War Museums and Photography

Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert*, Alexandra Bounia**

Abstract

The use of photographs in museums can reveal how the perceived transparency of photography and the authority of the museum interact with the subjectivity and the political construction of historical narratives. This paper focuses on the medium of photography in five war-related museums in Cyprus and examines how it is used in the context of these museums as a means to construct strong narratives by assuming the role of factual information and by appealing to emotions. More specifically, this paper explores (a) the types of photographs most common in war museums, (b) the context photography is presented in and how it influences meaning, and (c) the relationship between photography, memory and history. It is argued that photography in museums needs to be treated in a more critical and responsible way.

Key words: war museums, photography, museum context

Museums and photographs seem to have one thing in common. Both media are considered to be reliable and credible, and thus become official vehicles of history, despite the fact that they may provide only a partial, and often biased, view of reality. According to Sandell (2007), museums, more than other media, are considered to be objective, authentic and credible. Consequently, their voice appears to be authoritative and thus influential. Nevertheless, museums provide both historical / scientific information as well as subjective information that involve complex choices when it comes to political, social or economic matters. According to Cameron (2005: 217), 'the seemingly authoritative, truthful and objective quality of museum information makes it difficult to distinguish between these two sources'. Furthermore, memories and narratives of war are rarely objective. Museums, and especially war museums, emerge within specific spatial, national and political contexts, which influence their content. This content has a direct effect on what communities choose to remember and forget (Walsh 2007).

Photography is also a medium considered to be 'transparent' (Walton 1984) or else a 'species of alchemy' (Sontag 2003: 73), since it is considered to represent unmediated, unbiased reality. But as Tagg (1988: 4) argues, photography's apparent truthfulness is 'a complex historical outcome and is exercised by photographs only within certain institutional practices and within particular historical relations'. Therefore, one has to consider not only what a photograph can communicate visually but also how its meaning is shaped by institutions like museums.

A close study of the use of photographs in museums can reveal how the perceived transparency of photography and the authority of the museum interact with the subjectivity and the political construction of historical narratives. This paper attempts to deal with some of these issues by discussing the use of photography in five war-related museums in Cyprus, an island torn by political conflict. After a short introduction to Cypriot war museums and the events that shaped them, three different parts of the relationship between photography and museums are examined. The first part looks at the categories of photographs most commonly found in the case study museums. The second part investigates how different museum contexts can influence the meaning of the same photograph. Finally, the third part discusses the relationship between photography, memory and history.

War Museums in Cyprus

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

In direct response to these events, several museums and memorials were created on both sides of the island. The main war-related museums which serve as our case studies are: (a) the Struggle Museum (opened to the public in 1962, South Cyprus); (b) the Museum of Barbarism (opened in 1966, North Cyprus); (c) the Museum of National Struggle (opened in 1982, North Cyprus); (d) the Peace and Freedom Museum (opened in 2010, North Cyprus) and (e) the Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus (opened in 2010, South Cyprus). These museums seem to reinforce the officially recognized national narratives. By assuming the role of factual information and by appealing to emotions, photography plays an important role in supporting these narratives.

War Museums and Types of Photography

The case study museums typically display three categories of photographs: (a) documentary/ photojournalistic images of events that took place during a particular war (such as killings, destruction, displacements, etc.); (b) portraits of heroes or martyrs and (c) images of military and political events, including images of soldiers in social situations. The first category usually consists of photographs taken by photojournalists from the local or international community. The second category consists of photographs coming from periods before the events when the soldiers were preparing for war or celebrating various family or other events. Finally, the third category differs from the first in the sense that it aims to celebrate the military, rather than present the tragedy of war. All photographs are usually labelled but are almost always unattributed. Information about the photographers, their intentions, their alliances, their employers, the original context of the picture and the circumstances of their shooting are usually not available.

Documentary Photography as Proof

War museums often display a significant number of photographs as visual testimonies of the events described by texts and other exhibition media. Endorsed by the aura of the museum's authenticity, photographs serve as visual proof (Williams 2007) to help reinforce the museum's narrative. Documentary photography, which is considered a mechanical reproduction of reality at a specific time and place, seems to exclaim: 'See with your own eyes! It happened and it looked like this'. The Greek Cypriot Struggle Museum as well as the Turkish Cypriot National Struggle Museum and the Museum of Barbarism predominantly use documentary photography as a claim to historical accuracy and truth. The Museum of Barbarism will serve as the case study for this section.

The Museum of Barbarism is a small museum in the northern (Turkish Cypriot) part of divided Nicosia. It aims to commemorate not an act of war but an atrocity inflicted on innocent victims and is located in the former residence of Dr Nihat Ilhan, a major who served in the Cyprus Turkish Army Contingent in the 1960s. According to the museum narrative, his wife and three children, together with a woman from the neighbourhood, were killed in the bathroom of their home by Greek Cypriot fighters during the inter-communal conflicts of December 1963. The house remained as it was until 1965, when it was opened to the public as a memorial space,

and then officially became a museum in January 1966. Repairs were made in 1975 and 2000 and the exhibition, as it is today, was inaugurated in 2000. Apart from the personal belongings of the victims, the museum narrative is constructed from photographs and a few artworks. Accompanying texts in Turkish and English were excised from the international press reporting on the event just weeks or days after it occurred. These quotes are considered to be impartial testimonies of brutality and, as the name of the museum suggests, barbarism.

The selection of photographs is indicative: mutilated bodies, refugees and mothers and their children in despair. The most shocking photograph though is a bland snapshot of Dr Ilhan's wife and her three children dead in the bathtub of their home (see Image 1). The bodies are stacked one on top of the other and the faces of the three young children are clearly visible. The photograph, framed in a gold frame like a family portrait, hangs on the wall just outside the bathroom of the house and thus invites the viewer to recreate the scene. This rather cruel photograph is the only image in the visitor handout available at the entrance. The repetition makes the photograph the visual highlight of the museum, demanding recognition of the event and, thus, the atrocities inflicted on Turkish Cypriots by Greek Cypriots. This particular image of the dead woman and her children is present in almost every Turkish Cypriot museum dealing with war as well as in the Cyprus / Korean hall of the Istanbul Military Museum (Toumazis 2010). This is not surprising since it offers an iconic image of suffering, a photographic proof of injustice and a 'wound' (Sant Cassia 1999) able to reinforce a collective Turkish Cypriot memory that justifies division.

Image 1. Arrangement at the Museum of Barbarism, Nicosia, photo by the authors, 2010. The framed photograph depicts the wife and three children of Dr Nihat Ilhan who were murdered in their bathtub December 1963 (Photographer unknown).

However, a closer examination on how this iconic image was produced can reinforce the view that all documentary photography is constructed to some degree. In 2007, the editor-in-chief of the Turkish Cypriot newspaper Africa, Sener Levent, wrote three short articles in the Greek Cypriot newspaper Politis about the events that took place at the house of Dr Ilhan (Levent 2007).

Apart from leaving open the possibility that the killers of the family might not have been Greek Cypriots after all, the third and final article features the well-known photograph (image 1) and reveals how it was produced. An ex-commander of the Turkish Resistance Organization (TMT) who was present at the scene of the crime admitted that the first photographs were taken by TMT and are very different from the image that eventually became famous. He claims that in the first photographs only the face of the smaller child is visible and that TMT altered the position of the bodies to make the photographs more 'effective' (Levent 2007). Furthermore, several photographs and videos were shot at the scene days after the actual event. Apparently, the bodies were not removed immediately, so that international reporters had the chance to document and broadcast the event.

Photographs like the one at the Museum of Barbarism serve as unchallenged proofs of what has been and, under the right conditions, visualize the suffering of a whole community. However, we need to remember that all documentary photography is constructed either because of the way it was shot, subsequently used or framed within a museum.

The Human Face of Tragedy: Heroes and Martyrs

While the Museum of Barbarism is populated with images of evictions, captives, victims, executions, bodies, bombings, burned and burning sites, the following two museums choose to highlight a different kind of photography: portraits of martyrs and heroes. The Turkish Cypriot Museum of Peace and Freedom (opened in 2010 in its present form) and the Greek Cypriot Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus (opened in 2010) are war museums in a more straightforward fashion, since the military has been involved in the creation of the first one, while a regiment is responsible for the creation and management of the second one.

The Museum of Peace and Freedom commemorates the most controversial historical event of modern Cyprus, i.e. the arrival of the Turkish army on the island in July 1974, what Greek Cypriots call the Turkish Invasion and what Turkish Cypriots prefer to call the Peace Operation. The museum is located quite near the actual site of the event and right next to a cemetery where soldiers / victims were buried. The museum consists of a small building, an open-air display of military vehicles ('trophies of war' as we learn from the labels), a monument and a cemetery. The main building, which houses an exhibition devoted to the 1974 events and the leader of the operation, Colonel Ibrahim Karaoglanoglou, has been there since 1975/6. The museum complex though, which bears the name The Museum of Peace and Freedom (referring both to the operation itself and to its perceived consequences), was not inaugurated until July 2010 and, according to its staff, has since become a major tourist destination for Turkish tourists. The Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus is the most recent war-related museum on the island. An initiative of the Cypriot Association of Commandos, it opened its doors in 2010. It covers the period from 1964 (when the association was created) until the present with special highlights on the years 1964 and 1974 (Cyprus Association of Commando Reserves, n.d.).

The photographic material used in both museums is quite similar since special emphasis is given to portraits of soldiers and important military and political figures. In some cases, a person is singled out because of the role he (not a single woman is highlighted) played in the war efforts, or, more often, the individual photographs are grouped together to provide a mosaic of personal and collective sacrifice. For example, in the Museum of Peace and Freedom, two separate grid arrangements display the portraits of the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot soldiers respectively who died during 1974 (see image 2). The number of headshots in both displays seems to be similar. The separation of the photographs of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot soldiers implies that both communities fought side by side but also that motherland Turkey sacrificed as much as the local population.

Usually portraits of heroes and martyrs consist of sober black and white headshots of soldiers in uniform. These images seem to pursue more emotional than photojournalistic purposes. According to Barthes (2000), the power of these portraits emerges from the fact that these people were not dead when their photographs were taken. Furthermore, the viewer is asked to compensate for the lack of information, to consider the soldiers' lives cut short, their mourning families, their sacrifice and their bravery. This 'imagined memory' (Williams 2007) can be stronger and more effective than historical memory. However, at the same time, the grid

arrangement can depersonalize this personal and emotional feeling. According to Williams (2007: 73), 'Although memorial museums typically aim to put a "human face" on tragedy, the end result can be depersonalization, insofar as the person or people depicted are often received as little more than representative sacrificial victims of historical narrative'. From personal tragedy, the grid arrangement transports the viewer to abstract ideas such as sacrifice, history, memory and duty.

Image 2. Grid arrangement of soldiers who died during the 1974 events, Museum of Peace and Freedom, near Kerynia, photograph by the authors, 2010.

Celebrating Military Operations

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

Since the Museum of Peace and Freedom celebrates the 1974 victory of the Turkish army, the overall message is that of a victorious army that helped liberate the suffering Turkish Cypriot community. An unattributed photograph of (we assume) a Turkish Cypriot child offering a glass of water to a Turkish soldier, along with two other photos showing the arrival of the Turkish army, hang above a map which marks the route of the army's landing. This photograph of the child, a potent symbol of the future, successfully summarizes the overall message of the exhibition. Similar images are displayed in other war museums. For example, Toumazis (2010) observed that a photograph of a Turkish soldier affectionately holding a Turkish Cypriot baby hangs in the Cypriot / Korean hall in the Istanbul Military Museum, while a photograph of a Greek soldier holding a Greek Cypriot baby hangs in the Cyprus hall of the War Museum in Athens. Such images reinforce the belief that the Turkish and Greek armies respectively arrived in Cyprus in 1974 in order to protect and fight for their people and were received with gratitude and hope.

Perhaps not so surprisingly, the photographic material at the Museum of Commando Fighters of Cyprus tells a similar story. Portraits of soldiers and photographs of military leaders

and groups are favoured over images of death, displacement and destruction. The general feeling is again that of a well-organized military group ready for everything, something that the tour guide, a commando veteran who fought in 1974, makes sure to emphasize to visitors. Even though the war in 1974 ended with Turkey occupying a large part of the island, the overall feeling in this museum is an optimistic one since, according to the museum's narrative, the fight is not over yet.

Context and Meaning: Image and Text

How images work depends largely on the context they are found in, on how they are linked with text or on what the audience expects to find in a museum. All images are polysemous since they can imply different meanings, which usually depend on the viewers' knowledge of national, cultural and aesthetic characteristics that are embedded in the image (Barthes 1980). Similarly, the meaning of photographs found in war museums can depend on the nationality and political views of the viewer, as well as cultural and social factors. To avoid this polysemy, museums use labels and text to direct the messages emitted by the photographs. According to Barthes (1980: 275), 'the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle dispatching, it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance'. This section examines how the museum's context can remote-control photographic meaning by favouring one interpretation over others, regardless of the original context of the photographs. As an example, we take one photograph found in two similar museums, which, nevertheless, offer very different narratives: the Greek Cypriot Struggle Museum in south Nicosia and the Turkish Cypriot Museum of National Struggle in north Nicosia.

The Struggle Museum in south Nicosia was established on 26 January 1961 by the Greek Cypriot community. The aim of the museum is to 'keep alive the memory of the struggle for liberation of the Greek Cypriots against the British, which was organized by the National Organization of the Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) from 1955 to 1959' (Michalopoulos 2004: 37). The collection was re-arranged and the museum, as it now stands, opened to the public in April 2001. On the other side of the Green Line, a different museum bearing exactly the same name describes a different version of the story (Papadakis 1994). The National Struggle Museum in north Nicosia was established in 1978 and is currently housed in a building constructed in 1989 for the 'purpose of immortalizing, displaying and teaching the generations ahead the conditions under which the Turkish Cypriot people struggled for their cause from 1955 till the present' (Museum of National Struggle n.d.: 4). In this case, the museum, which was slightly rearranged in 2002, presents the national struggle of the Turkish Cypriot community in three stages: from 1878 to 1955, from 1955 to 1974, and from 1974 onwards. Even though the story starts with the arrival of the British on the island, the main emphasis is given to the two subsequent phases, in which Greek Cypriots emerge as the primary enemy. Although both museums have changed since 2000, their main stories, and even texts, remain unchanged.

While both museums cover the anti-colonial struggle of 1955–59, only one image appears in both museums. This photograph can help us examine how meaning can be determined not only by what we see on the photographic surface but also by the museum content. According to Barrett (2006: 106), 'it is difficult for viewers to arrive at a trustworthy interpretation if they don't have some prior knowledge of the photograph: who made it, when, where, how, and for what purpose'. As a matter of fact, a photograph has at least three different levels which one has to consider in order to get a fuller picture: (a) its internal context, which includes what one can see; (b) its original context, which includes information about who, when, how and why the photograph was taken as well as what events it depicts or excludes; and (c) its external context, which includes the situation in which a photograph is presented (Barrett 2006).

Internal Context

The photograph (see image 3) shows two men lying in a busy street next to a carriage and a bicycle. They seem to be dead. A third man on a pavement is moving away from the photographer, while a fourth man walks agitatedly towards the photographer and seems to be

talking to him. A woman is walking right behind the fourth man. With one hand she is covering her face as to avoid looking at the men and with the other she is holding a grocery bag. Curious bystanders surround the scene.

Image 3. Photograph found in both the Greek Cypriot Struggle Museum (north Nicosia) and the Turkish Cypriot National Struggle Museum (south Nicosia), photo by Robert Egby, 1956. Permission to use was received by the photographer.

Original Context

On 28 September 1956, the EOKA fighter and photojournalist Nicos Sampson, along with Athos Patrides and Andis Tseriotes, attacked and shot three Scotland Yard agents (Sampson 1961a). During the attack, Sergeant Cyril Thorogood and Sergeant Hugh Carter died (the two bodies in the street), while Sergeant William Webb was injured (the third man who looks away from the photographer) (Egby 2011). The murders took place on Ledra Street, one of the most populous streets in the capital of Cyprus, in bright daylight (Georgiou and Papademetris 2000). According to Sampson's (1961a) detailed report of the events, the British agents were at a local camera store where they boasted that they had arrived in Cyprus to crush the EOKA leader Grivas Digenis. A store clerk overheard the discussion and immediately notified the local resistance fighters, who in a few minutes were following the three agents. The agents stopped at a second store to load their cameras with film. Upon exiting the store, they were attacked by the EOKA fighters (Sampson 1961b). The attack took place practically opposite from the offices of the newspaper the Cyprus Mail. The editor, Victor Bodker, heard the shots and rushed to the crime scene. As he reported the next day (Bodker 1956), as soon as he stepped outside he saw two men lying on the street and a third man leaning against a wall with a revolver in hand. He was there when a Greek Cypriot doctor examined the men and when the three men were helped into a passing taxi, which drove them to the hospital. Victor Bodker is identified as the fourth man who appears to be talking to the photographer (Phileleftheros 1956).

The photographer, Robert Egby, was working at the time as a photojournalist at the Cyprus Mail. According to his autobiography, when he heard someone shouting, 'There's a

killing outside,' he grabbed his camera and ran to Ledra Street. Egby (2011: 123) offers the photographer's point of view:

As I walked onto the street I started taking pictures. It was automatic. I could see one man was dead; another was on his back, waving his arms and in the throes of dying. The third man, trying to stay on his feet was looking up Murder Mile. He had a gun drawn. Victor Bodker was coming towards me, calling out to everyone to call an ambulance. A lady named Mrs Leyland, whose husband often came into the paper, had been shopping and was walking by. That is the moment I took the picture. It was tragedy frozen in time.

This 'tragedy frozen in time' appeared in a number of newspapers the very next day, and has since appeared in a number of book publications and is, of course, featured in both museums in question. However, the name of the photographer is not mentioned in any of these sources.

External Context

The specific photograph is displayed in both Struggle Museums but becomes a part of a very different narrative depending on which side of the Green Line you are. In the Struggle Museum (Greek Cypriot), photographs are grouped in 'separate panels (boards), each of which displays in a satisfactory manner one page of the Struggle' (Papachrysostomou 1977: 10). The headings of the panels are enough to provide the framework for understanding the photographs and to direct the meaning for visitors. The specific photograph is included in a panel of similar photos with the overall label 'Executions of British Intelligence Service Officers'. The dead bodies are correctly identified as British officers and those responsible as EOKA fighters. Within the context of this museum, this is an act of bravery, an act of protection of our own against the enemy, a justifiable and even commendable act.

The use of photography in the Turkish Cypriot National Struggle Museum is similar to its Greek Cypriot counterpart. The visual information is overpowering as small and large black and white photographs are displayed on almost every wall. However, most photographs have their own labels. In this museum, the specific photograph appears with the following label: 'Our people cruelly murdered in the streets by EOKA'. Therefore, the dead bodies are incorrectly identified as that of Turkish Cypriots and the killers as EOKA fighters. The exact same photograph is used to prove the cruelty of Greek Cypriots and the threat EOKA posed to the Turkish Cypriot community.

To sum up, apart from what we can see in the photographic frame, the original context of a documentary photograph can inform us about what happened, when, where, why, by whom and to whom. In the case of this specific photograph, the information provided by witnesses, the photographer, as well as newspaper articles and official reports makes up the original context of the photograph. Without this context, one cannot completely decipher its meaning. However, the two case study museums choose to strip photographs from their original context and present them as part of a larger narrative, another visual documentation of similar events in a 'page of the struggle' (Papachrysistomou 1977:10). As a result, the external museum context determines, to a large degree, a photograph's meaning and reception. This becomes even more obvious when the same photograph is used in two museums to support two completely different stories. In one case, it is used to celebrate the EOKA killings as heroic acts against a foreign rule and in the second case it is used to condemn them as cruel acts targeting the local minority population.

Photography, Memory and History

The war museums examined so far use photography as a form of memory that is carried over into the realm of history. The role of photography in preserving memory is clearly acknowledged by Papachrysostomou, an ex-EOKA fighter and the first director of the Struggle Museum: 'The greatest success of the Museum, which fulfils its most vital aim, is the photographic salvation of the memory of the Struggle. Many thousands of original photographs save the memory of events and people' (Papachrysostomou 1977: 10). These visual traces of place and time are displayed in institutions which, invested with credibility and labelled as history museums, thus become sources of historical truth. However, Nora (1996) warns that memory and history are

far from being synonymous. He explains:

> Memory, being a phenomenon of emotion and magic, accommodates only those facts that suit it. It thrives on vague, telescoping reminiscences, on hazy general impressions or specific symbolic details. It is vulnerable to transferences, screen memories, censoring, and projections of all kinds. History, being an intellectual, nonreligious activity, calls for analysis and critical discourse…Memory wells up from groups that it welds together, which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs observed, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple yet specific; collective and plural yet individual. By contrast, history belongs to everyone and no one and therefore has a universal vocation (Nora 1996: 3).

The use of photographs by the war museums in the ways discussed above closely resembles Nora's concept of memory and, more specifically, his concept of public collective memory, more than history. The photographs are carefully selected to represent, express or (re)create the memories of specific communities (Greek or Turkish Cypriot) and they function in a more symbolic and emotional manner than in an intellectual or critical one. After all, 'groups talk about some events of their histories more than others, glamorize some individuals more than others, and present some actions but not others as "instructive" for the future' (Dickinson, Blair and Ott 2010: 7). Usually, photographs are pre-selected because they have something to offer to a predetermined narrative. Those that do not fit the narrative are usually omitted. Communities are interested in promoting certain collective memories because these memories can influence the present (Urry 1996). As a matter of fact, they can provide a history, which will help communities make sense of their world, provide beliefs and opinions and serve as a basis for future decisions (Misztal 2007). This section also examines one photograph in particular, in order to highlight the selective power of memory.

One of the most famous photographs taken during the inter-communal conflicts in 1964 is by the British photographer Donald McCullin. The photograph shows a Turkish Cypriot woman in agony, her hands clasped to her chest, two women supporting her and a young child reaching for her (see Image 4). Even though the Cyprus conflict in the 1960s was the first major assignment for the Magnum photographer, in 1964 he managed to become the first British photographer to be awarded the first prize in the annual World Press Photo contest (Sant Cassia 1999). This particular photograph received extensive international publicity, is repeatedly used by the Public Information Office in the northern part of Cyprus (Sant Cassia 1999), is instantly recognizable by most Turkish Cypriots and is displayed in both the Museum of Barbarism and the National Struggle Museum.

Even though the photograph is framed correctly within a particularly distressful period for the Turkish Cypriot community, differences in labelling reflect the different approaches of each museum. In the Turkish Cypriot National Struggle Museum, the label under the photograph reads 'Pleas and tears from the mothers of the martyrs and the missing people of the 1963 conflict'. In the Museum of Barbarism we read the following: 'The drama of Nevcihan Niyazi, the wife of Hüseyin Niyazi who was lost during (the) 1958–1960 incidents and never heard (of) again'. In the National Struggle Museum, the photograph becomes a generic image of pain inflicted during a specific period of time on the Turkish Cypriot community as a collective subject. In this sense, details are not important; not when this happened or to whom in particular, but that this did happen to one of us and therefore to all. In the Museum of Barbarism, a more personal stance is taken even though the photograph is used to illustrate an event which, according to the label, happened years before the photograph was taken. On the other hand, the British Imperial War Museum North, takes a more factual and distanced perspective, while attributing the photograph to its author. The accompanying caption on the museum's website reads: 'A distraught woman flees the village of Gazabaran with her family after the killing of her husband, Cyprus, 1964. Photograph © Don McCullin'. The accuracy of attribution to both author and date claim a historical perspective and take distance from memory. Furthermore, it also implies an appreciation of the photographer's individuality and artistic expression. In other words, whereas the two museums in northern Cyprus use the photograph to create emotions and recall memories, the museum in Britain makes a claim to history.

Image 4. Arrangement of the 1964 photograph of a Turkish Cypriot woman in agony taken by Donald McCullin, Museum of Barbarism, Nicosia, photo by the authors, 2010.

This photograph, despite being well-known both in northern Cyprus and internationally, is virtually unknown in the southern part of Cyprus. The familiarity of a photograph and its display is a political decision. Memories that might be too dangerous to activate are usually omitted. According to Misztal (2007: 386), 'to remember everything could bring a threat to national cohesion and self-image. Forgetting is a necessary component in the construction of memory just as the writing of a historical narrative necessarily involves the elimination of certain elements'. In order to avoid the threat to national cohesion, the museums examined become collaborators in a collective remembering and forgetting by including certain photographs and excluding others.

Furthermore, photographs, as well as other objects displayed in war museums, are read according to the visual database one has in mind along with the context of the exhibition. After all, when confronted with images, we tend to remember what is familiar to us because it makes more sense to us (Misztal 2007). If Image 4 was presented in a Greek Cypriot museum and marked with the date 1974, there is no doubt that it would have been identified by Greek Cypriots as Greek Cypriot refugees mourning the loss of their loved ones. If the audience expects to see the suffering and struggle of a specific community, it will unavoidably read the images in this context.

Papadakis (2006: 84) demonstrates this point when he talks about the photographs he saw during his visit to the Museum of Barbarism:

> Then I saw the photos of Turkish Cypriot refugees from 1963, tent after tent in long lines. They had been settled in an area of Lefkosha still called Gochmenkoy ('Village of Refugees'). The people were sitting outside, cold, ragged and sad, among puddles of rainwater. Children with their heads shaved were lining up with metal containers waiting for food, looking at me with black, empty eyes in those familiar pictures. Had I seen them elsewhere, I would have thought they were Greek Cypriot refugees from 1974.

For Papadakis and other Greek Cypriots, these images are indeed familiar. Not these specific

images but this type of image. The Republic of Cyprus has long promoted images of refugees in order to highlight the Cyprus Problem locally and internationally. Similar images are, therefore, embedded in the collective memory of both Turkish and Greek Cypriots, although they refer to a different conflict (1963 for the former and 1974 for the latter). Therefore, in the absence of the photograph's original context, the visual collective memory and political point of view of the viewer controls the meaning of photography.

Conclusions

In the catalogue of the Greek Cypriot Struggle Museum, under a photograph of a British soldier holding a gun amongst a group of children, instead of a descriptive caption, we read the popular saying 'a photograph, a thousand words' (Demetriou 2008: 13, translation from Greek). This caption indicates that the reader should trust what he / she sees because a photograph can talk by itself. But one can wonder, whose thousand words are we talking about? This paper questions this notion by examining the types of photographs that are common in war museums and why, how the museum context might influence photographic meaning and how, and the relationship between photography, memory and history.

Despite the fact that all the photographs displayed in the five case study museums present a repertoire of similar events (refugees, murder, heroes/martyrs, etc.) and follow a similar aesthetic (photojournalistic style or portraits), the messages communicated change according to the accompanying text, the museum's central narrative as well as the preconceptions of the viewer. History is told through images, which eventually form and reinforce a collective memory. But, since their use and framing is selective, a particular narrative is reinforced at the expense of another, a partial story is told, choices are made and silences are ensured. However, this is not a uniquely Cypriot experience. Partial stories are told in museums in other countries as well, especially when history and heritage are closely connected to the dominant political system (for Croatia see Goulding and Domic 2009; for Israel see Mendel and Steinberg 2011; for Cape Town see McEachern 2007). Presenting issues from a critical historical perspective that is considered too political or sensitive appears to be 'dangerous business' (Casey 2007: 295) for any museum. As a result, in countries where conflict is still fresh and unresolved, museums appear to present straightforward narratives with the help of the 'evidential force' (Barthes 2000) of photography. Thus, photography functions as a form of memory; a selective, emotional and vague form of memory that is vulnerable to changes in the museum's context.

However, the meaning of photography in museums is always constructed, in one way or another, regardless of how objective museums try to be. To begin with, photographers choose what to photograph and how, the media promote certain images more than others and museums select from existing archives the images that can reinforce already predetermined narratives. Finally, viewers filter photographic representation through their own visual library of images, beliefs and attitudes. With this much selection, manipulation and subjective reception, it is difficult for one to insist on the 'transparency' of photography. On the contrary, one can argue that photography in museums is an 'opaque' construction that should be approached in a sceptical fashion.

Nevertheless, because visitors are often unaware of how a photograph is constructed as well as how the museum context influences its meaning, photography, and especially documentary photography, still holds sway over visitors as it is seen as a truthful, unbiased documentation of what has been. According to Barthes (2000: 91), 'the photograph is violent: not because it shows violent things, but because on each occasion it fills the sight by force, and because in it nothing can be refused or transformed'. One can even argue that in the case of war museums, photography is violent twice since it also presents violence. Due to photography's visual force and the fact that it is placed within a credible institution, photography in museums constitutes a vulnerable medium that can be easily manipulated. Museum professionals need then to provide viewers with more information about the original context of photography, acknowledge the selective processes of its creation, distribution, archiving and usage, and in general use photography in a more critical and responsible way.

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***Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert** is a lecturer at the Cyprus University of Technology. She earned her PhD in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester and her MA in Visual Arts/Museum Education from the University of Texas at Austin. She received several awards and scholarships such as an Arts and Humanities Research Council Award (UK), an A. G. Leventis Foundation Scholarship (France), a M. K. Hage Endowed Scholarship in Fine Arts (USA) and a Fulbright Scholarship (USA). Her research interests include museum and visitor studies with an emphasis on issues of cultural consumption, as well as photography and visual sociology.

E-mail: theopisti.stylianou@cut.ac.cy

Address: 9 Diagorou str.,
k. Lakatameia,
Nicosia,
Cyprus

Telephone number: +357 96456146
Fax number: +357 25002665

Alexandra Bounia is an associate professor of museology at the University of the Aegean, Greece, Department of Cultural Technology and Communication.

She studied archaeology and history of art at the University of Athens and museum studies at the University of Leicester, UK. Her research interests include the history, theory and management of collections and museums, the interpretation of material culture, and the use of new technologies as interpretive media. She has published in Greek and international journals and participates in research projects in Greece and abroad.

E-mail: abounia@ct.aegean.gr

Address: 29 Avgis Street,
N. Kifissia,
Athens,
Greece

Telephone number: +30 2108001061
Fax number: +30 2108001061