

Re-Envisioning Cyprus

Edited by PETER LOIZOS, NICOS PHILIPPOU AND
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This excellent and substantial collection of essays – wonderfully illustrated with adeptly selected photographs – reveal a Cyprus hidden by the affluence of recent times. The editors, Loizos, Philippou and Stylianou-Lambert, have brought together contributions from a wide selection of perspectives which has resulted in a book which is intellectual but not stuffy, insightful but never polemic, and entertaining whilst never tacky. This review is not an in-depth discussion of each chapter; it is an impression of the book from an outsider looking for meaning, and not a reflection of the quality of each writer's contribution. This leads to an uneven review of chapters, since some have more specific relevance to the writer than others. This does not convey any value other than in the context just given. The book as an entity works very well, allowing cherry-picking as well as a full read. The cherry-picking approach is used here.

The quality of the eleven-chaptered book is – not surprisingly – started with the essay by Peter Loizos. His ability to take difficult and wide-ranging subject matter and integrate it into a piece that is reflective, empathic and informative shows the considerable personal skills of a man who cares deeply for his country and one who has the ability to share this easily with others. The feeling of a Deleuzian rhizome created by Peter enriches our meaning, and understanding of the interconnections of what it is to be Cypriot flows in this opening chapter. Such high standard is maintained in the following chapters.

Loucas Antoniou's chapter is not for the faint hearted. It highlights the conditions of child mineworkers and points the finger of culpability for their working conditions and lives directly, and appropriately, at those responsible – the capitalist mine owners who exploited the child miners and the children's adult co-workers whose carelessness (in some situations) worsened the plight of these children. The photographs tell the story equally as well as the narrative; a story worthy to be told but difficult to comprehend: A story not just of Cypriot children but of the injustice of colonialism and greed which degraded the working classes in Cyprus and around the world. A light chapter follows, provided by Nicos Philippou. This is an interesting, essay which illustrates notions of self and how, through photography, one projects notions of one's self image at various levels of authenticity. Building from a discussion of Thomson's social-political take on Cypriot life to the formal rigidity of the aesthetic of the portraits, Nicos illustrates the constraints and the relational nature of being captured in an epoch as the context for self creation. For me, this chapter communicated an understanding of the dual identity of Cypriots – their own and the projected – and reveals important hints as to where the nation might go.

Sondra Sainsbury's essay on migrant women is not illustrated but her words are sufficiently strong. Her discussion is of the exploitation of these lowly-paid women whose future is almost totally controlled by their employers and who, for sure, bring huge benefits to Cypriot society. The lack of monitoring of their conditions – and thus the potential for their own lack of identity – mirrors in many places the discussion in the previous chapter. The lack of personal identity for these women, and their presence as a grafted

extension of the new affluent Cypriots, is surely problematic and a repetitious example of the power inequalities of colonial times. Sondra's optimism is based on the small but growing group of activists seeking proper rights for these women.

Miriam Paeslack cleverly uses Joanna Diehl's photographs as a discourse of, in her own words, 'transferences, displacements and translation processes' (p. 69). The chapter is interesting and indicative and worthy of considered reflection. This same use of space to explore events is evident in Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert's illustrated essay on the touristic treatment and, specifically, the promotional images of the Rock of Aphrodite. Insightful as to the uses of photography for personal pleasure, promotional activities and the development of affinity to both place and myth, this chapter seems to me to have a slight undertone of the ideologically infused work of Thomson – not in the damaging way he used it, but in the context of the use of pictures to paint a thousand words for the benefit of the image owner. The Easter bonfire essay by Nicos Philippou has real resonance with me living just yards away from my village's annual incineration! The height, intergenerational rivalry and bravado are everything, and Nicos' pictures capture this essence rather than the surface purpose of these temporary monuments.

Haris Pellapaisiotis' exploration of the living spaces of Nicosia through the artists and their photographs provide a stimulating journey through the City and one worthy of his guided tour. The same cannot be advised for Demetris Taliotis' stark set of photographs of Nicosia Airport. Its images of isolation, even despair, show a journey which has led somewhere but now cannot take us anywhere. This is contrasted with a final poem by Stephanos Stephanides, who takes us on that evocative journey.

Before closing, I have missed the chapter by Chrystalleni Loizidou which concerns the Liberty monument. This is deliberate, for it is the place I want to close this review. The discussion in this paper reflects for me many of the issues still playing a role within the wonderful island of Cyprus. Moreover, it has elements which resonate with themes which emerge from each of the excellent essays offered here. As a portfolio, the essays make compelling reading and are visually intriguing. Of course more could have been written but then the book would be too unwieldy. As the book is presented it represents a coherent, informed and culturally-informed view. It offers the outsider a real opportunity to re-envision Cyprus and complements the warmth, humanity and intelligence that has been my experience of the island.

PAUL GIBBS