Transnational affect and gender-based violence in *Arizona, CY* (2024)

Marilena Zackheos

Department of English Studies, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus.

zackheos.m@gmail.com (ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5375-1524)

Nicos Philippou

Department of Communications, University of Nicosia, Nicosia, Cyprus.

philippou.n@unic.ac.cy (ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0089-9561)

ABSTRACT

Arizona, CY (2024) blends original poetry and photography to forge narrative and visual connections between Arizona and Cyprus. Poems like *After the raid, Where are you?, Emine,* and *Ledger* illuminate real-life stories of trauma, exploitation, and gender-based violence (GBV) against women, exploring the intimate and structural dimensions of these experiences. The visual imagery – arid landscapes and resilient flora – symbolise the damage and survival from the shared histories of environmental devastation, interethnic tensions, and social injustice across these regions. Grounded in transnational feminism, this article examines how colonial legacies, migration, and economic disparities contribute to the perpetuation of GBV as a global phenomenon. Drawing on affect theory, trauma studies, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's nomadic sensibility, we emphasise the work's focus on resilience, empathy, and interconnectedness. Sara Ahmed's concept of 'sticky' emotions, as well as Elizabeth A. Povinelli's theories of abandonment and economies of value, provide frameworks for understanding how *Arizona, CY* fosters transnational solidarity by creating therapeutic social links and affective experiences. By respecting cultural specificity while challenging patriarchal structures at large, *Arizona, CY* highlights the transformative potential of empathy and rhizomatic thinking in addressing GBV. The work ultimately acts as a feminist praxis for fostering solidarity and change across borders and contexts.

Keywords: women, violence, conflict, transnational feminism, affect, nomadic.

Dates:
Received: 2025-02-24
Accepted: 2025-09-01
Published: 2025-11-24

Published by

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2617-3255/2025/n39a24

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Introduction

At Art Seen Contemporary Gallery in Nicosia, Cyprus, concealed behind a black curtain that one must pass through, is a grainy black-and-white photograph of towering, slender prickly pear plants projected on the back wall of a rectangular, long, and small exhibition space. The three-by-three metre projection is an enlarged Polaroid showing prickly pear plants grown in a round, giving viewers the impression of being surrounded by them in a semi-circle. The image is filtered through a thin sheet of gauze placed 80 centimetres away from the wall. The resulting visual has the haunting quality of a spectre. Accompanying the photograph projection is a sound installation of a poem retelling the story of three Navajo girls captured and tortured by Apache raiders in an Arizona of 1878 (Figure 1). *After the raid* is an artwork that forms part of a collaborative project called *Arizona, CY* (2024), which encompasses a book publication and an art exhibition. This project is a joint effort between us – Nicos Philippou, a landscape photographer, and Marilena Zackheos, a poet. Both of us are also academics from Cyprus. The project draws visual and narrative parallels between the arid landscapes and violent histories of Arizona in USA and Cyprus. *After the raid*, and other poems like *Where are you?*, *Emine*, and *Ledger* are based on real-life stories of gender-based violence (GBV) against women, some from Arizona and others from Cyprus. The poems serve as companions to photographs of barren landscapes and resilient flora, together signalling both the damage and survival resulting from similarly lived histories of environmental devastation, interethnic tensions, and social injustice across these regions. In this article, we are guided by the transnational feminist thought of Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (1994) and also draw on Sara Ahmed's (2014) work on affect, Elizabeth A. Povinelli's (2011) economies of abandonment, Françoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière's (2004) trauma research, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (1986; 1987) nomadic thinking to explain how affective experiences and therapeutic social links are forged in *Arizona, CY* in order to initiate solidarity and change across borders and contexts.



FIGURE **Nº 1**

Constantinos S. Constantinou. *After the raid* from the exhibition *ARIZONA, CY*, 2024. Projection and sound installation. Courtesy of Art Seen Contemporary Art Projects & Editions.

Controversy: Addressing objections

First, a caveat: we recognise that our work can be controversial. We speak to Cyprus' trauma from war and conflict by way of similar experiences in Arizona. We tackle gender-based trauma, historical trauma, race-based trauma, and intergenerational trauma as intertwined. We address gender-based trauma in the form of killings and rapes of Cypriot women during the interethnic conflict between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots occurring under British colonial rule (1878-1960), after Independence (1960), and all the way to the war of 1974 when Turkey seized one third of Cyprus. We do so via a narrative link with the killing and rape of women during a violent episode between Navajos and Apaches in nineteenth-century Arizona. Intersectional trauma caused by racialised and gendered violence against women is also apparent in our work. The narrative of migrant women and their children killed by a Greek-Cypriot man and then disposed of in the Mitsero mine and its environs is told in the shadow of more widely recognisable narratives of hardship and danger associated with Arizonan mines, as well as prejudice toward migrants more widespread generally. The exploitation of enslaved Black women in the history of Arizona and the lesser-known history of Black slavery in Cyprus is another

narrative link that our work draws attention to. A Turkish-Cypriot prostitute's experience during British colonial rule is yet another link made with the more familiar tales told of female prostitutes in the Wild West. Lastly, in all poetic works discussed here, the ghostly presences of the mistreated women address intergenerational trauma passed down from the respective historical traumas.

Some critics might object to the parallelism forged between diverse experiences, going on to maintain that this is a form of relativism (Natarajan 1994:144) that ultimately flattens cultural differences. Yet, the narratives that are told are not intended to be read as equivalent to each other. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003:78) reminds us, it is not enough to merely pay attention to the fact that narratives document one's experiences, but one must also take into account 'how they are recorded … read, receive[d], and disseminate[d]'. The Arizonan and Cypriot narratives are rewritten via a different context in order to be read through a different set of eyes. American Western narratives inflate the Cypriot experience, throwing into sharp relief the cultural pluralism that monocultural Greek nationalism has flattened on the island.

In *Economies of abandonment: Social belonging and endurance in late liberalism*, Elizabeth A. Povinelli (2011:13) argues that governments abandon certain members of society to 'ongoing structural social harm', essentially assigning value to some and not others, choosing which subjects to safeguard. She goes on to defend an ethical obligation to make those populations rendered 'spectral' (Povinelli 2011:39) more legible as actual subjects with worth (Povinelli 2011:120). One of the strategies Povinelli suggests using is interpreting abandoned subjects through a lens of 'a set of beliefs largely consistent and true *by our own standards*' (Davidson cited by Povinelli 2011:82). The narratives that we tell are ones that have largely been ignored from masculinised, monocultural, nationalist narration and the intent is for these to be remembered and be rethought in relation to each of our own distinct positions. We seek a 'radical interpretation' (Povinelli 2011:82) through an analogy that can yield greater intelligibility. Additionally, these narratives are meant to implicate readers. They are intended to be brought to the forefront and act as 'embodied thoughts', in other words, 'thoughts seeped with the apprehension that "I am involved"' (Rosaldo 1984:143). As Sara Ahmed (2014:10) explains, 'feelings become a sort of social presence', activating both individual and collective sensibilities and reactions.

We anticipate that by pairing experiences from the history of the US with Cypriot experiences, some might argue our project universalises in a way that engages in an instance of colonial societies appropriating Western colonialist national thought (Chatterjee 1986:13). In Lydia Liu's words, the work may be then considered to 'speak the language of colonialism' (Liu 1994:38). We indeed borrow from Wild West history but do so to challenge local nationalist hegemonies. In response to the claim that Europe and the

Americas have been rendered as the most prominent historical actors shaping our understanding of both colonialism and anticolonial resistance so much so that '[e]ven our imaginations must remain forever coloni[s]ed' (Chatterjee 1993:5), Partha Chatterjee (1993:6) states that 'anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty'. The manner in which the colonised adapt colonial practices should not be undermined. Chatterjee (1993:5) maintains there is immense power and creativity predicated 'on a difference with the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West'. The poetry in *Arizona, CY* does indeed speak in English, but neither the Queen's nor the American Emperors' English. It borrows the language of American Western slang, incorporating Navajo proverbs and the English-Spanish dialect of the American borderlands to discuss Cypriot experiences, as well as Greek-Cypriot vernacular, Turkish words, Cypriot historical records, and even autobiographical information to speak of Arizonan experiences. Language is used here more as mimicry in Homi K. Bhabha's (2006:121-131) sense or as a deterritorialisation narrative strategy in Deleuze and Guattari's (1986:18-27) understanding of minor literature for exaggerating, exposing, and challenging the brutality and absurdity of violent interethnic and intra-social relations. In the spirit of Povinelli (2011:120), we are 'trying to extend something over space and time that has no viable language outside this iteration of its persistence'. We stretch language to create a social imaginary where abandoned voices and experiences are recognised.

As much as the literary text is composed of American cowboy poems about Cyprus, there are also Cypriot poems about Arizona. In fact, distinguishing between the places and experiences is difficult, even though the literary work is based on historical records from both locations. On this point, many visitors of the exhibition expressed amazement that they could not decipher which Polaroids were produced in Cyprus and which in Arizona, when in fact they are all from the dry plains around Nicosia. That is to say, the photography in *Arizona, CY*, just like the poetry, blurs the boundaries between the two locales and obscures temporal and geographic specifics by eschewing realism and the aesthetics of the documentary tradition.

The photography embraces visual noise, accepting unintended artefacts and choosing poeticism over crystal-clear signification. It was created on temperamental Polaroid film, scanned, converted to monochrome, reprinted on Riso, projected through old-school overhead projectors, and, in the case of *After the raid*, projected onto the wall through thin fabric. The resulting territory is a here, there and nowhere, where the landscape's cacti and other succulents are transformed into phantasms, like the ones that populate the poetry. For Deleuze and Guattari (1986:11-12), instances of metamorphosis are instances of absolute deterritorialisation which oppose submission to authorities and to a system. 'To become', in their terms, is,

> to cross a threshold, … to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialised flux, of non-signifying signs (Deleuze & Guattari 1986:11-12).

The haunting photographs of *Arizona, CY* cross thresholds and resist literal signification as they lend the project an aura of vagueness and an intensity of feeling. The ambiguity in the photographs is a strategy to resist territorialisation and, therefore, escape subjugation to a single local nationalism, while avoiding at the same time speaking the "language" of any of Cyprus's historical masters.

A last objection we expect to our work pertains to the publicising of forms of violence against women, contributing to 'the fetishi[s]ation of the wound' (Ahmed 2014:33) but to echo Ahmed, we believe that forgetting would be an act of repeating injury (Ahmed 2014:33). Women's misfortunes have long been silenced through colonial and patriarchal erasure or appropriation into hegemonic nationalist narratives (Spivak 1988:83). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) has warned about the dangers of speaking on behalf of the subaltern female or of symbolically depicting the subaltern female's experience. That is, one's own background, ideologies, and assumptions may come to reinscribe the erasure of the subaltern (Spivak 1988:102). Nonetheless, Spivak (1988:81) also suggested that we have an ethical imperative to make visible 'the mechanism' that rendered the subaltern silent.

While the reiteration of stories about rape and violence against women in a project about national trauma might for some signal the 'engendering of nation as male through [the] representation of the female body' (Natarajan 1994:88) and this might then contribute to what Mary Layoun (1994:65) identified as a particularly 'familiar obsession with the body of a violated (Cypriot) woman', we intend to expose injustice and its silencing. The narratives of GBV in our work are, rather, meant to function as feminist 'revolutionary testimonials', which, as Doris Sommer (in Mohanty 2003:82) explained, 'construc[t] relationships between the self and the reader, in order to invite and precipitate change (revolution)'. For us, it is the construction of these relationships initiated through testimony that may amplify an understanding of injustice and enable, as Spivak (1988) advocates, the exposure of debilitating power structures. We know, according to Grewal and Caplan (1994:17-18), that gender is impacted by 'scattered hegemonies'. These are 'multiple, overlapping, and discrete oppressions' (Grewal & Caplan 1994:17-18). Rather than lumping these under a single global unifying plight of gender, Grewal and Caplan call for transnational feminist solidarities that will interrogate oppressive systems of power in a range of specific locations. On that account, *Arizona CY* attempts to form a transnational alliance between the GBV struggles from the two locales, which is grounded in affect.

Connecting through transnational affect

After the raid is a poem written as a testimonial from the perspective of three Navajo girls who were captured and killed in 1878 by Apaches who raided their encampment by the Little Colorado River. The telling of the story 'do[es] not focus on the unfolding of a singular woman's consciousness', which Mohanty (2003:81) explains is common in autobiography of the prevailing European modernist tradition, but instead, the testimonial 'speak[s] *from within* a collective, as participants in revolutionary struggles'. This is clear in the first-person plural use throughout the poem. We reproduce the poem here:

After the raid

Three of us were taken prisoners.

They mounted us on their horses
and hid us away
in a nearby underground chamber.

They stripped us of our clothes,
dragged us by the hair
in the dirt,
beat us with sticks,
knifed designs of their whim in our flesh.

Every man took turns for his amusement.

They made us watch each other.
So they could watch.

Then we were brought out of the chamber.
For the art of war, they scalped our braids off.

Then they impaled us.
One over the other,
finally let to rest.

We have taken
root in this place and we have grown wild (Phillipou & Zackheos 2024:14).

The gruesome narration of the girls' deaths ends with the haunting lines, 'We have taken/ root in this place and we have grown wild' asserting that the girls' ghosts persist and do so unrestrained. This narrative twist echoes the stories told about the haunted cave where the Navajo girls and 42 Apache raiders were subsequently killed; there are reports to this day of people hearing groans and footsteps in the area. Yet, the ghost speakers act as testaments of the sadistic violence women have and continue to endure.

The eerie audio narration of the poem, in combination with the spectral-like photographic image fluttering against the thin gauze, was intended to unsettle. In the introduction to their edited book, *Arts of living on a damaged planet: Ghosts and monsters of the Anthropocene,* Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Nils Bubandt, Elaine Gan, and Heather Anne Swanson (2017:6) explain that 'ghosts remind us'. They do so out of urgency. They 'point to our forgetting' as we proceed to remake landscape by privileging certain memories over others (Tsing *et al* 2017:6). In the case of rape, these narratives are most often silenced as they are considered taboo, people do not wish to admit that their own people would commit such atrocities (Kades 2024), and there is little hope for reparation. Moreover, haunted landscapes signal both 'our disaster as well as our weedy hope' (Tsing *et al* 2017:7). The ghosts in *After the raid* remind us of the threat of extinction but also that 'life persists in the shadow of mass death' (Tsing *et al* 2017:8). The ghosts share their story and thereby share their perspective as tortured girls and bystanders of war, offering their critique of intercommunal conflict but also a sentiment of resilience. In the poem, they are not presented as victims; to echo Rosalind O'Hanlon's words (in Mohanty 2003:82), they can be said to 'stand outside and … escape the constructions of dominant discourse' that have silenced and erased them from history. They persist to tell of their survival. Spectral presences are 'bracketed' in Povinelli's (2011:78) sense of not being fully socially recognised, but they refuse to remain in this way unresolved. They reach out to the listener, crossing temporal and spatial worlds. Moreover, the pairing of the ghostly image of the prickly pear plant – known for its resilience – with the last verse of the poem, which talks of persistence instead of victimhood, tells anew the Arizonan story in Nicosia almost one and a half centuries later.

To our reassurance and delight, our main installation resonated with Cypriots. Though the location of the visual and textual material was not specified, the work proved to have formed an affective transnational link between women's violent experiences in Arizona and Cyprus. Consequently, *After the raid* was bought by the Republic of Cyprus's Deputy Ministry of Culture for its Permanent Art Collection. It seems that something about that piece "stuck" with local visitors to our exhibition, including members of the Cyprus State Art Acquisition Committee. Ahmed (2014:11) notes that 's[ome] objects become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension'. She explains that objects

of emotion can move us to connect with other bodies, including 'bodies of communities' (Ahmed 2014:33). It is this 'circulation of objects' (Ahmed 2014:8) of emotion that allows for a confirmation of pain, violence, and injustice. It is not that we "feel the same" when we are moved. Rather, it is 'the ungraspability of [our] own pain [that] is brought to the surface by the ungraspability of the pain of others' (Ahmed 2014:31).

In other words, Cypriot audiences at Art Seen appear to have been prompted to draw on their own knowledge of historical Cypriot trauma as they became witnesses to the historical trauma of the temporally and spatially distant Wild West. Greek-Cypriots may have tapped into local cultural knowledge about mass rapes of women aged 12-71 committed by Turkish soldiers during the 1974 war in Cyprus that led to the division of the island (European Commission of Human Rights Report, 1976:paragraphs 373-4). Turkish-Cypriots may have, in turn, tapped into local cultural knowledge of rapes perpetrated against Turkish-Cypriot women by Greek-Cypriot EOKA B members (Kades 2024), part of the Second Nationalist Organisation of Greek-Cypriot Fighters, who sought union with Greece and undertook a coup in collaboration with the Greek junta, overthrowing elected President Makarios, setting into motion the Turkish invasion.

The transnational feminist alliance is evident in the poem, allowing for the contemplation of GBV experienced by the Navajo girls in 1878 and by the Cypriot women in 1974. Ahmed (2014:174) explains that 'Stories of pain can be "shared" only when we assume they are not the same story, even if they are connected, and allow us to make connections'. She makes clear that 'I am moved by what does not belong to me (Ahmed 2014:31). It is not that we feel exactly what others are feeling, but 'we feel sad about their suffering' (Ahmed 2014:21). We are moved by and can approximate others' feelings based on our past knowledge and impressions. That is, 'the process of recognition (of this feeling, or that feeling) is bound up with what we already know' (Ahmed 2014:25). In *History beyond trauma*, trauma theorists Françoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière (2004) explain that there is transformative and transferential potential between subjects who carry pasts that bear witness to war atrocities. They argue that when Madness finds an Other with a parallel experience in their historical lineage (Davoine & Gaudillière 2004:159), it is possible to overcome the traumatic particulars of history because 'the bond of combat erases the distinction between oneself and the other' (Davoine & Gaudillière 2004:155). While Ahmed refuses to conflate self and other as a result of objects of emotion, she agrees that there is transformative power in connecting through emotion, including for feminist causes. She writes

> it is in the alignment of the "we" with the "I", the feminist subject with the feminist collective, an alignment which is imperfect and hence generative, that a new grammar of social existence may yet be possible' (Ahmed 2014:188).

Moreover, the narrative of GBV in *After the raid* does not collapse the difference of experience between the Navajo girls of 1878 and the Cypriot women of 1974, but generates a transnational affective recognition of their parallel traumas.

Through its title, the poem *Where are you?* urges readers to consider their own stance and align with a joint feminist cause. The poem deals with the murder and disposal of the bodies of six female migrant domestic workers and two of their female children in mine shafts, lakes, and pits in the environs of Mitsero in the Cypriot countryside, which were gradually all uncovered in 2019 (Zackheos 2019:105). Known as the "Mitsero murders", they were perpetrated by a military officer while reports of the women going missing were not investigated properly by police, who instead dismissed their disappearances as cases of migrant women simply fleeing the country. Written exclusively out of snippets from Facebook posts at the time of the uncovering of the murders, the poem curates a sample of the public's positions on the subject and, in this way, enacts a type of retrospective and corrective searching for the neglected women and girls. Furthermore, in the poem, the women are named, paying tribute to their lives and encouraging the reader to conduct a personal investigation to comprehend the allusions to historical events. The poem seeks to make the reader feel the intensity of emotions expressed from the Facebook posts and also be moved by the atrocious loss of the lives of these women and girls.

The discovery of the murders was a national fiasco and a clear example of what Povinelli (2011:29-30, 136) describes as economies of abandonment and late liberal tolerance of suffering where a colonial logic of neglecting racialised female Others – in this particular instance, from the Philippines, Nepal, and Romania – persists, as seen in the Cypriot police's inaction as well as the local media's lack of news coverage of the women and children's disappearances. Institutional and public indifference in this case highlight xenophobic and classist prejudices toward migrants in local society. The murderer, a military officer, served a system of power and received from this system social recognition, unlike his victims, who were positioned at the far end of this hierarchy due to their race and domestic labour occupation, keeping them dependent, isolated, and socially invisible. Contrastingly, once their disposed bodies began to be exposed, the news was met with a public outcry; their recognition became an event, out in the open, no longer possible to ignore. As is clear from the formatting of the poem, the work visually reproduces the erasure of these women and children from the landscape, making visible the extent to which the serial killer sought to vanish them as well as the police and public neglect:

Where are you?

down the mine shaft stuffed in suitcases tossed in a lake
the rage I feel consumes me each day
a new heart test what sorrow
no consolation whatsoever why
would no one search why
is the sex so damn
significant god the
angry god
the undetectable
god the powerful
god I am a believer
I have witnessed
the real spirit in a
world where love
did not grow cold
where men cared
about women in a
communion of a
different kind on a
good friday against
the lure the discard
the sick power that
s.o.b. better rot
in jail each staged
a protest each
whispered a prayer
to humanity our only benevolence *oh my sweet spring,*
my sweetest child Mary. Asmita. Maricar. *where does your beauty*
fade? Livia. Arian. Elena. Sierra. I take better care of this earth
than I do of me, nursing the young jacaranda tree in the heat
of summer (Phillipou & Zackheos 2024:44).

The empty space in the poem's formatting mimics the social and physical erasure of women and girls; however, the words surrounding that space lay a foundation for caring for these women and girls. Additionally, the image of a cavern evoked in the poem's formatting echoes the poem's reference to the mine where many of the bodies were found. The Mitsero Mine is a site charged with material violence from the copper extraction

led by the US-owned Cyprus Mining Corporation and backed by British colonial authorities, from the resultant lung disease that struck many miners, from the chemical contamination of the ecology, and from the migrant women and girls' bodies being dumped in the area. The Mitsero mine serves as both a material site and a metaphor for the abandonment of late liberalism in Povinelli's sense.

The Arizona mines, which were foundational in the development of the Wild West's mythology of limitless opportunity and credo of risk-taking, are a narrative lens through which the masculinist violence, exploitation, and abandonment of the "Mitsero Murders" can be understood. The mine in the poem *Where are you?* is in turn intended to awaken within the reader the curiosity about and possibility of events of erasure occurring in an Arizonan mining landscape. The copper mine in Bisbee, Arizona, is another material site of exploitation and violence, with a blatant example being that of the forced deportation of racialised striking miners and supporters that took place in 1917. The male miners and 'sympathisers' were forcibly deported to New Mexico by the Phelps Dodge Corporation in collaboration with the town sheriff to stop their demands for better conditions (Marcy 1917:160-162). While it was the men who were outright targeted, their families and wives were simply abandoned in Bisbee with no financial support. Moreover, the place of violence in the poem *Where are you?* is not in any way originary of atrocious acts. Conditions of abandonment and erasure have always occurred and continue to do so across places in distinct ways. What the poem seeks to do is jump-start a deeper search for transnational connections between gender-based and racialised violence in the mining environments of Cyprus and of Arizona.

Another transnational connection drawn over institutional racism that allows for the abandonment of racialised Others is explored in the poem *Emine*. The poem tells of a Black domestic worker's strife as,

> … a vision of subservience,
> sweeper of porches and tile floors,
> fluffer of cushions,
> wiper of windows and kitchen cupboards,
> undergarment launderer,
> shirt presser, latrine scrubber, meal superintendent,
> olive picker,
> parrot cage cleaner,
> tender of chickens
> in a family of fragrant dresser-uppers, black
> forehead gleaming against the white of her maid's cap (Phillipou & Zackheos 2024:21).

She has a ‘dirty mouth’, a

> … nervous
> tapping on furniture then on her cheek
> restraining herself from outright reacting,
> tsk-tsking around the sons experimenting
> with puberty and indirection (Would she tsk the same
> if she had her own son?) (Phillipou & Zackheos 2024:21).

The poem ends with her ‘cursing/ God dusting memories since/ she couldn’t keep him, her job/ to keep house’ with the insinuation being that ‘him’ is a son she had to give up or abort. The woman is tasked with caring for this white family at the expense of her own mental well-being and that of her son. Given the well-known narratives of Black slavery in America, one can easily imagine the setting of this story being Arizona. The narrative that is lesser known, however, is that of black slavery in Cyprus. During Ottoman rule, a large number of enslaved Black people were both imported to and exported from the island. The prevalence of Black slavery was so significant that it is documented that in the mid-1800s, well-to-do families each owned one or two slaves, including child-slaves (Zackheos 2024a). *Emine* seeks to acknowledge the invisible suffering and neglect experienced by black women across nations, shedding light at the same time on Afro Cypriots – one of Cyprus’s least known communities – which is made up largely of descendants of formerly enslaved Black people. The poem thus creates transnational connections related to Black women’s experiences, nomadically mapping points of similar occurrences of suffering.

One final poem we would like to mention is *Ledger*. This is a piece that presents a parallel narrative about prostitution, drawing on the histories of Arizona and Cyprus. In the *Arizona, CY* book’s Notes Page we indicate that *Ledger* ‘is for the Turkish-Cypriot woman numbered 127 in the Larnaca 1916 Prostitute Registration Book’ (Phillipou & Zackheos 2024:58). The speaker of the poem laments, ‘I shield my dreams in burlap’ and describes her job sleeping with ‘Brothers, / husbands, widowers,/ unfamiliar sons’ for money as painful as ‘molten metal against flesh’ (Phillipou & Zackheos 2024:13). With the influx of British soldiers to Cyprus through the port of Larnaca, the demand for prostitution rose alongside the local population’s poverty. With the rise of prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases also rose, leading to measures taken by the British administration to contain the problem, which included keeping track of the prostitutes as well as setting up clinics specialised in venereal diseases. The concern was, obviously, not the women’s own health – the women were, of course, subjects of abandonment – but the concern was how to control sexually transmitted diseases from spreading across Cyprus’s British soldiers, the administration, and their families. The history of prostitution in Cyprus is understandably

not well known internationally. Conversely, the phenomenon of prostitution in the Wild West is well-documented and represented in many films, and literary and academic works, so much so that it is part of our common imaginary of the American Wild West and, one might even argue, the history of prostitution in general. *Ledger* can well be understood through the narrative lens of prostitution in the Wild West. Moreover, the poem aims to initiate inquiry into these untold Cypriot stories but also identify with the strife of sex workers[1] across nations and time whose own desires have been muted. The image accompanying *Ledger* obscures a clear vision of the landscape; similarly, it reflects the women's muted experience. The sky in the image looks vast, like the void created through women's silenced narratives, and invites a journey across lands with potential for hope (Figure 2).

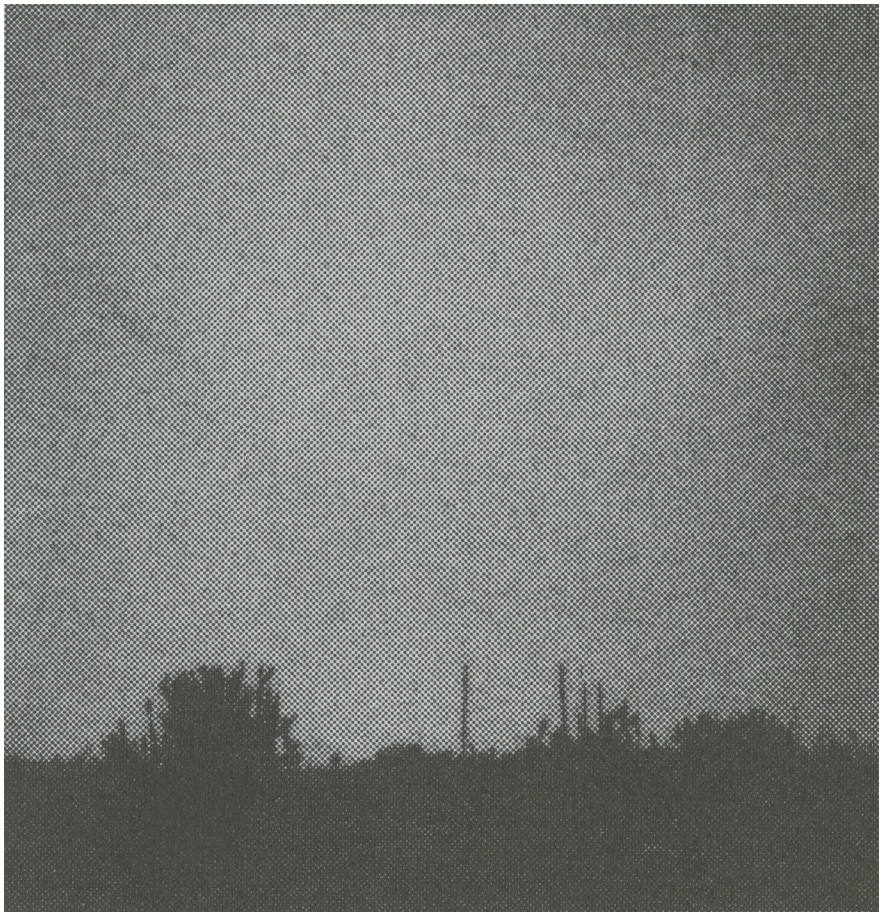


FIGURE **Nº 2**

Nicos Philippou. *Untitled* from the book *ARIZONA, CY,* 2024. Riso Print from an original Polaroid. Reproduced with permission.

Epilogue: Enacting a transnational feminist praxis

Our project, *Arizona, CY*, was conceived, discussed, theorised, debated, rethought, and redesigned over a period of several months during our daily early morning walks – our "walking-talking" sessions – where we connected with each other along the dry bed of the Pedieos River that cuts through the city of Nicosia. We then researched the project through an intellectual journey into the archives and cultural history books of both Cyprus and Arizona. Then, physical journeys, both local and international, ensued, allowing for a more sensorial and corporeal exploration and contemplation of the geographies of the two locales. One was a temporary relocation to a writing residency at the village of Mesana, adjoining the so-called "Hasampoulia Territory", an area in which a notorious homonymous bandit's gang – reminiscent of the likes of Billy the Kid – acted in Cyprus during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Another physical journey undertaken was a transatlantic trip to the USA, for a road trip in Arizona to explore locations such as the Bisbee Mines, the Tombstone Boothill Graveyard, and a place called Nothing. We employed movement and fluidity as a practical dimension of both the conception and the materialisation of our project, as well as a metaphor for our desire to challenge fixed narratives about Cyprus's geography and culture. Like Deleuze and Guattari's nomadic sensibility (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 351-423) and rhizomatic thinking (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:3-25) that act as strategies for non-hierarchical, non-linear, and decentralised generation of knowledge challenging established hierarchies, travel in our process was designed to make us brush up against the unfamiliar and keep us clear of "the beaten track" of local narratives that have been infused with the persistent flavour of both nationalism and patriarchy. Among them is the tendency to glorify "heroic" acts by national heroes in narratives told predominantly from male perspectives, which silences the suffering of women in violent conflict. For revolutionary potential, to oppose dominant structures, Deleuze and Guattari advocate maintaining a perpetual stance of transformation, engaging in a multitude of possibilities of being, and seeking affective intensities and movement (see Deleuze & Guattari 1987:3-25 for their discussion of the rhizome). In *Arizona, CY*, we sought to do just that, including with our method.

The project's Polaroids were produced during motorcycle outings on the backroads of the dry Mesaoria plains, surrounding Nicosia. These outings involved minimal planning and were designed to produce surprise encounters with this dry land during hot summers. We avoided motorways and other major arteries. The journeys on the complex network of country roads purposefully avoided a linear progression and predetermined boundaries, as well as points of entry and exit, resembling the journeys of a rhizome. Randomness and the accidental turn, or in Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:24) terms, the 'line of chance' were embraced. In contrast to travelling in a car, where one is enclosed in a contraption

and cut off from one's surroundings (see Pirsig 1974:4), riding a motorcycle exposes one to the elements. There is a bodily connection with the air, temperature, smells, sounds – overall, an immersive connection with one's environs, so that one becomes them. Deleuze and Guattari (1987:308) explain 'that all becomings are molecular'. In fact,

> The molecular has the capacity to make the elementary communicate with the cosmic: precisely because it effects a dissolution of form that connects the most diverse longitudes and latitudes, the most varied speeds and slownesses, which guarantees a continuum by stretching variation far beyond its formal limits (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:308-9).

Ultimately, it is movement that creates deterritorialisation (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:172).

Our intellectual and physical journeys, the movement and fluidity that run through the various levels of conception and materialisation of our project, metaphorically challenge the boundaries of hegemonic narratives. Nationalism is one of those solid narratives we wanted to revisit and challenge. Patriarchy was another. The women's narratives from both Arizona and Cyprus forge feminist alliances across borders and nations that are rhizomatic; each node connects to specific cultural experiences and to each other without universalising experience. The forging of feminist alliances across borders and nations is initiated symbolically through the merging of women's narratives from two distinct locations. In turn, processing cognition of the represented space in the photographs requires an associative act on the part of the reader, which allows multiple location options to coexist at once. Overall, the poetry and photography in *Arizona, CY* advocate for multiplicities and relational, fluid connections. Our insistence on nomadic wandering highlights the state of becoming, of transformation, of resisting the fixity of patriarchal structures and the fixity of trauma. In short, the narratives from the two locales transcend a type of feminist national struggle and move towards a transnational feminist solidarity.

By forging a transnational link between Cyprus and Arizona, and by identifying Cyprus with the Wild West, we aimed to turn the idea that "history is written in stone" on its head, inviting the audience instead to see that history and identity formation are shaped by mythology and storytelling. We were, therefore, surprised that the Contemporary Art Acquisition Committee of the Deputy Ministry of Culture purchased the *After the raid* installation. Although on one level, this move may signal a reterritorialisation of the piece that tames the project's disruptive connotations, on another level, the Deputy Ministry of Culture's acquisition of our piece can be seen within a broader context of change in Cypriot arts and society in general. Certain state-run or state-sponsored institutions have begun to engage with and be in a constructive dialogue with a new artistic zeitgeist that in turn reflects the dramatic shifts that have been reshaping the local art scene, and more generally, Cyprus's cultural production during the last 20 years (see Phillipou 2023, for

a more comprehensive account; see also Costantinides & Papadakis 2015; Demetriou 2015; Stylianou & Philipou 2017; Pasia 2017; Trimikliniotis 2019; Tselika *et al* 2021; Zackheos & Phillipou 2021; Constantinides 2022; Parpa 2023).

These shifts can be observed in the visual arts, music, cinema, dance, and literature of Cyprus, and are evident in their form, language, and semantics. These developments contribute to a prevalent wider process of rethinking and redefining Cypriotness in terms other than the hegemonic nationalist formations of Hellenism and Turkishness. This renewed exploration of identity and Cypriotness embraces multiplicity and fluidity. It is "sacrilegious" in nature as it stands in opposition to nationalism, patriarchy and imperial, cultural and class colonialisms. It proposes alternative geographical and cultural affinities, displaying gender sensibilities and symbolically reinstating the working classes and their culture. It is of its time and of the future. Contemporary Cypriot art practice can be viewed as a minor art practice, similar in nature to Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature (Deleuze & Guattari 1986:16-27), whereby its postcolonial, anti-nationalist, anti-patriarchal and often anti-heteronormative tendencies speak back to prevalent and hegemonic structures. It is essential to acknowledge that these shifts in the arts, both semantically and ideologically, intersect with grassroots radical political movements and relevant scholarship by Cypriot academics on local arts and culture. That in this historical conjecture, the arts meet the "street" and the two are in tune with the "University", points to a revolutionary and disruptive potential. These shifts are, in turn, so profound that they are increasingly infiltrating institutional agendas and initiatives, including those of state-affiliated art institutions and agencies, such as the Contemporary Art Acquisition Committee. Even though this revisionist artistic, academic and political zeitgeist is often met with resistance by more conservative forces and institutions, it has managed to claim its legitimate right to be part of a more complex and varied discussion on Cypriot identities. In closing, *Arizona, CY*'s transnational and feminist interests should be seen to reflect those of similarly minded contemporary art scenes that wish to put pressure on national narratives, thereby beginning to include more community members than they have intentionally and historically excluded.

Notes

1. We understand the term "sex worker" as an overarching category today that also includes porn performers and online webcammers for example. It implies a certain amount of agency which we are not sure we can attribute to the situation in colonial Larnaca. Though the word "prostitution" has today largely been replaced by "sex work" to avoid negative connotations and victimhood labels, "prostitution" still best captures exploitation, as in patriarchal contexts where women's bodies are considered to be controlled by men and in anti-trafficking contexts where 'the lines between coercion and consent become unclear' (Hansen & Johansson 2023:155).

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