# Labour Migration, Diasporic Intimacy and Belonging in Maren Wickwire's Documentary *Together Apart*

**Marilena Zackheos**[1]

**Abstract**

*Maren Wickwire's documentary film Together Apart explores institutional discrimination against migrant workers in Cyprus through the personal narratives of its Filipina protagonists. At the same time, the film brings attention to the women's intimate relationships formed in the diaspora. By analyzing how these moments of diasporic intimacy challenge the logics of institutional discrimination, this paper seeks to re-evaluate heteronormative understandings of attachment. The paper explores, first, institutional discrimination against migrants in Cyprus, second, the (unfortunately) negligible contribution of Cypriot films and films about Cyprus so far in addressing this issue, third, the significance of Wickwire's cross-border filmmaking practices, and lastly, it calls into question conventional logics of family, belonging and nationhood that fuel discrimination by demonstrating the border-defying powers of diasporic intimacy in Together Apart.*

**Keywords:** gender, labour migration, documentary film, intimacy, transnational motherhood, human rights, belonging, nationalism, Philippines, Cyprus

## Introduction

Though several NGOs like the Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies, Kisa and Obreras Empowered have for years rallied in opposition to violence against women and in favour of equal rights for migrants and domestic workers,[2] it took the sensational arrest of Cyprus' first serial killer to shamefully expose the island's systemic racism and sexism to the international scene. According to press reports, the self-confessed Greek Cypriot killer made contact with a woman from Romania, a woman

[1] Marilena Zackheos, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Nicosia.

[2] Despite its many successes and relentless hard work, civil society of course has its shortcomings including core funding and organisational problems, lack of solidarity between NGOs and common agendas, as well as ineffectual campaigning. See N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou, 'Evaluating the Anti-discrimination Law in the Republic of Cyprus: A Critical Reflection' (2008) 20(2) *The Cyprus Review* 106.

from Nepal, and three women from the Philippines on a dating website, had sexual intercourse with them, then murdered and disposed of their bodies including two of the women's daughters in mine shafts, lakes, and pits in the Cypriot countryside.

The discovery of the first of these seven missing persons, the killer's confession, and the subsequent police investigations made it on all major news broadcasters like CNN, Al Jazeera, and ABC News. A BBC article, however, went further to expose that the Cypriot police showed indifference to reports of these women and children's disappearances.[3] Agencies like the New York Times and the Washington Post quickly picked up the story, too, with headlines like 'Serial-killing case shocks Cyprus as police come in for criticism' and 'Missed chances to stop serial killer scrutinized in Cyprus,' respectively.

The police was further slammed through protests from the general public for failing to undertake investigations, alleging that the women and their children may have crossed over to the north of the island,[4] having decided to leave their lives behind from the Republic of Cyprus to start anew.[5] In rebuttal to the accusations of law enforcement indifference, the police also claimed to have had their hands tied, as under the law it is forbidden to lift the phone data of missing persons.[6] Alarmingly, however, the seven lost lives are not the only women and girls who have gone missing in Cyprus. Unsolved by the police are the disappearances of 32 others since 1990, three of which are Greek Cypriot and the rest are all, unsettlingly, of non-Cypriot origins.[7]

[3] R. Blunt, 'Cyprus Reels as Police Hunt for Victims of Suspected Serial Killer' (*BBC News* [online], 26 April 2019).

[4] To the police's defense, this scenario is not unprecedented as many take this option as an escape from systemic hurdles encountered in the south. Working in the north allows migrants the freedom to escape exploitative work situations, work wherever they choose, for instance in restaurants or bars, outside of a contract and at higher pay. M. Wickwire, '*Staying Strong*: Precarity and Self-Determination Among Filipino Migrant Workers in Cyprus', (Master's thesis, Freie Universität of Berlin, 2017), 38–42.

[5] E. Hazou, 'Justice Minister Pressured to Resign Over Mine Murders' (*Cyprus Mail.com*, 22 April 2019).

[6] M. Iacovides, 'Police Association Say Missing Persons Cases Were Hindered by Data Restrictions' (*Cyprus Mail* (online), 26 April 2019).

[7] B. Hadjioannou, '32 Women Still Missing in Cyprus Since 1990' (*Cyprus* (online), 15 April 2019).

Subaltern immigrant women suffer discrimination, due to their gender, ethnicity,[8] migration status and class, by Cypriot society[9] and also by Cypriot governmental authorities. Perceived largely as passing through and as a means to an end through the 'low wage–low productivity–low skill'[10] services they provide for Cypriots—whether these include caregiving, housekeeping, or prostitution—they seem to be tolerated but not integrated. At worst, they are neglected, exploited, assaulted, or even killed. Their own fates but also gender inequality at large receive less attention than other priorities of the island.

Unsurprisingly, the Cyprus Problem is a priority in Cypriot films and films about Cyprus too. The absence of films on migrant women's experiences further silences and neglects migrant women who partake so actively in society. Arguably, this absence contributes to the continued discrimination against migrant women by failing to make them visible and give them a voice, thereby not exposing to audiences these women's realities. Films that do tackle female migrant others in Cyprus are few,[11] which include Marianna Christofides' experimental documentary *dies solis. Sundays in Nicosia* (2010), Iva Radivojevic's visual essay *Evaporating Borders* (2014) and Maren Wickwire's documentary film *Together Apart* (2018). Christofides makes visible domestic workers on their day off, Radivojevic narrates largely through personal experience as an asylum seeker herself on the island, and Wickwire highlights personal narratives particularly from the perspective of domestic workers.

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[8] Z. Gregoriou, 'Questioning the Location of Gender in Integration Discourses and Policies' in *Young Migrant Women in Secondary Education: Promoting Integration and Mutual Understanding Through Dialogue and Exchange,* Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (Nicosia: University of Nicosia Press, 2011), 11.

[9] A case in point regarding Asian women's problematic racialisation in particular is the often interchangeable common usage in the Cypriot Greek dialect of the terms 'Ασιάτισσα' [*Asian woman*], 'Φιλιππινέζα' [Filipino woman], 'Σριλανκέζα' [Sri Lankan woman] and 'μαυρού' [black woman] as Nicos Trimikliniotis notes. He argues that this racism is based on skin colour and also on class difference, in the sense that maids who would traditionally work in rich houses [αρχοντικά] were of a lower class status. N. Trimikliniotis, 'Racism and New Migration to Cyprus: The Racialisation of Migrant Workers' in F. Anthias and G. Lazarides (eds), *Into the Margins: Exclusion and Migration in Southern Europe* (Avebury: Ashgate, 1999), 139–178.

[10] N. Trimikliniotis and P. Pantelides, 'Mapping Discriminatory Landscapes in Cyprus: Ethnic Discrimination in the Labour Market' (2003) 15(1) *The Cyprus Review* 137.

[11] Another noteworthy film about migration is Adonis Florides and Thodoris Nikolaidis' comedy *Kalabush* (2004). It tells the tale of an illegal male immigrant from Syria attempting to integrate in Cypriot society.

More specifically, Wickwire's *Together Apart* explores institutional discrimination against migrant workers in Cyprus through the personal narratives of its Filipina protagonists. At the same time, the film brings attention to the women's intimate relationships formed in the diaspora. By analysing how these moments of diasporic intimacy challenge the logics of institutional discrimination, this paper seeks to re-evaluate heteronormative understandings of attachment. The paper explores, first, institutional discrimination against migrants in Cyprus, second, the (unfortunately) negligible contribution of Cypriot films and films about Cyprus so far in addressing this issue, third, the significance of Wickwire's cross-border film-making practices, and lastly, it calls into question conventional logics of family, belonging, and nationhood that fuel discrimination by demonstrating the border-defying powers of diasporic intimacy in *Together Apart*.

## Institutional Discrimination and the Paradox of Cyprus' Multiculturalism

Following the April 2019 news of the multiple femicides[12] in Cyprus, President Nicos Anastasiades expressed his disgust at the scandalous fact that the murders 'have selectively targeted foreign women who are in our country to work'.[13] Yet he also later unwittingly reaffirmed the presumed second-rate status of these women in Cypriot society. Addressing the congress of right-wing party DISY on 4 May 2019, President Anastasiades attacked the opposition party, left-wing AKEL, for the deteriorated economy and for failing to apologise regarding how the confiscated munitions and resultant naval base explosion incident was handled in July 2011 under AKEL's administration.[14] President Anastasiades pronounced that, unlike AKEL, DISY assumed responsibility for the recent national tragedy, stating: 'I have ex-

[12] Following Diane E. H. Russell's definition, what classifies the killing of a woman as a femicide is if the motivation for the crime is gender-related. For more on femicide, see for instance D.E.H. Russell and J. Radford (eds), *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992) and D.E.H. Russell, 'Defining femicide and related concepts' in D.E.H. Russell and R.A. Harmes (eds), *Femicide in Global Perspective,* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001).

[13] Associated Press, 'Serial-Killing Case Shocks Cyprus as Police Come in for Criticism' (*The New York Times* [online], 17 April 2019).

[14] Ammunition and military explosives had been confiscated by the Cypriot National Guard from a ship headed to Syria and these were dangerously stored in an open space at the Evangelos Florakis naval base in Mari for over two years before the blast resulted in 13 lives lost, severe damage to the island's largest power station Vasilikos, and destruction of many private residences. G. Psyllides, 'Disy-Akel Trade Barbs Over Apologising for Dead' (*Cyprus Mail* (online), 4 May 2019).

pressed my regret, I have expressed my apology, we dared to apologise regardless of the victims being foreigners'.[15]

Though this proclamation meant to counter-attack accusations of the current administration's criminal negligence in dealing with Cyprus' missing women, the President inadvertently expressed the perception that these women do not belong to a desired community within Cyprus. Immigrants to Cyprus are excluded from discussions of evolving Cypriot identity and dismissed as 'non-Cypriot communities' or even as 'non-communities' even though their contribution in numbers, as well as 'to the economy and to the evolving social and cultural fabric of the island' is immense.[16] Concerning domestic workers in particular, the contradiction is their ongoing recruitment at the epicentre of Cypriot family life and yet their simultaneous disenfranchisement with policies aiming to keep them on the periphery of Cypriot society.[17] State practices like detention and deportation criminalise harmless people simply looking to extend their work, shape negative perceptions of them[18] and also 'sen[d] a clear message of these people being *unwanted*'.[19]

Part of the reason immigrants are dismissed thus is related to systemic discrimination that originates in the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus. The Constitution acknowledges only two dominant communities: the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities. Under the Constitution, the small Armenian, Maronite, and Latin religious groups must choose membership between one of the dominant communities,[20] effectively, homogenising society instead of valuing its multiculturalism through a participatory and pluralistic form of government. These

[15] Ibid. The President's exact Greek wording of this proclamation is as follows: «Έχω εκφράσει τη λύπη μου, έχω εκφράσει τη συγγνώμη μου, εμείς τολμήσαμε και ζητήσαμε συγγνώμη, ανεξάρτητα αν τα θύματα ήταν αλλοδαπές».

[16] J. Teerling and R. King, 'Of Hubs and Hinterlands: Cyprus as an Insular Space of Overlapping Diasporas' (2012) 7(1) *Island Studies Journal* 43.

[17] C. Mainwaring, 'On the Edge of Exclusion: The Changing Nature of Migration in Cyprus and Malta' (2008) 20(2) *The Cyprus Review* 40.

[18] Ibid, 32.

[19] Ibid, 39.

[20] The Roma minority population was not organised enough, not considered a religious group, and therefore not included in the Constitution. The few Greek-speaking Roma assimilated in the Greek Cypriot community and the Turkish-speaking Roma were counted in the Turkish Cypriot community. N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou, 'The Cypriot Roma and the Failure of Education: Anti-Discrimination and Multiculturalism as a Post-accession Challenge', in N. Coureas and A. Varnava (eds), *The Minorities of Cyprus: Development Patterns and the Identity of the Internal-Exclusion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) 241.

religious groups have their own representatives in the Parliament but undeniably, the Constitution normalises bi-communalism.

Furthermore, President Archbishop Makarios' 13 amendments to the Constitution in 1963 aimed at altering the representation of Turkish Cypriots in Government from 30%, which was imposed by the British in the Constitution, to 20% so as to reflect the actual population ratio. This led to the withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriot community from the state power structures. Subsequently, 'the administration of the Republic has been carried out by the [Greek Cypriots]'.[21]

The Cyprus conflict developing from Greek-Cypriot calls for *enosis*—union with Greece—and Turkish-Cypriot calls for *taksim*—partition of the island—has certainly contributed to a greatly divisive society. Sociologist Caesar Mavratsas has noted that Greek-Cypriot nationalists' 'emphasis upon the *Greekness* of Cyprus and the particular ideological constructions that this orientation necessitates pose serious obstacles to accepting political cohabitation, in whatever form, with the Turkish Cypriots'.[22] The legacy of the conflict is a catastrophic *dialectic of intolerance*[23] that has perpetuated distrust and racism in a significant section of society.

Moreover, the Cyprus conflict has acted as a blanket excuse for the government's disinterest and ineffectiveness to handle migrant issues. Anthropologist Sondra Sainsbury has noted that 'The *Cyprus Problem* in general and the *green line* in particular are often officially pointed to as the main reason for the Greek-Cypriot authority's failure to be able to adequately control illegal immigration into the country'[24] but as seen recently in the case of the missing women who were murdered, emigration is maintained as another similar unmanageable issue. Overall, 'the division plays into the fears about foreigners'[25] immigrating to Cyprus and also concedes not assuming responsibility about the well-being of undesired foreigners in Cyprus.

The true paradox about the current situation in Cyprus is its prevailing multiculturalism. Cyprus has had a long history of interculturalism. Among the peoples who have settled in, migrated to, or have occupied the island are the Greeks,

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21 N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou (no 2), 97.

22 C.V. Mavratsas, 'The Ideological Contest Between Greek-Cypriot Nationalism and Cypriotism 1974-1995: Politics, Social Memory and Identity', (1997) 20(4) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 733.

23 Ibid, 734.

24 S. Sainsbury, 'Migrant Women in Cyprus: A Silent Presence', in P. Loizos, N. Philippou and T. Stylianou-Lambert (eds), *Re-envisioning Cyprus*, (Nicosia: University of Nicosia Press, 2010) 57.

25 Ibid.

the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Arabs, the Romans, the Lusignans, the Genoese, the Venetians, the Ottomans, the British, and the Turks. The current Cyprus population is in turn ethnically mixed, being made up predominantly of Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Armenian-Cypriots, Maronite-Cypriots, and Latin-Cypriots from French and Italian roots. There is even a small number of black Cypriots who have African heritage and whose predecessors arrived on the island as slaves during the Ottoman period.

Cyprus is a *falsely homogenised host society*.[26] On the contrary, it is also a *multi-diasporic space* that is 'made up of overlapping diasporas and their everyday intercultural encounters'.[27] This fact cannot be emphasized enough. Migrant workers increased in Cyprus beginning in the 1980s as the government strived to cover shortages in various sectors.[28] Statistics show that more recently, in the mid to late 2000s, Cyprus ranked highest in the European Union pertaining to the rate of immigration proportionate to its population. Cyprus also ranks second in regard to population with foreign citizenship and third for population of foreign birth.[29]

As migration scholars Janine Teerling and Russel King note, among Cyprus' residents are also British *expats* who are retirees and lifestyle migrants, military personnel from the British sovereign bases at Akrotiri and Dhekelia, Pontic Greeks, Eastern Europeans such as Russians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Georgians, and Serbs, peoples from the Middle East including Lebanese, Syrians, Palestinians, Israelis, Iraqis, and Egyptians, African refugees as well as domestic workers hailing from Southeast Asia like Filipinos, Indians, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis, and Nepalese.[30] In turn, Greek nationals have been growing exponentially on the island as a community primarily due to labour migration, as a result of the economic crisis in Greece, but also due to high rates of inter-societal marriages as social distance between Greek-Cypriots and Greeks is considered minimal.[31]

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[26] J. Teerling and R. King (no 16), 42.

[27] Ibid, 21–22.

[28] Z. Gregoriou and G. Christou, 'The Dubious Gift/Debt of Integration: Patriarchal Regimes, Ethnicity and Sexuality in the School Lives of Migrant Girls in Cyprus' in *Young Migrant Women in Secondary Education: Promoting Integration and Mutual Understanding Through Dialogue and Exchange,* Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (Nicosia: University of Nicosia Press, 2011) 23.

[29] Luxembourg ranks first regarding population with foreign citizenship. Cyprus ranks third after Luxembourg and Ireland for population of foreign birth. J. Teerling and R. King (no 16), 23.

[30] Ibid, 32–33.

[31] M. Fulias-Souroulla, 'Marriage and Migration: Greek Cypriot Representations and Attitudes Towards Inter-Societal Marriage' (2008) 20(2) *The Cyprus Review* 123.

The multinational personnel from the UN peacekeeping force is another group[32] that contributes to Cyprus' diverse social landscape. There are also students from Europe, Asia, Africa, and even North America who increasingly choose to complete their studies in Cyprus' private universities. Additionally, speaking of the north of Cyprus, though we have no accurate reports, it is believed that at least 50,000 Turkish settlers reside there.

Regardless of Cyprus' rich multiculturalism and due partly to the predominance of the Cyprus Problem in public interest, anti-discrimination issues have so far concerned the authorities considerably less.[33] What is additionally disquieting is that not only have far right groups not been convicted for racist attacks[34] but, in 2016 the ultra-nationalist party ELAM (The National Popular Front) even managed to win one seat in the House of Representatives.

## The Matter with Cypriot Films and Films about Cyprus

The Cyprus Problem, encompassing also reunification efforts, has in turn dominated as a thematic focus in Cypriot films[35] and films about Cyprus at the expense of other sociocultural issues.[36] In terms of full-length documentary films' subject matter in particular,[37] consider for instance the following from the 2000s.[38] *Living*

[32] J. Teerling and R. King (no 16), 42.

[33] N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou (no 2), 106.

[34] Ibid, 107.

[35] Some of these films whose thematic focus is the Cyprus Problem include: Andreas Pantzi's *The Rape of Aphrodite* (1985) and *The Slaughter of the Cock* (1996), Michael Papas' *Tomorrow's Warrior* (1979), as well as Costas Demetriou and Pavlos Philippou's *Order to Kill Makarios* (1975). For more information, see C. Constandinides and Y. Papadakis, 'Introduction: Scenarios of History, Themes, and Politics in Cypriot Cinemas' in C. Constandinides and Y. Papadakis (eds), *Cypriot Cinemas: Memory, Conflict, and Identity in the Margins of Europe* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015).

[36] Ibid, 11.

[37] Unsurprisingly, funding by governmental agencies, associations and organisations like UNDP have been primarily allocated to film projects that deal with the Cyprus Problem, thus significantly limiting the content of documentary films as well. E.A. Davis, 'Archive, Evidence, Memory, Dream: Documentary Films on Cyprus' in C. Constandinides and Y. Papadakis (eds), *Cypriot Cinemas: Memory, Conflict, and Identity in the Margins of Europe*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015) 36.

[38] Despite the more prolific documentary film-making work of the 2000s, arguably, the most significant documentary about Cyprus remains *Attila '74* by Greek-Cypriot Michael Cacoyiannis, which was filmed exactly at the aftermath of 1974, exposing the events alongside interviews with survivors and refugees from the war but also with significant figures such as President Archbishop Makarios and Nikos Sampson, leader of the coup d'état and subsequent temporary de facto President. Although these eye witness reports comprise only the narratives of the Greek-Cypriots, they are remarkable testaments to the period and its turmoil.

*Together Separately* (2003), by Greek Cypriot Elias Demetriou, focuses on the two communities living in Pyla, a mixed village located in the Buffer Zone and monitored by the United Nations. *Cyprus: Echoes Across the Divide* (2006), by Australian Adam Sèbire, charts the process and difficulties in organising a bi-communal musical performance in a divided Nicosia. *The Case of the Ambient Atmosphere* (2005) and *Poison* (2008), by Greek Cypriot Makarios Drousiotis, both tackle the Greek Cypriots' rejection of the Annan Plan for resolving the Cyprus Problem in the 2004 referendum. *Sharing an Island* (2011), by Greek Cypriot Danae Stylianou, follows six young Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots who journey to the north and south of the island together and discuss the political conflict, trauma, and discrimination they have inherited. *Birds of a Feather* (2012), by Greek Cypriot Stefanos Evripidou and Irish Cypriot Stephen Nugent, records positions by United Nations officials, academics, educators, researchers, and activists as well as shared and conflicting narratives from Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot refugees on the traumatic 1963 and 1974 events. Also, *Colony* (2015), by Turkish Gürcan Keltek, focuses on the remnants of 1974 in Cyprus' geographical space, concentrating for instance on the excavations of mass graves for Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot missing persons and the abandoned Nicosia International Airport.[39] Many of these films have a praiseworthy peace-making mission, promoting greater understanding of Cyprus' complex historical conflict, and the oft-similar but oft-diverging viewpoints of the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. It is clear that their top priority is the *national* issue, giving prominence to inter-ethnic relations only between the main two communities of the island.

Documentaries that deviate from the key themes of the Cyprus Problem and reunification include works as diverse as the following. *Memories of Miners* (2007), by Greek Cypriot Paschalis Papapetrou, recalls the difficult working conditions of miners and their union strikes in the 1930s and 1940s. Papapetrou's film *Troodos and the Birth of Cyprus* (2009) gives a geological account of Cyprus' formation. *Dreams in Another Language* (2010), by Greek director Lucia Rikaki, shows the everyday coexistence of students hailing from 21 different countries at Nicosia's Faneromenis School. *The Third Motherland* (2011), by Greek Cypriot Costas M. Constantinou and

[39] Elizabeth Anne Davis provides a thorough analysis of contemporary Cypriot documentary films' focus on the Cyprus Problem and specifically their use of archives in *Cypriot Cinemas: Memory, Conflict, and Identity in the Margins of Europe*. Among the documentaries she references are: Derviş Zaim and Panicos Chrysanthou's *Parallel Trips* (2004), Vassiliki Katrivanou's *Women of Cyprus* (2009) and Serkan Hussein's *Homeland* (2010).

Giorgos Kykkou Skordis, tells the Maronite community's integration within Cypriot society but also their ethno-cultural difference. *Missing Fetine* (2017), by Australian-born Yeliz Shukri, uncovers the phenomenon of various young Turkish Cypriot girls having been sold and wed to Arabs during British Rule due to poverty through a personal search for a long-lost aunt. *Birth Days* (2018), by Greek Cypriot Danae Stylianou, examines natural birth practices without medical intervention in Cyprus. *The Ghost of Peter Sellers* (2018), directed by Hungarian Peter Medak and produced by Greek Cypriot Paul Iacovou, recounts the various disastrous incidents that thwarted the completion of a Hollywood movie shot in Cyprus starring Sellers.

The 2010 documentary *dies solis. Sundays in Nicosia,* by German Cypriot Marianna Christofides, is one of a few exceptions to the disinterest of film-makers in migration. The film documents over the period of one year how domestic workers spend their Sundays off in Old Nicosia. The 2014 visual essay *Evaporating Borders*, by Iva Radivojevic, in turn explores the status, livelihood, perceptions and treatment of asylum seekers, refugees, domestic workers and other migrants in Cyprus to a significant degree through voice-over by the director, herself born in former Yugoslavia but having migrated to Cyprus following the political unrest.[40] Finally, the 2018 documentary film *Together Apart,* by German Maren Wickwire, tells the story of 50-year-old Carren, a single mom from the Philippines, who migrated to Cyprus for work and 25-year-old Guil Ann, Carren's oldest daughter, who has followed in her footsteps, leaving behind three children and a husband, to generate income in Cyprus.

## *Together Apart*'s Cross-Border Film-making Practices: Defying *National* Cinema

*Together Apart* was produced by Manifest Media, whose founder, Maren Wickwire and director of the said film, has described as 'a nomadic film production company'. Though Wickwire lives in the United States, she works globally with interests in globalization, migration, and women's issues. Created as part of her MA thesis in Visual and Media Anthropology for Freie Universität of Berlin, the documentary went on to win the Best Student Film Award at the 27th International Festival of Ethnological Film in Belgrade 2018, the Best Student Film Award with an Honourable Mention

[40] C. Constandinides, 'Postscript: Borders of Categories and Categories of Borders in Cypriot Cinemas' in C. Constandinides and Y. Papadakis (eds), *Cypriot Cinemas: Memory, Conflict, and Identity in the Margins of Europe* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015) 220.

from The Society for Visual Anthropology's Film and Media Festival 2018, and it received an Honourable Mention for the 2018 David Plath Media Award. Furthermore, the film was officially selected for screening in over a dozen festivals worldwide during 2018, including the Baja California International Film Festival, the London Migration Film Festival, Cine y Derechos Humanos de Madrid and Ethnografilm Paris.

In Cyprus, *Together Apart* was first screened at the *Goethe Institut* Cyprus with the organization's support on 10 February 2018. More than 150 people attended, including a significant number of Filipino community members, locals, and internationals. A vibrant question and answer session followed with the director and one of the documentary's protagonists Guil Ann. The event was especially stimulating for the audience, as the screening was organized in tandem with German Rebecca Sampson's photography exhibition titled *Apples for Sale* that featured Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong. This allowed one artist's work to concentrate on the specifics of female labour migration in one location to inform the other, emphasising that the issues faced by domestic workers are a global phenomenon. The film was screened again on 22 September 2018 as part of the AEI-Cine Fest in Skali, Aglantzia. Following the screening, 16 Filipino women answered questions from the audience. A public film screening was then organized by the Cyprus Centre for Intercultural Studies in collaboration with the University of Nicosia's UNESCO Chair on 'Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue for a Culture of Peace' on 29 October 2018, at the University of Nicosia, with an audience made up primarily of students and academics. Lastly, the film was screened[41] in Pafos at Technopolis 20 on 3 November 2018 for an intimate audience of 20. Lissa Jataas, founder of the association Obreras Empowered, was present for the question and answer session, representing the domestic workers community.[42]

[41] *Together Apart* will next be included in the festival programme of Ethnografilm Nicosia and screened at Home for Cooperation on 27–28 September 2019.

[42] As Wickwire explained, 'The aim of the film was to bring the Cypriot and migrant communities together and actually have a direct dialogue'. The audience in all screenings was successfully engaged, voicing various questions afterwards in the question and answer sessions. Interestingly, the younger generation was more empathetic towards domestic workers' rights, though the older generation 'tried to justify that they paid way more, plus accommodation, etc.' Wickwire reflected: 'It would be really interesting to do a study on how young Cypriots perceive domestic workers—since so many were raised by them. I think they are emotionally torn between the public perception of *foreigners* and *outsiders*, *invaders* in Cyprus and their personal experience of being cared for and raised by a domestic worker' (personal communication, 20 June 2019).

One cannot easily categorise Wickwire's documentary in a single national cinema. As film-maker Elia Suleiman has claimed about his own work: 'My films are Palestinian because I am a Palestinian, the way you'd say a film is French if the director is French. But my films don't deal with Palestine'.[43] Similarly, Wickwire is German-born, but *Together Apart* does not deal with Germany as its thematic focus. Like Suleiman, Wickwire can be said 'to deconstruct th[e] imposed national image'[44] by dealing with non-German specific issues.

Furthermore, she has explained that her use of alternating scenes in Cyprus and in the Philippines is influenced by visual anthropologist and film-maker Steffen Köhn, who suggests that the 'temporal and spatial montage provide new possibilities for the organization and dissemination of ethnographic knowledge in terms of multivocality and multiperspectivity and thus foster the viewer's active engagement with the contradictions and uncertainties of our deterritorialised present'.[45] Wickwire's interest in multivocality and multiperspectivity is shared also by Suleiman who strives to 'avoid a centralized, unified image that allows only a single narrative perspective'.[46] Decentralization is here used as a method to 'blu[r] boundaries of territory and identity'.[47]

By virtue of being decentred and shot in two countries, Wickwire's documentary also resists being pigeonholed exclusively in either Philippine cinema or Cyprus cinema.[48] The nomadic or transnational nature of the film rather calls for understanding the work as *being of* and *apart from* any one single national cinema. Its transnational approach 'challenge[s] the western (neo-colonial) construct of nation and national culture and, by extension, national cinema as stable and Eurocentric'.[49] It is not that the national ceases 'to exert the force of its presence' on the transnational;[50] the transnational is very much shaped by the sociocultural and political forces of nations. However, as theorised by film scholars Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, cross-border film-making can 'scrutiniz[e] the tensions and dia-

43 E. Suleiman, 'A Cinema of Nowhere' (2000) 29(2) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 99.

44 Ibid.

45 M. Wickwire (no 4), 45.

46 E. Suleiman (no 43), 97.

47 Ibid.

48 The work can also be described as an ethnographic film but it engages in ethnographic research transnationally.

49 W. Higbee and S.H. Lim, 'Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies' (2010) 1(1) *Transnational Cinemas* 9.

50 Ibid, 10.

logic relationship between the national and the transnational' to the extent that 'it may affect, subvert and transform national and transnational cinemas'.[51] In this sense, while not produced or directed by either a Cypriot or a Filipino, *Together Apart* may be considered as boldly participating in Cypriot cinemas (especially under Costas Constandinides' widened definition of *Cypriot cinemas*[52]) and Philippine cinemas too. Fittingly, the documentary also challenges strictly national and mono-cultural conceptions of belonging in its subject matter by emphasising intimate connections formed in the state of displacement of its protagonists.

## Visibility, Voice, and Intimacy in *Together Apart*

*Together Apart* gives both visibility and voice to a community of women not only contributing financially to care for their own families but contributing socially in Cyprus while also struggling there due to systemic discrimination. This agrees with the proposal of the European Commission's Handbook on Integration (2010) to 'giv[e] a voice and face to migrant women, both those who are empowered and those who are the victims of exploitation'.[53] At the same time, what is truly remarkable about Wickwire's documentary is the uncovering of a central tenet that supports and sustains these women in their experience of displacement in a second home and which furthermore comes to challenge monolithic understandings of family, belonging, and nationhood: diasporic intimacy. By displaying and voicing moments of diasporic intimacy, the documentary rewrites conventional logics of attachment. It also puts forth a political statement, calling for the Republic of Cyprus to revisit its labour and integration policies pertaining to domestic workers.

Throughout the film, the Filipino community members are given visibility outside the confines of the private domestic space of their employment. This move is significant as it acts counter to the invisibility of their domestic work that neglects or victimises them. As the nature of domestic work is confined to the private household, domestic workers are rendered invisible, and this invisibility 'is unfortunately used by the authorities to justify the complete lack of control mechanisms to ensure

[51] Ibid, 18.

[52] Constandinides proposes that Cypriot cinemas be considered: '(1) as a paradigm for interrogating normative and aberrant representations stemming from multiple viewpoints on the Cyprus Problem, and a multi-ethnic Cypriot society; (2) as a paradigm that wishes to depart from the normative perception of the *National* as a host and source of binaries; and (3) as a paradigm that examines the transnational *frame* as a cultural, affinitive, and/or epiphanic exchange, which extends to other interactions that are not exclusively economic. C. Constandinides (no 40), 232.

[53] Z. Gregoriou (no 8), 7.

the implementation and observance of a domestic worker's employment and living conditions'.[54] Gender and migration researchers Josie Christodoulou and Anna Zobnina remind, 'This situation leaves [domestic workers] extremely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse'.[55] Instead, *Together Apart* proudly supports domestic workers' visibility. The Filipino women are herein displayed as comprehensive and dynamic individuals commanding their own lives. The camera for instance records Guil Ann riding the bus on Makarios Avenue, one of Nicosia's main shopping streets, as well as shopping there; taking selfies outside of Nicosia's Venetian walls in a park in the moat and at the National Forest Park of the Pedagogical Academy; enjoying herself with other Filipinas at karaoke; overlooking Nicosia on a rooftop in the evening; attending a service at the Holy Cross Catholic Church; connecting with friends in private living quarters; and posing at the beach as seen in her photographs. In turn, the Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) community is shown rehearsing traditional dances under a bridge in Nicosia; competing in a league at a volleyball court; barbecuing in a neighbourhood street; and marching together downtown for Philippines Independence Day.

Moments of communal congregation, such as the singing of the Lord's Prayer at church, the gathering for karaoke and the cheerleading for their respective volleyball teams show a vibrant and publicly active community in Nicosia.[56] They also show ethnic solidarity, connecting women who might otherwise not have met but is made possible specifically through their common experience of displacement. As diaspora studies scholar Svetlana Boym argues, diasporic intimacy is directly related to uprootedness,[57] which requires learning to inhabit loss, and in this process, immigrants see *possibility after the loss*.[58] Intimacy of this kind is transformative in that it provides both a sense of belonging and empowerment for these women

[54] J. Christodoulou and A. Zobnina, 'Investigating Trafficking in Women for Labour Exploitation in Domestic Work: The Case of Cyprus' in *'I Thought I Was Applying as a Care Giver': Combating Trafficking in Women for Labour Exploitation in Domestic Work* (Nicosia: University of Nicosia Press, 2015) 29.

[55] Ibid.

[56] As visual ethnographer Nicos Philippou aptly notes, the use and adoption of urban space is significant in terms of constructing a community. See N. Philippou, 'Migrants, Social Space and Visibility' (2008) 20(2) *The Cyprus Review*.

[57] For more on Boym's understanding of diasporic intimacy, see M. Zackheos, 'Michael Ondaatje's Sri Lanka in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*' (2012) 33(3) *South Asian Review* 67.

[58] S. Boym, 'On Diasporic Intimacy: Ilya Kabakov's Installations and Immigrant Homes' in L. Berlant (ed.) *Intimacy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) 230.

despite loss. In *Together Apart*, intimacy's potential is materialised for example in the recording of one of the volleyball team's cheerleading routines that incorporates Queen's victory anthem *We are the Champions* as well as in the image of Carren's volleyball trophy that was awarded to the most cooperative team.

By focusing on transnational motherhood, the film further asks its audience to expand its understanding of modes of attachment. Guil Ann connects with her family in the Philippines by videoconferencing, sharing her photographs online, and mailing them presents as well as physical photographs in a carton box from Cyprus. The silent close-ups on the family's facial expressions of sweeping sadness but also transient joy upon seeing Guil Ann's photographs in person reveal an attachment that can simply be intimated, that is, not easily reduced to words. Boym explains that 'Diasporic intimacy can be approached only through indirection and intimation, through stories and secrets. It is spoken in a foreign language that reveals the inadequacies of translation'.[59]

This foreign register of diasporic intimacy has physical distance as its groundwork, but the distance does not limit its direction. Though, at the beginning of the film, Guil Ann's mom Carren also resides in Cyprus, the physical contact between them too is limited. They each work during the week and get to see each other on Sunday, which is their day off. Mother and daughter are never shown together in a single frame but only in the case of photographs stored on Guil Ann's phone. The only times the two women are shown to have contact are via the telephone. Technology (including the director's camera itself) truly mediates these women's relationship, substituting close physical connection. 'Actually, we didn't have much bonding with my mom,' Guil Ann says, given that Carren worked abroad for over 14 years. Hazeline, a 32-year-old former OFW herself in Cyprus, laments that the domestic workers' lives revolve around taking care of other people's kids while being away from their own, as was the case with Carren and her own daughter.

Nonetheless, there is tenderness between Carren and Guil Ann, shown in their few interactions. For instance, when Carren is unexpectedly arrested and confined at a detention centre for working illegally on the island, amidst despair over Carren's possible deportation and the family's dire finances, mother and daughter exchange a humorous moment over the phone. Carren complains that the food tasted

[59] Ibid, 227.

terrible that day, and Guil Ann teasingly asks her plump mother if she is getting skinny; to which Carren cackles and blurts out 'No chance!'.

The antithesis to such warm moments is the backdrop of systemic discrimination. The documentary juxtaposes this tender phone conversation heard in voice-over with a sequence of unpopulated sterile state detention centre images. The women's caring for each other is contrasted with the desolate landscape of a system uncaring for real-lived lives. Overall, the *institution* sequence reminds that the system ejects these women, treating them as unwanted visitors once their visa permits have expired or once their illegal residence status has been discovered. Driven to return with a new name and fake passport for their livelihood as well as for human bonds created in the host country, these women eventually inevitably face lack of integration.

Following Carren back to the Philippines after her deportation,[60] *Together Apart* documents additional narratives and facets of Cypriot society's discrimination against Filipina domestic workers, ironically (or fittingly?), there, removed from Cyprus. These injustices are protested via intimate connections. Carren begins: 'You know, Maren, life in Cyprus is…'. There she pauses and then proceeds with: 'Ah, the people there are…,' again censoring herself. Finally, she relates that 'Just because that we went there as an OFW, they think that we don't have brain, we don't have nothing… we don't know how to use the vacuum, use the microwave, use the TV. Somebody is asking if there is a TV in the Philippines. And I hate that!'. Hazeline here chimes in, mocking, in perfect Cypriot Greek: '«Έσσει έτσι; Έσσει έτσι;» [*Do you have this in the Philippines? What about this?*]'.[61] The intercultural relations between Carren and Maren, the director, but also between Hazeline and Greek Cypriot culture are what allow for this insight and criticism to be voiced regarding the ignorance of Cypriots toward Filipinos.

Carren then humorously confesses: 'Actually, we don't have a TV in the house now, it's broken'. Her joke—albeit also a truth about the broken TV—echoes stereotypes Cypriots have of Filipinos as undeveloped and poverty-stricken. However, Carren also outright protests against such stereotypes when she soon tells Maren:

[60] Regrettably, Carren's deportation was directly related to a dispute between her and a fellow Filipina, This shows that the community is not 'an exclusively unified whole against systematic violence' but community members can also cause harm to one another to establish more powerful positions therein. M. Wickwire (no 4), 16-17.

[61] For a discussion on subversive acts of mimicry that call for a re-evaluation of hegemonic discourse, see M. Zackheos, 'Amazon Island: Revisiting Female Intimacy in Luz María Umpierre-Herrera's *The Margarita Poems'* (2016) 37(2) *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 38–39.

'You can spread the news that Filipinos are having a good life. They eat five times a day. They have everything and it's tastier than Cyprus!'. All three women laugh, recognising the jab at Cypriots' pride in their cuisine but also arrogance in relation to other cultures.

Carren's claim that they have everything also echoes another general assumption by Cypriots that domestic workers make a fortune working abroad and return to build palaces. This assumption justifies for Cypriots the minimal net salary given to Filipino domestic workers of €309 a month. Yet the film debunks this myth of riches showing that, despite working for years abroad, Carren has not managed to bank any savings. She is left with only a dream of building a house one day in the city but knows that she is getting too old to be employed again. Instead, she must now rely on her daughter for her livelihood. The vicious poverty cycle of course continues intergenerationally as Guil Ann admits that 50% of her salary goes to her family and 50% goes towards her *credits* in the Philippines, that is to say, her loan directed to pay off her employment agent.

More significantly, Carren's self-deprecating good-life joke and the women's laughter that ensues emerges with a social function. As laughing expert Robert R. Provine points out 'The necessary stimulus for laughter is not a joke, but another person'.[62] There is of course a difference between laughing with someone and laughing at someone. Furthermore, 'In some respects laughter may be a signal of dominance/ submission or acceptance/ rejection'.[63] In this case, the lines are very much blurred. Nonetheless, what ensues between the one who jokes and the one who laughs is a form of pleasurable connection and a sense that they are both *in the know*, sharing a common secret, thus shaping a close bond.

Another aspect that the film captures in the Philippines is these women's unacknowledged role as caregivers in their own families in addition to others. Women care for each other and for their elders as seen in raw shots of pampering pedicure-giving. Mistakenly, there are assumptions about migrant women coming from non-advanced countries and being held back by their own conservative cultures with little attention paid to 'the *headless body* of contemporary patriarchal capitalism'.[64] The film's close-ups on treating worn out feet in the pedicure scenes reveal the domestic

[62] R.R. Provine, 'Laughing, Tickling, and the Evolution of Speech and Self' (2004) 13(6) *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 215.

[63] R.R. Provine, 'Laughter: A Scientific Investigation' (1996) 84 *American Scientist* 42.

[64] Z. Gregoriou (no 8), 8.

workers' multidirectional caregiving, which falls in stark contrast to the busy women of Cyprus who are part of the mechanism of patriarchal capitalism themselves and must hire domestic workers to assist them with their own families. Domestic workers and in particular 'Asian women make it possible for [Cypriot women] to work outside the home and still have a clean home with food ready and someone to tend to their children while they are away at work'.[65] In short, there is pressure on both migrant women and their employers 'not to neglect their family/ communal/ national obligations'.[66] However, it is the state's failure to provide welfare to the elderly, disabled and children[67] that has made live-in domestic work a necessity.

What is certainly clear in the film is that the conventional heterosexual family structure is no paradigm for these domestic workers. For one, the film highlights single motherhood through the character of Carren. Secondly, Carren and Guil Ann are displayed as the main breadwinners for their entire immediate family. Furthermore, sexual intimacy between a heterosexual couple is shown as neither the sole nor the primary type of intimacy in the lives of these women; rather, their livelihoods depend on other types.

## Intercultural Connections

It is intercultural connections formed in the receiving country that are shown as fundamental in the diasporic lives of these domestic workers, shaking up the conventional heterosexual family structure model for these women's support. At the money transfer company Guil Ann uses to send money home, when the middle-aged Greek Cypriot clerk Panayiotis asks her if she has found a boyfriend, this conversation ensues:

> Guil Ann: 'You want me to find someone?'
>
> Panayiotis: 'You don't want to?'
>
> Guil Ann: 'I don't want'.
>
> Panayiotis: 'I don't blame you'.
>
> Guil Ann: 'Maybe I will be the one to feed them!' [she laughs]

The exchange may at first strike one as inappropriate due to its intimate subject matter, but Guil Ann's body language of leaning in on Panayiotis' desk and resting

[65] S. Sainsbury, 'Migrant Women in Cyprus: A Silent Presence', 57.
[66] J. Christodoulou and A. Zobnina (no 54), 36.
[67] Ibid, 35.

her head in her right palm shows comfort with her interlocutor. He, in turn, shows respect for her personally in inviting her to express her wishes. Rather, the viewer comes to understand that this is a heart-to-heart exchange about Guil Ann's erotic life in which Panayiotis expresses interest in her happiness but also her well-being as seen in his empathetic statement 'I don't blame you'. This is someone Guil Ann has formed a close relationship with, as she regularly needs to send money home. As is made clear, Guil Ann's mother also grew close to him. During this office scene, Panayiotis is shown scrolling down his Facebook feed and asking Guil Ann why Carren is wearing a coat in her recent pictures online. As he continues scrolling, he pauses on a get-well post composed by another Facebook user from the Philippines and goes on to enquire into the health of Guil Ann's uncle. The connection between Panayiotis and Guil Ann's family is very real and not limited to the professional realm.

Subsequently, on the subject of transferring money home, the two have the following exchange:

> Panayiotis: 'So I will send €270 to your mama'.
>
> Guil Ann: 'Why? Ah, I will give the…'
>
> Panayiotis: 'Why? Because I want to'.
>
> Guil Ann: 'Okay'.

Taking on a fatherly role, Panayiotis takes the reins and decides how much he will send to Carren on behalf of Guil Ann. He does so through an unspoken concern for the well-being of Guil Ann's family present in the context of his words: 'Because I want to'. Intimacy 'relies heavily on the shifting registers of unspoken ambivalence'.[68] What is intimated carries significant weight. Panayiotis soon follows this with the sobering business-like statement: 'And don't forget to give me the other money you owe me'. Despite the pragmatic intent of his words, they reveal that he has clearly been helping Guil Ann with her payments, giving her credit out of consideration for her personally and her family. This tender scene is remarkable in that it presents an economic imbalance between Cypriots and non-Cypriot domestic workers and yet it erases the hierarchy and distinction between *us* and *them* by presenting the bond between Panayiotis and Guil Ann as that of a blood family.

[68] L. Berlant, 'Intimacy: A Special Issue', 6.

Additional representations of intercultural intimacy are revealed in the interactions between Guil Ann and a Greek Cypriot immigration attorney and between Guil Ann and a local friend of the family. In the case of the telephone conversation between Guil Ann and the Greek Cypriot attorney she makes contact regarding her mother's arrest, Guil Ann is shown in profile inside a car outside the detention centre, asking her lawyer for an update. He informs her that Carren applied for free legal aid from the state and they await news after the court ruling. Guil Ann thanks him for the information and adds 'We are just worried, or…' at which point he interjects with: 'My pleasure, my pleasure'. The timing and anxious repetition of his polite response shows empathy to her loss and a wish to ease her worries, though he knows full well and regrets there is not much he can do to help. Solace to the family is also given in a scene shot in Guil Ann's private quarters where an unidentified woman with a Greek Cypriot accent is heard offscreen telling Guil Ann in English that Carren should not despair in the detention centre and 'She should like… know that we need her'. As Roland Barthes argues, tenderness is always a substitution and as such, it in turn is 'a miraculous crystallization of presence'.[69] The friend's statement acknowledges Carren and her importance even in her absence.

More directly, however, it is the intercultural connections with the host family that become the domestic workers' everyday lives, giving them a sense of belonging. Upon arriving in Cyprus to work as caregiver for a young child, Carren finds out she is herself pregnant. Given the choice by social welfare to keep her son with her in Cyprus or fly him back to the Philippines, she commits the ultimate self-sacrifice and chooses the latter, flying her 20-day-old son back; she claims keeping him with her would be unfair to her employer's daughter. Years after, she is brought to sorrow that she knows nothing about her son's character due to her long absence. Nonetheless, Carren confesses that she never felt homesick because Eva, her employer's daughter, 'gave me all the love'. Carren narrates that with her employer away during the night or day for work, she would take Eva in her room, not letting her sleep in her crib. This is a secret bond and a powerful one that the two share to the extent that Carren says: 'I am the first person that she called *mama* instead of her mom because we are always together every day, every night, that's why…When she grows up, she knows already I explained to her that "You can call me *mama* and call her *mommy*".

[69] S. Boym (no 58), 230.

Carren and Eva's relationship challenges what queer theorists Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner explain is national heterosexuality.[70] National heterosexuality depends on a familial model of society that is procreational. It is 'the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a saniti[s]ed space of sentimental feeling and immaculate behavio[u]r, a space of pure citizenship'.[71] But Carren and Eva's forceful intimacy questions this model of pure citizenship that excludes those that do not participate in society through national lineage. Berlant observes that 'The kinds of connections that impact on people, and on which they depend for living (if not 'a life'), do not always respect the predictable forms: nations and citizens…'.[72] Carren's caregiving goes above and beyond her work duties. As she says, 'I always take her on my side to hug her and if she will cry, I treat her like a real daughter,' which in turn renders Carren herself as an indispensable member of her employer's family and social life.

Moreoever, *Together Apart*'s testimonies of these domestic workers' intimate connections point to a transgressive crossing of borders—from the private to the public sphere, the personal to the communal, the stranger to the family member, the submissive to the empowered, the exploited to the respected, the foreign to the native self. In response to Berlant's question of 'What kinds of (collective, personal) authority, expertise, entailment, and memory can be supposed, and what kind of (collective, personal) future can be imagined if we do not define ourselves by *procreational chronology*?[73], the film puts forth one representation of a potential future of diverse coexistence and respect for difference. During the Philippines Independence Day Celebration, Filipino domestic workers wave flags of Cyprus and of the Philippines side by side. The united front of joyous celebrators fills the streets of Old Nicosia proudly singing in the Filipino language: 'Filipinos are unique. Don't be afraid. Be proud. I am a Filipino. We are all Filipinos'. Within the context of Nicosia's city streets, the slogan 'We are all Filipinos' takes on a whole new meaning; one of inclusivity regardless of national origin.

[70] For more concerning intimacy between people unrelated by blood or ethnicity and how this can challenge heterosexual culture, see M. Zackheos (no 61).

[71] L. Berlant and M. Warner, 'Sex in Public' in L. Berlant (ed.), *Intimacy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) 313.

[72] L. Berlant (no 68), 4.

[73] Ibid, 7.

## Conclusion

Overall, the documentation of diasporic intimacy in *Together Apart* works to destabilize understandings of collective plus personal realities and dreams. These understandings hold native and foreign subjects' lives as distinctly separate. The separation is reinforced and solidified by 'structural "sexist practices and the gender-blindness of government and community practices… that displaced, ignored and silenced women and led to an unequal and discriminating social order"'.[74] For instance, short-term work visas treat these women as temporary and yet they are required to contribute monthly to social security 'with the knowledge that they will never be allowed to stay long enough in the country to receive pension payments'.[75] Visa renewals are handled by the employer and on top, any complaints against employers are handled by the migration office rather than the labour office, sustaining an imbalance of power, threatening migrants with deportation.[76] Domestic worker benefits have improved in recent years and include: free accommodation and food, paid annual leave of 24 working days, paid sick leave of 30 days, paid public holidays and paid medical insurance in the framework of the General Healthcare System since 1 June 2019. However, as long as 'ethnic diversity in Cyprus continues to be imagined—by the state and to some extent by the population—as a *temporary* phenomenon rather than something that will need to be addressed within a long term perspective',[77] human rights violations will persist.[78] While Europeanisation has already paved the way in granting rights to migrant albeit European workers, third-country domestic workers' rights in Cyprus are still at the minimum. Due to unregulated workplace and living conditions, they 'are often overworked, underpaid, have their personal documents confiscated, and report restrictions in freedom of movement, poor working conditions, and isolation from family and friends'.[79] Frequent contract violations include sharing the services of one worker with the extended family and disregarding a worker's rightful time off.

[74] J. Christodoulou and A. Zobnina (no 54), 30.

[75] M. Wickwire (no 4), 14.

[76] Ibid, 15.

[77] S. Sainsbury (no 65), 57.

[78] For more in-depth analyses regarding discriminatory practices, see N. Trimikliniotis and P. Pantelides (no 10), 121–146 and V. Pavlou, 'Migrant Domestic Workers, Vulnerability and the Law: Immigration and Employment Laws in Cyprus and Spain' (2016) 7(1) *Investigaciones Feministas* 149–168.

[79] A.M. Agathangelou, 'Combating Trafficking in Women for Labour Exploitation in Domestic Work' in *'I Thought I Was Applying as a Care Giver': Combating Trafficking in Women for Labour Exploitation in Domestic Work* (Nicosia: University of Nicosia Press, 2015) 17–18.

More significantly, the matter pertains to a greater issue. Gender scholar Zelia Gregoriou has articulated it best by pronouncing 'gender equality is not an (ongoing) social struggle but a basic European value'.[80] Household and care work disproportionately fall under the responsibilities of women. Female employers submit to this gender regime, contributing also to vast inequalities between female employers and their employees based on class.[81] What we are ultimately faced with is large-scale female migration whose subjects provide care services but are not cared for themselves nor are they offered the potential for social upward mobility because of unfair pay.

This ongoing systemic injustice frames *Together Apart* in intertitles at the beginning and the end. The epigraph explains the global demand for domestic workers and that 'In 2016, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) sent USD 26.9 billion in cash remittance home,' sustaining the national economy and yet doing so at a large human cost, primarily gendered female. The film's concluding title card protests that 'Cyprus has one of the lowest wages for live-in domestic workers in the European Union' and that 'Cyprus refuses to sign the Domestic Worker ILO Convention 189, impeding policy regulations toward decent working conditions and fundamental rights'. The film literally calls for action to be undertaken by the state. Nonetheless, this call is contextualised in representations of diasporic intimacy suggesting that more relevant than ever is the task to rethink models of attachment that are the groundwork for personal but also communal relations. According to Berlant, 'To rethink intimacy is to appraise how we have been and how we live and how we might imagine lives that make more sense than the ones so many are living'.[82]

Gregoriou notes that Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal's concept of postnational citizenship, which grants rights and duties to non-citizens in a given nation regardless of the 'historical or cultural Rights to that community' may be an 'ultra-optimistic assessment' for the future.[83] It is hard to deny this concept as a utopia for Cyprus,

[80] Z. Gregoriou (no 8), 8.

[81] The matter of course is more nuanced when we take into consideration Floya Anthias's formulation of translocational positionality that understands people as 'being located across multiple but also fractured and interrelated social spaces of different types'. She argues for instance that people's social positions may shift depending on the location they find themselves in. A migrant woman who visits the homeland may be regarded as having acquired 'higher social status through her relative economic success' although she is treated as a subordinate in the host country, 'thereby giving her a contradictory social location transnationally'. F. Anthias, 'Hierarchy of Social Location, Class and Intersectionality: Towards a Translocational Frame' (2012) 28(1) *International Sociology* 131–132.

[82] L. Berlant (no 68)), 6.

[83] Z. Gregoriou (no 8), 9.

especially since rethinking intra-social and interethnic relations requires a political maturation, which Mavratsas has rightly lamented 'the Greek Cypriot community has been historically unable to go through',[84] given the ongoing Cyprus Problem.

As a border culture, Cyprus has been defined by its various walls. But who can discredit that a boundary also has the potential of 'a threshold to another world'?[85] Relational thinker Ash Amin has argued bounded territories are also spaces of relation where 'all kinds of unlike things can knock up against each other in all kinds of ways'.[86] Speaking specifically of trafficked bodies 'that mov[e] illicitly across the borders of nations, as well as the borders of morality and proper bodily containment' but relevant also to the marginalised bodies of migrant workers, Agathangelou asks that we recognise 'these bodies may spill and transgress, and in so doing, threate[n] to displace notions, imaginations, and desires about borders'.[87] According to Agathangelou, these bodies 'transgress and simultaneously reveal transnational and intimate borders of "security—"of subject, family, nation, and region, thereby pushing us to consider trafficking, labour, exploitation and violence otherwise'.[88]

Ultimately, intimacy itself is a powerful and cherished good that 'is not solely a private matter; it may be protected, manipulated, or besieged by the state'.[89] Intimacy is prized because it has the power of transgression. It can cross familial and national borders, setting the reverence for these up for debate. There is immense danger in intimacy, both in terms of what connections it can forge but also what consequences it may have on the reciprocating parties and on the nation at large.

The non-Cypriot women and children killed trusted a Greek Cypriot man and the Republic of Cyprus with their lives. Both deemed that their personal lives did not matter. They were treated as a heavy burden, locking them up in luggage and wishing them away. When the violence against them was publicly revealed, their lives became a reality the nation could no longer deny. Tragically and indefensibly,

84 C.V. Mavratsas (no 22), 734.

85 H. Van Houtum, 'The Mask of the Border' in D. Wastl-Walter (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011) 59.

86 A. Paasi, 'A *Border Theory*: An Unattainable Dream or a Realistic Aim for Border Scholars?' in D. Wastl-Walter (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011) 20.

87 A.M. Agathangelou (no 79), 24.

88 Ibid.

89 S. Boym (no 58), 228.

in life, they were rendered invisible. In death, they became a priority. Why? Did disrespect for diasporic intimacy call the nation itself into question?

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