

Disasters that Matter: Gifts of Life in the Arena of International Diplomacy

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Abstract

This article examines the bodily donations made by Greeks, Turks and Cypriots to the victims of two devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Greece (1999), as well as to a Greek and a Turkish Cypriot boy, both suffering from leukemia (2000). Considering the age old discourse of amity and enmity shared by the citizens of the three nation states, I ask what made them see these hardly rare events as exceptionally important, and rush to offer each other their blood and body organs. Politicians and journalists of the time presented these corporeal responses as “civil society’s demand for brotherly rapprochement,” thus underscoring the anthropological insight that contemporary identity politics is increasingly “medicalized”. Taking into consideration both the medical regimes of truth that made these donations possible, and the painful political experiences lived and remembered by Greeks, Turks and Cypriots to this day, I argue that the conciliation these donors performed revealed the suspense of their faith in the reconciliatory future rather than their acceptance of restorative notions such as brotherhood and rapprochement. Stated otherwise, these donors, being familiar with the euphemistic and the conditional hence pending nature of such political conciliations, dared the Derridian impossible: without endangering the principle of sharing, they opened their bodies to alterity, to their foe’s bodies, and hence entertained the possibility of non-predetermined, thus unexpected even incongruous events of memory.

Conciliatory Politics: “Bonds of Division”

On August 17, 1999, Turkey’s Marmara region was struck by a devastating earthquake which caused about 18 thousand deaths, and left more 44 thousand people injured and 200 thousand people homeless in the most heavily populated and industrialized area of Turkey. The disaster triggered a rush of humanitarian assistance from eighty countries including Greece, one of Turkey’s “historical enemies”, which was among the first to send rescue teams specialized in natural disasters. At the same time, thousands of Greek citizens, including members of NGOs, offered Turks huge quantities of blood and some even body

organs. Very soon, on September 7, 1999, another series of earthquakes hit the northern urban area of Athens, causing the death of 150 people, injuring over 2 thousands, and devastating hundreds of buildings and industrial plants. This time the Turkish people and government, Greece's "eternal" enemies, were among the first to send humanitarian aid and reciprocate the offering of gifts of life. Both events were represented by the national and international media as cases of "seismic diplomacy". A few months later (March 2000), thousands of people from the two countries and from Cyprus repeated these massive blood offerings for the sake of Greek Cypriot *Andreas* and Turkish Cypriot *Kemal*, who both suffered from leukemia and were in need of bone marrow transplants. This time the appellation deployed to describe these practices was "leukemia diplomacy".

Considering the age old contradictory discourse on amity and enmity shared by Greeks and Turks, as well as by Greek- and Turkish Cypriots, in this essay I ask what made them perceive these hardly rare events as exceptionally important, and rush to offer each other their blood and body organs after years of declining organ and tissue donation in their countries. Most journalists and political leaders of the time attributed these excessive bodily donations to "civil society's demand for brotherly rapprochement," thus affirming two interrelated insights of recent anthropological studies. First, that contemporary identity politics is increasingly "biologized" (Rose & Novas, 2005) due to the "transnational triumph of medical realism" that, in the era of "fast capitalism", provides the "elusive career of the body and personhood" with a more "authoritative and culturally comprehensible representation of human identity" (Seremetakis, 2001, p. 118). Second, that in many cases the body is perceived as more important than the mind or reason because, "as [Western] thought's negated condition, it presents itself as a possibility for *thinking differently*" (Colebrook, 2000, p. 32, italics added): the body supposedly guarantees visceral immediacy versus cultural mediation, as well as civic emancipation from hegemonic political entities such as the state bureaucracy.

In what follows I present the international legal and medical regimes of truth that made these civilians' offerings possible. Although the pervasive medicalization of culture and the Western perception of the body as more truthful than the mind cannot be disputed, in this essay I propose that identity-oriented and corporealist interpretations of these phenomena should be handled with caution so that we are not led back to tautological narratives about the body *versus* mind dualism, nor to the normalizing discourses of organicist ("brotherly") affiliations. Contrary to such predetermined certainties and closures, I suggest, following Allen Feldman, that no version of this "physicalized" modern project can fully integrate the political asymmetries underlying it; instead, there are always certain events that resist these "medical subtexts" whose ultimate goal is to impose a "cathartic 'break' with the [violent] past" (2004, p.170) hence to repress social memory. On the basis of this assumption, I argue that, because of the painful political experiences lived and remembered by the majority of Greeks, Turks and Cypriots to this day, these donors were aware of the conditional thus pending nature of politicians' conciliatory plans and dared the Derridian "im-possible": "without endangering the expansion of exchange and *partage*" (2003, p. 90), they "did something more than materializing the possible" (p. 93), that is, they opened and dispersed their bodies to alterity, to their foes' bodies, and hence entertained the possibility of non-predetermined, thus unexpected even incongruous events of memory.

In other words, I propose that the kind of conciliation these civilians demanded and performed did not coincide with the politically naïve, essentialist meanings intrinsic to

restorative notions such as “brotherhood”, “friendship”, “neighbourliness”, and “rapprochement” between “peoples”. Although they themselves used these conciliatory idioms, the performers of bodily diplomacy under study appeared to be familiar with the fact that these are “practices of euphemism”, as Nicole Loraux has argued (2006, p. 122), that disguise the divisive and negative nature of reconciliatory “positive politics” (p. 93). The latter are mostly “bonds of division” or “bearers of negativity” (p. 93), and for that matter they cannot be easily integrated into “technologies of memory” that stress the “unproblematic transparency” of local peoples’ “[bodily-visceral] memory” and ignore the political, international history of “social memory” (Feldman, 2002, p. 260).¹ This is the reason why, although I approach these donors as fully informed by the discourses of biotechnology and its body-mind dualism, I argue that these citizens’ bodily offerings brought to the fore the “suspense” of their “faith in the [reconciliatory] future” (Feldman, 2004, p. 166) rather than their willingness to subsume differences into a system of corporeal equivalences or human sameness, supposedly sensed in their (“shared”) past and imagined for their (“common”) future. As a consequence, the specific ways these people not only think but also remember *differently* through their body is the concern of this essay. As it will be shown in the remainder of the essay, these donors “[re-]did” their socio-political international memory and their national identities by means of “un-doing” them and/or keeping them in suspense.²

Transnational Body Parts

Civilians’ promptness to make massive blood donations in cases of natural or other disasters is hardly new. In fact, the technology of mass blood donation and transfusion originated in the disastrous conditions of war: blood banking methods were first developed in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War and perfected in the US, the UK and North Africa during the WWII (Waldby & Mitchell, 2006, p. 2; Resnik, 1999). Since then, civilian blood donation and banking have been associated with the defence not only of one’s nation but also of one’s allies; indeed it was during the Second World War that

¹ Drawing primarily on Balibar’s political notion of “negativity”, I am interested in those “practices” that are “incompatible” with “the spirit and the letter of institutions” and that “arise at the very center of their daily functioning, completely mixing up the limits of normality and exceptionality”, and thus end up “turning institutions against themselves” (2004, pp. 61-62). For the same and similar concepts (i.e., otherness, alterity, strangeness), I also draw inspiration from Bhabha, 1994; Butler, 1993; Corin, 2007; Leys, 1992; Loraux, 2006; Margaroni, 2007; and Seremetakis, 1994, among others.

² The analysis of these events is based on data coming from the Greek, Turkish, Cypriot and the international press released between 1999 and 2004, as well as from the relevant literature developed by political scientists and anthropologists. Given the extended daily coverage of these events by the national and international press and television, I have been able to follow and analyse not only the pacifist discourse projected by most political leaders, NGO representatives, journalists and the “ordinary people”, but also the academic and other ‘voices’ that went against this trend. The essay constitutes part of a wider research project focusing on post-WWII and post-Cold War peacemaking practices that are usually given the label of “soft diplomacy”. My main argument is that the peacemaking and peacekeeping orientation projected by these policies conceals the fact that they have been and still are the pacific weapons of the post-WWII wars.

international export of plasma was initiated by the USA and the plasma was first sent to European allies (Waldby & Mitchell, 2006, pp. 40-41).³ Of key interest to this analysis, however, is that nowadays disasters are also accompanied by the circulation of all sorts of body parts, nationally and transnationally. As is well known by now, the so called “crash syndrome” caused by disasters often is followed by national and international kidney donations and transplantations (e.g., Server, 2005); also, as Waldby and Mitchell inform us, in the days following the 9/11 attacks, skin banks sent several square meters of allograft skin to New York City for burn victims (2006, p. 6). In sum, at the present time, both governments’ and civilians’ responses to disasters inevitably draw on images of the human body parts recently refashioned and made available through new biomedical technologies, such as the banking, circulation and transplantation of many kinds of matter harvested from both living and deceased bodies (from solid organs to blood, skin, bone, heart valves, corneas, gametes and stem cell lines from umbilical cord blood, bone marrow, etc.). As has already been noted by Waldby and Mitchell among others, the transnational circulation of donated body parts, directly related to neoliberal economies, have had significant repercussions for public health but also for the conception of national identity and the distinction between local, national and international relations. As a consequence, today “any simple equation between the borders of the nation state and the origins of body tissues is *disturbed*” (2006, p. 5, italics added). And although neither national organ and tissue banks nor the sense of belonging to a “nation” have disappeared, “they have definitely been *complicated* by other emerging forms of obligation and identification” (p. 5, italics added). For instance, in a period of poor national rates of regular blood and organ or tissue donation all over the world, more and more citizens in need of bone marrow and organ transplants register themselves on national and international waiting lists.⁴

It is within this new “biopolitical” (Foucault, 1990), “biosocial” (Rabinow, 1996), and transnational framework that the donation practices under study are approached here. Indeed, at the time of the seismic and the leukaemia diplomacy, Greeks, Turks, Greek and Turkish Cypriots already proved familiar with blood, bone marrow and organ donation and transplantation. What is interesting however in this case is that civilians’ blood and organs have not only entered the arena of international diplomacy but were donated to the

³ According to Waldby and Mitchell, “before the WWII, nation-states did not export or import blood, but only collected it within the boundaries of national space. Hence the circulation of blood was readily conceptualized as part of the creation of horizontal, equitable relationships of national solidarity among citizens, and between citizens and the state” (2006, p. 41).

⁴ At the same time, more and more citizens living in neoliberal economies are organizing self-help groups in cooperation with genetic researchers (e.g., Taussig, Rapp, Haeth, 2003), and are becoming not only prospective organ-tissue donors but also “autologous donors”, by banking regenerative parts of their own bodies (blood, cord blood) for private use (e.g., Waldby & Mitchell, 2006; Franklin & Ragone, 1998). Also, more and more patient groups have developed exclusive patent-based relationships with researchers in order to have access to knowledge and profits coming from research on their own tissue fragments (e.g., Pottage, 1998; Rose & Novas, 2005). Although the percentage of such “biosocial” (Rabinow, 1996) practices is not yet high in all economies, it is enough to argue that peoples’ expectations about medical treatment of the human body have radically changed all over the world due to the recently elaborated and popularized “idea of a regenerative body, whose every loss can be repaired” (Waldby & Mitchell, 2006, p. 30).

“foe” rather than the “ally”. In fact, it seems that this bodily rewriting of diplomacy has reached such an extent that more and more foes make political statements through body parts. For instance, during the Israel-Lebanon war (2006), one Israeli man donated his killed brother’s corneas to an Arab Christian girl (a Druze); at the same time, an Arab man offered his kidney to an Israeli patient. The transplant doctors who appeared on Greek television (August 15, 2006) said that “peoples [as opposed to governments] can understand each other; they can go beyond political and economic international interests, and can reach such high levels of humanity as organ donation”.

Disasters that Matter: Greek-Turkish Relations, the European Union, and the “Cyprus issue”

Apart from the very extensive media coverage of the Marmara earthquake internationally, during the whole year (and beyond), both Turkish and Greek media put a special emphasis on Greeks’ “brotherly” response to the disaster. They spoke of an unexpected process of “improving relations” between the two “historical enemies” and presented the “Greek-Turkish rapprochement” as the product of “seismic diplomacy”, initiated by the “peoples” of both countries *after* the earthquakes (Gundogdu, 2001, p. 1). The same timing was assigned to the “leukemia diplomacy,” which was also presented as the beginning of the bi-communal rapprochement. Nevertheless, journalist representations of both afflictions kept obscuring an important piece of information: that the Greek-Turkish, as well as the Greek- and Turkish Cypriot “rapprochement” had begun *before* the disasters, under the pressure of the European Union, the UN (and the USA), in view of the fundamental post-Cold War geopolitical changes in the Balkans and the new realities of the globalized world (Gundogdu, 2001; Coufadakis, 1996; Papadakis, 2005).⁵

Given this situation, one might assume that the particular attention paid to the two earthquakes (as opposed to previous ones), and to the Cypriot boys’ disease, had less to do with their disastrous effects and more with changes in the three countries’ foreign policy of the time. Anthropological research on disasters and hazards is replete with examples concerning the “political management of natural disasters” (Fassin & Vasquez, 2005, p. 390), and the “differential politics of aid” along the criterion of “deservedness” (Oliver-Smith, 1996, pp. 5, 9). Disasters are “social constructions, defined by existing, politically and economically informed cultural norms”, argues Dynes drawing on Rousseau’s interpretation of the famous “Lisbon earthquake”; consequently, “whether an event is considered a ‘disaster’ depends on *‘who is affected’*” (2000, p. 107, italics added).⁶ As is

⁵ In Cyprus, the inter-communal meetings started taking place in the early 1990s and were encouraged by the UN, various embassies, and NGOs. During the whole decade, the meetings were becoming more and more frequent and new groups were constantly created: groups of teachers, lawyers, women, artists and others. Most of them belonged to the two largest left-wing and many other parties on each side. It is worth noting that in those bi-communal meetings “Conflict Resolution Seminars” were also organized by academics or professionals who had experience in places like Israel and Ireland (Papadakis, 2005, pp. 169-172).

⁶ According to Dynes (2000, p. 98), Rousseau was the first to point out the socio-economic and political dimension of natural disasters; thus, while the Lisbon quake became notorious because it affected the fourth largest city in “modern” Europe (mid-18th cent.), previous devastating earthquakes in Sicily and

well known by now, the importance or gravity attributed to certain illnesses as “deserving” hence “achieving the ‘disease status’” (Rabinow & Rose, 2006, p. 210) as opposed to others —the former usually including those afflicting the West and the latter those affecting the Rest —is equally constructed.

Besides the issue of foreign policy, however, some analysts have also argued that the ways Turkey, Cyprus, and Greece responded to political and natural crises in the post-Cold War era reveal significant “redefinitions of old ideas about Self and Other” among their “domestic constituencies” (Gundogdu, 2001, p. 6; see also Ioakimidis, 1999; Kazamias, 1997; Kirisci, 1999). To be more concrete, Greeks and Turks have long shared a discourse of mutual amity and enmity. Of amity, due to a long Ottoman past (15th-19th cent.), shared by Christian and Muslim populations who cohabited the territories now belonging to contemporary Greece and Turkey. Of enmity, because of the fact that the two nation states achieved their sovereignty as a result of the fierce wars of liberation they fought against each other.⁷ It is common knowledge by now that both states’ national historiographies have described their nations’ life course so as to establish historical continuities and construct notions of “historical”, namely, eternal enmities.⁸ The collective memory of past enmity has been especially nourished by the final partition of the island of Cyprus through the Turkish invasion and conquest of its northern area (1974), and the subsequent division of Greek and Turkish Cypriots into two separate populations who, not surprisingly, also share an age old discourse of amity and enmity.⁹ At the same time, however, the

Jamaica proved irrelevant “from a European viewpoint”, having taken place in “distant” and “exotic” places. Similarly, none of the previous earthquakes that hit either Turkey or Greece, both located in the first-degree seismic zone of the Mediterranean, had had similar responses at the inter-national, inter-local and inter-corporeal level.

⁷ The long period of coexistence was interrupted by the creation of the “Greek nation-state” (1830) and a fierce war in Anatolia (1917), also initiated by Greeks’ irredentist plan to reestablish the Byzantine Empire and recapture its capital city, Constantinople (Istanbul). Greeks’ defeat to Kemal’s army (1923), was followed by the dislocation of almost 1,5 million Greek-speaking residents of Asia Minor and their relocation in Greece, as well as the compulsory massive “exchange” of Muslims and Christians who up to that time had lived in territories nowadays defined as ‘Greek’ and ‘Turkish’. On these issues, see Papailias, 2005.

⁸ For an ethnographic approach to nationalism in Greece, see Faubion, 1993; Herzfeld, 1982, 1987, 1997; Hirschon, 2003; Just, 1989; Karakasidou, 1994; Stewart, 1994; Sutton, 1998. For the case of Turkey, see Aktar, 2003; Keyder, 2003; Navaro-Yashin, 2000. For Cyprus, see Argyrou, 1996; Loizos, 1981; Papadakis, 1993, 1998, 2005. Also, for the ways Turks and Greeks are represented in Turkish and Greek history textbooks and literature, see Fragoudaki & Dragona, 1997; Hamilakis, 2003; Millas, 2001. It is worth mentioning, however, that Greeks, compared to Kurds, constitute less of a ‘significant Other’ for Turks.

⁹ For an anthropological analysis of the initial bloody ‘division’ of the island in 1964, under the pressure of the British and the UN, and of its final division in 1974, imposed by the Turkish invasion and supported by the Greek junta (1967-1974), see Papadakis, 2005. Since 1974, “Northern Cyprus”, that is, the Turkish part of the island (separated from the southern-Greek part by a “dead zone” controlled by the UN) was transformed into an “abjected space”, to use Navaro-Yashin’s apt term (2008, p. 196), because its state administration has not been recognized by the UN —not even by Turkey which “refrains from inviting Turkish Cypriot administrators to international conventions held in Turkey” (p. 260 n. 21). For a synoptic history of this “phantom state” (p. 171) and its disastrous repercussions on peoples’ daily lives, see

possibility of again living peacefully has traditionally been voiced by humanists and leftists in both countries and in Cyprus. Also, Greek and Turkish nationals living close to the borders have incessantly contacted each other through shopping, tourism, even smuggling, watching, or listening to Greek and Turkish television or radio programs. Yet, while such exchanges are usually represented through the use of kinship and friendship idioms, mutual comparisons between the European hence more “civilized” Greece as opposed to the Asiatic “barbarian” Turkey, still pertain, reminding Turkey of the impossibility of becoming an equally honored EU partner. Connected to such attitudes are the contradictory feelings all these peoples share, at both the official and popular level. Hence the many stories narrated by Greeks and Greek Cypriots who have actually coexisted with Turks and Turkish Cypriots “swing from cases of coexistence and cooperation to others of conflict and animosity” (Papadakis, 1993, p. 147).

Official and popular ambiguities notwithstanding, during the 1990s, the governments of the three countries had to respond to the new European and US politics that developed especially after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. After many fluctuations in their foreign policy, Turkey and Cyprus (then accession member-states of the EU), as well as Greece (a full member since 1981), started conforming to the European Union’s (and the UN’s) requirements: political and economic cooperation, and adoption of the Union’s transnational spirit. The multiple actions that indicated the changing political atmosphere before the earthquakes included the Greek-Turkish cooperation in the NATO’s Kosovo operation in 1999; the establishment of the many NGOs in Greece, Turkey, and especially Cyprus in order to promote inter-communal relations; as well as the meeting of the Turkish and the Greek foreign ministers, *Ismael Cem* and *George Papandreou*, who talked about improving bilateral relations in tourism, environment, culture and education, and about promoting “a multicultural Europe” (Gundogdu, 2001, p. 2). This conciliatory atmosphere reached its peak in 2000, when Greece dropped its veto of Turkey’s EU candidacy. The Greek FM declared himself ready to enter into a dialogue with “a European Turkey”, in the hope that their “differences”, especially those concerning the “Cyprus issue”, would be solved. At the same time, however, the *conditional* nature of this dialogue was particularly stressed by the Greek Defense Minister: “There is no prospect for Turkey’s accession to the European Union if [it] does not contribute and make concessions on Cyprus” (Gundogdu, 2001, p. 8). The Greek Minister of Culture was even more negative: “We have recently discovered that our Turkish neighbors are our brothers. Yet they are not, and need not be such before the time comes” (Eleftherotypia 2002b). It goes without saying that a large number of Turks shared the same attitude toward Greeks who praised the newly discovered feelings of brotherly friendship. A Turkish columnist’s accusations against Greeks’ post-seismic cordiality sums up perfectly Turks’ feelings of mistrust. Mim Kemal Oke considered this friendship “a serious strategic foreign policy” that serves “the national interest of Greece”. He called Greece an “untrustworthy NATO ally” for three main reasons: for supporting the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) until its leader was arrested (1999); for helping (Christian Orthodox) Serbs in (Muslim) Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo; finally, for endorsing the Greek Cypriot Administration’s EU-candidacy, without having previously reached an agreement with

Navaro-Yashin’s anthropological work based on the experiences of those living in this “no man’s land”.

Turkey and the TRNC, namely, the Turkish Cypriot administration considered to this day illegal by the UN and its member states (Oke, 1999).

Corps Diplomatiques

Within the next days after the Marmara earthquake, various groups of Greeks, from football players to members of local associations and NGOs, had collected large sums of money and offered large quantities of blood which was sent to Istanbul hospitals. Initially, the Turkish health minister rejected blood arriving from Greece, and, according to Kubicek (2002, p. 6), this act among many others caused Turkish citizens' furor and serious questioning of the statist system in Turkey. During the same period, a Greek man expressed his determination to offer one kidney anonymously to a terminally ill Turkish citizen. He did so by writing a letter to Mikis Theodorakis, well known as the music composer of *Zorba the Greek* but less known as the president of the "Greek-Turkish Friendship Association" which was established some years ago. In his letter, published in the Greek press, the man called his act a "bridge of friendship between the two peoples" (Eleftherotypia, 1999). The event became widely known in Turkey through Zulfı Livaneli, a well known Turkish music composer, friend of Theodorakis and cofounder of the Friendship Association. According to Livaneli, "Turks were astonished by this offer". He received thousands of letters, faxes and e-mails from Turks living in Turkey and all over the world asking him to thank "Greek brothers" in general and the Greek kidney donor in particular. Letter senders included Turkish *gastarbeiters'* children thanking their "Dear, kind hearted Greek uncle". Also, according to Livaneli, many Turks declared their willingness to offer organs to Greek earthquake victims (Pini, 1999) —meanwhile rumours about kidnapping kids, victims of the Turkish earthquake, with the aim to extract their organs were announced in the media. On International Day of Peace (Sept. 9th, 1999, two days after the earthquake in Athens), Turkish ecologists were shown in the press standing on the Greek-Turkish frontiers and offering little pine trees to be "transplanted" in Greek soil! In the following months, these "gifts of life" were followed by many so called "bridges of life" namely visits exchanged between representatives of the two "peoples", including NGOs, schools, university departments, theatrical groups, singers, dancers, mayors, and businessmen. The mayor of a Turkish city close to the borders suggested that for the Greek-Turkish "brotherly friendship" to be "re-constituted and completed", there should also be an "exchange of brides" — "not only take but give them brides as well" (Abatzis, 2000, p. 13).

All of the above acts were presented by the Turkish and the Greek media as practices of "civil society" and were openly supported by both countries' foreign ministries in collaboration with the UN. All parties propagated the idea of the NGOs' political independence from the states, by stressing their crucial role in the development of "citizens' diplomacy", also called "soft diplomacy", and in the establishment of "transnational bodies" such as the Transbalkan Civil Society (Eleftherotypia, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). In sum, both sides not only "reduced" civil society "to the world of NGOs" (Hann, 1996, p. 22), but "promised the afflicted a progression to civil dignity supposedly already possessed" by the managers of such "empowering technologies of memory" (Feldman, 2004, pp. 197-198). It is worth noting that this "politics of disasters' representation" (Oliver-Smith, 1996, p. 4), was followed by even more conciliatory acts. During the same period of time, forty four Greek and Turkish municipalities signed the

oath to become “town twinnings” (“sister cities”). In these exchanges, politically and financially supported by the EU, civilians of all ages dance, sing, eat, drink, (trans)plant olive trees, and exchange gifts in a spirit of cordiality and peace (Papagaroufali, 2005). Like offering blood samples and organs, these practices are usually perceived as somehow *corporeal*, meaning affectionate and affective. Most of them follow the organicist model rooted in notions of “blood” and “soil”, two familiar idioms widely used in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus to declare both national identification and international coalition – or their opposites.

In the meantime, the sort of “soft diplomacy” developed between Greece and Turkey was disapproved of by the (Greek) Cypriot Government and some Cypriot academics (e.g., Giallouridis, 2000, p. 87; see also Drousotis, 2001; Konstantinidis, 2001). It was not precluded though, when another life-threatening event took place on the Greek Cypriot side of the island. On March 2000, *Andreas*, a six-year old boy suffering from leukaemia, was in desperate need of a suitable bone marrow donor. His father’s public plea for help was met with a flood of volunteer blood donors. These included thousands of Greek nationals and Greek Cypriots, many of whom were members of local NGOs, as well as Greek and Turkish Cypriot diaspora associations from all over the world; also Turkish nationals (medical students, football players, NGO members); and, last but not least, two hundred Turkish Cypriots who were given permission to turn up at UN headquarters on the Green Line dividing the island.¹⁰ Additionally, there was a communication between Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers about the subject – and as usual intra-island affairs were negotiated through the supposed “mother” countries. The latter reassured the former that the national thus confidential register of 150,000 Turkish bone marrow donors would be made available to Greek Cypriot experts, in their search to find a donor for little *Andreas*. In exchange for this generous move, Cyprus put its own national donor database at the disposal of medical doctors trying to find a suitable donor for a twelve-year old Turkish Cypriot boy, *Kemal*, also suffering from leukemia and waiting for a transplant in a hospital of London. *Andreas’* father and *Kemal’s* uncle met and were shown in the newspapers and on television embracing each other and thanking the political leaders from

¹⁰ According to Stefan Beck’s ethnography (2009), during the 1990s, three NGOs related to blood and bone marrow donation were established in the northern and southern parts of Cyprus by a Turkish- and two Greek Cypriots respectively. Given that they were politically and financially supported by international bodies (the Rockefeller Foundation, the USAID, UNOPS and the EU), these organizations had a bi-communal orientation and played a decisive role in the leukaemia (inter-communal) diplomacy. Drawing on Gramsci’s “organic intellectuals” and on the argument that contemporary states can rule only if they connect with non-state apparatuses of knowledge collection that problematize and exercise demands and constraints on central powers (Rabinow & Rose 2006, p. 202), Beck (2009) approaches the NGO founders as the “entrepreneurs” of this new form of “moral economy”. He argues that although these men’s activities originated from their national interests (i.e., to criticize their leaders’ nationalistic politics), they were nevertheless based on “the supra-national sphere”. The anthropologist attempts to examine the extent to which these intellectual “artisans of transnationalism” could help the local public sphere of health by introducing this “emergent form of bio-power” which is “partially uncoupled from the state and bound to new forms of a transnational civility”. He seems to conclude that although the NGOs played an important role in providing Cypriots with “a new mode of reflexivity”, their successful results were primarily due to the local ethos of altruism and mutual support developed during the British occupation of the island.

all sides. Within a few weeks, Cyprus ranked first worldwide in blood banking with around 120 thousand registered bone marrow donors for a population of one million (before then there were 18,500 donors for 663,000 Greek Cypriots). Many of them declared that they had seen Andreas's disease as "theirs", as "their own children's". In the Greek Cypriot newspapers, it was announced that newly-bought machinery had began processing 1,000 samples a day — "the first time a single laboratory anywhere in the world has tested so many samples at a time". The government spokesman said the effort to find a donor had "overcome the island's division, proving that Greek and Turkish Cypriots could live together"; he even reassured the Greek Cypriot public that "our files are available for everyone and more so for our Turkish Cypriot compatriots" (Karsera, 2000, p. 1). One match had already been found for a Greek Cypriot child in a similar situation to Andreas and Kemal, and his parents were shown in the newspapers thanking blood donors from all sides. In Athens, where five big hospitals were recruited for that purpose, registered donors also increased by another five thousand individuals. Two matches for another two Greek children were found among these newly registered donors. The Greek television (Antenna Channel) that covered these events on March 25, 2000, put particular emphasis on their nationalist dimension: "Andreas 'breaks' borders". A Greek man donor, carrying his little son on his left hand and a Greek flag on his right, was shown on TV many times saying that "it could have been my son"; the Greek TV also showed a Turkish Cypriot man donor saying "there are no borders for children and sick people". Meanwhile, many festivals were co-organized by both Greek- and Turkish Cypriot youth local associations and NGOs, in order to collect blood samples for Andreas and Kemal.

As in war, national states spoke through the appropriated bodies of their populations. In fact, despite all the blood shed by volunteers, not a single drop could be exchanged and used, had their governments forbidden its circulation. National blood and bone marrow banks became available only after governments' permission. Andreas' blood type had to pass through the diplomatic route to become known to local blood units: the Greek Cypriot Foreign Ministry gave it to the Greek consular in Cyprus, in order to send it to the Greek Foreign Ministry; the latter gave it to the Turkish consular in Athens to send it to his Foreign Ministry who in turn handed it to the Turkish Cypriots. However, these war-like state interventions in national bodies' usefulness were disguised by the normalizing and normative discourses currently practiced by "the many actors competing to perform as state" (Arextaga, 2003, p. 4), these being here the NGO and the UN spokesmen,¹¹ as well as the local and foreign correspondents of international events.

First of all, the whole event was presented by the international media as a case of "leukaemia diplomacy" and was totally attributed to civil society's capacity to "build bridges" between "peoples" — namely, outside their states' nationalistic interests (Associated Free Press, 2000). Also, according to the Turkish Milliet Newspaper, it was peoples' initiative that established a «Blood brotherhood on the island» (Cyprus Mail, 2000). According to the government spokesman of Cyprus, it was bi-communal NGOs' humanitarian efforts that "proved that Turkish and Greek Cypriots are citizens of the same

¹¹ For the ways in which the "state-centric", "normalizing" discourse of the UN produces "normal" or "recognized" states as opposed to such "no-man's lands" as "Northern Cyprus", Kosovo, the West Bank and Gaza and many others, see Navaro-Yashin, 2008 (pp. 177-78 in particular). For the NGOs' role in increasing the brokerage between the state and civilians hence the latter's disempowerment or dependency on state regulations, see e.g., Cheater, 1996, Fassin, 2007.

home” (Karsera, 2000, p. 2; Haravgi, 2000). Similarly, the spokesman for the UN peacemaking force stressed that it was the “increased levels of understanding and awareness of people as people” that “contributed to bridging 26 years of isolation, suspicion and mistrust on this East-Mediterranean island” (Associated Free Press, 2000). Serdar Denktash, son of the Turkish Cypriot leader, and Mehmet Ali Talat, the opposition party leader, who also gave blood, were the only people who did not let the popular fantasies of the symbolics of blood to supersede the analytics of blood — namely that side of blood relations that are measured, scaled, and imposed by states, not civilians organizations: “citizens’ blood donation should be seen as a case of international humanitarian aid rather than the extension of their governments politics” said they (Karsera, 2000, p. 2; Politis, 2000).

Ironically no match was found for Andreas nor for Kemal. Yet, while the Greek Cypriot boy received a cord blood transplant in a US hospital and was saved, Kemal died because the match he received proved incompatible. His father accused the Turkish Cypriot and the Turkish authorities for having slowed down donation and transplantation procedures on the basis of “advice” written by a member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences that “Turkish blood should never be given to foreign powers” (Beck, 2009)¹². Nevertheless, since 2000, many more bi-communal body- part offers took place at a massive and individual level. When the borders between “Northern” and “Southern” Cyprus opened for a couple of days in view of inter-communal rapprochement (2003), many people from both sides were permitted to walk towards the Dead Zone to give blood samples in order to find a suitable bone marrow transplant for *Jale*, a five-year old Turkish Cypriot girl suffering from leukaemia (Papadakis, 2005, p. 240; Beck, 2009). During the same year (2003), an anonymous Greek Cypriot donor of bone marrow also saved a young Turkish man’s life from leukaemia as well; the latter thanked the Greek Cypriot donor publicly, reassured him that from now on he would consider him his “fifth brother”, and asked to meet him (Eleftherotypia, 2003). The following year (2004), hundreds of Turkish citizens living to the east of Greek-Turkish national borders were shown on the Greek television to have queued in front of blood units established on the borders (after the Greek government’s permission), in order to offer blood samples for the sake of a Greek girl in Thessaloniki (northern Greece) suffering from leukaemia.

None of the offerings mentioned so far should be imagined as external to power relations. Apart from the states’ interventions presented above, the body-parts donation and reception themselves are always accompanied by reservations, contradictions, and demanding expectations on the part of both donors and recipients.¹³ Stefan Beck’s research on Cypriot blood donors and recipients during the leukaemia diplomacy confirms that both parties admitted “tacitly” that their newly-established interrelations, besides being anonymous and invisible, were also “asymmetric”: recipients were seen as “inescapably submitted” to donors’ “legitimate domination” (2009). Not surprisingly,

¹² All citations from Beck, 2009 are from the original English manuscript which is unpublished.

¹³ For the contradictions and ambiguities the metaphor “gifts of life” still causes to people involved in organ donation and transplantation —from transplant doctors to donors and recipients, as well as to researchers, including anthropologists—see e.g., Das, 2000; Fox & Swazey, 1992; Joralemon, 1995; Lock, 1995, 2002; Ohnuki-Tirney, 1994; Papagaroufali 2002; Scheper-Hughes, 2000; Sharp, 2006.

these power-laden interpretations of bodily offerings were not irrelevant to the discourse of (asymmetric) interethnic relations: the very same Greek Cypriot recipients who feared the possibility of having received “Turkish blood”, and felt “the horror of getting polluted or hybridized”, simultaneously expressed their “pleasure” in offering “Turks” their own blood (p. 12).¹⁴ It is most likely that, for the same reason, Cypriot donors expected to “meet”, “see” (or observe?) and “touch” their recipients; like donors from all countries practicing anonymous body-part donation, they felt frustrated and embarrassed by their “unreciprocated” affections (p. 11). To the contrary, recipients, terrified by the idea that the unknown benefactors might have transfused them “bad” (also meaning “Turkish”) habits, refused the possibility of getting to know them (hence of being seen or observed and touched by them).

One way to interpret these contradictory attitudes shared by actual donors and recipients is to see them as mere nationalistic prejudice and suspicion resulting from the inimical Greek-Turkish relations still experienced by Cypriots and “remembered” by Greeks. Another way is to approach them as the “suspense” of these civilians’ “faith in the [reconciliatory] future” (Feldman, 2004, p. 166) that is promised by politicians, NGOs and the UN. “There will never be a solution” to the “Cyprus problem”, declared a Turkish Cypriot informant to the anthropologist Yael Navaro-Yashin; consequently the house he was building for himself “will never be completed” (2008, p. 181). In the next part of this analysis I will examine the quality of the suspended and the incomplete that pervaded the Greek, Turkish and Cypriot bodily diplomacy back in the late 1990s and early 2000s.¹⁵

Daring the Impossible

At first, in all of the bodily offers discussed above, the body seems to become important because it presents itself as a possibility for thinking and remembering differently: contrary to the “mind” or to “reason”, the body is supposed to provide one’s own truth claims with deeper truthfulness, more trustworthiness and forcefulness, thus with the possibility of emancipation from the hegemonic body politic (related to the past, the present or the future). For instance, Beck (2009) argues that Turkish and Greek Cypriots exchanged their blood in order to make a strong political statement: that they disapproved

¹⁴ Similarly, during the post-seismic period, the Greek government and NGO representatives bragged about Greece’s “transformation from a country that used to receive humanitarian aid to one that offers it to third countries”, such as Turkey, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia (Rosenberg, 2000). The same stance was adopted in the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake (12-01-2010).

¹⁵ Although I am aware that civil activists are far from having the same goals, expectations and results in different political and economic contexts (Hann, 1996), or of being homogeneous in terms of political orientation, age and other criteria (Kubicek, 2002), I assume that even if a large part of Cypriot, Turkish and Greek donors (NGO members or otherwise) were young back in the 1990s, they were nevertheless fully familiar with the pain and losses caused by their nations’ disastrous politics for two reasons: first, because their parents, grandparents, relatives, neighbours, and friends belonged to the generations directly or indirectly afflicted by them; second, because many of them, especially in Turkey and Cyprus, as becomes obvious from the ethnographies of Loizos (1981), Papadakis (2005), and Navaro-Yashin (2008), have themselves experienced and still are experiencing the disastrous outcomes of these afflictions.

their leaders' old nationalistic practices, and that they demanded conciliatory political and economic reforms supported by international and supranational bodies, such as the United Nations and the European Union. And yet the question of how did inner body parts become vehicles of international "positive politics" (Lorau, 2006) still remains. Following Colebrook (2000), I have already suggested in the beginning of this article that such bodily practices cannot be interpreted simply in terms of already determined (and shared) idioms such as the Western dualism between the visceral and the cognitive; nor by means of "translating [them] into a politics of emancipation, justice, recognition", namely, through the "masculinist" notions of "collective consciousness" or "awareness of one's own oppression and rights" (Margaroni, 2007, p. 803). These approaches would merely lead us back to the tautology of the body versus mind binarism, as well as to the *a priori* connective discourses of "brotherly" affiliations (in their "medicalized" version or not), propagated through the techniques of memory used by the media, politicians, NGOs, and the UN. Consequently, they would make us miss all those instances that reinstate negativity to "positive" political practices, and unravel the limits of dominant regulatory ideals, such as conciliation or rapprochement, brotherhood, friendship or neighbourliness, and donation. Stated otherwise, they would make us miss "all these issues —identity, intimacy, sexuality— on which individuals *feel most divided*" (Elliott, 2007, p. 16, italics added).

One such instance is a statement made by the Greek Foreign Minister, George Papandreou, at the University of Istanbul, during the period of seismic diplomacy: "Some want to say that what we are living through today in our Greek-Turkish relationship is simply a 'fairy tale'. And yet it is not. Because our people demand it! I therefore say this: it is time to *dare the impossible*".¹⁶

Although this statement may be seen as part of conventional diplomatic language, I suggest that "daring the impossible" is an oxymoron that captures aptly the imagination of those civilians who have "demanded" and enacted rapprochement. For instance, in the post-seismic establishment of Greek-Turkish town twinnings, Greek men and women enjoyed many "sensory-affective" exchanges with Turkish "siblings" but, at the same time, wondered if what they were experiencing was indeed "possible" to last (Papagaroufali, 2005).¹⁷ The very moment they would realize that some Greeks and Turks "share the same blood" (due to past coexistence and to marriages with the "infidel"), they would make fierce comments on issues referring to "Turkish atrocities" —and other improprieties such as Turks' presentation of ancient Greek monuments excavated in Asia Minor as "theirs" (Theodossopoulos, 2006). Nicole Lorau's argument that "it is futile to hope that one can approach forgetting that founds the political without triggering a return of the repressed" (2006, p. 10) was also confirmed by some people in Greece who wondered "if Turks would appreciate Greeks' blood donation". Feelings of such uncertainty have also been shared by Turkish and Greek Cypriots participating in bi-communal activities since the beginning of the 1990s (Papadakis, 2005), because "death

¹⁶ George Papandreou, "Inaugural Speech at the University of Istanbul", October 3, 1999. Cited in Gundogdu, 2001, p. 8 n. 2.

¹⁷ The same ambiguities and questions are reproduced between spouses of Greek-Turkish marriages —perhaps the quintessence of "daring the impossible" (Petronoti & Papagaroufali, 2006).

[ies] on the flip side of each site and memory of Cyprus” (Navaro-Yashin, 2008, p. 182). And while Greek Cypriot blood recipients thought of their anonymous donors as “cordial friends” or “godparents” or even “blood relatives”, they simultaneously felt “uneasy” at the probability of having received “Turkish blood” through them (Beck, 2009). The same unease was shared by Greek Cypriot donors concerning their newly established, yet anonymous, relationship to their blood recipients: they feared that their unknown “siblings” might marry their kin and establish “incestuous” bonds, which for the Orthodox Christian (Greek) Cypriots would mean “mischief, death, disorder, and a lasting pollution of the whole kinship group” (p. 14).

All these instances of uncertainty and ambiguity accompanying the bodily offerings to and from the foe echo Greeks’, Turks’ and Cypriots’ contradictory feelings already discussed in this essay. Given this state of ambivalence, what made them rush to offer body parts to their “foes”, after years of declining blood and organ donation? Following his informants’ explanations, Beck attributes this “new type of biosocial relationship” (2009) to the Cypriot “culture of giving” (p. 3): he argues that because of their colonial and post-colonial experience of “emergencies”, Cypriots are used to offering each other goods that even are culturally conceived as “inalienable”, that is, “exempted from the commercial sphere” (p. 13). Another interpretation of this event might follow from Feldman’s argument that, because of modernity’s continuing “dependency on the politics of the body” (2004, p. 185), people who are considered not coeval tend to support their speech by “opening” their bodies for their “naked” truth claims to be “observed” thus “testified” by the authenticating spectators-witnesses –the latter including all kinds of “Enlighteners” dramatizing the “[colonial] visual model of knowledge and truth claiming” (p. 169).

Although both interpretations are very important in terms of reminding us of the continuing embodied asymmetries between the neo-colonialists and the neo-colonized, Feldman brings us back to the body versus mind dualism, and Beck to the connective discourse of physicalized affiliations – in this case the medicalized cultural identity shared by Cypriots. Instead, I suggest that the conciliatory activities enacted by these performers of “civil corporeality” (Waldby & Mitchell, 2006, p. 16) should be seen as what Loraux calls “practices of euphemism” (2006, p. 122) that disguise “the discord” underlying “the myth of friendship” and of “brotherhood” (124).¹⁸ Stated otherwise, Greeks were (and still are) aware of the fact that the so called “Greek-Turkish Friendship” was only conditional, threatened by the possibility that Turks would not make any concessions to the “Cyprus issue”; that brotherly oaths given during the establishment of Greek-Turkish twinnings are indeed bearers of negativity since most of them aim at “joining the dissimilar” (p. 126), the “historical” thus eternal foes; that so far the only instance of state-level cooperation between the two countries has been the NATO’s military operation in Kosovo; finally, that Greeks are unable to truly forget the atrocities Turks committed to Greeks and Greek Cypriots (but not vice versa!) –“We cannot forget these things, though this does not mean that we can’t travel back and forth to Turkey for business, and get along fine” (Sutton, 1998, p. 162). And yet they, together with the Turks and the Cypriots, showed willing to dare the impossible: to preserve “the conciliatory form of the political” (Loraux, 2006, p. 24), which in such cases “is the name of one who knows how to agree *to rejected memory but still a memory*” (p. 146, italics added).

¹⁸ On this issue, see also Balibar, 2004; Derrida, 2003; Kristeva, 1991.

This political definition of daring the impossible reminds us of the Derridean admonition to fight the hegemonic nature of normative, pre-calculated, supposedly foreseeable conciliations (*syndiallages*) among national and transnational political entities, “without endangering the expansion of exchange and *partage*” (2003, p. 90). Derrida himself considers this effort “definitely contradictory and *im-possible*” (p. 90). That is, impossible to be pre-calculated and prejudged by normative, legal, ethical criteria (p. 117 n.47), and yet as the only way for an “event” to “arrive”, because an event breaks in “only where people are *doing something more than materializing the possible*” (p. 91, italics added); namely, only where there is “an exceptional, unique rupture in the regime of possibility” —which, of course, is the prerequisite of its own rupture. In my view, these donors and recipients did something more than the possible and gave rise to an “event” in which “the body bec[ame] different” (Colebrook, 2000, p. 41): from a gift to one’s own relative, compatriot or ally, to a gift to one’s own foe. More analytically, at the time of the seismic and leukaemia diplomacy, not only blood but organ donation and transplantations (themselves being “exceptional” and unique “ruptures” in the conventional medical regime of truth), were already routinely practiced in most parts of the world including Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. Consequently, there was the “possibility” for such donations to be implemented as well as the possibility to use the body for thinking and remembering “differently” — for example, Greek prospective donors perceive their whole body or organ donation as a way to go against the religious establishment and to have control over their after-death life (Papagaroufali, 1999, 2006). At the time of the earthquake, however, the citizens of the three countries were familiar with living kidney donation as an act meant exclusively for one’s own relatives; also, the majority of them thought (and still think) that donated regenerative and non regenerative body parts are destined for national recipients or at least for those perceived as allies. Thus, what these donors, especially kidney donors, did was something more than materializing these possibilities: it was the first time that voluntary body organ donation entered the history of Greek-Turkish diplomacy. This might be the reason why Turks were “astonished” by Greek kidney offers and vice versa. Equally unexpected —and astonishing— was the excessive quantity of blood offered to the foe. Does this mean that, in the era of “fast capitalism”, to recall Seremetakis’ words, these donors “medicalized” culture, or diplomacy for that matter, in order to ascertain their “human” identity — in its inter-national, “brotherly” version?

Regardless of whether these conciliatory practices were instances of biologized politics, and irrespective of the extent to which NGOs had “disseminated” this “medical[ized] imaginary” among both sick and healthy civilians (Delvecchio-Good, 2007, p. 364), I suggest that neither the excessive blood donation nor kidney offers should be seen as acts that ascertained the restorative metaphor of a (past) brotherly identity. To the contrary, these people were shown to have dared to inscribe themselves into what was perceived as Other: into the “historical” enemy, hence into the im-possibility to pre-calculate and prejudice the possibility of undergoing incestuousness, pollution, mischief, disorder, and death. Thus, I would argue that Greeks’, Turks’, and Cypriots’ body-parts’ semiosis as a “gift of life” to the foe should be seen as “a thoroughly historical and historicizing process that recuperated [or re-membered] difference” rather than sameness (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 41). Stated otherwise, these bodily practices were not the products of corporeality, projected by Western metaphysics as the source of naked truth, nor simply the political version of “the transnational triumph of medical realism” in the midst of “fast capitalism” (Seremetakis, 2001, p. 118). Instead, they were instances of self transcription “onto diversity and history” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 28) that activated the past as “an unfinished

rather than a stable referent in the service of the [reconciliatory] present [and future]" (Feldman, 2004, p. 166).

“We Are All Turks”

Following this line of argumentation, I would propose that the white, middle-class Euro-American model, which usually presents Westerners as both shocked by the devastating results of the unstable modernity and nostalgic about the fixity that supposedly once prevailed (and now is lost) in the developed West, needs to be corrected in our case: for many decades before and during the globalized fast capitalism, neither the majority of Greeks nor of Turks nor of Cypriots have had enjoyed fixed identities or lives because of the political plagues inflicted by the (inter)national powers. Instead, their lives have mostly been threatened by, and lived under, conditions of foreign occupation and civil wars, dictatorships, imprisonments, killings, disappearances and displacements, and, to this day, emigration and exile. All these experiences of hardship and enforced interethnic enmity have constantly been concealed, thus preserved, by the establishment of international but always conditional treaties of amity or partnership –including the ones between Greece and Turkey, and those signed or promised by the European Union. Given this embodied knowledge about the *conditionality* of such positive practices, hence their inherent *negativity*, it is hard to see the citizens of these nations as politically naïve and reassured, as this positive (and positivist) model implies. To the contrary: living in a context of transnational contestation and experimentation, that is, in a political-economic environment where the UN (and the USA) decide which populations may constitute legally valid states; where Europe is divided into member- and accession member states of a European Union-to-be; and where the imperative to interconnect (despite previous animosities) coexists with Euro-American post-Cold War military operations in the Balkans, these donors performed an international conciliation or *syndiallagi*, without having recourse to “previously assured criteria” (Derrida, 2003, p. 90) — either political or medical.¹⁹

Just after the Marmara earthquake, when some Greek journalists saw the corpses of Turkish mothers and babies, they thought “maybe these same mothers would be crying over their children after a *possible Greek-Turkish conflict*”. And while criticizing their government’s policy in spending lots of money for armament, these people felt feelings “never felt before”: “The pains of these people left a sour taste *in us* and there was a lump *in our* throats. As we see the victims of the earthquake in the neighbouring country, we feel *as if* this lump will strangle *us*” (Gundogdu, 2001, p. 7). Similarly, Greeks who rushed to offer their kidneys and blood to Turks justified their donation by saying that “it could

¹⁹ Greeks, more than any other European partner, deny organ-tissue donation because of the organ theft and commercialism rumours; furthermore, they do not trust Greek medical doctors (Papagaroufali, 1999, 2006), and mistrust the cadaver, “worn out” and “perishable” organs, as opposed to the “artificial”, “brand new” ones (Papagaroufali, 1996). To this day, organ donation has not captured Greeks’ social imaginary because it is considered heretical or subversive (in the late 1990s, the Church was not supporting organ donation for these reasons), and its results are perceived as less certain than those coming from the open heart surgery or similar major operations.

have been *us*”. Those Greek and Turkish Cypriots who offered so much blood to little Andreas and Kemal also identified with the Other: “they could be one of my our children, my family, a friend, anyone” (Beck, 2009). What kind of an identity was being “done” or re-ascertained by these statements?

At first, these statements sound like instances of identification with the Other, supposedly achieved by putting oneself in place of everybody else (all “humans”), and by sharing not only the same (“brotherly”) blood but also the same political judgments and language. My own reading, however, goes against this interpretation: the encounter with the Other, who is the same but not quite so, to use Homi Bhabha’s apt phrase, reinstates alterity or heterogeneity within all kinds of imaginary unities, including the unity of the self and his or her nation –remember Cypriot blood recipients’ fear of the possibility of incestuousness with Turkish donors. Hence I would suggest that Greek, Turkish, Greek- and Turkish Cypriot donors and recipients encountered the foe neither with mere “amity” nor with “enmity” but rather with what Julia Kristeva calls “disquieting alterity” which is felt as much one’s own as the Other’s (1991, p. 242). Kristeva has called this experience “a new kind of cosmopolitanism”: one that “transverses governments, economies, markets, and constitutes the opus of a sort of humanity whose notion of solidarity is based on the consciousness of its – raving, disastrous, fearful, empty, impossible— unconscious” (p. 255). Following Arextaga, we might also add that this experience becomes tenser when “the Other is a familiar face, familiar but strange in its familiarity, such as [ethnic] neighbours” (2003, p. 6).

“We are all Turks”, exclaimed a Greek correspondent when he saw the victims’ corpses after the earthquake (Gundogdu 2001, p. 11). This “cosmopolitan” cry and the responses given by many Turkish journalists (“Thank you neighbour”; “We were bloody enemies just a few days ago, and we became blood brothers after the earthquake”), have been interpreted as a process of “demystifying the ‘enemy’”, and as “the first signs of emerging common bonds between the two peoples” (Gundogdu, 2001, p. 6). Instead of proposing an interpretation that simply reproduces the possible, namely the dominant discourse of remembered amities and enmities, I would rather read this cry as a “critical bereavement”, in Feldman’s apt words (2004, p. 183), which did something more than materialize the possible: the very moment it confirmed the necessity of sharing, it introduced a familiar strangeness to the national (Turkish) experience, and undermined the dependence all nation states have “on corpses and funerals as acts of possession and rebirth [of the national body]” (Arextaga, 2003, p. 6; see also Fassin, 2005). At the same time, it spoke the language of “discontinuity and break prevailing in the margins” (Seremetakis, 1991, p. 2) at any time rather than only at times of fast capitalism, or of disasters that matter or not. Not coincidentally, Cypriot donors explained their culture of helping each other by pointing to the island’s continuing history of “emergencies” and “unforeseen events”; to the forced displacements on both sides of the Green Line; and to the disappearance of many civilians still missing since 1974 (Beck, 2009).²⁰

²⁰ According to Beck, Cypriots share “a feeling of being besieged and of being marginal”, especially with respect to the “Europeans” (n.d.: 15); accordingly, the anthropologist calls the Cypriot culture of giving “a *poetics of marginal virtue under a regime of contingency*”.

Epilogue

Even if we accepted that the donors (and recipients) under study “refused to betray the labour of the negative” (Margaroni, 2007, p. 800), we should not lose track of the extent to which reassuring narratives, such as “citizens” or “peoples’ diplomacy”, are capable of consuming and eliminating differences other than ethnic ones. Elaine Enarson reminds us that in both sociological and popular representations of disasters “it is less often noted how the experience of disaster is culturally *engendered* –generally in stereotypic ways — through humour, language, metaphor and image” (2000, p. 42, italics added). Using the female names attributed to hurricanes as an example of her argument, Enarson shows “how the cultural equation of women with unruly and destructive natural forces against which men marshal the forces of reason and technology, is the context in which people make sense of disastrous environmental events” (p. 43). In all kinds of disaster images, from films to TV to graffiti, it is men who are always projected as the political, military, emergency “rescuers of women”, whereas female mayors, uniformed female soldiers, firewomen, women sand baggers are always represented as “exceptional women”; the rest of the (non-exceptional) female population are presented only as crying, caring for children, cooking for male sandbaggers, overall as “passively observing the disaster scene” (p. 43). Similarly, in the cases of seismic and leukaemia diplomacy discussed here, knowledge, protection and safety were associated with male figures, on top of which was the *Engelados*, the ancient Greek name of the mythical male giant who causes earthquakes. Also, despite their emphasis on “citizens” diplomacy, the local newspapers and TV narratives did not conceal the engendered and engendering nature of most reporters’ (male) eyes: the latter were attracted mainly by male rescuers-firemen, male seismologists, male politicians, male UN and NGOs representatives, male donors and sons, male mayors, male children, male parents and relatives!

In her article, Enarson also shows how, in cases of disasters, the “invisible” and “disempowered” women (and children) tend to have recourse to art (from music, drama and dance to decorative pottery, rug weaving and quilting), “in order to claim the prerogative of the storyteller and to tell the whole story, or at least their story” about the disaster (p. 57). She believes that such “emotional” yet tangible “grassroots” experiences (both consensual and conflicting, nationalistic and critical), offer “a level of depth missing in strictly cognitive [masculinist] discussions” (p. 53). Enarson’s unfortunate reproduction of the commonsensical association of femininity with the “emotional”, the “corporeal” hence the “material” (Butler, 1993), reminds us, on the one hand, of the extent to which this connection constitutes the necessary Other for the phallogocentric economy to establish and reproduce itself (ibid.). Recall the Turkish mayor’s post-seismic proposal to exchange brides with Greek “brothers” thus reaffirming the association of state control with masculinity, and of the nation with femininity, maternity and domesticity. On the other hand, this connection makes us rethink the label “soft diplomacy” assigned to the politics of body part donation, and ask whether all these “citizens”, both men and women, who rushed to offer their inner parts to other “citizens”, constitute the “soft”, meaning the discredited “feminine” side of phallogocentric international politics and diplomacy – especially at a time when everything, from natural disasters to disastrous illnesses, “mattered” primarily due to foreign policy changes imposed by the EU and the UN. Remember that regardless of how visible and empowered (male) donors became through the media, these peoples were simultaneously shown as being in emotional need of rapprochement, as “demanding it!” (as demanding a “bridge” between the remembered

past, the experienced present, and the imagined future). This is why political leaders of the time presented themselves as “having faithfully *translated the feelings*” of the volunteers “into policies and acts”.²¹ As is well known, feelings are considered feminine, hence unruly, thus destructive; consequently, “citizens’ feelings” could have been politically useful as authentic testimonies—to recall Feldman’s argument—only if “translated” into normative, masculinist, therefore reassuring and domesticating political terms (e.g., “soft diplomacy”, “state policies”). In that case, then, we should ask if the “soft” or “feminine” men and women diplomats under study should be seen in the end as trapped by politicians’ nationalistic and gendered translation-politics of memory and identity.

Although no relevant data are available, I risk guessing that the unexpectedly excessive quantities of blood donated among foes, as well as the voluntary donation of organs to an historical enemy, disturbed rather than gladdened political leaders of all sides. In my view, the latter’s promptness to not only translate peoples’ feelings but also define the appropriate time to put them under their own aegis (recall Papandreou’s “I therefore say this: *it is time* to dare the impossible”), implied their awareness that uncontrolled self-entry into alterity can be as unruly as feminine hurricanes, and as destructive as the male Engelados. Thus, following my previous suggestions in this essay, I would counter-argue that the donors’ and recipients’ dispersal in the Other, whose neither the name nor the gender are known, undermined the nationalistic associations of femininity and masculinity with “the normative roles stereotypically assigned to women as ‘mothers of the nation’”, and to men as “sons sacrificed to the nation’s military [and diplomatic] pursuits” (Athanasίου, 2005, p. 41).²²

By this I do not mean that these civilians acted consciously or purposefully in this direction. The many instances of “politicized anamnesis” (Feldman, 2004, p. 164) discussed in this paper, including Cypriot recipients’ uneasiness at the thought of having received Turkish blood and flaws, show that they were neither immune nor amnesiac to nationalistic and gendered discourses. Nevertheless, these reactions were expressed *after* having *actually* offered or received the foe’s body parts. This is the reason why I have already suggested that the reservations and unease voiced silently not only by Cypriot but also by Greek and Turkish civilians did not imply mere anamnesis of their inimical past and present, but the “suspense” of “their faith in the [reconciliatory] future” (Feldman, 2004, p. 166). Given their embodied knowledge of political afflictions and the conditional nature of ensuing reconciliations, it is hard to see these bodily diplomats as having adopted either the naïve positivity projected by “the model of harmonia” (Lorau, 2006, p. 122), or the unproblematic transparency attributed to *corporeal* hence truthful representations of identity and memory. Instead, their euphemistic use of brotherhood and friendship with the foe, as well as their body-parts’ semiosis as a gift of life to or from the anonymous, the genderless, and the “incestuous” Other, reactivated the un-reconciled (if not unreconcilable) fabric of their political memories, and generated more questions than answers. The latter are still *in suspense*: to this day, Turkey has not become a European

²¹ From the “Speech Delivered by FM Ismail Cem at the East-West Institute On the Occasion of Presentation of ‘The Statesman of the Year’ Award”, May 2, 2000, (Gundogdu, 2001, p. 8 n. 4).

²² The author is referring to the feminist anti-militarist international movement *Women in Black* whose members, first organized in 1988, challenge ethnic wars of aggression and the politics of “ethnic superiority” worldwide.

Union member state; the “Cyprus issue” has not “yet” been resolved; and the “Greek-Turkish rapprochement” is still incomplete.

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