‘Unofficial’ histories: the historical narratives of the Left in the Cypriot diaspora.

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The Left in Cyprus has presented its own version of history as marginalised and excluded from public contexts dominated by the nationalist account of history (Papadakis 1998, 2003). Thus, the leftist history has been rendered to an ‘unofficial’ status, whereby it challenges the ‘official’ history through claims to truth.

This paper argues that the ‘unofficial’ history of the left is not in an opposing relationship to the ‘official’ history of nationalism. Whereas the Left has traditionally defended its anti-nationalist stance on the ‘Cyprus problem’, its own version of history shares a responsive relationship with the nationalist narrative.

The information presented in this paper is based on 22-month fieldwork in the Cypriot diaspora in the UK and in Cyprus. I use the Cypriot Community Centre (CCC) in North London as a case-study here and I focus on interviews with first generation migrants and AKEL [Anorthotiko Komma Ergazomenou Laou (Progressive Party of the Working People)] supporters who frequent the centre.

In this paper, I aim to illustrate how the discontinuity of personal memory, caused after departure from Cyprus, has forced the first generation migrants to search for new ways to reconcile their diasporic experiences with the AKEL historical narrative. This discontinuity has led to a double marginalisation for my informants, both as leftists

and migrants. My account with the personal narratives of these migrants indicates that certain personal experiences, which they consider important, lack prominence within the 'unofficial' historical narrative of the Left. The paper concludes that the 'unofficial' history of AKEL resembles to some extent the 'official' historical narrative in terms of structure and language. Moreover, AKEL supporters often move successfully between the two historical models in their own narratives without jeopardising their allegiance to the party. In other cases, however, the result of such flexibility is the contestation of the 'unofficial' history from within.

In the first part of the paper, which I will not explain here in detail, I present how my informants at the centre consider themselves 'escapees of history', as this developed in Cyprus after their departure, and how they try to fit their diasporic experiences into the party's historical narrative. This is often a strategy employed by individuals in their attempt to maintain continuity between their personal memories of Cyprus and London and between their personal memories and the party history and to make sense of their experience through the familiar framework of the Left rhetoric. Furthermore, it is a strategy for dealing with discontinuous memory and exclusion.

The idea of exclusion emerged very often in the discussions of the AKEL supporters at the Cypriot Centre. Very similarly to Papadakis's experience described in his book 'Echoes from the Dead Zone' (2005), men at the centre were often insistent on giving me information that I would not be able to find in 'official' books. This was mainly information about the 'real' reasons of the 'Cyprus problem': what the roots of the problem are –'the EOKA struggle for enosis'-, about intra-communal violence –

‘EOKA killed more communists than British’- and about recognising the suffering of others –‘we did many bad things to Turkish Cypriots too’.

Although analogous narratives were very popular and dominant in the centre, they were mostly labelled by the men as ‘unknown’ and ‘hidden’. AKEL has always been a strong political party maintaining almost a third of the votes throughout its political history and it has control over its own media and public spaces. Its presence is especially strong in the UK community, which has often been proudly described by the informants as a leftist community in its origins. However, despite its popularity in Cyprus and in the diaspora, AKEL has presented its own version of history as marginalised, unrecognised and suppressed.

This is partly explained by the fact that, while the particular histories have been told and heard many times in both private and public spaces, they have been conspicuously omitted in particular contexts, such as in education and in governmental accounts of the ‘Cyprus problem’. Most of my informants would describe such contexts as the ones where the histories of nationalism have dominated, they have been reproduced and they have, therefore, become ‘official’. Mr. Loizou, one of the regulars in the centre, used to be one of the members of the Parents’ Association that operated a number of Greek Cypriot community schools in London and, unsurprisingly, he was always been interested in educational issues. He told me once:

> One of the main problems of nationalism is the school. Look what they teach them in Cyprus, how to hate each other. When my son was younger, I took him to a school that was part of the church to learn the language [Greek]. But he started saying things like ‘look what the Turks did to us’ and the boy started being full of hatred. They fanaticised him. I had never

> ever told him this kind of things. I hadn't actually told him anything. But then, I took him out of that school and I took him to a school where I knew they were not fanatics. And that was only once a week. Imagine if this happens here, what happens in Cyprus. And then I told him many things myself, I told him about truths he would not get in books.

Similar references would often be made in relation to other institutions, such as the army and the church. For the 'escapees' of history, leaving Cyprus meant escaping to a large extent the power and control of these institutions. As Mr. Loizou told me, 'I never felt comfortable as a communist in Cyprus. But when I came here, everyone was almost like me. It was much easier to be here than in Cyprus'.

At the same time though, as I have suggested earlier, migration reinforces the experience of marginalisation.

The notion of marginalisation within the Left is repeatedly used in order to deal with issues of blame and guilt. People of the Left put the blame of the Cyprus problem on the expansion of nationalism and chauvinism on the island, in which they did not take part. 'The Left does not have any blood on their hand' is an expression that would often been echoed by supporters of the Left –although not exclusively- during my fieldwork.

For the first-generation migrants in the centre, however, there was extra blame to be attached to nationalism. As young, leftist, poor, persecuted and unable to find work in Cyprus, many men blamed the EOKA struggle as one of the factors that pushed them to migrate. They identified themselves as doubly-suppressed and excluded, first as leftists, and second as migrants, who had to leave their country and through hardships to make a living on foreign soil.

But for the men in the centre blame is accompanied by a level of guilt. This feeling of guilt has to do with being an 'escapee of history', in the way it was discussed before. During my fieldwork I followed some of the men from the centre to their holidays in Cyprus. In a few cases, when heated political discussions developed, they were confronted with the marginal identities of leftists and 'escapees of history'. One of these discussions took place in a *taverna* in Larnaca, where I went to see Mr. Costas, a man I had met at the Cypriot Centre. He was sitting in a group of old friends and they had been discussing for hours, when a man from the group said: 'But what have the leftists done for this country? When Mr. Costas tried to explain and defend the Left, he was confronted by the man: 'How do you know, Costas? You were gone by then…you, guys, were lucky, you didn't have to go through what we went through'. On our way back, Mr. Costas stated almost apologetically: 'See? They think we had it easy. But we didn't want to leave, we had to leave. They didn't want us in Cyprus and now they are asking why we didn't stay'.

What is suggested here is that the leftist migrants feel that they have been marginalised at least twice. They were first marginalised as leftists who were excluded from the EOKA struggle and faced persecution. Migration became an empowering experience in a sense, as individuals found in the diaspora a 'safer' space to express their leftist ideas and backgrounds. On the other hand, migration led to the exclusion of individuals from direct participation in political developments in Cyprus. Consequently, as 'escapees' of history, the leftists of the diaspora became also marginalised as migrants.

Many of my informants at the centre saw the election of President Christofias as marking the end of this period of marginalisation and exclusion and welcomed it as an opportunity for the history of the Left to be heard in 'official' contexts. Whereas it is a legitimate quest for a group of people to demand to be heard and visible, the next section questions as to whether the 'unofficial' history of the Left can be seen as independent from and uninfluenced by the 'official' historical narrative.

As it has been suggested before, the leftist claims to historical truth have developed in opposition but also as dependent to an 'official' nationalist discourse. AKEL's historical narratives often demonstrate features comparable to those of the historical model of 'official' nationalism. The 'official' historical narrative has been accused by the Left for selectively focusing on particular historical periods, in its attempt to present a linear and coherent narrative, where events follow from each other in a progressive and teleological order. This order is then presented as natural, 'the natural order of things', whereas alternative histories and narratives are silenced and excluded. However, the history of the Left also has its own gaps and silences to demonstrate. AKEL's ambivalent stance on Enosis during the 1960s and on the Anan plan in 2004 that created tension in the relationships of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Left have often been avoided in the political discourses within the party.

In addition, whilst public commemorations have been seen as a tool, by which the nationalist narrative is injected into public memory (Connerton 1989), the Left has also established its own commemorative events. One of the most important commemorations AKEL organises every year is in honour of Mishaouli and Kavazoglou (Papadakis 1993). Mishaouli, a Greek Cypriot and member of AKEL,

and Kavazoglou, a Turkish Cypriot and member of the central committee of AKEL, were murdered together on the 11th of April 1965 by members of TMT.

In London a special event is organised every year in the Cypriot Centre to honour the two heroes of the party. During my fieldwork, I attended the commemorative event twice. In the second year, however, the day acquired even greater importance within the new political developments in Cyprus and the recent election of AKEL in government and its secretary Christofias as president of Cyprus. The London-based AKEL newspaper, Parikiaki, clearly makes a connection between the two events and ties them historically across an imagined chronological spectrum on its front page of April the 10th 2008:

> The fascists of TMT wanted to silence an irritating voice, which was standing as an obstacle to their divisive plans. They wanted to terrorise every patriotic Cypriot, who was fighting for a united country. They wanted to terrorise AKEL. But they achieved the opposite through such an atrocious crime. The Kavazoglou-Mishaouli sacrifice became the symbol of a shared struggle of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots for the salvation of our shared country. The anniversary of the Kavazoglou-Mishaouli sacrifice coincides with developments in the 'Cyprus problem'. The beginning of these developments was demarcated with the election of Dimitris Christofias as president of the Republic of Cyprus, who has changed the status quo with his stance, policies and flexibility. (Parikiaki, 10/04/2008).

Before the start of the event, I spoke to one of the elderly regulars of the centre and one of the older members of AKEL. Mr. Yiannis is called 'the teacher' by other men because of his previous jobs in Greek community schools. His nickname, however, also reflects his passion for reading. Mr. Yiannis is a great admirer of Ancient Greek civilization and letters and together with his 'communist books', as he calls them, he always carries different editions of ancient Greek classics; some of the other people in

the centre seem to share his passion. During my time in the centre, he would always recommend to me books to read, 'because our youth has to get in touch with our Great past, our great ancestors and with our beautiful Greek language that is becoming extinct'. Such a historical understanding of past and origins has been traditionally identified with the nationalist narrative. On the contrary, most of AKEL supporters would denounce a clear connection to Greek ancestry and relatedness, by often referring to the multiple occupiers of Cyprus and concluding 'who knows where we came from? We are a mixture of everything'. For Mr. Yiannis, however, being Greek, communist and Cypriot are not exclusive, unbridgeable categories. He sees himself as descendent of Ancient Greeks but 'I do not support enosis with Greece', as he says.

Mr. Yiannis's example, without it being a unique case, illustrates that different political and historical narratives from seemingly opposing paradigms can coexist and be reconciled through individual memories, experiences and cosmologies. Papadakis (1998) recognises that party allegiance is not homogeneous and he discusses individual tactics that transcend the historical paradigms of the Right and Left. He focuses on silence and the way individual agents exercise self-censorship in order to avoid tension and maintain friendships, family, business and social relationships. Moreover, as the example above shows, individual agents also move between opposing discourses in order to make sense of their memories and experiences and to negotiate between their different identities. This pattern constantly emerged during fieldwork when I would talk to individuals with seemingly unbridgeable identities, such as being religious and communist at the same time, or right-wing nationalist and pro-unification. The dichotomy between Right and Left as absolute and monolithic

categories is, therefore, challenged and attention should be diverted at how individuals manage their identities and everyday lives through synthesis and appropriation of opposing historical narratives and discourses.

Additionally, as individual experiences develop, memories are also sometimes reworked and reconstructed and the opposing narrative can be used by individuals as a tool for contestation. At the event for Mishaouli and Kavazoglou, while I was still talking to 'the teacher', a man in his early 60s approached us to ask for some information.

It was Mr. Farouk, a Turkish Cypriot, who had come to the UK in the early 60s and worked most of his life as a tailor for many different employers, amongst whom many Cypriots. He had been an old member of AKEL but he eventually became less politically active. 'I came to find some old friends today. I don't normally go to these things anymore. I felt quite disappointed all these years with AKEL. First, there was their support for enosis, then the Anan Plan. And look at these events. There were few Turkish Cypriots speaking, it was mostly in Greek. This happens all the time. It's again like 1960s. Greek Cypriots want a federation but they don't believe in it'.

Although the event was organised as bi-communal, the main speeches had indeed been delivered in Greek, whereas the fewer Turkish Cypriot speakers used English. Whereas most of the speakers celebrated the election of the AKEL government and expressed their hopes for a solution to the 'Cyprus problem' and the establishment of a bi-communal federal state in Cyprus, Mr. Farouk suggested that the format and organisation of the event was reminiscent and nostalgic of another period of Cypriot

history, in which Turkish Cypriots were once again suppressed and not equal sharers of power. I often heard similar comments about the bi-communal events organised by AKEL in London by both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Many of these individuals were of a leftist background themselves, like Mr. Loizou. He is one of the men in the centre, who has been a member of AKEL for many years, however, a 'critical supporter', as he says. When I asked him about the events, he told me 'yes, these things have been happening in the same way for many years. AKEL talks about old friendships and stories of co-operation but they have to talk to people about today. We have to take some responsibility too. We have to speak about things that are happening today. And our past shows that we have made mistakes too'.

For both Mr. Farouk and Mr. Loizou, personal memories and experiences contradict and challenge to some extent the historical and political narrative of the party and these contradictions are often articulated by using opposing historical narratives of both life in Cyprus and in the diaspora. In the same way that an 'official' nationalist narrative is contested through individual memories and experiences, which may be seen as a source of an 'unofficial' history, so, on closer inspection, the assumption of a shared 'unofficial' history collapses, as it is contested through the same process of responsive commentary.

As the paper has shown, AKEL's claim that its history is marginalised and suppressed by 'official' history reflects the experiences of marginalisation of its individual members. Members of parties, however, have multiple and complex experiences that affect their allegiance to the party line in various ways. The men at the Cypriot centre have experienced marginalisation not only as young leftists in Cyprus but also as

migrants. For them, the rhetoric of ‘marginalisation’ that dominated in AKEL is a way of dealing with blame but also with guilt for leaving one’s one country and becoming an ‘escapee of history’. This suggests that the ‘unofficial’ history of AKEL encompasses a variety of diverse narratives that also need to be studied and understood in their own terms.

Moreover, the ‘unofficial’ history of the Left is tightly dependent on the opposite ‘official’ discourse, not only in terms of form, but also in the way that both narratives often coexist in political and individual narratives. Similarly to how the ‘unofficial’ history has the potential to contest ‘official’ accounts, the ‘official’ history can also be used by individuals to contest the ‘unofficial’ rhetoric in order to match their changing experiences and memories. In short, the ‘official’ narrative of nationalism and the anti-nationalist historical account of the left are not parallel lines that cannot meet; the boundaries between these two accounts are negotiable and transgressible.

In the light of discussions for the improvement of the School History books in the Republic of Cyprus (see Papadakis 2008), the history of the Left cannot be unreservedly included to fill the gaps of the dominant historical narrative. The aim should be towards a multi-vocal history, which will provide space for many historical accounts and ‘truths’ to emerge. The attention then should be diverted to the wider processes of history production, to how historical knowledge is produced and dominates, rather than to the presentation of a complete truth.

"I can't wait to go back home!": Negotiating Spaces of Belonging in Greek American Return Narratives

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Abstract

This paper aims to contribute to ongoing discussions of 'home' in social sciences and literature, by specifically focusing on 'home' in the Greek diaspora, especially in autobiographical return narratives by second and third generation Greek American authors. I claim that the unique process of return subverts humanist and essentialist discourses of 'home,' discourses that have been dominating the perception of 'home' in diasporic literature. The representations of 'home' in return narratives construct a counter-narrative, a diasporic narrative, in which these authors depict the multiplicity of identity and belonging, they speak of *identities* and *belongings* that do not come naturally, but have to be negotiated. Within their return movements, returnees seek home in several locations, showing that 'home' is not one place in which people are rooted, but rather *places* of construction and agency.

My talk today is called "'I can't wait to go back home!': Negotiating Spaces of Belonging in Greek American Return Narratives." My title already reveals that the most significant space of belonging in return narratives, is 'home.' Talking about 'home,' I want to start by quoting Eleni Gage, one of the authors I will discuss today. In her return narrative, *North of Ithaka*, she writes: "Lia loomed in my mind: as a home from long ago that would require much effort to be reached" (15). In this short sentence, Gage describes the complexity of 'home' in return projects within the diaspora.

Lia, that is her father's birthplace and the village in which her grandmother was executed during the Greek Civil War in the late 1940s. As she claims, this place has haunted her, has loomed in her conscience as an obscure element - a presence she cannot pin down for sure. She understands it as a "home from long ago," meaning a home she never experienced, but rather a place that *feels* like home. It is a place from "long ago": this time interval is also meant geographically. The past? That is Greece. Claiming Greece will be a struggle, she predicts.

What I want to do today, is discuss 'home' as it is represented and constructed in return narratives by second generation Greek American authors. In particular, I will analyze two narratives: Eleni Gage's *North of Ithaka*, which was published in 2004 and Adrianne Kalfopoulou's *Broken Greek*, published in 2006. I will argue that the unique process of return subverts the humanist discourse of home that has idealized it as a "hearth, an anchoring point through which human beings are centered" (Blunt 11) - a place of comfort, stability and security. My approach is interdisciplinary, drawing from theories from cultural geography and philosophy.

Firstly, I want to say some introductory words on return and return narratives. Within the corpus of Greek American literature, there is a small group of narratives that deals with returning to Greece. Mostly temporarily, but at times even permanently, these autobiographical narratives tell of the journey to Greece and the individual return projects the writers seek when they leave the United States for the 'other' home across the Atlantic.

The longing for Greece is nothing new in Greek American literature. The character of longing has shifted throughout the generations though. When first generation writers wrote about the home they had to leave behind, their yearning was much more concrete than what following generations speak of. In narratives by second and third generation authors, Greece has developed into a myth, constructed by the memories and story telling of others. It has become an imaginative place, a place they nonetheless constantly have to deal with in reality.

In the these narratives, authors like Gage and Kalfopoulou return to the villages and islands of their ancestors where they confront the imaginative place with the real one. The motivation for this journey is founded on the desire to learn about their past and live where their grandparents had lived, hoping to unite what they perceive to be fragmented or incomplete identities, torn between a lived American and a dislocated Greek identity. When Kalfopoulou arrives in Athens after a longer trip to the US, she complains: "I'm jetlagged and disoriented in what has begun to feel like a lifetime of dislocation" (68).

Return narratives deal with this dislocation and the urge to overcome it. It might seem to be a misleading term, as many authors have never been to Greece before, meaning there is no place to return to. I therefore regard second and third generation return narratives as part of what is known as "ancestral return" (King 6), the return to the place of ancestry. Returnees are in a state in-between: neither visitors nor locals, neither at home nor in a foreign place. They do not stay forever, but they

never leave for good either. Return narratives pinpoint a specific movement that stands for a dynamization and fluctuation between the place of departure that is 'home,' and the place of arrival, that is 'home' as well, only this time not lived. These contradictions have to be discussed.

In the following, I will turn to the narratives and look at how both authors write about these contradictions. In *North of Ithaka*, Eleni Gage, daughter of Greek American author Nicholas Gage, returns to the village of Lia in Ipiros, for the period of one year, in order to rebuild her grandmother's house. Adrianne Kalfopoulou, in *Broken Greek*, returns to Greece forever: To Athens and Hora, a small village on Patmos, where she buys a house and reconstructs it.

These return projects are projects of 'home' and identity. In their book *Home*, Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling write specifically about the connection between these two significant markers, claiming that writing about home is writing about self and vice versa, people's sense of self is expressed through home (9, 34). Home indeed makes identity, both authors transcribe the dispersion of their home to their identity, which they perceive as fragmented.

Gage and Kalfopoulou appear to be on a journey of therapeutic self-fulfillment, joining the pieces of their life together: "Maybe facing my past would somehow jump-start my grown-up future and provide the piece that seemed to be missing from my present existence" (Gage 14). Gage even regards the building of the house as a rebirth - "[a] birth takes only nine months – why should a rebirth take longer?" (20). She expects her stay to make her a new, 'complete' person. Kalfopoulou, although she does not explicitly speak of rebirth, nevertheless claims: "As a result of ancestry and a childhood love of the country, I found myself returning to Greece in young adulthood in a quest for self-reference" (9). She needs the reference to Greece in order to speak in her own voice, to claim her self. As she states further on in the text: "[T]his narrative was about my failure to belong as much as it is about moments of affirmation" (9). She feels she has failed in clearly belonging to one space and therefore she seeks home in more than one location.

Interestingly enough, Kalfopoulou cannot completely explain the reasons why she returns, as she writes, she "finds" herself returning to Greece, an expression suggesting that it happens without her influence. Gage argues similarly: "I couldn't explain exactly what it was that drew me to Lia, why I needed to explore my ancestral land. […] It was a place where my aunts, father, grandparents, and all who had come before them belonged, and I wanted to make a space for myself there, too" (10). In both statements, the process of return is naturalized, both authors claim they were somehow driven towards home, they seem to have internalized this myth of returning to the roots in order to 'find' one's self. Simultaneously though, and this is where their narratives become interesting and show friction, they both claim agency as well: Gage says she wants to *make* space, while Kalfopoulou claims she is on a quest, ready to take over 'home.'

With the anticipation to become a so-called complete self, to belong and to be home, these women return to Greece only to realize that their expectations are not fulfilled. They do not, because of ancestry, automatically belong; home is not always a comforting, safe space, but a space of struggle and sometimes even danger. While living in her grandparents' house in Athens, Adrianne Kalfopoulou is a victim of burglary; her personal space is intruded and exploited. Eleni Gage's family has had to experience the danger of home with much different and painful consequences, her grandmother was executed in her own house, at home. For her and her family, the house is a site of trauma; they fear it: "None of my relatives wanted to see the house

again. My aunts begged me not to move there and reconstruct it, then warned I'd be threatened by wild animals, homicidal intruders, and dark curses if I defied them" (xvii). The house, in both narratives, becomes *the* major symbol of home, beyond its materiality. By fixing their houses, it seems, Gage and Kalfopoulou fix themselves. Consider also Kalfopoulou's title *Broken Greek* in this context.

The dichotomy of *xeni* and *dyki mas*, of outsider and insider is probably the most remarkable experience they make during this process. Roger Bromley, in *Narratives of a New Belonging*, argues that "belonging is always problematic, a never-ending dialogue of same with other" (5). Both authors are in the midst of this dialogue, or, doing justice to the Greek culture of debate, in the midst of a heated argument. As Gage observes: "In Lia, people who didn't recognize me never asked, "Who are you?" but "*Whose* are you?" because they suspected they would know my family, and therefore understand why I was there" (271). She wonders whether she will be resented as an outsider who intrudes other people's home and even builds a house there. Kalfopoulou, in numerous passages, mentions the struggle to become one of *them*: "It was important to belong; my ex mother-in-law assured me I was still 'hers' though I had divorced her son" (89). When she buys property in Hora, her realtor tells her to show presence: "Right away he mentions the importance of making myself known to people so 'a face' can be attached to my name, so I will no longer be *xeni*" (103). This effort pays off, because in the end: "In being part of the village or family of *dopious* (natives), I was finally made one of theirs; *dyki tous*" (115).

Belonging, just like home, does not come naturally, but has to be acquired and fought for. In both return narratives, belonging, in the end, comes through building, through inscribing the women's presence physically into the nation's ground. Adrianne Kalfopoulou finally belongs to the village after she fights for the land, for her estate, after she struggles with bureaucracy and unwilling Italian (read: 'foreign') neighbors. Eleni Gage goes through similar hardships with constructors, architects and public authorities in Ioannina. In the end though, she has built the house, on her grandmother's grounds: "[O]n a stone on the side of the *exoporta*, Yanni had carved "2002," the date I returned to rebuild the fallen home. I was now officially a part of the physical history of the house, clipped into its entranceway for posterity" (177). Future generations will be able to claim they belong to her and to the house; they will not be outsiders anymore.

The acquisition of the masculine act of building a house, or at least of the authority in a project like this, breaks with the gendered understanding of 'home,' that has for centuries restricted women to 'making homes' in terms of domesticity (cleaning, providing food etc.) In these narratives, women literally 'make *homes*.'

The plural is important here, because 'home' is never one place. For Kalfopoulou, it is three: Athens, the village Hora on Patmos and definitely the US, a place with which she has a contradictory relationship. In the midst of Greek chaos and the density of Athens, she misses American structures of life, and the other way around. She calls Greece and the US, "[t]he two countries that made up my identity" (160). The United States, in both narratives is the *implied* home, not often specifically referred to, but always emerging in times of distress.

Taking a step away from the narratives, the most urgent question still is: What is 'home'? Fran Markowitz, in "The Home(s) of Homecomings," claims 'home' is "one of the few remaining utopian ideals" (22), meaning it is a highly idealized, romanticized and unachievable space. Nevertheless, we all claim to have a home, everyone has a notion of what and especially where home is: it is a "complex and

multi-layered geographical concept" (Blunt 2), "both material and imaginative, a site and set of meanings/emotions" (22).

As I already mentioned in the beginning, in humanist/essentialist discourses, 'home' is understood as an "anchoring point" (Blunt 11), a container in which human beings are centered and rooted. If home is static and anchored, a natural site of belonging, what happens with the ones who leave home and settle some place else? What happens with 'home' in the diaspora? The logical conclusion of humanist understandings assumes that migrants, or people in the diaspora will always be *detached* and never *attached* to any other place than their homeland. They will be out of 'home' and therefore also out of culture. I want to object to this, because 'home,' being an integral part of the diaspora, has, and will always adjust to the decentering and destabilizing character of transnational migration.

This is especially illustrated by return movements that add another layer to the complex issues of rootedness and transnationalism. The unique character of return demands a reconsideration of 'home' and identity. Through the dynamics and fluidity of return movements, static notions of 'home' appear to be outdated. Anastasia Christou and Russell King have argued that return is a "profound homecoming at multiple levels" (13) and, to complement this statement by the converse movement of what they describe here, "in each return the meaning of home is created anew" (Long/Oxfeld 15). Every return movement is directed towards returning home, but simultaneously, every return crafts a novel home that will differ from the space that was left behind. Return is a homecoming to a home that is created through the act of return, meaning that the expectations the returnee has of home are not fulfilled, but are shaped in the course of return.

As I have shown through the close reading of some passages of *North of Ithaka* and *Broken Greek*, the authors' return projects and representations of *homes* subvert the humanist discourse of home, by rather exemplifying a *diasporic* discourse, in which 'home' is neither an anchoring point nor a vertically rooted space. It is rather *spaces* of negotiation and agency. Although Gage and Kalfopoulou, at times, tend towards a naturalization of 'home' and belonging, for example in the way they cannot explain what 'drew' them to Greece, through the telling of hardships, rejections and the final mastering of the people and the land, they show that 'homes' are constructed, are variable, can shift and have multiple layers. Especially as women, they trespass the boundaries that restrict them to domesticity. They deconstruct myths of home, myths of natural belonging and of stability. Their narratives have to be regarded as a crucial contribution, not only to transnational and post-colonial literature, but also to US-American literature that has a long tradition in critically dealing with 'home,' for example in African American slave narratives, modernist and especially post-modernist fiction.

I want to end my talk in the words of American writer and feminist bell hooks, who, in her book *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* adequately and eloquently argues: "At times home is nowhere. At times one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations" (148).

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