Loud Cypriot Women:
Reimagining Cypriot Identity Through a Feminist Lens

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Abstract

As a woman growing up in a Greek Cypriot household in the United States, I am privy to Cypriot women's narratives that the general American public has not heard and that Cypriots living in Cyprus may not realize are valuable. Cypriot collective memory, specifically spanning the years from the 1950's to the 1980's, has a gap where unfiltered Cypriot women's lived experiences should be. These narratives have been stricken from the public narrative or altered before making up part of the Cypriot collective memory. As these were the years most salient to the formation of Cyprus' national identity, the exclusion of women's voices resulted in an identity that is dictated by and representative of men alone. Neither the causes nor the effects of this are isolated. A complicated colonial history yokes the Cypriot identity to politics. This colonial past continues to influence a Cypriot identity formation reliant on the acceptance of certain dichotomies like "Greek vs. Turk" and "Subject vs. Colonizer" that women's experiences have the possibility to weaken. The result has been the systemic silencing of women's experiences outside of the nationalist project, and the promotion of the stereotype of the opinionated and loud Cypriot woman who loudly expresses male-controlled narratives of nationalism and colonialism. The effects of this practice range in scale but not in importance. Cypriot women do not have an authentic voice within their own society; they are excluded from participation in Cypriot politics. Furthermore, Cypriot identity, as a result of being based on an incomplete history, has become monolithic and culturally and politically stagnant. By exploring these themes in literature produced by Cypriots, I will pinpoint what female narratives exist but are hidden from the public portrayal of Cypriot women and society, and how the inclusion and recognition of these narratives changes what it means to be Cypriot.[1] The lived experiences of

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[1] The Cypriot women that I will discuss in this thesis are both Turkish and Greek Cypriot. When I use "Cypriot", I am referring to all Cypriot women, be they Turkish Cypriot, Greek Cypriot, or Armenian. However, I will mostly

Cypriot women in Cypriot literature challenge the existing conception of Cypriot identity and all the political decisions portrayed as the rational steps towards the protecting this identity.

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highlight the tension between Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalist narratives and women's role within them. Additionally, when I talk about my own experiences and those of my matriarchal line, I am speaking as a Greek Cypriot woman.

Chapter 1: Loud Cypriot Women- an introduction

"I scare you? You scare me!" - Georgia

This is a thesis born of an identity crisis. I tell three stories. One is my own and the way I've tried to come to terms with my identity as a Cypriot woman, daughter, and member of the Cypriot diaspora. The second is the literary story of Cypriot women. The third is a story of Cyprus, its history, and the effects of that history on its future. Apart from the people that are in this room, it is likely that no one will ever read any of these stories as they are bound by a common thread: they are silenced. The personal narrative I reveal puts me at odds with my family's beliefs and history, and so I whisper it. The second story casts Cypriot men in an unfavorable light and calls into question the progression of Cypriot society, so it will be covered. The third, in concerning itself with one of the longest standing conflicts and taking neither side, will be received favorably by no one, and will therefore fade away. Nevertheless, I feel that it is my duty to use my power despite the knowledge that my voice will likely blend into the white noise of verbalized opinions of Cypriot women and my point will be moot.

Cypriot women are loud. Most who have the pleasure of knowing them will use "loud" as the common descriptive term. However, what Cypriot women express through their loud speech often remains unexamined. I used to tell my mother, "when you keep yelling everything sounds the same." Cypriot women yell. They yell about their husbands, they yell about cooking, they yell about the Turks and the British, and Cyprus' 'dialimeni parelasi', or broken-down parade, meaning its government. But this cacophony of yelling voices translates into noise that isn't given importance and already has a meaning assigned to it before the sound even travels. Women have a wealth of knowledge — insights about policy, collaborations possible between ethnic groups, etc. However, what women tend to yell about is what is socially sanctioned and scripted by men in two main narratives of colonialism and nationalism. Scripted narratives are perpetuated by Cypriot society, superficially through the gender roles established.

In Cyprus, the grieving woman dressed in all black is often still the symbol of the country and its history. I grew up thinking that black 'shalia' or headscarves and black long skirts with shapeless sweaters were the preferred attire of the women above the age of sixty in Cyprus. In my father's village, there were only few women that didn't follow this fashion trend. I finally asked my father one day why people chose to wear such depressing clothing in what I thought was the happiest place on earth. He replied that the women dressed in all black were widows in endless mourning for the sons and husbands that they lost and that had never been found. Remembrance was the very publicly symbolic duty of women. However, "being a symbol never bodes well for the flesh and blood woman" (Cockburn 116). The flesh and blood body becomes irrelevant, and the Cypriot woman becomes an image manipulated to promote different agendas.

This is not to say that the women of Cyprus have not suffered and have not mourned. But the sanctity of their pain has been converted into a political 'our women have suffered more' contest. Women become the living vessels of Cypriot identity, which is the crux of what the Cyprus problem is about: what *Cypriot identity* should be culturally and politically promoted? The role assigned to women is to keep the national memory of trauma alive and to use their decidedly "loud" voices to do so. The very loud symbolic narrative that enshrouds the Cypriot woman makes it incredibly difficult for her to argue that she does not have a voice. When one is the central figure of a cause, the audience presumes visibility and control of the narrative. But women's central role as the embodiment of national mourning leaves women no other voice. The sanctioned, male-authored, public, loud voice of the Cypriot woman echoes so loudly that it swallows up her presence.

Loudness is the attribute of a sound that determines the *magnitude* of the auditory sensation produced and that primarily depends on the amplitude of the sound wave involved. It is associated with volume but has no associations with the *actual information* that is supposed to be transmitted by the sound, like pitch or melody. Loudness is something that you can become accustomed to and block out. Every night when I try to fall asleep, I have to put on white noise at medium volume. Silence makes it too easy to pick out disruptions, like the footsteps of my upstairs neighbor or other oddities. Loudness gets written off in my mind as not having any importance. It continues at the same volume and I get used to it and drift off.

The human brain is better at detecting differences than levels. For example, it is easier for a person to state which music sample is louder when two samples are played for them to compare than to give a numerical volume for each individual sample. It takes a lot of intensity for a sound or a voice to separate from the loudness. In physics, this is known as the Weber fraction, or the ratio of the just noticeable difference to the intensity of a stimulus. The more intense the starting stimulus is, the more of a change in the stimulus is necessary in order for the change to be detected. In the context of Cyprus, the starting stimuli that need to be overcome are the very powerful discourses of colonialism and nationalism. Since these narratives are so deeply rooted in Cypriot history, it requires great intensity for any other sound to break through them.

The result is that the lack of representation of women's issues is masked. Given the centralization of the woman in Cypriot society within these dominant narratives, she is assumed to have power. All of the women in my family supposedly 'wear the pants' within their households. Cypriot men and women alike describe Cypriot women as "drakounes", or female dragons. Dragons make a spectacle. They breathe a lot of fire. Greek Cypriot women seem forceful because of the volume of their voice, but when it comes down to it, they publicly know their place. I grew up believing that my grandmother pushed around my grandfather. I felt bad for him and the verbal abuse that he received. It turns out that my grandfather makes all decisions. My grandmother may complain and fight him, but she does as she is told, and this is something that is understood on a much larger scale. The Cypriot woman might speak out, but she publicly defends the ideas put forth by men.

Comparable to the stereotype of the loud angry black woman, or the overly passionate Arab woman, Cypriot women are given a publicly recognized voice and presence, to ensure that their lived experiences are not actually brought into and heard by the public. Loudness functions as an almost impermeable curtain that separates the shared narratives of women and the symbolic narratives of women in Cypriot society. The former has the power to disrupt, and the latter has the equally strong power to maintain. Loudness keeps Cypriot women as silent symbols of collective Cypriot trauma and a fight for retributive justice. Politically, the loudness of women discredits their experiences and shared narratives. Instead, the spread of the long-standing patriarchally constructed conception of Cypriot identity is the favored mode of self-representation by Cypriots, and an identity that Cypriot women accept.

Nationalist patriarchy benefits when everything a Cypriot woman says is one homogenous stream of loudness. No one part of her passionate speech stands out. Any particularly uncomfortable idea can be ignored and moved past and those who benefit from the narratives in place will not be disrupted. There is a thin enough layer of agency and expression given to women by this loudness. Cypriot women aren’t often seen as being oppressed. How could they be? The faces of Cypriot women are splashed against banners, symbols of the tragedy of the 1974 Turkish invasion, symbols of what is at stake: the future generations of Cyprus, the safety of a husband’s wife, a father’s daughter.

The effective force of nationalist and colonialist narratives that make the Cypriot woman exist *only* in this context, this very public and seemingly important context, is what comes to castigate her. When no one is paying attention to what women are saying because they are always "loud", and when all they say becomes white noise, the following narratives are hidden:

- Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot, Armenian, Maronite, or immigrant women have common experiences during the 1970's as subject to the political decisions of men.
- Cypriot identity as other than the bipartite amalgam of a history of colonialism and a remedy of nationalism.
- Changes in female Cypriot identity that emerged, including a new division of labor, a new role to be the perpetuators of nationalism, a role to carry on the remembrance of any men that fought in or died in the war.
- The redefinition and establishment of sexuality in terms of politics, leading to common experiences of bodily violation during Cyprus' years of conflict, including miscarriage and rape.

In literature, these unexpressed narratives are revealed. From Lawrence Durrell's work *The Bitter Lemons of Cyprus,* I draw from narratives of colonialism and nationalism to explore how Cyprus' history has shaped the position of women within it. Andreas Koumi's *The Cypriot* poses as a romantic novel that emphasizes the importance of Cypriot unification through young love. However, the main woman in the book is, despite her anticipated importance, is characterized in the same way that all other women are characterized: from a male nationalistic perspective, and via ascribed loudness. The work of Christy Lefteri, *A Watermelon, a Fish, and a Bible* tracks the silence versus loudness juxtaposed in a group of women held captive during the invasion. The women only come to understand each other when they break their silence, or rather, when they deviate from the narratives that they had previously been urged to express and discover the unique feminine experience that bonds them. It is with this cooperation that the women free themselves from oppression. Lastly, I discuss Eve Makis' novel *Eat, Drink, and be Married,* in which the tense relationship in a matriarchal line is examined and it is discovered that the root of that tension is a lack of expression of female trauma, which has the ability to bond the women. All of these novels establish the Cypriot identity, women's defined roles within it, and the female narratives of dissent that have the power to uproot it.

I stumbled into the world of feminist perspective and Cyprus accidentally. I was brought up being told that the best thing that I could do was distance myself from the Cyprus problem and Cyprus politics. However, as we see in these novels, being a Cypriot woman informs every area of life, from the personal to the professional. Our Cypriotness affects the way that we interact with our world. The Cyprus problem, largely political, has at its core identity, developed historically, and is engaged with by each and every Cypriot based on their own personal narrative. These three realms are inextricable from each other and should be presented as such in an analytical work.

The women that are involved in my study, be they fictional characters, women authors, or family members, express a great wealth of experiences that is publicly very hard to encounter, especially in their unaltered form. Be she Greek or Turkish Cypriot, the Cypriot woman is not considered constitutive to Cypriot identity. [2]This has kept Cypriot identity homogenous, patriarchal, divisive, and seemingly stagnant. Given the nature of the Cyprus conflict and its emphasis on protecting the Cypriot, an incomplete identity can only lead to political misrepresentation and failure. This is best articulated by Cypriot scholar and feminist Maria Hadjipavlou in her book *Women and Change in Cyprus*: “The absence of a women’s viewpoint and dismissal of the gender perspective reveal shortcomings in the democratic participatory process that will certainly influence the content of a future political solution and the composition of institutional structures” (10).

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[2] I recognize the Armenian-Cypriot and Maronite-Cypriot woman of Cyprus as well; the main divide exists between Greek and Turkish Cypriot women and the portrayal of each as the "other" in the major political narratives that are written by the men of each ethnic community.

Women have been called on to participate, however, selectively allowing their voices to be heard devalues any of their contributions. Women cannot be engaged in their own development, and the development of Cypriot identity, if that same identity is used to keep their participation selective. It is my hope that through narratives written by Cypriot women, particularly the ones I will be discussing later in my work, I draw attention to the power and experience of women and bring to light the dearth of engagement with the female perspective regarding the Cyprus issue.

Chapter Two: Georgia Demetriou

> “Even those who acknowledge that both sides across the ‘green line’ share the burden of responsibility for the current division and ongoing dispute- that is to say, no one can be either so righteous or so erroneous after all-often fail to come out in the other (either via the media or through scholarly work) so that their views become accessible to the wider publics, both in Cyprus and abroad. It is the aim of this study to undertake this task, the writer being cognizant of the fact that many people-especially among the Greek community-would become outraged, convinced that Turkish and Western “propaganda” have influenced or ‘dehellenized’ yet another of their boys” (Demetriou, 1997).

> “Don’t try to tell me anything about the Turks” (also Demetriou, 2020).

I have never understood Cypriot women, and I am one. My father always joked growing up “you are all the same- you, your mother, your grandmother”. This statement never failed to horrify me. My mother is a very loud, powerful, and abrupt woman. I had always hoped that I would grow to be like her in intelligence and passion, but to be more reserved and graceful, more accepting of people’s differences, and far less opinionated. My mom’s speech tended to rub people the wrong way, and it took me a long time to figure out why.

I found it easiest to discover why it bothered me. What my mom preached about the role of women in some ways directly contradicted what she herself had achieved as an educated, independent woman, and also contradicted her goals for me, to achieve even higher levels of education and independence. I was always confused and didn’t know why my mom couldn’t pick one or the other: her progressive stance or her traditional one. She would express both, and in extremes. The traditional woman was the stereotype, the same stereotype of the loud Greek Cypriot woman that I also found in my grandmother. She was femininity idealizing, strict, traditional, and opinionated. That woman I never really listened to, because I always thought I knew what she was going to say before she could even get it out. Granted, often, I did. “Act like a lady, speak softly, cross your legs”. I hated that my mom was parroting this scripted advice on the role on conduct of a woman when I knew that she never adhered to that same script. All I could focus on growing up was this hypocrisy.

What I finally realized was that my mother was cursed with double consciousness. A term first coined by W.E.B. Du Bois, double consciousness refers to a “two-ness” experienced by Black people in the United States, because of their racialized oppression and disvaluation in a white society. This notion becomes application to the experience of Cypriot women in that they too are disvalued and oppressed by a majority, a male majority, by virtue of their sex, another immutable factor. In Du Bois' usage, "double consciousness" led to the warring ideals of being both an "American" and "Black", the one larger identity which would stamp out the other. Regarding Cyprus, the larger Cypriot identity, male-authored, stamps out the identity of the Cypriot woman. This inability to determine where one belongs, as Du Bois says, can "tempt the mind to pretence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism" (202). Du Bois' prediction certainly applied to my mother, who participated in both hypocrisy and radicalism.

Georgia was aware of the traditional script that she was supposed to follow and also very aware that she didn't want to apply it to herself. And so, my mother always issues with her "voice". When Georgia would try to sing in church, my grandma would say that her voice was too loud, but that it wasn't sweet enough, so it stood out too much. This continued. My mother talked back to her teacher that made fun of her family. She got sent home for being disruptive. Georgia liked playing soccer with the boys. Too improper. Finally, at wit's end she left the family home and came to the United States at the age of seventeen to continue her studies. In the States, Georgia was placed under the care of her uncle, who enrolled her in community college, because that was good enough for a girl. She would get a respectable education and then go back home to get married. My mother didn't accept this, and she was labeled problematic. While working in restaurants, she applied and was accepted to Columbia University. This wasn't accepted or celebrated by her uncles or family. What more do you need to learn? Why is what we decide not good enough for you? No one went to my mother's graduation, though she earned her degree in Diplomatic Relations and mastered eight foreign languages.

Georgia tried then to connect with Cyprus in her own way. The young Ms. Demetriou got a job at the United Nations working for the Cypriot Government. She tried working her way up the ranks but then discovered that women weren't valued in Cyprus politics. Georgia explains this as a preference for men, a practice of nepotism, and an attitude that women shouldn't involve themselves with politics. Georgia had grown up right in the midst of Cyprus' most formative years, the end of British rule in Cyprus and the beginning of what has become one of the world's most protracted conflicts. She slept next to fugitives, shared her bed with internally displaced persons from North Cyprus, and pursued higher education to understand all sides of the conflict. Still, she was told she had nothing of value to say.

You would think that these experiences would have caused my mother to hate the system, to want to change the place that women were assigned in Cypriot society. In a sense it did. For a brief time, I knew that rebellious woman that denied the scripted life of fervent nationalism that the rest of her family followed. That was the Georgia who raised me taught me French as a child, played Spanish and Arabic music around the house, encouraged a love of culture, people, and life. Xenophobia had no place in my childhood or in my mother's actions. My mother molded me in her image as a global citizen. I was raised to believe that a woman could be anything she wanted, that marriage and children should come after a career, that a woman should be reliant on no one.

When there was only this version of my mother, we weren't as confused. We had a good relationship. But eventually, she tired of being the black sheep that didn't accept her familial and societal role. Georgia's dissent had alienated from her own family. And so, Georgia became determined to rewrite her own history of loudness, to make her voice sweeter, and the only way to do this was to change her own rhetoric. She learned to harmonize. Her loud voice blended in with those espousing grand Cypriot ideals, would be approved of and appreciated. The best way to showcase that she had truly changed was to not only publicly defend the female identity that she had previously rejected, but to imbue her own daughter with it. Georgia started becoming my *yiayia,* the woman who had made her leave Cyprus. Suddenly, my mom wanted to only hear me speak Greek in the house, not even just the Cypriot dialect. We were Greek, proper Greeks, and European. Her opinions regarding women, leaving the family home, gender roles, and everything in between were suddenly regressing to none other than my grandmother's perspective.

The rebellious nature my mother had rooted in me with was now directly at odds with the type of person that she now wanted me to become. When my mother left home, it was because she saw the world in a different way and had different views than my grandparents. When I left home, it was because I was starting to see the world in a different way that my mother could see it now, but in the exact same way that she had seen it at one point. So, what did I learn from all this? That it is easier to be a loud woman who doesn't actually say anything. No one minds that Cypriot women are loud. My family never minded that my mother was loud, it was the fact that her words and actions didn't match up with the maintenance of the status quo. It wasn't the quality of her voice in church that was problematic, it was that she would question the teachings. And it wasn't the fact she left home, or went to university that was the problem, it was that she rejected the role of the Cypriot woman. This is what made her the black sheep of the family. Looking into the future, I believe that this cycle is what will come to afford me that same label. At one point, I too, will have to decide if I'll have to choose between using my voice to defend what I believe in or using it to harmonize with the voices of a scripted choir.

Chapter 3: Situating Cyprus

“Cyprus? That’s a tree, right?” -a lot of people

Cyprus is a small island-nation in the Eastern Mediterranean. It remains mostly unknown to the rest of the world. Growing up in the United States, when I would say "I'm from Cyprus" the response would usually be "Isn't that a tree"? Cypress trees aside, any recognition of Cyprus comes from its sandy beaches, year- round sunshine, and cheap tourism. In only rare occasions have people heard something about the Cyprus conflict. Depending on their level of familiarity: the next question is "Cyprus, that's Turkey, right?", "Cyprus, that's part of Greece, right?". To all of this I usually respond with "Cyprus, it's a small country in the Middle East across from Lebanon. You might know about the Cyprus conflict which caused the island to be divided and which led to the ongoing Turkish occupation of Cyprus. The majority population is Greek-Orthodox and speaks the Greek Cypriot dialect which is why we just find it easier to say we are Greek sometimes". The truth is the history of Cyprus is much more complicated than any short answer I've ever given in a conversation. I avoided the complexity altogether by identifying myself as Greek for the first seventeen years of my life.

In fact, calling yourself Greek is easier because then at least you have one history to refer to, one that most are acquainted with. Everyone knows of the Parthenon, the Greek Gods, Greek philosophers. Cyprus's history is much more ambiguous and difficult to trace back to one origin story. The history of Cyprus stretches as far back as the beginning of the sixth millennium, as British academic and feminist Cynthia Cockburn notes in "The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus" (42). Located in a strategic spot, Cyprus has passed through the hands of many empires. Prior to 1878, Cyprus had been the land of the Venetians, the Lusignans, and most recently, the Ottoman Empire. By the nineteen-hundreds, ownership of Cyprus was something known to be in flux, with each new empire trying to impose its own character on Cypriots. Because of the mix of cultures and languages that came to characterize Cypriot society, as well as Cyprus' (a female country in Greek) many "masters", Cyprus became known to some as 'the whore or prostitute of the Mediterranean. Oftentimes, the multifaceted nature of Cyprus became supposed cause for other empires to "civilize" Cypriots. In the case of British rule over Cyprus, "Cyprian" became the colloquialism for prostitute. The reticence of one to self-identify with such a history, or rather, this version of Cypriot history, is understandable. The glory of being Greek, pure and virtuous, is a more attractive option.

Nevertheless, Cyprus' history as the perennial "conquered", has been formative in cultural and political parts of its development. This characterization of Cyprus is altered and used by many depending on their political purposes. Some point to the many "partners" or "rulers" of Cyprus as a sign that Cypriot identity should be fluid and accommodate for all children of Cyprus. These actors usually express the need for a "unified" Cyprus[3]. Others, those that had pushed for the union of Cyprus with Greece and now oppose the "reunification" of Cyprus, lobby for the restoration of Cyprus to its "pure" form.

However, the history that most Cypriots know, focus on, and pass along is that which started in around 1878. In 1878, the island nation was turned over to Britain by the Ottoman Sultanate in return for British support in the case of future global conflict. Cyprus was declared a colony of Great Britain in 1925 (Cockburn 29). The Cypriots still alive today, the generation of my parents, have this as their starting point of shared memory. Cypriot history as taught in schools or intergenerationally, contextualizes the start of the Cypriot struggle for independence as being against the British Empire. Thus, the British come to represent the first colonizers in the minds of many Cypriots today. Many Cypriots today know two main historic dates, the first of which is 1955, the year that Britain denied Cyprus its independence (Crawshaw 129-138). This was then followed by five years of guerrilla warfare from EOKA, a Cypriot organization that wanted the Cypriot independence and the eventual union or *enosis* of Cyprus with 'mother Greece'. EOKA was met with resistance, but the idea of *enosis* was already one that permeated many aspects of Cypriot life. Cypriots, the majority of whom were Greek Orthodox and spoke Greek were taught Hellenic history. As Greek Cypriots pushed for *enosis,* the Turkish Cypriot position emerged, taking the name *taksim*, which promoted the division of Cyprus into Greek and Turkish portions. *Taksim* became the reality of the island. Fourteen years after Cyprus became an independent Republic of Cyprus, Turkey invaded under the pretense of protecting the Turkish Cypriot population. 1974 is this second date most Cypriots have emblazoned into their memories. What ensued was tragic loss for both communities. The 'Cyprus problem' as it is now so comfortably referred to is one of the world's most contentious and protracted conflicts.

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[3] A "unified" Cyprus tends to refer to the existence of one Cyprus with no buffer zone or Turkish occupation. Most that favor reunification do not push for the return of occupied land nor reparations being made by the Turkish government. Their goal is primarily cultural and political unity. Those that oppose reunification believe that there should first be an acknowledgement of the illegality of Turkey's occupation of Cyprus, the returning of occupied land, and the absence of any Turkish military presence in Cyprus.

The situation is not as crystallized as it is in history books. The conflict between Cyprus and Turkey is alive and reaching new heights. Turkey has long treated its "Republic of Northern Cyprus" as a colony, controlling much of the economic and political features of the occupied zone. In recent months, Turkey has faced disapproval from European Union states because of its infringement upon Cyprus' natural resources, drilling for hydrocarbon exploration off the Cyprus coast. The United States Secretary of State was recently sent to Greece amidst increasing tensions between Turkey and Greece in relation to Cyprus. Not since 1974 has the hostility between these two countries been so heightened. A major contributing factor to this is the type of rhetoric that surrounds Cyprus politics. At some point, Greece and Greek interests became a metonym for Cyprus and Cypriot interests. The Cyprus problem is presented to the outside world as a battle between two major world powers: Greece and Turkey. One country represents Christianity, Europe and the spread of Western ideology, the other has come to be a stand in for the Islam, the 'East', and modern version of expansionism originally perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire[4]. What is displayed to the outside is an unbridgeable ideological chiasmus that is represented by the partition of one country: Cyprus.

The Cyprus problem has been boiled down into being a case study of what happens when the above clash. To the rest of the world, the result is regional tension that upsets the balance of things. When Cyprus makes international news, headlines usually point to increased Turkish aggression, Turkey's pending European Union membership, and a brief acknowledgement of the illegality of Turkey's actions regarding Cyprus preventing what would otherwise be its gracious acceptance into the European Union. Simply, Cyprus news is never about Cyprus. The global concern is about what the Cyprus conflict means regarding power placements outside of Cyprus. The dialogue surrounding the political implications of the Cyprus problem that matters to *Cypriots* has at its heart the matter of identity: which Cyprus is the world obligated to recognize and protect? Borders are to be drawn around which group of people? Who are the real Cypriots and what are their values? How do we identify Cypriots and how do they identify themselves? Because these questions concern Cypriots and not the broader powers involved in the Cyprus problem, little attention has been directed towards answering these questions, and specifically, answering them using the perspectives of all people that consider themselves Cypriot.

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[4] Turkey used to represent the bridge between Europe and Asia. In fact, Turkey's Bosphorus Bridge was the first fixed linkage between the two continents. Greece was considered as the birthplace of much of the Western values that much of the European continent adopted. With the passage of time, Greece solidified its role as the protector of these "values" (and Christianity) and philhellene sentiment stayed strong. Turkey has come to represent an emerging and modern power in the region, but also a threat to Greece and what it stands for.

This practice has several consequences: Cypriot identity is publicly determined by a select group of people that have a voice in the public sphere, Cypriot identity remains representative of a very small and select group of people, the Cyprus problem is presented as unfixable because the interests of 'Cypriots' are presented as being fundamentally incompatible with the interest of other minority groups that in fact *self-identify* as being Cypriot. There are upsides to keeping Cypriot identity, or at least its public presentation, stagnant and monolithic. As Alexis Heraclides writes in "The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the Aegean", "portraying the 'other' as the 'historical enemy', 'violent', cunning and unscrupulous is intended to buttress national identity and self-worth" (232). In the case of Cyprus, national identity is reinforced by creating an enemy that appeals to the majority Greek Cypriot population. This presents Cyprus and its people as united politically against one common enemy.

Sustaining this "othering" is contingent on stripping from public narratives the Cypriot voices that dissent with this postcolonial nationalist project. There are groups whose experiential narratives that could help dissipate anger, anger contra those who are responsible for past and possibly future subjugation. Ensuring the absence of these narratives is what helps keep the "national identity protection" rallying cry unified. Looking at how the Cyprus problem has been presented to the outside world by Cypriots themselves, visitors of Cyprus, politicians, etc., Cyprus very much *is* portrayed as being a protracted matter of negotiating freedom of identity in the face of nationalism and colonialism. An example of such description of Cyprus and its people is found in my next section on Lawrence Durrell's *The Bitter Lemons of Cyprus.*

Chapter 4: Constructing Cypriot History - in Fact and Fiction

In an island of bitter lemons
Where the moon's cool fevers burn
From the dark globes of the fruit,

And the dry grass underfoot
Tortures memory and revises
Habits half a lifetime dead

Better leave the rest unsaid,
Beauty, darkness, vehemence
Let the old sea-nurses keep

Their memorials of sleep
And the Greek sea's curly head
Keep its calms like tears unshed

Keep its calms like tears unshed.

-Lawrence Durrell

What is Cypriot history about? I've been asking myself this question for twenty years. Greek Cypriot children growing up in Cyprus are taught Greek history, Turkish Cypriot children growing up in Cyprus are taught Turkish history. The knowledge that is imparted onto future generations contains minimal information about Cyprus itself. More often it is Cyprus *in relation* to whatever greater nationalism one subscribes to. Who are we? That's the real question, right? Cypriot history, and the constant manipulation of that history by internal and external forces, traps them in an endless cycle of being defined by others and then opposing other's definitions to redefine themselves.

Much of the Western world historically knows Cypriot history through the works and rhetoric of colonizing powers. Cyprus has a long-standing history of being a colony, and the national memory of colonization often begins with British rule. Cyprus, being the small island nation that it is, usually tends to pique interest when it receives attention from a greater power, and in Cyprus' most recent history, Britain was that greater power. British rule birthed the first not-definition, or definition by denial, of the Cypriot identity. What I am is what I am not, and Greek Cypriots decided they were not what the British said they were. Cypriots have historically defined themselves in relation to their quest for independence, and thus, as the antithesis of the colonizer's du jour definition of a Cypriot. Understanding British description of Cypriots is salient to understanding how Cypriots tried to first define themselves in order to assert their value as independent people.

Leading the twentieth century epistemic charge on defining Cyprus was Lawrence Durrell. Lawrence Durrell's memoir *The Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* (1957), is a British author's autobiographical account describing the three years he spent on the island of Cyprus, the interactions he had with Cypriot people, and his opinions on the nature of the Cypriot people and the country's political trajectory. As Durrell so colorfully describes in *Bitter Lemons*, he soon settled in the village of Bellapais, which is located in the mountain range in the Kyrenia district and now part of Turkish occupied Cyprus. In the early 1950s Kyrenia was a popular place for British officials and expats to live (Demetriou 19). Durrell describes the process by which, with the help of Turkish Cypriot estate agent Sabri Tahir "terrestrial rogue of business" (Durrell 45), he acquires a house in the slightly more inconspicuous Bellapais "to see a little further into Cypriot life, to canvass its values at a humbler level" (*Bitter Lemons* 38). Through vivid descriptions of Cyprus's geographic and social aspects, we go with Durrell on his journey of trying to come to terms with where Cyprus belongs, and where he belongs in Cyprus. Because of sentences like "It was time to say good-bye to Europe", marking the beginning of Durrell's journey to Cyprus, the reader might expect that Durrell's work be presented as a neat anthropological study of a country bridging the Arab world and Europe, a country on the cusp of modernity but still comfortable in history. What we see however, is something far more socially dependent and contentious. Durrell's understanding and lengthy description of Cypriots acts as a stand-in for the greater British understanding of Cypriot identity, and consequently, the narrative on which Cypriots based their own identity. The matter of Cypriot identity focuses on the protection of the very identity that was in great part developed as the rejection of being a British colonial subject.

The success of Durrell's novel largely comes from his willingness to displays these two identities side by side. Durrell, through his own perspectives, reveals the dominant colonizing narrative, and through his description of Cypriot people, reveals the development of Cypriot identity. This peek into an otherwise esoteric world becomes available to Durrell through his interactions with Cypriot men. It is revealed through these dialogues that there are indeed, two main identity narratives, but also only two main actors determining them. It is colonial men defining Cypriots on one end, and then opposing them, Cypriot men defining Cypriot identity as a nationalist battle alone *against* any past or future colonizing forces. Contextualized within these two extremes, Cypriot identity is relegated to a very monolithic existence. Missing from the conversation, as is evidenced in Durrell's novel, are narratives that could provide more depth to the determination of Cypriot identity.

Durrell looks in to 1950s - 1970s Cyprus. Greek Cypriots were pitted against Turkish Cypriots, the Cypriot government was unstable, three major powers Greece, Turkey, and Britain were all pulling at the puppet strings of Cypriot actors, and the Cypriot people, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots were, very passionately, trying to protect their own identities. For Greek Cypriots this meant proposing union with Greece and independence from Britain, and for Turkish Cypriots the natural reply was opposition. Of course, most of this was decided by men, who largely make up Durrell's interlocutors. Cyprus politics, are, as Durrell seems to realize, decided and expressed very openly in public by men. It would seem that Durrell expresses these views because they are the only ones that truly matter. However, it is this exclusively patriarchal representation of Cypriot identity and Cypriot objectives that make it easy for Durrell to describe Cypriots as envenomed militants.

Durrell uses the availability of male discourse, and its patriotic and political content, to portray Cypriots as one-dimensional, concerned with an idea of freedom that is only understood as the opposite of their current situation. Durrell consistently contrasts his own level-headed, objective manner of thanking and speaking with the nationalistic conversations of his so called "friends" to assert his dominance. Durrell has several friendships with Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and does his best to show the reader that he truly embedded himself into

Cypriot life. Durrell’s narrative tool is the tailored description of him participating in seemingly natural traditional activities with his native friends. For example, he describes a night of drinking with his friends. One of these scenes occurs in a wine cellar with Clitos. Durrell compares Clitos to a “small boy who is afraid to be left alone in the dark” and his voice to “a gnat attacked by the vapours” (Durrell 42-43) when his wife is calling on him. In one instance, Clitos, Frangos, another man described as a “cornered bull, sheepishly turning his great head this way and that” (Durrell 41) are in a wine cellar and find themselves in a political discussion. Here, Frangos expresses his contempt for the “damned English” (Durrell 39). To placate the men, that he clearly does not view as intelligent or respectable, Durrell lies. Durrell lies so easily telling everyone present that his brother died in the famous battle at Thermopylae during WWII, fighting beside the Greeks against the Germans (Durrell 40), capitalizing on the pride these Greek Cypriots feel for their Hellenism. Durrell’s false revelation gains him respect and acceptance into the circle of “the palikars [brave young men] of all nations” (Durrell 41). Durrell is fully aware of what this lie means, and of how deceived the men would feel if they were to find out the truth. However, with the perfect paternalism of a colonizer, Durrell mocks the intelligence of Cypriot characters both in his deception and description of them. His acceptance into the cohort is built on a complete lie, as he himself notes (Durrell 41). Through actions like this and their documentation Durrell establishes the justice of the paternalistic colonial system based on his “proven” ability to deceive these simple and small-minded people. Durrell’s Cypriots might be well intentioned and jolly, and he is empathetic to them, but ultimately, they are established as Durrell’s subjects in this colonial experiment.

In this characterization of Cypriots, Durrell manipulates an already existing story. A recurring theme is that Cypriot men are presented as heavy drinkers, weak, unaware, and impassioned only by ideas of war. Parts of this are true. Ingrained in Cypriot society is the idea that men are the protectors of their "mother nation" and by extension, all women within. Young men are still conscripted when they turn of age. It is common for fathers to say that their sons become men after being in the army, and for mothers to stop bothering their sons about "household affairs" once they go off to the army. Boys become functioning members of society once their military service acts as a symbol of their willingness to defend Cyprus and Cypriotness. Contributing members of society are those who are allowed to voice their opinions about the future and meaning of what they defend. These are ways in which men are established as the defenders and thus determiners of Cypriot identity against all enemies, against the omniscient presence of some intruding "other". However, "As the tension between 'us' and 'them' demands an answer to the questions 'who are we?', the rigid distinction between 'us' and 'them' overlooks differences within each community and other possible answers to the questions 'who are we?'" (Hadjipavlou 40). This increasing tensions between "us and them" is obvious in Durrell's writing. It is something that he exploits to push forward his characterization of Cypriots as being unyielding and hungry for an ambiguous freedom. Durrell's ability to do this is reliant on "us vs. them" being the main feature of a Cypriot identity born out of Cyprus' colonial history and perpetuated by Cypriots. The result is the second part of Hadjipavlou's statement, "the rigid distinction between 'us' and 'them' overlooks differences within each community and other possible answers to the questions 'who are we?'"

The rigid distinction that both Cypriot male and British male colonizer create between each other leaves no room for the Cypriot woman to provide her vital input towards answering the "who are we question".

Women have also been deeply affected by conflict. However, following a narrative of colonialism, in discourse surrounding Cypriot identity and Cypriot politics (which is usually about which Cypriot identity to protect, perpetuate, and defend), we tend to see the perspective of men, and the much more heterogenous experiences of women are occulted. Under the British, Cypriot women, both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot took on two different roles: she in need of saving, she in need of conquest (Cockburn 49). And it follows that Turkish Cypriot women too, were viewed in such a manner by Greek Cypriot men. Apart from this, Cypriot women are connected in the sharing of other experiences as well: It was homosocially only that Cypriot women could discuss topics related to female sexuality. This ranges to topics of sexual attraction and pursuing relations, to topics of menstruation and miscarriage (Cockburn 119-134). Though this is most obvious in the work of Eve Makis and Christy Lefteri, which I will soon analyze, Durrell's work, in its exclusion of women's voices reveals exactly what is *not* said.

Women are certainly acknowledged as having *a* place in Cypriot society, just not an *important* place when actively deciding the political trajectory of Cyprus. Durrell has many dealings with Sabri, the Turkish Cypriot real-estate agent. One day "Panos brought me the message, smiling at my obvious anxiety, and telling me that Sabri was rather despondent because it now appeared that the house was owned not by the cobbler but by his wife. It had been her dowry, and she herself was going to conduct the sale" (128). Women in Cyprus do have their own property, but it is more often than not the man that handles these holdings and conducts business. We aren't told much more about the situation. Durrell concludes: "With women," said my friend, "it is always a Calvary to argue. A Golgotha…. nevertheless Sabri had decided to go forward with the business" (Durrell 128). In what could possibly have been a passage explaining the role of women and their power, the entire situation is dismissed by making the woman seem impossible and having the men go about their business.

The (nonsymbolic) Cypriot woman, absent as she may be from Durrell's novel and from the public Cypriot voice from the 1950s-1970s, had a role besides supporting the "us vs. them" nationalist narrative. During this period of time, when men became increasingly involved with fighting battles, Cypriot women's roles shifted. When tensions started increasing and men spent more time in coffee shops discussing next steps, when some joined EOKA (the militant organization fighting against the British), women stepped up to fill in. They became mothers and fathers, and educators to the populous regarding what on earth the men were off fighting for. Publicly, in narratives such as Durrell's women were bound by the social structures that allowed them to be mothers and housewives, but forbid them from entering high levels of education, the workforce, and Cypriot politics. Publicly, nothing had changed for the Cypriot woman as a passive and symbolic participant. Privately, the active female redefinition of gender roles and experience of conflict bonded Cypriot women. The experiences that Cypriot women shared were a powerful source of cultural understanding and collaboration within communities. In the context of increasing nationalism, these commonalities became something threatening. Being similar to "Greek sisters" or "Turkish sisters" did a great deal to undermine the ethnic divides that were being drawn by all Cypriot men, and the very cause that they were fighting for.

The kinship among Cypriot women is not highlighted by Durrell or by Cypriot society. Instead, what has been prevalent in literature regarding the women of Cyprus supports the very public narrative of the shrouded Cypriot woman as being the vestigial testament to the effects of war on Cyprus. The Cypriot woman though incredibly active and involved in conflict is described as passive and unmoving, having multiple wars waged *on behalf* of her protection, the forever physical tie between the motherland and motherhood. Both Cypriots and Durrell build this portrait. Durrell participates in ascribing a false identity to women that

> "Were Famagusta altogether without inhabitants it would be less impressive in its desolation than it now is as seen in the twilight—nothing stirring but the owl and the bat, and perhaps here and there, haunting like ghosts the narrow lanes, a few pale fever-stricken women in their Turkish veils and long white mantles, who might well be taken for the last survivors of a city where war, famine and plague had done their worst" (Durrell 341).

Whereas Cypriots themselves use the veiled Cypriot woman image to a "Rally around the flag" effect, or at least "rally around our women" to promote the narrative of "Greek Cypriots against Turkish Cypriots", Durrell points to the "Poor women of Cyprus" as those who have most suffered the effects of Cypriot men's irrational quest for separation from the British.

Durrell also portrays the Cypriot woman as an object of conquest. In one of the of the few instances where Durrell describes Cypriot women he says:

> "The cobbler's wife detached herself from the circle—or tried to, for many a hand clutched at her frock, detaining her for a last-minute consideration which was hissed at her secretively by the family elders. At last, she wrenched herself free and walked boldly across the road, entering Sabri's shrine with a loud "Good morning" spoken very confidently. She was a formidable old faggot, with a handsome self-indulgent face, and a big erratic body. *She wore the white headdress and dark skirt of the village woman, and*

> *her breasts were gathered into the traditional baggy bodice with a drawstring at the waist, which made it look like a loosely furled sail*." (Durrell 132).

The physical description of the woman specifically fits into the national symbolic presentation of the female form, as some that stands in for national duty, but is in no way feminine. By this I mean that the sexuality and agency of women, have been separated from the symbolic woman, whose femininity is only used as a stand in for emblematic ties to the "motherland", "rebirth", "protection". The woman's body is described in almost anthropological terms. Durrell's portrayal of the women in this paragraph alone shows that the paternalistic colonial relationship certainly did not exist for the benefit of women.

What becomes clear is that for Durrell's narrative to be able to stand on its own two legs, women's experiences can't be included. This would disrupt the male-centric political world that he constructed, that supports his version of what Cypriot identity is and what the existing colonial relationship is justified. The same applies to the elision of women's narratives even within Cypriot society. It was necessary to uphold the version of Cypriot identity that clung to male nationalism as being the true remedy for a colonial past and the prevention against a colonial future. The fight against the British was, as many scholars recognize, one of the contributing factors towards the invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish troops in 1974. The Cypriot fight for independence from the British, and alternative proposal of union with Greece, was viewed by Turkey as a threat to the Turkish Cypriot population on the island. Turkey, in defending their illegal invasion and occupation of the island, states that their decision to invade was justified in the attempted protection of this population (Heraclides 72). Though acceptance of this rationale is not shared by all Cypriots, it is impossible to deny a connection between the war of independence against the British and then the tensions between Greek and Turkish

Cypriots. At one point in time, both the British and the Turks (along with Turkish Cypriots) were the enemy.

This othering was supported by that same "us vs. them" narrative. While this isn't the main feature of Durrell's novel, as he left Cyprus amongst the increasing inter-communal tensions, the identity that was created by Cypriots as a response to the British colonizer's presence was the same identity that persevered in the face of a new emerging colonizer. And so, the same narrative had to be upheld. Greek Cypriots this time had to be united in the same goal of preservation of an identity against *two* enemies, the British and the Turks. The identity thus had to be insulated against any possible dissenting opinions that would poke a hole in the new "us vs. them" categorical.

Personal and public narratives alike were insulated from experiences and voices that would challenge this continued definition of Cypriot identity as being fundamentally incompatible with any tolerance of colonialism. This analysis is supported by my own experience. My grandfather is described as a hero, especially in our village. In Tochni in 1974, as I've been told, Greek Cypriots caught wind of the Turkish invasion before it happened and felt it best to round up the Turkish Cypriot men in what used to be a mixed village and hold them in the school. What happened after Turkey invaded, is that all these Turkish Cypriot men went missing, and were presumably killed. The people of Tochni have this event in their history written as "what the good Greek Cypriot men of Cyprus would do to protect their wives and their children." However, if the perspectives of these wives and these children were exposed, perhaps disagreeing with the armed conflict, the efforts and the violence committed by Greek Cypriot men would be invalidated. The loss of the idyllic version of Greek Cypriot village life would be immediate, as would the faith in the nationalist narrative of us vs. them. Similarly, if Greek

Cypriot women captured during the invasion and raped by Turkish soldiers would speak out, their Turkish Cypriot women compatriots would likely sympathize, and very publicly, the heroic picture of Turkish Cypriot men would be shattered.

Cyprus has never been stable, and it has never had a linear history, but it desperately clings to the construction of strict ideological divides between Greek and Turkish Cypriots that have become based on abstract morality instead of true ideological differences. If the moral failing or hypocrisy of each side was to be exposed by the shared experiences of Greek and Turkish Cypriot women, or even Armenian and Maronite women in Cyprus, Cypriots wouldn't have one solid narrative to cling to. Yet the truth remains that rape forms a distinct memory in the collective history of *all* Cypriot women, which points to a severe flaw in all versions of identity constructed. The colonial narrative was a civilizing mission, yet the rape of women by more intelligent, eloquent, British soldiers was widespread. The aim of the Cypriot fight was the protection of a Cypriot identity symbolized by Cypriot women, yet Cypriot women were not protected (be they Turkish, Maronite, or Greek Cypriot). You see, this one experience alone, this tragic experience, points to the severe historical misgivings that nationalist and colonial narratives have perpetuated. The idea was that working in an "us vs. them" would protect Cypriot identity and Cypriot people. However, Cypriot women were not protected, nor did they identify with that identity.

This omission of women's voice is not just something obvious to those with an insider perspective such as me. Durrell's memoir is valuable because it traces the beginnings of the Cypriot identity that made it necessary for dissenting opinions to be hushed and furthermore evidences that polarizing effect that this omission had on Cypriot society both among Cypriots themselves and within a larger global context. Durrell documents the circumstances that led to the elided gendered history that exists but has not been brought to light. History, however constructed it may be, has a bad habit of shaping identity, especially national identity, and national identity in turn shapes politics. The absence of a history that includes these discordant narratives has resulted in a Cypriot identity that is incomplete and a public political character that misrepresents the desires of the Cypriot people. The fact that Durrell's account of Cyprus could so easily not include female perspectives and experiences *apart from* narratives of nationalism and colonialism reveals a problem that Cypriot people have to fix in order to avoid being so easily homogenized. Women are privy to a wealth of information. The impact of conflict is highly gendered, and during the 1950s-1970s in Cyprus, women became educators, workers, household heads, and were united by this restructuring of Cypriot society. However, what Durrell and Cypriot identity publicly focuses on in terms of women instead, are the roles that women took on in support of a new identity revolving around the establishment of patriarchal nationalism as the way back to normalcy and unity.

Chapter 5: Romancing the Cypriot Woman: Love and War in Andreas Koumi's *The Cypriot*

"You never trust any man, *any* man, not family, not cousins, no man. All they want to do is take advantage. You can never let them think they have the power." (Georgia)

The Cypriot (2006) is a tale of the forbidden love between a Greek Cypriot man and a Turkish Cypriot woman set in 1950's Cyprus. The novel follows a young man Andonis and his transformation in matters of the heart as well as in matters of honor. Andonis is forced to choose between his interest in a Turkish-Cypriot girl in the village, a forbidden relation, and his acceptance within his own social circles. The characters that Koumi introduces to represent externalizations of Andonis' internal struggles, all voicing their perspectives on the relationship. Koumi's novel contains several elements of interest to someone trying to understand the connection between gender roles in Cyprus' sociopolitical identity, as this period of time marked the end of British rule and the heightening of ethnic tensions.

Koumi makes the conscious choice to write a love story. Love, however, is merely part of the mise en scene while themes of nationalism and colonialism stay front and center throughout one man's quest to discover his own identity and place in society. A love story, usually a narrative with expressed themes of love, womanhood, and sexuality, is thus not an apt categorization of Koumi's novel. Additionally, the co-main character, the woman in the relationship, is not given any special role or voice. The novel instead is a Bildungsroman, tracking only a young man's experience in this romantic relationship. Koumi sets up the possibility for a quintessential love story nicely.[5] Boy meets girl at local festival, they begin courting, there are familial pressures, and they eventually end up together in the end. This all is part of Koumi's narrative, but it neither the focus nor the reality of the situation. The narrative becomes boy meets girl, boy is Greek Cypriot and girl is Turkish Cypriot, their relationship becomes representative but still overshadowed by the context of the heightened political tensions between the two groups, relationship becomes irrelevant until they somehow reunite decades later. Furthermore, the reader is relayed all of this information by the male protagonist only and the journey becomes his alone. The woman's perspective and experience are omitted from both the love narrative, as well as the greater development of national events. This could very much be Koumi's way of accurately representing the role of women in Cypriot society at this time, as symbols of what needs to be protected in a national struggle for independence. Alternatively, Koumi could in fact have thought that the romance narrative *was* a good enough inclusion of women's voices. Regardless, although Koumi picks an archetype that theoretically makes space for a female voice, it does not come through. Female narratives, romance included, are swallowed up by the two greater discourses around nationalism and colonialism. Furthermore, this allows for the public recognition of women's roles, experiences, and issues only within these contexts. Lastly, Koumi, in erasing the main female voice in it, allows his narrative to have a rather happy ending, which would not be feasible had that voice been included. Given what attempts to do in this novel, which is describe the development of Cypriot society and life during the 1950's-1970's, the ending is of course a statement about the larger Cypriot issue. The exclusion of Cypriot women's voices leads to conclusions, reconciliations, and decisions that don't adequately consider all experiences. [6]

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[5] While one might be tempted to categorize this novel as a "Romeo and Juliet" archetype, Koumi's artful description of Cyprus' zeitgeist forces the reader to contemplate the meaning of this relationship on a different scale. and reveals to us why exactly the bi-ethnic love story that he crafts is something much more telling about Cypriot identity rather than the stuff of romance. Furthermore, the Romeo and Juliet narrative is not appropriate to apply to this novel. This archetype, obvious to an American and British audience, is not a popular point of reference when it comes to Cypriot works or culture. Specifically, the idea of a Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot pursuing a romantic relationship is so forbidden that it is not popularly represented in Cypriot media nor literature. Several movies attempting to do so have actually been banned in Cyprus. One such film is *Akamas* by Panicos Chrysanthou. Many Cypriots living in Cyprus have not seen the film. This is largely due to the Cypriot government's actions, which effectively banned the film in Cyprus (but not in Europe).

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[6] Koumi also authored "The need for a single Cypriot voice in the UK" (Koumi, Andreas.Cyprus Mail; Nicosia [Nicosia]12 Apr 2009). In this piece, Koumi expresses the need for unity between Greek and Turkish Cypriots abroad. The differences between these two groups leads them to "cancelling each other out" in terms of making their demands heard. This does urge us to consider that Koumi's consciousness of the need for one Cypriot voice means in his own work. Does he believe that he *does* fully account for one Cypriot voice within his own novel, or is he, as I am, highlighting the deletion of one.

Koumi takes us back to 1950's Cypriot society and there begins his adventure. The reader is transplanted into what could easily be any Cypriot village and a nuclear family composed of Andonis, his brother, and two parents. As most Cypriots know, family of course extends beyond the nucleus, and includes Andonis' godbrother Nigos and his god sister Stella. In Cyprus, Andonis finds himself at odds with the increasingly nationalistic and segregated Cypriot society. Often Andonis says he wants to "escape the family, the village, and the tensions" (63). He finally finds an escape in his romantic pursuit of a Turkish Cypriot girl, Funda.

Funda, the other half of this couple, is the relatively poor Turkish Cypriot girl, living in the village with her disabled brother, mother, and father. We don't really know much about her apart from that. We find out in time, through the perspective of Andonis, that she had become pregnant with Andonis' child, but had married another man to protect herself from inquiries and to be able to provide for the child since Andonis left for England. Her husband then dies. Apart from these necessary plot points, Funda's life remains a mystery to the reader. She is referred to in the novel as the object of Andonis' affection and the female body on which the Turkish Cypriot vs. Greek Cypriot struggle plays out. We do not read about Funda falling in love with Andonis and being in a sexual relationship for the first time. We don't hear about the pressure that she feels to get married, of her getting pregnant and then raising Andonis' child with another man. We don't know what she thinks or feels about anything. In fact, we barely hear Funda speak at all.

Ironically, Funda's voice is what captures Andonis' attention. We never really do hear that voice again until the end. Andonis first meets her while she is sitting prettily singing at a village fair and this is the image that he freezes in his mind. There are two main songs featured within the novel that Funda sings. The first is "psintri vasilija mou".

“My sweet and slender basil, my marjoram so fair,
You are the one who’ll tempt me to leave my mother’s care”

This is the first song that Andonis hears Funda singing, and he was “entranced”. He explains that the song was one his grandmother Maria used to sing as well. The song can serve dual purposes. It first of all foreshadows Funda’s role as a “temptress” sweet and slender who is portrayed by all the villagers as she who tempts Andonis to not only leave his physical mother’s care, but also to go against his “mother” Greece. The second song that Funda sings throughout the novel is “kinise i gerakina”

“Off she set, Miss Yeragina,
To the well to fetch cold water. Drun-drun, drun-drun-drun-drun.
As her bracelets rattle on”

This tune is about a “buzzard”, or rather, a girl that bears incredibly physiognomic resemblance to the bird. Legend says that "Buzzard" was a real female person who lived around 1860 in Nigrita, Greece. If the story was true, the song recounts a girl drowning in the well as she went to fetch water. This was a very common chore for Cypriot women, to walk miles and miles to a well to fetch water. The possibility and fear of falling in is a real one, not just the chorus of a silly song. Neither Koumi nor Andonis bring attention to this. Actually, no man really brings attention to this. The thing is, Koumi is right. These songs are indeed a feature of most Cypriot’s childhood. They are also traditionally sung by men. Men tell these female stories. And the result is what? That none of us really know what on earth they’re referring to unless we finally ask another woman that learned from a long line of oral history the true meaning of the song.

Funda’s songs are expression of the shared female history of Cyprus and unity of female experience. However, they are retold by men. They are observed by Andonis and then translated and relayed to the reader by Koumi, neither of whom probe at what is stressed within the novel. We are introduced to the fact that Funda sings because it is what draws Andonis in and what helps him notice her beauty. Funda is just a mythical siren that draws a wealthy, smart, good Greek Cypriot boy to his demise. That is the male narrative's portrayal of her. But that same male-piloted narrative overlooks that what Funda was singing, is about the plight of female history of Cyprus, of falling down wells and having your story retold as a song in festivals by men. This is something that Andonis never realizes. When Andonis finally returns to Cyprus he encounters Funda by accident. She is described as a young shawled Muslim woman walking past him. The man Andonis is with says "She still sings. She's with child, her betrothed is murdered and she still sings. Why?" Andonis responds, "she won't be denied that."

Funda goes on singing:

"and she fell into the well.
And she gave an almighty yell.
Drun-drun, drun-drun-drun-drun.
As her bracelets rattle on"

This exchange is a brief indicator of the gravity of the song, a hint that it is something that this beaten down woman holds as her last weapon. But neither Andonis nor his companion recognize this. Andonis goes on living his own epic, and Funda's voice once again fades into the background. Andonis, who loved this woman deeply, never realized what she was singing about though that was the exact song that she was singing when the two first met (67). Women's expression throughout the novel is ultimately connected to women's world that is neither understood nor properly valued by men. Funda sings, and her songs are beautiful, but they fade into the background or just become tied to something superficial like her beauty. Funda is a woman instrumentalized for a man’s sexual and political benefit. The true meaning of this intergenerational public female narrative is discounted and relegated to the world of entertainment and relayed by men.

Instead, what we know about Funda, though she is a main character, is revealed to us the same way that it is regarding every other woman. We come to know about Funda through masculine descriptions of her. In general, Funda’s experiences are not emphasized unless they are described or dictated by the men in her life, including Andonis, her father, and her brother Zeki. The presented Funda is nothing but a shadow of the real one. The parts of Funda’s relationship with Andonis that truly concern her exist liminally. Funda, by being in a relationship with Andonis, risks her honor and name in a way that Andonis doesn’t. Andonis is not labeled a whore and he is not ruined by being with a Turkish girl. Funda faces a different kind of stigma. One night, Funda and Andonis are together when Nigos comes around looking for Andonis. The couple stays silent and here’s the following from Nigos “We should try the neighbourhood of the Turk. Maybe he’s gone to visit his whore” (102). Even so, Funda is the one that thinks of the consequences. We see that even her fantasies of her possible relationship with Andonis she “imagined how she might feel if Andonis was banished from the village, for loving her, for being a traitor” (125). However, this is somehow seen as a lack of resolve. When discussing the relationship with some other young men, one of them, Marios, tells Andonis “…You’re so love-struck these problems would count for nought if only she were willing to share your dreams. Share your quest for meaning. *But how can she? When she’s a female; with female weaknesses and female intuitions”* (199). The men do not consider that Cypriot women have to negotiate so much more about their own identities.

Andonis even goes so far as to shush Funda the few times that she does voice her opinions. Funda repeatedly asks Andonis to be more careful in courting her, as it puts her reputation and life in danger. First she says "…you call this safe? I love you so much, but it's the middle of the night, Please, Andoni[7]. You must go home" (164). Andoni responds by adamantly professing his love for her. Funda again says "Please Andoni. You don't know the trouble you're causing me" (164). Andoni says "Forgive me, Funda. I mean no harm". Andonis "Put his hands to his ears" and said "No, don't say that…" (164). Funda's concerns prove to be correct. When Funda's father finds out about his daughter's relationship, slaps her across the face. Her mother cries "Not her face, not her face" (127). The father tries to hit her again, until Funda's crippled brother stands in front of her and blocks their father. This interaction reveals so much. First of all, we see that what is most important is Funda's beauty. In a daughter's beauty or marketability there is a great amount of opportunity not only for her but for the family she comes from. We also are exposed to the harsh truth that a man, no matter his disability, still has a more powerful presence that a woman, no matter her strength. Funda and her mother both protested to the father's violence, but only when another man told him to stop did he do so. Unable to escape from the contextualization of women as pawns and symbols in Cyprus politics, the protagonist's lover, Funda, like all the other women within the novel, is described in terms of the male dominated activities and opinions that surround her, and subject to their decisions.

The few female narratives that are emphasized by Koumi are described as being discounted or viewed as irrational by the public. As Hadjipavlou writes "Appeals to women's professed irrationality, special responsibilities, and intuitive and caring nature kept many women out of work and formal politics" (24). Women are certainly present in Koumi's novel, however all of them, even the woman that makes up half of the romantic narrative that is supposedly the focus of the novel, are not given a voice to express their experiences. Their identity is described *for* them, by men, relegating them to existence in these predetermined spaces.

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[7] Spelling varies from Andonis to Andoni. Leaving off the -s is likely indicative of more familiarity between Andonis and the person addressing him. It is a shortening used colloquially in the Cypriot dialect.

There very much is a functional point to the exclusion of women's voice in the Cypriot narrative. This was my main point in my analysis of Durrell's *Bitter Lemons.* Women's voices would confuse the entire nation-centered identity that was being constructed at the time. At this point in time, Cyprus is trying to determine its sovereignty and cease to be a British colony. This results in some Cypriots wanting to join with "Greece", the motherland, and others that want an independent Cyprus. Echoing actual history, this changing political climate also changed what used to be a harmonious existence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island, as a union with Greece would pose a threat to the Turkish Cypriot minority on the island. Any perspective such as Funda's that would challenge the seemingly incompatible natures of coexistences of Turkish and Greek Cypriots would be dangerous. Therefore, the Cypriot woman gets silenced unless she's saying something that supports the by now tired "us vs. them" dichotomy.

Koumi's narrative reveals that this is systemic. All the women in the novel get "shushed", not just Funda. Among the other women referenced are Andonis' grandmother, Maria, a temperate woman that favored the union of Cyprus and emphasized the similarities between the country's two ethnic groups. She becomes representative of the country's past. Representing Cyprus' present and future are Andonis' mother, Stella, his god sister, and Funda.

Andonis' mother Irini is the epitome of the Greek Cypriot women, described as devout, proper, and also irrational. She also embodies the archetype of the waiting woman, or what Maria Roussou, in "War in Cyprus: patriarchy and the Penelope myth" calls the "Penelope figure", which I explain more in depth in the next chapter (Roussou 31). The crux of the role is that a Penelope figure forever waits for the men in her life to return to her, from war, from conflict, or figuratively from being concerned with other matters of the nation. Irini is faithful, nurturing, and given no importance besides her role as a housewife and mother. Koumi describes an incident. A fox wounds one of the family chickens. Koumi writes about Irini's reactions "She slapped her cheek and shook her head. Tears were pouring down her face 'My God, what have we done to deserve such retribution?" 'Hush, woman!' commanded her husband, bending over to scoop up the bird in both hands. Then without hesitation, he snapped its neck. Irini gasped and gabbed Marios for support" (97). It is not that Michalis is being particularly insensitive towards her or inhumane. This is the standard of masculinity that does exist in Cyprus and it lives within the popular narrative that men do what needs to be done and the women that cower behind them. When Irini is told to "hush", it is because it is already assumed that she has nothing of particular value to add to the situation, and that what she would say would just be something irrational. By labeling Irini as irrational, Koumi, Cypriot society, and the reader are allowed to pass over shocking events such as the following: a British soldier or "englezos" comes and demands that they take the family dog. In their accent they say "skeelo… We want skeelo". Irini does not understand, misinterpreting the word for wood, or "xilon" (229). The englezos replies "You stupid bitch. It's your dog I'm after. Skeelo! Why can't you speak English?" (229).

Here we see that Greek Cypriot women were often the receivers of anger of whichever group was politically opposed to their men[8]. And yet, there is no discussion that tracks the opinions of women regarding this matter within the novel. There is no dialogue commenting on the violence that women receive from colonizers that they cannot even communicate with. Still, women often times bear the brunt of the tension between British present and Cypriots. As Cockburn describes the violation of the female body in wartime is a very publicized and recognizable part of the collective memory of women, even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Greece. “In the violence between these majorities and minorities, as Greece pursued its expansionist project, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated and Kemal Attaturk built the modern Turkish state, rape was endemic. These rapes haunt the collective memory. For Greek and Greek Cypriot women, ‘the Turk’ is the archetypal violator, as is ‘the Greek’ for Turkish and Turkish Cypriot women” (Cockburn 77). Though the memory of rape haunts many Cypriot women like fictional Irini, Koumi glosses over it, as do his male characters.

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[8] This actually was the case for *all* Cypriot women, but Koumi's novel doesn't support this. The mistreatment of *Cypriot* women is often reduced to the abuse and rape of *Greek-Cypriot* women and was represented as the logical repetition of the Turk's barbarous history. However, Turkish-Cypriot women suffered too, as did women belonging to the ethnic minorities of Cyprus. Cockburn documents "Layik Topcan Mesutoğlu told me that Turkish Cypriot women had felt seriously at risk of violence from the deeply enraged and militant Greek Cypriot forces against whom they were as yet entirely undefended. "I still remember how afraid I was. I was afraid the Greeks would come and rape. That was the main thing I was afraid of…." (77). The fears of *all* Cypriot women have at their root the violence generated and perpetuated by men.

Stella takes on the role of the Greek Cypriot women needing “saving” or “protecting”, the Cypriot woman on whose behalf the fighting takes place. To Andonis, Stella is a girl that is in love with him, but that he simply does not want but still feels the need to protect. This extends to later in her life when Andonis finds out that Stella’s husband beats her. This section goes by without much explanation. Andonis jumps to the stage of exacting retribution instead. We never find out how Stella is doing, how bad the abuse is, etc. That is adult Stella. However, she experienced the same as a child. In one instance a British soldier named Bartlett is watching a local festival and admiring the girls. Bartlett “had even taken the arm of the pretty one (young girl) with a mole on her cheek, and enquired whether she might like to join him in the back row” (Koumi160). Bartlett viewed this as a “harmless gesture, a compliment even”. However, to his shock, “far from being flattered the girls appeared terrified. The one he’d touched screamed, her plump friend kicked and pinched him” (161). It is revealed to us later that the young girl in question was Stella. The way we find out is through Nigos' angry and sudden appearance in Andonis' workshop. Andonis asks where all the young men were last night, perhaps hearing that there might have been some commotion against the British, to which Nigos replies "We were protecting Stella" (174). When Andonis challenges this excuse with disbelief, Nigos fumes "It just goes to show how little respect you have for Stella. Or for any of our girls" (174). Though we saw that Stella, kicking and pinching the soldier, was perfectly capable of handling herself or warding off the unwanted advance, her "distress" becomes a male cause for action, a chance to prove male honor. Stella becomes one of "our girls", one of the Greek Cypriot girls that needs protection, one of the Cypriot women that becomes the symbol of a national rallying cry against the Brits and then against the Turks. In this one instance alone,[9] we never find out what Stella herself was thinking or feeling, but rather, the way that the interaction was evaluated and acted upon by two different men.

A great deal of Cypriot social and political practices rests on the pretense of "respecting" and "protecting" women like Stella. John Burke, in *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis of 1974* says "images of women in mourning are placed at the symbolic heart of the collective figuration of Greek Cypriot suffering. This universal sign is drawn on throughout the world, from antiquity to the present, as the female form acts as both the symbolic carrier of the future of the nation, and ultimately that of its contemporary suffering.[10] This figuration…can create an 'obligation' among the young to remember the consequences of the invasion and occupation. To forget would not only desecrate the memory of those who were lost, but would offend those wives and mothers that remain in this perpetual state of mourning" (Burke 98). Hadjipavlou notes "In the Greek Cypriot community many posters used in public spaces after the 1974 Turkish invasion depicted Greek Cypriot refugee women weeping and holding terrified babies of photographs of missing loved ones, all embodiments of the collective pain and suffering of Greek Cypriot refugees" (37).

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[9] We see this theme play out again when we Andonis runs into Stella in England, realizing that his Cypriot identity and past isn't something that he can escape. When Andonis finds out that Stella's husband beats her, and immediately asks to talk to the husband, the fierce public defense that a Cypriot woman is supposed to have of her husband comes through. She *yells*, Koumi writes. "Don't tell me what my husband should and shouldn't do, she *yelled.* You have no right…I look after myself. Understand? When Andoni challenges her once again and offers to talk to the husband, Stella says "No please, Andoni. He's a good man. Honestly he is. It's my fault. *I nag him too much. I lash him with my tongue.* A man can only take so much" (74). What power a Cypriot women's tongue must have! But alas, this power is only emphasized when convenient. Stella doesn't use this supposedly loud voice to speak out against her abuser. When it comes to defending her husband, his honor, his reputation, Stella thinks herself to be loud, and the way Koumi writes supports this. Simultaneously, Cypriot women are ascribed with loudness and powerlessness, depending on the context.

It appears that the women of the novel, in Koumi's portrayal of Cypriot society, are fated to have themselves defined by men. They are deeply complex characters; however, apart from these main roles that they occupy, the irrational mother, the young Cypriot woman in need of saving, the Turkish Cypriot temptress, they are not allowed to fully develop outside of predetermined context. This becomes painfully noticeable when the figure in the novel that should theoretically have as much power as Andonis does not have her own voice. Instead, what Funda gets is a happy ending that doesn't account for her pain and suffering, that does nothing to acknowledge the pain she has been singing about from start to finish. Koumi ends his novel in a love story. Funda and Andonis meet again:

> "They fell into each other's arms and, as their lips met, the years melted away. And all at once they were transported back to a magical, mythical time. A type when all things were

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[10] Burke, in his work on the reconstruction of Cypriot identity through imagery used in educational texts says the following "Within this highly politicize process of 'rewriting the past' therefore, several organizations have a vested interest in 'forgetting' or marginalizing certain aspects of Greek Cypriot history" (92). Part of the imagery that I have personally been exposed to is that which urges young Cypriots to "rally around" the image of the older Cypriot woman crying because of the loss of her family members.

> possible. A time of joy and hope, laughter and song, wisdom and love. A time that passed" (277).

How lovely this would be indeed. How gratifying it would be for those that have suffered most in Cyprus, its women, to get their romanticized happy endings.

In Cyprus, the main question that Andonis is asked is revealed to us by Mihalis, Andonis' father: "'But I ask you again sir, insisted Mihalis. 'What is our identity? To whom does an island belong that has seen so many peoples, ideas, religions and cultures pass through'?" (118). This is applied both throughout the novel both personally and politically. However, women are not asked the same identity question. Women's personal experiences matter as part of something much bigger. A dalliance with a Greek Cypriot boy means betrayal of their own community; thus, it becomes increasingly more difficult for them to express their experiences without fear of backlash. This question hangs over all Cypriot's heads, but only some are given the opportunity to answer it. Years later, Andonis says to a friend, "But my people have already created songs and stories and poetry full of beauty and meaning. It's just that no one's ever taken the trouble to listen" (Koumi 141). Throughout Cyprus' long history, this has remained true. As subjects, no one listened to Cypriots and silenced their truths. Now, as free men and women, Cypriots still keep themselves as subjects because they deny the wealth of information that women have that could free them from the shackles of monolithic definitions of identity. However, men do not listen to Cypriot women. Instead, they script what they believe Cypriot women should say, ignore what they sing out, and leave the real stories out of Cyprus' constructed history and identity. The body of the Cypriot women is the silent endurer of the effects of conflict.

Chapter 6: Mommy Issues: matriarchal lines and misunderstandings in Eve Makis' *Eat, Drink and Be Married.*

"You don't want to be like me."

"Why can't you learn from my mistakes?"

"You are doing the same things your mother did *said disapprovingly*"

-Georgia

Eve Makis' novel *Eat, Drink and Be Married* (2011) is a coming-of-age story of a young Greek Cypriot girl, Anna. Anna is a relatable character, trying to find her place in society as part of a middle-class immigrant family in England. This novel focuses on Anna's life at home with her family leading up to the period of time where she will leave to pursue her studies (she hopes). The family relationships that are most highlighted are those within Anna's matriarchal line. Anna struggles to negotiate her seemingly rebellious personal identity with the scripted life that her mother has laid out for her. While doing so, Anna discovers that she is not as different from her mother as she had thought, and that her experiences, struggles, and independence are common to the women within her family. The novel has an optimistic ending: Anna, her mother, and the other female characters in the book come to understand each other better, realizing that their preconceived ideas about the role of women are not ones that they actually believe. Tensions are revealed as the byproduct of misunderstandings; once the women start expressing themselves instead of masculinist ideals of womanhood, they realize that the gender roles that they occupy and tell others to follow don't match up with their true experiences. Makis shows that existing masculine narratives are often so overpowering that Cypriot women find themselves supporting their maintenance rather than their shared female issues.

The novel caught my attention because of its title, which to any Cypriot woman, very clearly sets out the expectations for one's future. In the acknowledgements the author writes, "I thank my mother…who will remain happily oblivious to the contents of the book and the character she inspired until the Greek version comes out and then I'm in trouble." My dear Eve, isn't it the fate of all Greek Cypriot women to be simultaneously terrified and in awe of their mothers? Why is that? Makis' dedication and the narrative itself are testament to this chapter's argument: that in Greek Cypriot matriarchal lines, there is a particular tension between mothers and daughters. Makis suggests that tension exists because *all* women are unfamiliar with the experiences that unite them but instead, mostly hear about patriarchally approved notions of femininity from each other. What unites the women at the end is their much-needed expression of the common female experiences that weigh on them and unite them.

If one of the main tensions in the novel is between Anna and her mother, Tina and her own mother share the same problems. So do Tina and her sister Miriam. Anna describes this very simply by saying that there are two possible versions of her life, one being 'Anna's Dream,' and the other being "The Anna Dream" imagined by her mother. "*The Anna Dream* would have ten-pound notes trailing the hem of a bulbous wedding dress followed by a life of simple domesticity" (Makis 215). Tina believes that "The best education a woman can get, she insists, is in the home and not behind a desk. *What good is a woman who she no cook?"* (Makis 15). Anna, on the other hand, dreams "of escaping the shop, breaking the mould, absconding to a place of higher education" (Makis 15). There is a tension between the traditional and the progressive. The traditional role of women is characterized by domesticity and includes childbearing, cooking abilities, and homemaking. The Cypriot root of this conception is in nationalism. Those in charge of scripting popular political thought (men), emphasize the role of women as the living forms of the values of the nation, and therefore the national identity.

In the 1950s through the 1970s, the Cypriot woman was conditioned to think that her individual life was primarily valuable to perpetuate the generational line. Womanhood was reframed as inherent "motherhood", and therefore the force behind the birth of the next generation of Cypriots that would help fight for national self-determination. Hadjipavlou notes "…most older Greek Cypriot married women focused their pleasure on their children and the gratification they derived from being 'good', sacrificial mothers' (110). Turkish Cypriot women were bound by the same or similar patriarchal structures. Though Cypriot women like Tina didn't consider themselves oppressed, their existences are very much scripted. This script is what Anna fights against.

Tina's script is expressed in terms of disapproval, the expression of what women should *not* do. For example, Anna and Tina butt heads about how a woman should look, including what a woman should wear and what body type she should have. Anna observes, "In her day being thin was unfashionable, meant you were too poor to eat" (Makis 30). Furthermore, Tina "stylistically…is the bastion of stereotypical femininity. She does not approve of women clad in male accoutrements, trousers and clumpy shoes" (40). This matches up the ideas that women of Tina's generation were inculcated with. Given that the role of a woman is primarily seen as a reproductive vessel, a homemaker in all possible ways, anything that retracts from this, such as a woman presenting herself as a man, is blasphemous to Tina. It goes against the only identity of femininity that she knows. In this context, being too skinny does not only mean that you were too poor to eat, which reflects badly upon your family's socioeconomic status. Rather, it signifies that a skinny woman might be too "fragile" to bear child, which decreases her overall value as this is her primary role.

Descriptions of women's bodies reflect patriarchal concerns of domesticity and cultural stability. At one point, Tina's husband and Miriam's husband are talking to a female neighbor described in the following manner through Anna's eyes and the observations of her female relatives as a "middle-aged brunette with heavy make-up and high heels, wearing a jersey dress drawn tight around a saggy bottom and heavy breasts" (93). Anna makes this observation almost sounding like she is objectifying the neighbor. She describes the woman in unusually physical terms. As a Cypriot woman, I can offer a possible explanation for this. Because we are told from a very young age to be this image of femininity, we at times almost adopt a male gaze, seeing women in terms of their functionality and sex only. The rhetoric that accompanies this has become so prevalent in Cypriot society that it is hard to even separate thoughts from such overarching ideas. The result is that women also describe and criticize other women through this disconcerting lens of "protecting the integrity", be it cultural, ethnic, or even genetic integrity of the group. This phenomenon is part of Raewyn Connell's gender theory. Connell proposed that men receive rewards as participants in male gender orders, and that this takes the form of status, command and material assets, or "patriarchal dividends" (162). Women can become participants in receiving patriarchal dividends as well by supporting the patriarchal status quo. These benefits, often salient to women's survival in patriarchal societies, can cause women to turn against other women or actors that do not espouse the same patriarchy-supporting narrative, or have been labeled as the "other" by the men in charge. Feminist and writer Audre Lorde introduced this as "horizontal hostility", a competition between members of the same subjugated group which diverts anger from the subjugators pitting woman against woman for a bigger slice of the pie (Lorde 20-24). Makis shows this in the following exchange:

> "That's our neighbor," Miriam says. "Wife of a surgeon."
>
> "Yiayia pulls a witchy, disapproving face. "I don't care whose wife she is, she wears too much make-up."
>
> "They say she's slept with a legion of unsuspecting local men."
>
> "Who can blame the men when she dresses like that?" Tina says. (93)

Such a woman poses a threat to the domestic family structure and the social order it engenders. Tina and Miriam blame social disorder solely on the sexual promiscuity of the woman. [11]Why is this? The masculine identity, because of its encapsulation as the public and physical force behind the honorable fight for the protection of Cypriot identity, has very much become impermeable. When men are protected by this valiant fight for the "honor" and "protection" of the collective culture and identity, female sexuality is deemed to be the cause of social upheaval. Promiscuous women stray from their purpose of being the publicly *symbolic* (albeit passive) maintainers of Cypriot identity. They do not fit the role of mother, of homemaker, of pure woman that needs to be protected. They do not adequately make themselves impervious to doubts regarding the national cause.

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[11] This phenomenon is one shared by many Middle Eastern societies. It is the systematic blaming of female sexuality for social upheaval. This is known as *fitna*. Fitna is described as chaos, a threat to the social order. [In

Tina consistently expresses disapproval of appearances that attract male attention, particularly the hair color, boyfriends, and smoking habits of English girls. Her son Tony dates these girls, and "Tina views her son's promiscuity as a natural part of a young man's life before he settles down. The more girlfriends he has now, the less likely he is to stray in the future, the better husband he will be for the dark-eyed daughter-in-law who inhabits her dreams." Yet she disapproves of these girls who might be "loose" with their "virtue." Anna admits that her mother can be "disturbingly misogynistic at times, quick to blame women for indiscretions requiring mutual consent" (93).

The basis of gender roles, femininity, and sexuality that form Tina's opinions are in large part rooted in and revealed to us via the discussion of Greek and Cypriot mythology. She has long standing mythological, literary and oral constructions of Cypriot women. The goddess

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Indonesian and Farsi, fitnah.] (Hélie & Hoodfar, X). Vivienne Wee, in "Politicization of Bodies in Indonesia" describes fitna as social disorder arising from the wrongful arousal of passion and clarifies that it is attributed only to women, as if they can arouse men's sexual desires but not vice versa. (Hélie & Hoodfar, 31). Wee asserts that in history "certain political interests were served by constructing a threat of national collapse due to sexual immorality", and that in Indonesian history this led to "the idea that the deviant conduct is symptomatic of a larger malaise– the idea that women as autonomous citizens become immoral, which thus requires alteration of the very basis of women's political participation, leading to the replacement of women's organizations by state-sponsored wives' organizations" (Hélie & Hoodfar, 26).

Aphrodite is the most well-known symbol of Cyprus.[12] Initially, Aphrodite was presented in Greek mythology as an incredibly sexual being, with minimal associations to maternity and fertility (Bolger & Serwint 320). Homer's early hymns reference the goddess' deep antipathy for the motherhood:

> But for me this will be a great disgrace among the immortal gods for all days everlasting because of you. Before they continually feared my words and wiles, as ever I made all the gods mingle with mortal women; for all minds were tamed by me. But now indeed no longer will my mouth be able to boast of this among the immortals, since I greatly erred, Wretch, most unblameworthy, having gone out of my mind, and I put a child under my belt having lain with a mortal. As for him, when indeed he first sees the light of the sun, deep-bosomed mountain Nymphs will raise him. (ll. 251– 57)

Greek Cypriot women rarely name their daughters Aphrodite. My own mother told me that it was because she was a flighty woman, that would entrap men with her beauty[13]. The free and sexual Cypriot woman that existed apart from and in spite of patriarchal constructs has always been a symbolic threat to the established social structures of Cyprus. Instead, women are more commonly named Maria, after the virgin Mary, Demetra, after Demeter the goddess of the harvest. As Stephanie Budin writes in "Creating a Goddess of Sex", "This tendency to separate sexuality from divinity, and thus to deny the inherent power within sexuality, is especially prominent in the study of the development of Cypriot religion" (Bolger & Serwint 315). However, Aphrodite remains the official symbol of Cyprus. Her bust and long flowing hair is found on many postcards and thousands of tourists visit “Aphrodite’s Rock” every year to see where the goddess supposedly emerged naked from the froth of the waves.

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[13] There was also a trend towards the naming of children with Christian names only as religion became a more prominent feature of Cypriot life.

Anna confides that Tina has hung a poster of Aphrodite in the restaurant. “Her palace outside Paphos was a brothel of sorts, where virgins would sleep with strangers before marriage, in honour of the goddess. *Ierodoules* they were called — holy servants — the ancient word for prostitute” (Makis 151). Anna says, “Tina would refute such unsavoury associations with her island home” (151). Rather, Tina participates in the worship of St. Fanourious. Greek Cypriot women bake a cake in the name of the mother of St. Fanourios whenever they need something to be found (205). Yet Anna tells us the mother was a “sexually promiscuous woman, who spread idle gossip and was quick to criticize others. To teach her a lesson her son took the form of a handsome stranger with whom his mother quickly fell in love. When St. Fanourios revealed his true identity, his mother realize the error of her ways” (206). Tina likes to believe that Aphrodite is just the goddess of beauty and love, and that Agios Fanourios’ mother was a chaste woman. Anna writes “…girls of Tina’s generation got married before their hormones kicked in. Sex was a rude awakening, a trauma. Tina has always stressed the supremacy of the virgin bridge and believes chastity, that fragile strip of the mucus membrane, is the finest quality a young woman can possess. She grew up in an era when brides would save their bloody bed sheets to show their female relatives” (112).

Tina prefers a mythologized version of the Cypriot woman Maria Roussou calls the “Penelope figure.” Just as Penelope waited for Odysseus’ return from fighting, all the while chaste, patient, and honorable, Cypriot women are encouraged to do the same (31). This is just one of the archetypes that Cypriot women are encouraged to become and molded into. “Cypriot women [14]are encouraged to follow the example of the *Panagia,* the mother of Christ, and other female saints such as Helen and Marina, who symbolize women as chaste, loving, and invariably sacrificing themselves to their husbands, their children, to God and society" (Roussou 31). While the Panagia and Penelope publicly provide women like Tina with positive examples of what to be like, figures like Aphrodite have been socially reconstructed or partially stricken from the record.

It is perhaps the result of this lack of representation of female sexuality in Cypriot popular culture that Tina finds it to be very uncomfortable to discuss[15]. Anna says "The day I started menstruating Tina behaved like a tragedy had befallen the house, dabbing her bloodshot eyes with a tissue…. Neither parent could look me in the eye. I felt as if life as I knew it had come to an end. Tina gave me a pad the size of a small baguette, with a loop at either end, and sent me off without explanation. All she said was a cryptic, '*Now you're a woman you have to be careful.'"* And somehow, this is something normal for Tina, as "Yiayia's mother had slapped her hard across the face when she started her periods, to acquaint her with the pain of womanhood" (Makis 115). Anna seems to understand the roots of her mother's views on sexuality but disagrees with expression of them and the expectation that they will carry over to her.

The "what should a woman be" question that causes a rift between Anna and Tina is clearly multifaceted. However, what the novel reveals to us is that this version of the Cypriot woman as a public symbol of the Cypriot struggle for self-determination and preservation is so incredibly narrow that *none* of the women can subscribe to it fully and relate to each other. Even

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[14] When Roussou refers to Cypriot women here, I assume she is referring only to Greek Cypriot women. We must notice that both of these molds for women are incredibly limiting. Greek Orthodoxy, the religion of the Greek Cypriot majority, became infused and tied to nationalism. "The relation between church and state in modern Cyprus is apparently peaceful and mutually supportive, ensuring the credibility of both in periods of crisis" (Roussou 31).

[15] This is a phenomenon still very much present in Cypriot society. Talk of sex, sexuality, or menstruation is portrayed as highly taboo even today. A woman's period is referred to as "her days", and sex simply is not discussed even in homo-social settings.

Yiayia and Tina who mostly support this version of womanhood are driven apart by their own deviations from it. Yiayia reveals “Your mother forgets what she was like at your age. She was stubborn and married your father against my will” (252). Yiayia tells Anna that Tony and Tina fled Cyprus like many other Cypriots and came to England where,

> “Tina fell from the clouds when she arrived in the city that became her temporary home. Oppressed by the greyness, the dank air, the filthy, litter-strewn streets. Tony worked fifteen hours a day while she locked herself inside a cramped bed-sit, too scared to venture onto the busy street outside, in an area populated by Indians, Irish and Jamaicans. She felt fear and loneliness for the first time in her life, acute and unremitting, in a country where the sun never seemed to rise” (254).

Married to a British man, Tina’s sister Miriam feels similarly alone. Miriam edits out her mother and sister’s anti-British comments and tones down their nationalistic notions her husband labels as archaic. As Anna puts it, Miriam “often bends the truth to make it more palatable, misquoting her mother and sister to put them in a better light. Her motives may be honourable but her unflinching distortions are unnerving” (63). Anna’s characterization of Miriam gets to the root of the “role of women” yet again. To keep the peace, Miriam presents her mother and sister as being more modern, less patriotic, and more soft-spoken than they are. Tina and Yiayia are offended and label her a push-over. To make matters worse, Miriam echoes her husband’s colonial perspectives. In a family dinner scene in which both Cypriot womanhood and community are disparaged, Malcolm, the British husband, only gives Miriam half a glass of wine, saying that she is watching calories. Tina finds this absurd and asks why to which Miriam replies “Malcolm says he’ll leave me if I ever get fat.”. Malcolm replies “And who would blame me?” (56). This pointed interaction reveals that Malcolm’s views, which continually violate major parts of Cypriot culture (in this case, family being centered around breaking bread), are met with disapproval by the family, leaving Miriam feeling alone and isolated.

And yet, despite judgment and disapproval, the women frequently find issues with each other because they don't quite believe what they are each expressing. Anna doesn't agree with her mother's version of the role of women, just as Tina didn't agree with *her* mother's, nor her sister's. The women feel disconnected from each other on a daily basis as they find each other and themselves unable to live up to the standards that they set regarding the role of women. Forced discussions and clashes such as the aforementioned allow hidden narratives to emerge, when the women challenge who really does determine the role of women and whether or not they believe in this narrative or just publicly uphold it.

What becomes clear is that there's something greater at stake to the women that causes them to consistently publicly defend a definition of a Cypriot womanhood that doesn't even describe them. Most of this is revealed by Yiayia, the woman with the most lived experience. Yiayia was the original Cypriot woman in this matriarchal line, that passed down her definition of womanhood to her two daughters, one of whom passed it down to Anna. Yiayia, in her conversations with Anna, discloses that the old woman's verbally staunch adherence to this traditional definition of the role isn't because she truly ever was the perfect example of such a woman, but because this identity is a strong and powerful tie to the distant homeland that none of these women are able to return to.

At a fairly young age, Yiayia "left the island after the war and refused to return until her home was handed back" (391). This is how Anna sees and describes her. "Yiayia is desperate to return to her ancestral home, if only to die…. The fate of her mud brick cottage is one she often dwells on…Yiayia is still waiting for a solution, for the exodus of Turkish forces. She only came to England for a short stay, as did my aunt and uncle, until their homes were handed back" (361). In Yiayia's passing down of the gender roles that she knew, she was preserving her idea of the homeland. In maintaining traditional home practices and ideas of femininity, she was attempting to provide her children with a point of reference for their culture and identity. In recounting her own personal history to Anna, Yiayia makes it clear that even she never truly stayed within the bounds of the gender roles that she preaches. Deep down, from her own lived experiences, Yiayia knows that the Cypriot woman has many a time been thoroughly incapable of living out the "housewife" stereotype neither she nor her daughters can live up to this standard. After all, she never stayed within the bounds of the Cypriot housewife role, raising children by herself in a foreign country, acting as both a father and mother.

Yiayia also knows that Tina also rebelled against the casted role of Cypriot woman, and shares this knowledge with Anna, which comes to change the young girl's perception of her mother.

From Yiayia, Anna finally learns about Tina's miscarriage:

> "I have kept this letter from you. Your mother never wanted you to know the truth.'
>
> 'The truth about what?'
>
> 'The fate of her first child.'
>
> "She unfolds the blue paper and reads from a letter in which Tina doesn't hold back to spare her mother's feelings. A letter in which she describes pacing a first-floor landing a week before the baby was due, to stretch her legs and ease her back pain. She tripped on loose carpeting and tumbled down the stairs, blacked out, came to as she lay in a crumpled heap at the foot of the stairs. She describes crawling her way back up the

> stairwell, climbing into bed, mopping the blood with bed sheets. She writes of excruciating pain, of feeling too embarrassed to cry out for help" (255).

Tina bore her pain and carried everlasting shame by not being able to complete the act of reproduction "well." Though Cypriot society places immense emphasis on women's role as reproducers, it also provides little to no support to them. The entire process is usually kept under wraps, and women struggling, are like Tina, too embarrassed to cry out for help.

Yiayia continues:

> 'Your father found her several hours later when he got home from work, lying in a pool of blood. He ran to a telephone box to call for help while she hemorrhaged.'
>
> 'She told me she'd had a routine miscarriage.'
>
> 'She has never been able to talk openly about that day.'
>
> Tina was rushed into hospital, hanging on to life by a thread, the baby boy[…]"(256).

And Anna very aptly asks, "Why hasn't she told us?', to which Yiayia replies *'Your mother likes to bury her emotions so she doesn't feel pain.'* Anna, after this conversation, feels that she is "understanding my mother a little more, her fears and her brashness, why she often says she grew up before her time" (257).

The novel introduces readers to the seeming inflexibility of the "ideal Cypriot woman" role that Tina supposedly encompasses and advocates for. According to Anna, in Tina's mind, "*Men have one role and women have another",* she says, citing a principle*, which she has failed to live by* (6). Even in daily practices and customs, Cypriot women might publicly support this dictum, but violate it in practice. Cooking souvla[16] is a great example of the "role of women" behind the scenes. Anna narrates, "cooking souvla is traditionally a male pursuit, providing an excuse to drink, escape the women and display male prowess. Cooking a good *souvla* is a source of great pride, the sign of a *meraklis,* a man who does things well" (155). Yes, men usually do cook souvla on public occasions. Like much else in Cypriot society, men leave the important, hard, tasks they complete to be done publicly. The public male struggle for independence is one giant glorified souvla, sustained and driven by the grunt work of women. They pass the meat onto large metal rods and roast them on the spit. They might even slaughter the animal themselves. However, there is a reason that me, my grandmother, and my mother all know how to prepare souvla and roast it. The majority of the year women prepare all of these meals. Cypriot women know how to gut and scale fish, chop up meat as well as a butcher, and light fires. They just publicly deny that this is part of their role as Cypriot women and support a narrative that glorifies masculinity instead. As this continues, it becomes harder for women to relate to each other because they see that their actions really don't fit within this defined realm of a woman's role. The Cypriot woman then has to negotiate supporting the gender roles that are part of a Cypriotness that ties her to the homeland and to a greater identity and defending gender roles that she cannot truly support and that prevent her from sharing in experiences that would allow her to relate to other Cypriot women.

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[16] Meat that is cut up, skewered, and slow roasted on several spits over charcoal.

The women in the novel choose the latter. Anna and the women in her matriarchal line choose to express and share their experiences, knowing that this means that the feature of Cypriot identity they have previously defended, is proven to be inapplicable, or at least incomplete. It is this decision to stray from defined Cypriot identity, and its sub definition of female identity, that allows them to remedy the divides between them.

Chapter 7: When the Crickets Die and the Women Come Together: Catharsis in Christy Lefteri's *A Watermelon, a Fish, and a Bible.*

"You can learn whatever you want from the books, but you will never know, you didn't live through it" (Georgia).

In her 2010 novel *A Watermelon, a Fish, and a Bible,* Christy Lefteri writes from her experience as a daughter of Cypriot refugees raised in London. She crafts a tale of the events that led up to the exodus of Greek and Turkish Cypriots from their homes in 1974. The tale follows the unfortunate life of Koki, a woman born to a British father and a Greek Cypriot mother in Cyprus. As if this intersectionality of character was not enough, Koki gave birth to her own child fated to live in liminality, the result of a love affair with a Turk. Two parallel plots follow the life of Richard in England, who is revealed to be Koki's father and the journey of Turkish soldier Adem in Cyprus, who is revealed to be Koki's lover. In Cyprus, Koki, with other female villagers, is captured by Turkish soldiers. The women get to know each other and try to cooperate to escape, fearing for their lives and trying to put off their inevitable rape by the Turkish soldiers. During this period, what the women find is that one of the greatest difficulties they must overcome is the idea that one of their own is the enemy. The prejudices that they have against the British as Cyprus' original subjugator and gateway colonizer make them gang up against one of their own, a Koki, a Cypriot woman, instead of directing their anger against those that truly keep them captive. The women discover that their captivity isn't just physical and at the hands of Turkish soldiers, but intellectual and at the hands of a patriarchal definition that pits woman against woman.

While the novel obviously deals with colonialism, its theme of loudness vs. silence is overt and one perhaps least directly engaged in Cypriot literature. Lefteri in fact identifies the importance of this theme, testament to the authorial intent behind the pervasiveness of this theme throughout the novel[17]. Lefteri directly acknowledges a loudness in her work. Lefteri pinpoints men as the source of loudness in her novel, and she and I both recognize that the loudness in the novel is ultimately rooted in masculine ideals and is something that women have to overcome in order to free themselves, both from the captors in the narrative and from the ideas that prevent them from connect with each other. There is one specific passage in Lefteri's novel that showcases loudness, who it comes from, who supports it, and what other narratives it overshadows. The scene presents silence as an omnipresent noise, or loudness, that is broken only by voices of greater intensity, which happen to be voices that dissent from the background majority.

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[17] "When I made the decision to write this novel, I wanted it to represent the silenced voice of individuals that had been scarred by the dominant, male discourse…. I started the process of researching this discourse, the history of the island, nationalism and British occupation. In order to create my own story, I wanted to follow the thread along the

Colonialist and nationalist discourses make up the content of the public voice that the women in the novel have to fight to be heard against. It is even a discourse that they participate in by virtue of being Cypriot women who are symbols of Cyprus' colonial past and nationalist presence. The colonialist narrative is most evident in the character of the protagonist herself. Koki is to be a personified version of Cyprus. With its many colonizers, Cyprus has never been seen as autonomous and most recently in history, was referred to by British and self-hating Cypriots alike as "the whore of the Mediterranean." Historically, the country has been at mercy of conquering men. Thus, the rape of Olympia (one of the women in the group), feeds into a colonialist idea that Cyprus is available for the taking as these women come to symbolize its lack of agency and resistance. Lefteri feeds this archetype by emphasizing the relationship that men create between women and the nation.

This archetype of woman as conquered land is expressed by Richard, all the way in England, who remembers his old lover Marianna through her smell of "oranges and baked

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lines of history to discover a story of myth, reality, hatred, intolerance and pride that had travelled through the ages" (Lefteri 2009).

bread." Later, women are likened to flowers, each "carried and tray and bent her head from the sun" (Lefteri 133). Themes like sustenance and harvest relate the women to the land. Like flowers and oranges which grow from the earth, women are associated with the presence of fertility and the continuation of life. Richard's musings also bear some resemblance to the paternalistic colonialist ones of Lawrence Durrell, contrasting himself to Paniko, the uncouth Cypriot. Richard compares himself to the author in his thoughts, and even goes back amongst his belongings to looks for his copy of Durrell' *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus,* which he admits "was his loyal guide and companion" back in 1958 when "he could not help but feel an excessive affiliation with the man" (284). Richard hoped he "might be able to rekindle a little of that romantic fictionalization of the Englishman in his crown colony, experiencing the smell of almonds and peach blossom…the smell of almonds and sweet wine…basking in the shade of the vines while making mental timelines of the various conquerors" (284).

In true Durrellian fashion, Richard silently judges the world of the Greek Cypriot, while embedding himself within it. At a coffee shop, a young Greek[18] sits at Richard's table without asking. "'These Greeks never ask', Richard thinks, 'remembering Paniko's poor manners'". And the dislike is mutual. Paniko's wife makes this clear in her treatment of Richard. "What you want?... British never bring gifts. Gypsies, yes. Turks, yes, shepherds, yes. Sometimes even the Egyptians, although they bring strange gifts. But British, never" (172). Richard is generalized into "British". Subject and colonizer continue to view and treat each other as such, demonstrated by Lefteri who plays out the tensions between manners and instinct, knowledge and practice, and the other senseless dichotomies that are perpetuated by colonial narratives. However, Richard does come to appreciate Paniko’s presence and his customs, as they transport him back to Cyprus and allow him to feel closer to his past love, and daughter.

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[18] Greek means Greek Cypriot when used by Lefteri unless the context specifically indicates otherwise. This is important to note. Greek Cypriots do often refer to themselves as Greek. In fact, I have noticed that we introduce ourselves as "Greek" to non-Greek Cypriots, and only as Cypriots to other Cypriots, especially when speaking in the Cypriot vernacular.

This colonial past is juxtaposed with a nationalist Cypriot narrative, and both are consistently voiced by men throughout the novel, in almost every interaction between Cypriot men, as well as many of the discussions between the Turkish soldiers. In *Watermelon,* men feed into the othering of each other, demonizing each other’s actions and equating individuals with greater ethnic communities and historic grievances. Nationalism becomes equated with pride, purpose, and freedom for Cypriot women too. Paniko’s wife Elli, for example, has the role of raising the children in the image of a Greek identity, according to the greater Greek nationalism Paniko preaches about (291). “‘Bravo Paniko!’, says Elli to the little boy with no front teeth. ‘He has learnt the Greek national anthem off by heart’, she says beaming” (291). Elli is the one that will inculcate this little boy with the ‘right’ political views. Yet it is Paniko that talks politics all day with his male friends. Paniko, who seems to lounge around all day playing cards, *tavli*[19], and eating nuts, criticizes his wife: “The woman can break a camel’s back” (41). Paniko complains about his wife’s nagging (41), but affairs of the home seem to be the only thing that she can have an opinion on -- and even that is deemed annoying. It appears that the role of Elli is to be a housewife alone, and to use her voice only to teach her child to support the version of Greek Cypriot identity that her husband spends all day discussing.

Back in Cyprus, among the women, Maria and Olympia similarly perpetuate nationalism. The narrator explains that Maria was always proud to discuss her brother’s death: “She had taken her brother’s patriotic nationalism after his death and nourished it with good Greek food, seasoning it with her bitter, sour Greek memory. ‘Never forget’ was her motto” (147). In history

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[19] A Cypriot game like checkers.

Cypriot women after 1974 were filled with grief. Many lost their male family members or spouses and it fell upon them to keep their memory alive. Thus, a new national memory of the Cypriot war hero came to fruition by the power and will of Cypriot women and their storytelling. Olympia embraces this role as a teacher, enjoys telling the rest of the women what they should believe. “When I was a teenager, I learnt that we had two enemies. The British colonialists, who would not give us independence… and the Turks, who wanted to divide our fragile island, who wanted, from then, to cut us in two” (220). Many women learned this exact history, and while Olympia’s profession required her to impart this story to future generations, many Cypriot women have done so because it was their societal role. Just as the Cypriot woman’s body is tied to the perpetuation of a line in colonialist narratives, the Cypriot woman’s knowledge is what has the power to give birth to new forms of nationalism. This education can take the simplest most subtle forms, like teaching children that dogs are Turkish and cats are Greek, and that “dogs eat cats”, which is what Olympia tells the group of women, especially young Maroulla, who is part of the next generation of Cypriot women (219). This portrayal of Greeks and Turks, and by extension, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, as being natural enemies, is what fuels the mutual othering amongst these two groups.

These ideas, rooted in masculine ideals and a masculine conception of Cypriot identity, are still expressed in a scenario when there are only women present. Here, Lefteri’s cricket idea comes into play. Lefteri’s use of the crickets that are always audible is intended to show that the masculine voices and accompanying narratives are always in the background, always the base sound for any conversation. In *Watermelon*, it takes quite a strong cacophony to pierce this veil of base sound and be noticed. This is also because the women contribute to the construction of the veil through their own. The usual chatter of the women, that which makes Koki the colonizing enemy, or that glorifies the masculine national fight for freedom, is the same type of noise as the omnipresent cricketing. Monotonous stimulation is a name for the white noise that the cricket and the dialogue represent. Since the women expressing themselves about prewritten ideas that they have associated with Greek nationalism are essentially monotonous, sounding scripted, they become part of that white noise. This works much like constructive interference in physics. If two waves are in phase, they are said to "constructively interfere", and form one singular, bigger wave. Should they be out of phase, or occur at opposite times, these waves diminish the effect of the other. In this case, the women's voices and the masculine narratives (the cricketing), occur in symphony, together; and they form one monotonous sound.

The sounds that break through the nationalist narrative needs to be powerful. As I explained in my section on noise, the human brain is better at detecting differences than levels. For example, it is easier for a person to state which music sample is louder when two samples are played for them to compare than to give a numerical volume for each individual sample. It follows that, the more intense the starting stimulus is, the more of a change in the stimulus is necessary in order for the change to be detected. The ratio of the just noticeable difference to the intensity of a stimulus needs to be great enough. Since the masculine narratives that have been widely accepted, parroted, and publicized are so intense, it required something especially powerful to make a noticeable difference in that level of stimulation.

This breakthrough does happen in one part of the novel several times, and each marks a turning point in the novel and in the situation of the women within in. The scene describes the women sitting in complete silence in the prisoner's house: Olympia, Elenitsa, Sophia, Koki, Maroulla, and Maria. Lefteri describes the scene.

> "Olympia is crying soundlessly. She is kneeling on the floor as still as the air and is muttering words to God. She has an icon in her hands. Which she holds close to her heart. Her hair is in a grey bun that is no longer neat and spills out at the sides. And her head drops over her chest. The tears from her eyes fall to her lap. The other women in the room are quiet. Elenitsa is slowly turning blue, like the sea when the sun rises. She has not moved for hours. Her baby is gone. The sun is rising, and slowly the shadows extend in the room and the picture of these women, in this old abandoned house, hangs frozen in the silence like an old photograph. Sophia complains about being hungry while the dog whimpers by her side. She still will not touch it. Some of the women look up now from their solid positions, irritated by Sophia's childish demands, and take this opportunity to look again disgustedly in the direction of Koki. Koki shifts uncomfortably in her chair, and Maroulla stands up instinctively, walks towards Koki and perches on her lap. Koki puts her arm round the little girl's waist and Maroulla leans back onto Koki's chest. She likes the sound of her heart" (Lefteri 233). In the midst of this Elenitsa's dead body lies on the floor. "Olympia pauses for a moment, as if contemplating for the first time the true horror of the scene before her and removes a handkerchief from her skirt pocket and looks down at it dejectedly" (Lefteri 234).

Then occurs the first true break in the silence when her Olympia begins to emit "A deep, pounding sobbing that pumps dark sadness into the room" (235). Olympia, so strong a steadfast like her mythical and monolithic name would suggest, realizes the losses that all these women have sustained. Lefteri explains that she not only cries for herself, but for all the women. This gut-wrenching expression "transiently mutes the crickets and the silence" (235).

Suddenly, this is the only sound the women can hear, and it overpowers the white noise that kept them in a trance, accepting their fates at the hands of their captors. Lefteri told us that the purpose of her crickets was also a metaphorical one, for the overbearing force of male narratives always in the air, always audible. Finally, this one true female expression, that of pure loss without any diatribe against an enemy or proclamation of nationalist martyrdom draws attention away from the omnipresent cricketing.

After this, the silence returns and "The heat is heavy and full of unspoken words" (236). Then, the women, led by Maria, begin to recite the Prayer for the Dead and Maria performs the customary ritual of circling Elenitsa's dead body with burning olive leaves (237). Then there is the potential for another breaking of silence, but it fades into a rhythm. Maria says, "If I could feed their brains to the dog, I would cut their heads open myself" and gets angry (237). She starts muttering "Devil" over and over again, until she is proclaiming it, and weight of the word presses on the women until one of them breaks. "Costandina is, once again, staring at Koki, but this time her eyes glow with anger", and she scratches her arms manically as Maria continues cursing at unnamed devils (238). "*The cicadas pound and pound and pound, like blood in one's ears.* It is all of these things that burn Constandina's nerves, that scorch her itchy skin. It is all of these things that cause her to stop scratching, jump from her chair and pounce, head first, at Koki" (238). At this climax Costandina has a reaction equaling Olympia's in power, but is angry, and directed towards Koki. Costandina is coming to the same realization of pain and loss but tries to find someone to blame immediately. Having the current situation be the fault of anyone else besides Koki would disrupt everything that Costandina's ever known, and so "Costandina grabs Koki's red hair, clenches her teeth and drags Koki off the chair… pulls Koki's hair desperately, pulls until blood drips from Koki's forehead" (239). It is clear that Costandina's reaction is misplaced, as the other women watch in silence and Maroulla, a child, stands scared for Koki. Lefteri shows just how powerful a woman's anger could be, and also how deeply one woman could hurt another for the sake of maintaining the ideals she has been imbued with.

Lefteri is so intentional in her construction of this scene. The building of the noise to surpass that threshold, the awareness of the cicadas representative of the scripted narratives that confine the women getting more obvious, the darkening of the room. Lefteri implicates the "incessant and continuous" cicada sound as dominant, male discourse, one "so loud that it filled Cyprus", just like the cricketing that has become characteristic of the country (Lefteri 2009). After this outburst, it is as if everything goes back to normal. "Koki whimpers, on the floor, and Maroulla takes her hand and holds it in hers. The lamp is on the floor and the night is bruised with shadows" (239). The incident is treated as if there was some bad humour in Costandina's body that simply needed to be drained by her inflicting pain on a stand-in for who she blamed for her own suffering. The women continue by moving Elenitsa's body and cooking dinner. Litsa wipes the blood off of Koki and helps her clean up. When the women are all sitting together and dinner is being served, Koki refuses to eat. The women finish, and our narrator describes the once again silent room. "When all is done, they sit in the house with blankets on their legs, for there is a cold breeze tonight. Koki sits without a blanket, self-consciously patting down her hair. She looks around for her headscarf, hopelessly, and then rips another purple strip from the bottom of her dress. She raises her arms to tie it round her head, but then lowers them and drops them in her lap" (240). After more sitting, thinking, and contemplating, we finally get to witness the result of that climax, the result of the realization that is this oppressive background noise that exists and almost acts as a driving force for anger and evil.

"I've been hiding all my life' Koki suddenly declared. "The women turn to look at her, some suspiciously, others ashamedly. Costandina looks at the wall. 'You pull my hair, ostracize me, beat me, call me names and then you turn your faces to the wall!' Koki twists the headscarf in her fingers, tugging, clenching, coiling and pulling at it with fury" (241). As far as we can tell, the headscarf is not necessarily a religious covering, but something meant to make Koki blend in more, to cover her fiery red hair which is an unmistakable indication of her rarity within the Cypriot community. Her red hair, indicative of some kind of "muddling" genes in her parentage is both rare in and of itself, but more important in this context. There weren't many cases of voluntary intermarriage or reproduction between the British and Cypriot women. Amongst the dark-haired Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot women, Koki stood out. Koki questions the women, "You talk about the Turkish and the British and what they have done to you. What about what you have done to me?...What about me?!' Koki's voice rises and resonates around the room; *years of anger blazing from within"* (241). This seems to be the same case with Costandina, though with a completely different target of anger. Koki continues, stating, "You have put me in a prison and left me there alone. You are just as bad as the people you detest!" (241). The prison appears to be the world that she exists in, as a target of people's anger. And the detested could be Turks, could be the British, or could be all the men that perpetuate this never-ending conflict that pits women against each other leaving *all* of them at least a little bit alone in this world in which they are prisoners. Earlier in the novel, in the opening scene precisely, Koki was the one shouting "Devil", to refer to the Turks that she thought were responsible for the death of her son, who was missing that morning of the invasion. At this point in the story, there are far too many figures implicated.

Koki's anger builds, and then suddenly vanishes as she realizes that at least some parts of her painful life experiences as a Cypriot woman apply to every other figure in that room, even Maroulla who sees adolescence far before her. Koki "looks around again at those wide, expectant eyes; she sighs and her eyes shimmer in the lamplight. As her mind wells up with memories, her shoulders soften" (241). It is perhaps Koki looking at these women and remembering what they have all gone through that causes her to reconsider the target of her own wrath, and to allow those shoulders to soften. Somehow, Koki is realizing that it is not these women, even Costandina who pulled her hair, that have most faulted her. Koki finally "lets go of the headscarf, looks down and then up again at the others. 'I have been a target of everybody's anger. You have stripped me of everything! Even my name has been taken from me! Even my beautiful name! I have nothing left that is mine. Nothing! "I have been the enemy, the scapegoat, the Devil, Medusa, the English whore, the fiend with red hair, the motherless child! None of you have ever heard my real story….' Koki's voice softens and her red hair and white skin glow in the lamplight. She takes a deep breath and as the light flickers on her face pictures of the past seem to move across the blue of her eyes. Koki's anger here isn't directed just at the women, but rather at everyone that has assumed things about her identity without giving her the chance to explain herself.

And finally, finally, Koki…or rather, Kyriaki, does. She explains that her name is actually Kyriaki, which means Sunday because she was born on a Sunday. She explains that Litsa's brother was the first one to call her *kokinokolos*, meaning red ass, at a gathering. He has seen her red hair and compared it to that of a British captain that drove up to the property's entrance and said "*kokinokoli*...both of them are *kokinokoli"*, or red asses. And that hair is what labels her as the possible bastard child of a British man, and therefore, labels her as the colonizer.

Koki goes on to say that she in fact had grown up much like the rest of these women, even including some memories with them as she tells her story (250). Koki explains with passion that she is not the enemy, but just another woman that has been painted into whatever role was a suitable scapegoat, be it a British whore or a Cypriot one, depending on which man was standing across from her. As Koki continues, the rest of the women are described as "interested" and "eager." Koki tells of how it was growing up, how she waited on men in the *kafeneion*, the coffee shop, and how she would hear them talk about politics. Koki recounts one man who told her:

> "What do stupid little girls need to know about politics? Eh, women, you are the problem with the world. Trust me there is a woman behind all wars… Eleni of Troy, Samson and Delilah, Aphrodite who sparked the Trojan War by offering Paris the Queen of Sparta! They stir the world with their spoons, and the men do mad things or the really stupid ones fight *for* them. Either way it is all women! At this he stubbed a finger onto the newspaper. All women. Their fault" (Lefteri 269).

Just as this man groups all women together as the source of evil, and even blames two separate women for the start of the Trojan War, as Koki continues her narration, the women realize that they are united by gender. It is what makes them relate to Koki's experience of love, of unwanted pregnancy, of having no steering power over one's own fate, and chiefly, of anguish. Koki finishes her story with tears in her eyes, and "the women's eyes shimmer in the darkness as the air pounds with Koki's last words and the sound of the crickets." After the end of Koki's story, the women free themselves physically from their situation. They work together to plan an escape and are aided by a Koki's past, which appears in the form of her Turkish Cypriot lover, Adem. Adem, with his Turkish soldier status, helps them escape.

The women in Lefteri's novel show that only when these narratives or experiences are shared among women and leave the confines of the private sphere can there be even homosocial understanding between women regarding the similarity of their experiences regardless of ethnicity or religion. If this is applied on an even larger scale, the collaboration or interlocution between women in the public sphere would result in a Cypriot political climate that could no longer ignore the similarities between the supposedly diametrically opposed Greek and Turkish Cypriot ethnic groups.

However, Lefteri's is not a feel-good ending. It is an optimistic description of freedom, the freedom that comes with finally telling one's own truth. This happens for Koki, but for the women in the novel who have been raped, hurt, or left without families, this freedom never comes. The narrative glosses over interruptions that Koki faced while telling her story, one of which was the rape of Olympia. The rape remains undiscussed. It just happens. Koki continues telling her story but what never changes is that when bad things happen, the go-to reaction is silence. [20]The women encounter a priest after they escape and Litsa starts trying to say "You cannot imagine what it was like to---" but she is promptly interrupted. The priest says "Relax, my child…There will be time for this later, it will do you no good." The divide that exists because of the abundance of stories untold remains, and it is comfortable. Furthermore, a male, representative of a foundational public patriarchal institution is the one that prevents the telling of the story. When women do return to their lives, they are confronted with the persisting ideas of what their roles should be, chiefly as creators of a new generation and the future.

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[20] "In both south and north women told me there are many important areas of live experience that are not much spoken about even between friends, much less in the family. It is not so very different from the time when women could hardly voice the word 'rape', though the danger of rape at that time was never far from their minds" (Cockburn 129).

Throughout the novel, Koki’s story was consistently being interrupted by that of a crying child (188). That child’s voice caught the attention of Serkan the military commander. Th child’s voice was heard. Women’s ability to produce children is in fact why their bodies are so often the silent endurers of conflict. Even after Koki has her catharsis, the voice of that baby remains powerful. There has to be a way for women’s other lived experiences to enter the public sphere with the same impact as childbearing. Women’s narratives need to be able to cut through the noise.

Chapter 7: Loud Cypriot Women- a conclusion

“Writing about Cypriot women is exhausting. We are exhausting, but important!” – my Twitter bio.

It hurts for Cypriots to think of all their losses. Since 1974 each ethnic group and every individual is left missing a part of their previous lives. Cypriots find this unbearable, both on an individual and community level. The soothing history that presents communal trauma as the logical predecessor to a continued fight for justice gives meaning to lives today. Thus, evidenced in both the dominant politics and people of Cyprus is a renewal of Greek the Cypriot nationalism that characterized an earlier Cyprus, with perhaps even greater fervor. The security of this narrative as a source of community and individual pride and strength would be catastrophically undermined if the continued fight were presented as one that didn't represent the desires of all people of Cyprus. This would be the case if women's narratives were included in discourse surrounding Cypriot identity and politics.

Instead, the dominant narrative of both the Republic and the Turkish-occupied North that exists is one that ties Cypriot politics to masculinist narratives. These narratives rest on a masculinity as constitutive of the nationalism embedded into the fabric of Cypriot society. Cyprus's masculinity has become wrapped up in the concept of "defense", defense of identity, of women, of one's ethnicity and religion, defense of all of these things in a monolithic political standpoint that because it so deeply has masculinity at its core and in its functioning that it leaves no room whatsoever for disruptive women's narratives. Though women played important roles in both pre- and post-1974 societies, they did not provide narratives that could be rallied around. Femininity could be weaponized by men if muted, rewritten, and reborn. The struggles of Cypriot women are politicized to support this primary male role of protector of all thing Cyprus. Cypriot histories, oral, literary, and political have all supported the deletion of a Cypriot female voice and its replacement with a male-constructed voice that fits in nicely in the background of patriarchal society.

From its most private spheres, Cypriot society is transmitted to the rest of the world by men. The result is that Cypriot women and their experiences don't have an active role in politics. Instead, women and their experiences have been rewritten and buried to preserve the only answer that Cypriots have to their identity question. Cypriot men have used the long-standing patriarchal traditions and customs, such as the painful colonial history of the country to monopolize authority; Cypriot women loudly perpetuate the idea of a unified, monolithic Cypriot identity and story. As to not undermine the unity of the identity, the wealth of information that Cypriot women hold as being the receivers of the gendered effects of conflict is withheld, often voluntarily. Maria Roussou chronicled the experience of a 65-year-old internally displaced Greek Cypriot woman. She said, "We left these things (Politics and war) to the men, and we had faith in them. They were our husbands, who talked for hours in the coffee shops about this or that politician, about the English, the Americans and the Turks… We just used to listen to them and hope for the best… They made a mess. We women shouldn't leave everything to them…. we know now what peace is and what war is" (Roussou 35). This leaves the identity narrative incomplete, and the entire country suffers the political and social repercussions of constructing a monolithic Cypriot identity. The ascribed loudness of Cypriot women has led the entire population to remain silenced.

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