life. ‘Kashalos (a leading figure in modern Cypriot painting) would consult me as his catalogues were being printed about the pricing of the paintings’, my interlocutor reminisced with a smile. Now known as ‘the Officers’ Club’, the room maintains a sense of elitism although the high standard of cultural refinement that the hosted exhibitions provided seems lost. Even if other hotels now hold exhibitions, perhaps even of works by the same artists, the sheer fact that these ‘fathers of modern Cypriot art’ are no longer alive renders the earlier exhibitions, which Ledra Palace pioneered in Cyprus, and in which they were physically present, irrecoverably lost.

In this process of evaluating loss, Ledra Palace Hotel becomes part of the refashioning of the present into the past as ‘heritage’. The acclaim that the painters hosted then have since received effected a shift from ‘culture’ to ‘heritage’, a shift further enabled by the readings of ‘loss’ to interpret what took place in the temporal gap between that past and the present of its recall. As the works surviving their creators become heritage to be exhibited in collections around the world, their first public home claims the spatial authenticity of that heritage, which is itself now lost. In becoming heritage, loss is cultivated, evaluated, and negotiated. The valuation–devaluation processes involved here oscillate between different ways of accepting loss – what Freud identified as mourning and melancholia (Freud 1917). Thus, even though the losses of

particular items are mourned within a frame of normality, other losses are not. They are instead subsumed under a collective sense of loss of the Hotel and the ‘abnormal’ conditions under which it occurred. They are consequently subjected to a different affective condition, akin to what Freud describes as melancholia.

Inherent in this oscillation between mourning and melancholia is a specific set of power dynamics in response to the erasure of the Hotel’s identity by its non-civilian occupants. These are poignantly shown in the lamentation over the loss of artistic items uniquely related to the Hotel: its logo presentations. The griffin symbol, a part-lion part-eagle creature, in the Hotel’s coat of arms has been found in excavations and has since symbolised Nicosia’s archaeological heritage by evidencing the establishment of Ledra (Nicosia’s older name) as the area’s first city kingdom at the beginning of the first millennium BC. The logo was etched into the glass of the Hotel’s wooden-framed doors, shipped from Italy. It was also shaped into a floor mosaic that graced the entrance floor just outside these doors. The mosaic is still visible, but largely unnoticed, while the doors were taken out after the Hotel’s closure and transported to a building across the road owned by the same company, along with other movables, to be protected there until the conflict stabilised. Instead, the building was burnt down in the course of the violence, and the valuables were lost forever.

Other items become the subject of a more personal kind of mourning for Mr Georgiou that hinges on the personal knowledge of the value of what was lost:

[O]ne thing I tried to recover was my old accounting machine; you know, when they first came out they were huge things, you put cards in them and then you punched. It would have made a good museum exhibit, but I never managed to find out what happened to it, it just wasn’t there when I looked for it.

Having visited the Hotel on several occasions after its closure to check on the building’s upkeep, Mr Georgiou has also witnessed other losses since 1974. The lift, he said, was stolen at some point, explaining with regret that this could also have made a museum piece, as it had metal folding doors. Mr Georgiou considers himself fortunate to have played a part in the recovery of much of Ledra Palace’s equipment. In 1982 Ledra Hotel was set up in the south of the island as a revival of the business venture that had been lost by a business group consisting of some of the people who had held stocks in Ledra Palace Plc. In the preparation phase, a team was able to recover many of the items that the UN catalogued and stored away when they moved into Ledra Palace. Mr Georgiou had kept regular checks on this inventory in the first few years after 1974, on special visits to Ledra Palace facilitated by the UN. In 1982 cutlery, dishes, chairs, and mattresses were moved to Ledra Hotel in

UNFICYP vehicles under special security measures. The chandeliers were taken down and dismantled, to be reassembled in the new hotel.

Although this operation normalised mourning by providing a sense of closure, the possibility of further recovery still persists: 'who knows what still lies forgotten in some basement?' Mr Georgiou concluded in his account of the losses. 'So many things were packed haphazardly, there was no time to take things down properly'. During my visit to Ledra Palace in early 2010, I was shown part of the 'labyrinthine', as my guides labelled it, basement of the Hotel. Using a camera flash in the pitch-blackness of one of the storage rooms, we discovered (without much surprise to my guides) a wall covered floor-to-ceiling with boxes containing garden lights. Recovery, I was reminded, is always incomplete and incomplete-able.

Another trace of the commercial appropriation of local heritage is found in the form of a hollow groove above the fireplace of 'the bi-communal room'. There, the shield-shaped outline of a comparatively unremarkable plaster moulding of the Hotel's coat of arms traces the absence of the Hotel. Pointing to it a visitor once identified the groove as the space where the Republic's emblem sat and noted that it was taken out when the room assumed its 'negotiation' function to neutralise the space. The assessment was only partly erroneous, since UNFICYP's 'neutrality' mandate dictates the erasure of signs, flags, and emblems in spaces under its authority. In this sense, the absence in the yellow-stone chimney groove points to the convergence of multiple signifiers towards an ethnicised reading of 'identity'. In the erroneous overlap between the Hotel's identity marker and that of the (Greek-Cypriot-run) Republic, Ledra Palace's Greek-Cypriot-ness is alluded to.

Overall, the Hotel's losses open up a space for mourning that bypasses memories of violence. Loss gains an aspect of temporality whereby what was lost at some moments is evaluated differently to what was lost at others. This temporality of loss exemplifies González-Ruibal's (2008) point about ruination, where he argues that the violence that politicises battlefields in Ethiopia but not abandoned rural houses in the French countryside is where the politics of understanding the recent past inheres. In this case, the politics at stake in temporally specific evaluations of loss is nothing less than the politics of 'the Cyprus conflict'. Thus, in readings that are politically situated in specific ways, the 'conflict' inheres in the disastrous losses of 1974 and the discounting of prior ones. In such selective readings, serenity is lost to the surrounding incidents of violence, Turkish-Cypriot presence to the erection of the border, and civilian sovereignty to the intrusion of paramilitaries. Loss works to separate positive from negative. The insertion of loss in the narrative is thus a political device that forecloses the story of how positive and negative became enmeshed in each other.

REFURBISHMENT AND RECONCILIATION (2004–2009)

I have elsewhere argued that Greek–Cypriot political subjectivity has been framed by the process of normalising what has, since 1974, been considered a transient condition, of waiting for an ‘imminent’ political settlement (Demetriou 2007a and 2007b). I also proposed that the core of this subjectivity can be conceptualised as a Lacanian knot, in which the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic sustain the enjoyment of the ‘transient’, ‘abnormal’ situation of division as *sinthome* (Demetriou 2007a) and that the reconfiguration of subjectivity necessary to allow a different ‘normality’ to be incorporated could have begun with the opening of the checkpoints in 2003 and the referendum of 2004 – two events that have instead shown the salience of division as inherent in Greek–Cypriot ‘normality’ (Demetriou 2007b). Revisiting the legacy of that period through the analytic lens used here, in which this normalisation of the conflict renders ‘the Cyprus problem’ an inherent part of Cypriot identity and thus a sort of political heritage, it is highly relevant to find that Ledra Palace Hotel, in the years following the failure of the referendum, became the ground on which this normalisation of ‘the conflict’ was argued and re-thought.

This rendering of ‘the conflict’ as heritage is also relevant for understanding the international politics in which Ledra Palace Hotel is immersed. It is to these politics that this final section turns in an attempt to show how the politics of responsibility (for ruination), thus far considered obliquely, have in the last decade become overtly articulated at the top official level. This high-level political contestation over the refurbishment of Ledra Palace is essentially also a struggle over what ‘Ledra Palace’ means, and consequently, also about the meanings of ‘the Cyprus conflict’ as notional heritage.

The beginnings of this struggle over refurbishment lie in the failure of the UN-proposed plan for a ‘comprehensive settlement’ of the Cyprus conflict, known as ‘the Annan Plan’, which was rejected in a referendum by the Greek–Cypriot public in 2004 (and thus remained non-implementable despite a Turkish–Cypriot endorsement in the same referendum). Under the United Cyprus Republic envisioned in the Annan Plan, the 1,228-strong UNFICYP was to be ‘liquidated’ and replaced by a 3,250-strong UN peacekeeping operation of ‘indefinite mandate’ and ‘a more substantive political role ... more intrusive than UNFICYP’ (UNSC 2004a: §22 and §24). UNFICYP’s ‘support structure ... the three sector headquarters’, which includes Ledra Palace Hotel, would be maintained (UNSC 2004a: §40).

Following the referendum, a number of activities hitherto postponed ‘pending a solution to the problem’ were carried out in the realisation that ‘the solution’ might not be imminent. One of these activities was Ledra Palace’s refurbishment, or ‘maintenance’ as a worker on the site noted. The terminology is important for

it points to the political contestations within which Ledra Palace is immersed: under UNFICYP's mandate, the properties used for the facilitation of their operations in Cyprus may not be substantially altered, including refurbishment (interview with UNFICYP official, May 2008). The official's careful selection of terms (correcting me when I called it 'refurbishment') references this situation but also calls attention to the fact that the works carried out were far from the 'refurbishment' that it actually required, and to the fact that even 'refurbishment' has become politicised and subject to battles over meaning.

The rejection of the Annan Plan resulted in the renewal of UNFICYP's mandate in May 2004, together with a proposal by the Secretary-General to the Security Council to review 'UNFICYP's mandate, force levels and concept of operations . . . [and to] submit recommendations on . . . adjustments or restructuring' (UNSC 2004b: §18). The review was accompanied by intense political efforts to thwart what Greek-Cypriot politicians feared was a call for disbanding the force, resulting in a recommendation that the military staff of UNFICYP be cut by a third, while its political and civil affairs branches be strengthened (UNSC 2004c). During this period of strained relations between the UN and the Republic of Cyprus the occupation of Ledra Palace Hotel (by the British contingent of UNFICYP) came under increased scrutiny.

Beginning in September 2004, the U.K. High Commission on the island entered into a long process of negotiation with the authorities of the Republic regarding work on the building, which, in the Foreign Office's view 'was falling down' (FCO 2008: 10). These exchanges took place within a difficult environment of strained relations between the Republic of Cyprus and several international actors who had supported the Annan Plan, including both the U.K. government and the UN. As a result it became clear to the U.K. High Commission that the Republic of Cyprus was unwilling to embark on refurbishment, and UNFICYP was asked 'to take control of solving the problem' (FCO 2008: 10). Two years later, the British Mission to the UN took the matter up in New York, urging the Secretary-General's special representative on the island to include 'some reference to health and safety in Ledra Palace' (FCO 2008: 7) in the forthcoming UNSC resolution. The preamble of the resolution described the conditions as 'unacceptable' (UNSC 2007), and a delegation of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly visiting the island made representations to the Republic's government, having found 'slum-like conditions . . . being endured by 600 UNFICYP peace-keeping forces . . . [including] faulty lavatories that deposited sewage in the soldiers' quarters, inoperable lifts, broken air-conditioning systems, soldiers packed three to a room because of space shortages' (Carter 2007). In what the British High Commissioner described as 'the pressure [having] worked', the Republic conceded to structural improvements (FCO 2008: 3). The improvements included replacement of the roof, installation of

heaters and boilers, new air-conditioning systems, asbestos removal from the basement, and refurbishment of various function rooms, including the dining room (which became the 'gym'), and the bi-communal rooms.

Most noticeable to Cypriot visitors was the panelling over the existing wooden panels lining 'the bi-communal room'. It exemplified both the layered 'maintenance' that resulted from a rule of 'least interference' dictated by the temporary status of the Hotel's military occupancy and the presumption that when the Cyprus problem is solved the building will revert to its original owners. 'This means that refurbishing any room effectively means creating a new room inside the room', an UNFICYP official explained when informally queried on the changes noticed. These constraints in the way 'maintenance' is carried out point to yet another set of power contestations that persist in the negotiation of Ledra Palace as a space.

In effect, these negotiations rendered Ledra Palace, till then the foremost 'space of negotiation', a space itself under negotiation. In the aftermath of the referendum, it seemed that the negotiations hitherto housed at the Hotel had been sharing its slowly deteriorating condition, for which no party was willing to claim responsibility, and which required costly restoration that no one was willing to undertake. As 'the conflict' entered a new constellation of global power structures (Agathangelou 2008), the question of responsibility, so forcefully asked about past tragedies – that took place at specific points in time in a past that is no longer 'recent' (Papadakis 2005) – was now being asked about the slow, ongoing processes of ruination that normalised the maintenance of non-peace in the present. 'Responsibility' thus became another tool for eschewing past violence by brushing over concepts hitherto associated with Ledra Palace (reunification, reconciliation, rapprochement, and bi-communalism) and foregrounding instead the spectre of the ruins created by their lack.

Many of the visitors to the site are oblivious to the refurbishment process underway, although it is generally accepted that the Hotel is in a state of collapse. The green panels installed in 2009 in the bi-communal room were hardly the focus of commentary by people who had used the room on repeated occasions apart from some who described them as an architectural faux pas, 'indicative of military style, what can you expect?' Thus, while many of the attendees to meetings have from time to time commented on Ledra Palace's 'crumbling state', ruination seems to have been accepted as part of what the Hotel, in its post-1974, UN-occupied phase stands for: a surviving relic of older, better times, that awaits the resolution of the Cyprus problem to be properly restored. During the opening of a conference on reconciliation in 2008, the keynote speaker was repeatedly interrupted by screeches coming from the bi-communal room's ceiling. Attendees, predominantly Cypriots who had attended events there before, looked at each other across the room, gestured, and burst into muffled laughter. It was clear that what we were hearing must

have been mice, or pigeons trapped in crevices in the ceiling. This was hardly surprising – the screeches were rather a confirmation of what everyone already knew about the Hotel: that ruination had become its normal condition. In this sense, it might be suggested that the unwillingness to meaningfully engage in ‘restoration’ of the site might be reflective of a more general unwillingness to undo the ruination that ‘the Cyprus conflict’ has been mired by. And while in the case of Ledra Palace’s restoration responsibility may lie with the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus, the political repair work required to render the notional heritage of ‘the conflict’ a thing of the past burdens both sides, and possibly much of the Cypriot population at large too.

POSTSCRIPT

If Ledra Palace in the 1980s and 1990s was the topos of the production of hope for a resolution to the Cyprus problem, it seems to have quickly become, especially in the aftermath of the opening of the checkpoints and the failure of the Annan Plan, the space in which the search for a solution stalled. In the displacement of a modernity symbolised by grandeur, the Hotel became the site of a post-modern morbidity as talks on rapprochement stalled and faltered. Contrasting with what the Hotel originally signified, its tedious decline is poignant: it points to the process of which it is also a material metaphor. The material aspects are as inescapable as the intangible aspects of this decline.

In recent work on the relevance of abjection in Turkish-Cypriot subjectivity, Navaro-Yashin makes the point that ‘the abject is not an exteriority against which subjectivity and sociality are to be defined (challenging the order from without), but fundamentally an interiority: what is internally generative of a political system or what is intrinsic to the system in and of itself’ (2009: 6). Navaro-Yashin is considering the relation between people and objects in the north of the island, objects (whether loot from houses or the barren landscape) that in an expansive, rhizomatic way carry the melancholia of conflict and the constricted political existence of Turkish-Cypriots. The point is instructive in considering Cypriot subjectivity in general but also, in particular, the tension between transience and permanence of the ‘always imminent solution’ that generates it. Ledra Palace, hated but inescapable, is a locus of such abjection.

One of the areas still accessible in 2012, albeit dysfunctional, was the Hotel’s communal toilets, which in the last few years had fallen into disuse and which prior to ‘maintenance’ had been replaced by mobile units on the former flowerbeds at the side of the entrance. The contrast with the Hotel’s original selling point of being the only hotel in Nicosia to feature a bathroom in every room is stark. In these toilets, which were occasionally still used in the late 2000s, the cubicle doors were broken and the toilets marked by cigarette burns and stains left over time that regular cleaning seemed unable to remove. Stuck

on the tired wall tiles were laminated, yellowing warnings against unprotected sex and the risks of AIDS, warnings that immediately confronted the visitor with the intimacy of military lives – and at the same time invited recollections of an epidemic ‘just’ passed, at least in ‘Europe’. Dry soap bars marked with dirt furrows sat on the washbasins, indeterminate clues as to when water last ran over them. It is as if in this space the unsuspecting guest entered a crime scene: clues were there but not to be touched, connections could be drawn but changes would not be made.

Any attempt to defy this order, to proceed ‘as normal’ despite it, seemed a harsh reminder that every single discharge is a contributor to dilapidation, that one cannot be absolved of the production of waste here, and that everyone’s hands are dirty. In this sense, the politics of what González-Ruibal calls ‘an archaeology of the recent past’ (2008) in Ledra Palace is the research politics of collective responsibility.

If the biography of Ledra Palace Hotel has a lesson for heritage research, it is the need to seriously rethink the ways in which the materiality of heritage is bound up with the intangible aspects of political subjectivity. Material heritage, I have proposed, is always attended by notional heritage. The exploration of the relationship between the two, which is inevitably political, can open up new ways of understanding the enmeshment of peace in conflict, militarisation in serenity, or the reconstruction of remnants of the recent past.

NOTES

1. For relevant arguments about such colonial/post-colonial conceptualisations in Cyprus and Greece see Gourgouris (1996), Argyrou (1996), and Hamilakis (2007), and for arguments regarding Turkish locations in structuring Cypriot subjectivity, see Navaro-Yashin (2012).
2. For this and subsequent references, the former deputy director is being cited from an interview on 7 August 2009.
3. EOKA was a Greek-Cypriot nationalist organisation that, under the spiritual leadership of the Church, waged a guerrilla struggle against the British colonists in 1955–1959 demanding union with Greece (‘enosis’). At the end of this struggle, the Republic of Cyprus emerged as an independent state in 1960. This was a power-sharing arrangement with Turkish-Cypriots that broke down in 1963, when inter-ethnic violence flared.
4. It should be noted that inter-ethnic violence had flared in the 1963–1964 period and again in 1968 before culminating in the war of 1974.
5. The Forte group (1935–2001) was the umbrella under which many British and international hotels and restaurants operated in the latter half of the twentieth century, from Little Chef to Le Méridien.
6. Note that a similar rhetoric surfaced in 2013 when Cyprus was affected by the global financial crisis and the Archbishop made statements against a feared takeover of Hellenic Bank by foreign investors ‘who may ransack it’ – using a phrase reminiscent of the Ottoman takeover of Constantinople [*na tin álósoun*] (statement to media, 27 October 2013).
7. Interview with staff of the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, Nicosia, June 2010.
8. The gender dynamics involved in the militarisation of Ledra Palace Hotel are indeed complex and have been explored elsewhere (Demetriou 2012).