Idyllic Times and Spaces?

Memories of Childhood Visits to the Parental Homeland by Second-Generation Greeks and Cypriots

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Russell King, Anastasia Christou and Janine Teerling
Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex

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Abstract

This paper focuses on one aspect of a wider comparative study of second-generation Greek-Americans, Greek-Germans and British-born Greek Cypriots who have 'returned' to Greece and Cyprus. We analyse those parts of their life-narratives which refer to childhood visits to their ancestral homes in Greece and Cyprus. In nearly all cases these are memories of idyllic times and spaces – of beaches and the sea, of villages and the countryside, and of fine weather and happy times spent with extended families. The key trope running through these memories of childhood visits is *freedom*: how children were allowed to 'roam free' until late at night, in contrast to the strict parenting and limited spatial and temporal freedom they experienced in the host country. However, different and sometimes less pleasant memories emerge when the visits took on a different character: for instance, when longer-term stays resulted from children being 'sent back' to be cared for by relatives, or when the children were older teenagers. In the second part of the paper, connections are made between these childhood times in the 'homeland' and subsequent decisions, later in life, to return to Greece or Cyprus for a longer-term settlement. In general the hypothesis that childhood visits were instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging in the homeland, preparing the way for the adult return, is only partially supported. Returns take place for a whole set of individualised reasons. Returnees find that their semi-permanent settlement in the homeland in early-mid adulthood poses a new set of challenges which contrast markedly with their childhood experiences and memories. Finally, reflecting on their relocation, second-generation returnees frequently remark on the loss of the 'authentic' nature of the homeland. They highlight the materialism of Greek and Cypriot society nowadays and the impact of recent mass immigration. However, they see the 'homeland' as a safer locale to raise their own children.

Introduction

Relatively little has been written about the transnational links of the second generation with their parents' country of origin, and even less on their specific experiences of childhood visits to the parental 'homeland'. This paper aims to explore these childhood transnational or 'counter-diasporic' visits, taking as its empirical frame a comparative study of three second-generation groups: Greek-Americans, Greek-Germans and British Greek Cypriots. Our research subjects are respectively US-born and German-born Greeks, and British-born Greek Cypriots, who are now living in the 'homeland', Greece or Cyprus, where most of them have moved as young adults. We explore those parts of their life-narratives where they reflect on their memories of childhood visits to their respective 'homelands' and say what role, if any, these visits had on their later-life decisions to relocate to Greece or Cyprus longer-term or for good.

The extensive literatures which now exist both on return migration and on transnationalism are, for the most part, resolutely focused on the first generation. For return migration this might be semantically justified, for the second generation does not 'return' to a place it never came from (in terms of birth-place statistics). On the other hand, the *affective* connection to what is often regarded as the 'home country' may be very strong, so that the 'return' has ontological meaning even if it contravenes the logic of migration statistics.

For transnationalism the explanatory excuse might be that the migration is so recent that the second generation does not yet exist, or that migrants who have children have left them behind in the care of spouses or other family members, to be brought up in the home countries sustained by migrant remittances. Whilst these demographic arrangements of transnational migration are undoubtedly widespread, it is also evident from general knowledge of the post-war immigration histories of Western Europe, North America and Australia that migrations of family settlement have occurred on a large scale,

with substantial host-country-born second (and now third) generations. It is true that, especially in the United States and continental Europe (but not so much in the UK where the socio-demographic notion of the second generation is less recognised), these second-generationers *are* being intensively studied, but this research focus is normatively guided by their progress along the path of integration or assimilation into the host society, especially in terms of their educational and labour-market profiles (see the review of this debate in King and Christou 2008:7-9). Their homeland links are, by and large, ignored.

This last statement is now beginning to be challenged. Levitt and Waters' (2002) edited book on the transnational lives of the second generation in the US was a major contribution here, with several chapters describing visits to various 'homelands' by older teenagers and young adults (but not by younger-age children). Other significant studies on second-generation transnationalism include Robert Smith's acclaimed ethnography of 'Mexican New York' (with fieldwork also in Mexican 'sending villages'; Smith 2006); Takeyuku Tsuda's equally original multi-sited ethnography of Japanese-Brazilian *nikkeijin* (2003); papers by Menjívar (2002) and Leichtman (2005); and a volley of recent papers by Phillips and Potter on second-generation returnees to Barbados (Phillips and Potter 2005; 2009; Potter and Phillips 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Also worth noting is Gill Cressey's (2006) monograph on return visits by young British-based Pakistanis and Kashmiris, although frankly this is not in the same league as Smith and Tsuda cited above.

Peggy Levitt's latest contribution to this debate on second-generation transnationalism reasserts a focus on homeland influences and includes references to Boston-based young persons' homeland visits to India, Pakistan, Brazil and Ireland. Her conclusion is that 'The second generation is situated between a variety of different, often competing generational, ideological, and moral reference paths, including those of their parents, their grandparents, and their own real and imagined perspectives about their multiple homelands' (Levitt 2009).

Our research enables a fleshing out of some of the key elements in Levitt's statement above. We draw on our AHRC-funded project (2007-09) on 'Cultural Geographies of Counter-Diasporic Migration: The Second Generation Returns "Home"', the core methodology of which has been the collection of life-narratives from quota samples of second-generation Greek-Americans, Greek-Germans and Greek Cypriots (30 of each) who had relocated to their parental home countries. Interviews were taken mainly in urban locations (Athens, Thessaloniki, Nicosia, Limassol, but also some smaller towns and villages) and involved roughly equal numbers of men and women (a slight majority of the latter). Most of the interviews took place in the first nine months of 2008, i.e. just before the global financial crisis struck.

The interviews were life-history narratives, sometimes recorded over two or more sessions, with fairly minimal intervention from the interviewers (Anastasia Christou in Greece, Janine Givati-Teerling in Cyprus). Hence interviewees were 'guided towards' talking about childhood visits to the homeland rather than being explicitly asked the direct question. The fact that so many of the participants spoke about these visits, often in the same way and with the same themes emerging, gives a measure of robustness to our findings and compensates, to some extent, for the lack of a rigorous random sampling approach in the selection of interviewees (which would have been impossible anyway in the absence of records of such individuals).

We see the homeland visit as a performative act of belonging and (potentially) of researching and discovering one's roots (cf. Fortier 2000:3-5). For childhood visits, individual agency will vary somewhat, according to the age of the child and whether they were 'taken' by their parents, or, as older individuals, such as college students, travelled independently. The 'roots' metaphor has powerful

resonance in studies of diaspora and of tourism directed to real or imagined diasporic homelands; in many countries with a history of emigration 'roots tourism' has become an important niche market within the tourism industry. For Basu (2004, 2005), who did fieldwork in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, 'roots return' is both actual physical mobility – a performative act expressed through visits to ancestral and heritage locations – and a more collective general project of (re)connection to the homeland. For Baldassar (2001) studying Italo-Australians visiting their ancestral villages in the mountains north of Venice, these long-distance returns have the character of a secular pilgrimage.

This paper, then, is about childhood, memory, multiple notions of home, and eventual relocation to the parental homeland. All are potentially interconnected, but none is a straightforward or simple notion. With childhood, the boundary is blurred, and in the narratives we hear different interpretations of homeland visits as the child matures into adolescence and adulthood. Memories are inevitably reconstructed post hoc. If articulating memories is an act of representation (and of performance in the interview setting), then we must ask what is its relationship to 'fact' and whether memories are 'real' and 'authoritative' reconstructions of self, home and history (Agnew 2005:7). Yet, is this the right question to ask? Memories are more than mere repositories of fact; they are an act of remembering that can create new meanings and new understandings, both of the past and of the present (Giles 2002:22). They 'ignite our imaginations and enable us to vividly recreate our reflections of home as a haven filled with nostalgia, longing and desire' (Agnew 2005:10).

But, for the second-generation individual, where is 'home'? One of our very reasons for studying second-generation Greek and Greek-Cypriot 'returnees' in the first place, was their unusually complex and ambivalent senses of home. Amongst people living in diaspora, conceptualisations of home are inevitably multi-sited and fluid, even more so when the second generation has moved counter-diasporically and when we are dealing with Greeks and Greek Cypriots who have a powerful sense of both diasporic identity and their national homeland. According to Blunt and Dowling (2006:199), the lived experiences and spatial imaginaries of diasporic people often revolve around complex dialogues about home: 'the relationship between home and homeland, the existence of multiple homes, diverse home-making practices, and the intersections of home, memory, identity and belonging'.

Let us take a specific, albeit hypothetical example, before we turn to our 'real' data. Consider a London-born British Greek Cypriot studying at a university in another part of the country (but not too far away). Every afternoon, after lectures and classes, she returns 'home' to her rented flat which she shares with two other girls. Every now and then, she goes 'home' to see her parents and younger siblings in London for the weekend. And every summer, the whole family flies 'home' to Cyprus for a holiday visiting friends and relatives. In this case, home is the space one currently inhabits, the place one's immediate family lives, and also the country of origin, where other family members live. Being-at-home involves the coexistence of all three registers of home, each with its own different – and fluctuating – meaning (cf. Ahmed 1999:338).

Key themes in memories of childhood visits

Before we present the key themes which emerge from our data, we need to make some important points about timing. Fieldwork in Greece and Cyprus was synchronous, as noted. But the three migration systems we are researching have different temporalities. Greek Cypriot migration to Britain was largely a phenomenon of the 1950s and 1960s, with a further brief boost in the mid-1970s following the partition of the island in 1974

(when all Greek Cypriots in the Turkish-controlled North were displaced from their homes and fled to the government-controlled South, whence some emigrated). Greek migration to (West) Germany was roughly contemporaneous with the Cypriot flow to Britain, except that it started a bit later: its heyday was the 1960s and early 1970s. Greek migration to the United States has a much longer history, starting over a hundred years ago and continuing, with interruptions during the two World Wars and the Great Depression, until the 1960s (see Saloutos 1956, 1964).

These different historical phasings have implications for the appearance of generational cohorts. For Greek Cypriots and Greek-Germans, second-generation returnees tend to be now in their late 20s, 30s or early 40s and to have returned within the last 20 years. Greek-Americans, on the other hand, embrace a wider age-range including some who returned several decades ago and who are now quite elderly, as well as young returnees who are the progeny of the Greek migrants to the US in the 1960s. The age of the interviewee is important as this will closely govern the historical time (the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s etc.) at which childhood occurred, and therefore the stage of 'development' that Greece and Cyprus were in at that time when childhood visits took place.

'Every summer we would go to Greece': on frequency of visits, and the journey

Given distance and cost, returns were more frequent and regular from Britain and Germany than they were from the United States. Most Greek Cypriot and Greek-German respondents remember returning every year, for the summer break of a month or so. For some it was twice a year, adding a second trip at Easter or Christmas. Here are some typical brief quotes (we annotate each interview extract with a code which gives the interviewee's pseudonym, age, and migrant group – GA for Greek-Americans, GC for Greek Cypriot, and GG for Greek-German).

Every summer we would go to Greece, every summer. For about a month (Thomas, 29, GG).

As we were growing up, every summer, every summer, my father would bring us over to Cyprus for holiday (Alexandra, 37, GC).

My father used to bring us on holiday twice a year to Cyprus to keep the Cypriot culture, you know (Angela 41, GC).

Note the patriarchy evident in two of these quotes ('father would bring us to Cyprus') – a theme that echoes through many other quotes and which we will return to later.

For most Greek-Americans, returns were less regular, above all because of the extra cost, although there were exceptions, such as the latter of the following extracts.

We would come to Greece like every two or three years in summer… They [parents] would really save up – it was a big thing and they geared everything towards, like they wouldn't buy us designer clothes and things like that because they were saving for a trip to Greece … like, nothing was ever missing, especially when it came to food… but they economised when it came to things – you know, we didn't have the big-screen TV or the satellite, whatever. We were saving money to come on vacation and my dad was always sending money back to his family … like he supported his family [brothers and sisters in Greece] pretty much … (Dora, 34, GA).

I think I first went to Greece when I was two years old, I am not sure … From the first year I went to Greece, every summer of my life I've been coming to Greece and sometimes for Christmas or for Easter for ten days (Magda, 36, GA).

From these quotes we get further insights into the migration process – for instance, the role of remittances – and into the more difficult nature of the transcontinental return. For the US and the UK, at least since the 1970s, returns were by air, which meant that for older interviewees, those

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older than about 50, regular childhood returns would have been unlikely. Mike (57, GC) remarked that, when he was a child in London, family holidays were to Brighton and Hastings, not to Cyprus. Return visits from Germany, on the other hand, were usually overland, by car – which brought its own challenges. The following quote is a nice evocation of the performativity of the annual trip down to Greece, and also of the materiality of the visit as well – the 'exchange' of high-quality German-manufactured consumer goods with the 'Greek stuff', products of the soil:

> Every summer vacation, six to eight weeks, by car. Actually, it's a traditional Greek-German vacation, by car, so you can carry all the things you want to carry. This is the nightmare of everybody, three days in a car, with all that stuff... I remember, like, in the beginning [laughs], it was like vacuum cleaners and televisions... there was a time in Greece thinking that everything that has a German brand name is better ... So you were carrying all that stuff back and you were putting all the Greek stuff in the car and bringing it back to Germany. It's like litres of olive oil, of wine and cheese and God knows what, that you cannot put on a plane... (Rebecca, 41, GG).

'Like a big playground': of sun, fun, beaches and freedom

Childhood memories of visits were almost always very positive, especially for the pre-teen years. There was the obvious feeling of being on holiday (but on a rather different type of holiday than children of non-migrant background), with frequent references to sun, sea, beaches, idyllic villages, nature and the countryside, and a warm welcome from family members. However, one word stood out as completely predominant in the narratives of all these summer holiday visits – *freedom*. Children saw themselves as being allowed much more freedom to run about without being watched, to stay out late, and to do things that they would not have been allowed to do in their 'host' countries. This was especially noticeable in the Greek-Cypriot narratives, suggesting that the contrast between the 'safeness' of Cyprus and the 'mean streets' of London (or other big cities – interviewees also came from Birmingham, Liverpool, Cardiff, Glasgow, Nottingham and Coventry) was sharper than between Greece on the one hand and Germany and the US on the other. The contrast between freedom in Cyprus (and Greece) and restrictions in the host country was most striking for the female interviewees, reflecting once again the powerful gender dynamic of Greek and Cypriot family life. Interviewees also observed that, during these holiday times, their parents were more relaxed and behaved differently towards them, the children, than when they were at 'home' in Britain, the US or Germany.

This, then, is the general picture, a remarkably consistent one, which we now disaggregate and nuance via sets of quotes. First, a few remarks about the nature of the return visit – essentially a holiday, but not one that other children at school shared:

> I only came for holidays then, I was nothing but a tourist. Greece was my homeland but I was just a visitor and a visitor hasn't got a clue about everyday life (Gregory, 40, GG).

> This was a holiday... you're not at home, but... You know it wasn't a holiday like I was staying in a hotel, and it *was* a holiday 'cause we had our own place over here, we had an apartment which my parents bought in 1980 when I was born. And I had my grandparents, so I would stay with them, I would stay with my aunty... it was different, but it wasn't like [the kind of] holiday like my friends would talk about when they went to a hotel or a cruise, and they did this and that... it wasn't like that (Theodora, 28, GC).

Where, exactly, did the childhood visits take place? Reading the full set of narratives reveals quite a complex geography and variation of types of place. The parents of Theodora, above, had bought a flat in Limassol (Cyprus's largest seaside town)

and so holidays were divided between the coast and staying with relatives inland. Both in Cyprus and Greece, most emigrants leaving in the 1950s and 1960s came from villages and small towns, as both countries had mainly rural, agricultural economies at that time. Other emigrants came from coastal areas and the Greek islands. Hence the holiday returns could be to any of these kinds of location. But that is not the full story because, whilst emigration was taking place, other family members (especially the brothers and sisters of the emigrants) were migrating internally, to Athens, Thessaloniki or Nicosia. So these places might also feature on the return visit itineraries, except that in the summer peak these cities empty out as people go back to their villages or decamp to the coast. Either way, beaches and the seaside, and villages and the countryside, are the two *topoi* most frequently referred to – inevitably in idyllic terms.

> We would come to Athens for maybe a week, maximum two weeks and stay with my aunt, and then we would go to the village and spend time by the beach and, you know, play in the water... as a child it was like a play time because you were getting away from school and you felt it was like a playground here.. it felt like my big playground ... (Demetra, 34, GA).

> We'd stay with relatives in the villages and [go to] the weddings, we'd attend a couple of weddings... Of course the whole thing was the wedding... taking the *prika* (dowry) from the wife's house to the husband's – the whole thing... Going to the *panigiria* (religious festivals) in the summers... immersed completely in tradition (Rose, 54, GA).

> When I was very small [and visiting Cyprus] I used to go to the shops in [names village] and ask for things and walk down there, be a Cypriot, and my father, he was someone of, not importance, but someone of recognition in the village, and they always knew who I was and said hello to me, so I felt a big part of all that was going on... My father would invite all his

friends back to the house and we'd have big barbeques and meet all his family, his friends, and really have a nice [time]... and the music, a lot of music everywhere, yeah, and I enjoyed it... I learnt more about my parents on holiday than I ever did living with them eleven months of the year in the UK! (Maya, 42, GC).

This friendliness and sense of community, especially in the villages, is closely linked to the main trope of the childhood narratives, freedom. From dozens of examples, here are a few descriptions; they are taken from the British Cypriots whose narrative material is particularly rich on this theme. Note how the holiday visit to Cyprus is often associated with a significant childhood or adolescent event, like learning to ride a bike or going out to a disco for the first time. And note how relationships with Cyprus-based cousins are so important, both in accessing 'freedom' and acting as 'protectors'; in other words, 'It's alright as long as you are with your cousins'. The quotes are quite long, because we think they are so interesting! The first one is from Theodora (28) and is in two parts: first she describes her upbringing in London, then she switches to holidays in Cyprus.

> Growing up in London was... when you're like me, my generation – like you said, second-generation, er, our parents, because they were fresh from Cyprus and they came to a strange land, they stuck with their communities a lot... We lived in Palmers Green, which was a very Greek area, still is, but in those days it was a very very Greek area... I was brought up quite strictly, because I was a girl, I was the baby, the youngest. My brother could go out, he could play, do whatever he wanted but I had to stay at home, I wasn't allowed out. I had to be escorted by my brother while I was going out, stuff like that... My parents brought me up, or tried to bring me up, with our traditions and within our culture... I had it embedded in me that I was Greek, that I was Greek-Cypriot... I had friends in school, but I wouldn't go

round to their houses… it was more like every Sunday we used to visit an aunty, I really socialised more with my cousins than I did with my friends, and if I had a friend from school they'd have to be approved by my parents… my mother'd have to meet the parents… she was just so worried… I had a really good friend at primary school and she was Italian and my mum got on with her, 'cause we're quite similar… And she'd always say to me, you know, 'not that I don't trust you, it's just that I don't trust everybody else'… I was driven to school to my embarrassment up to the age of 15 [laughs out loud], in a battered Mazda, oh it was really embarrassing… whereas my brother could go on his own… And I, er, was encouraged to do chores around the house, whereas my brother didn't have to do it 'cause he's a boy and I'm a girl, and I'm supposed to know how to do it, 'cause I'm gonna be a housewife, and all that kind of rubbish… and that's it… oh yeah, the school slumber parties, so I wasn't allowed to do that, 'cause I wasn't allowed to stay at somebody else's house overnight, my mum didn't trust so much, like an English family or whatever…

[…]

And the funny thing was that when I was on holiday here in '95, you know 15, mid-teens or whatever, the first time I went out was actually in Cyprus… My cousins here – this is when I found out 'wow, we really are so different' – so we were like 'yeah, we're going go out', and for some reason, as strict as my mum was in England, she would let me do whatever I wanted in Cyprus, it was so bizarre… And, you know, *she was different*, like the doors wouldn't be locked, whereas in England we would always lock the doors twice. Everything was so open in Cyprus… In England if I wanted to go down to the shop I wasn't allowed, but here I could just roam around and do whatever I wanted… so I kinda enjoyed the freedom of the holidays. And my cousin was going to take me out, and my mum was like 'alright as long as your cousin looks after you'; even though she was three months younger than me [laughs] she was looking after me, 'cause I was from England and I didn't know my way around [laughs]. And that was the first time I went clubbing, it was in the tourist district [of Limassol], it was really funny, I just wore something normal, you know, not super-trendy, just something to go out in, and my cousins were with their mini-skirts and they had a full face of make-up on, they had their highlights, and I was like [mimics shocked expression] and I felt like a baby actually, I really felt like a child, even though I was 15…

Among many significant interpretive remarks that could be drawn out of this long interview extract, we highlight the gendered upbringing of sons and daughters within the Cypriot community in Britain, the multiple social roles of cousins in both London and Cyprus, and the 'confrontation' between social models of youth behaviour and 'growing up' in the two places. This ambiguous 'reverse' encounter between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' was raised by other interviewees too, both in the context of childhood visits and in relation to their current lives in Cyprus (and Greece). The most common explanation was the 'inversion' through migration and its temporal and generational effects, of the 'expected' relationship between the 'traditional' (Cyprus as a poor emigration country and colony of Britain) and the 'modern' (Britain as wealthy, modern and cosmopolitan), but even this interpretation has its twists and nuances. Theodora again:

So there was a difference there, the safety and security, and whilst I was brought up so strictly and thought that everyone else was like that, the reality was, and that's why they called us villagers and stuff, that they looked down on us, the Cypriots here looked down on us, because they saw us as villagers… I always enjoyed seeing my cousins over here and stuff, even though I got teased as well – they used

to take the piss out of my Greek [laughs]... They see us as villagers 'cause we went, or people left after the war or whatever, and they kept their traditions as tightly as possible... and most of them were village traditions, because they were brought over from the village, whereas they [the Cypriots in Cyprus] had become Europeans, they'd become modern, and progressed, and they see us as being backwards a bit, which I actually find hilarious, 'cause it's the other way round. The thing is that actually we are more open-minded, more worldly, than they are. But the other thing I was seeing when I was age 15... was the materialism over here, which again was, you know, 'cause my parents were brought up in the village and... my mum used to buy me clothes from Marks and Spencer's that I hated, but I was thankful that I had clothes to wear [laughs]... whilst here, they wanted designer brands ... You know, I'm 28 now and I've moved over here and have a career [she works in property development], and I know people my age that are still getting money from their parents... So these are like major, major differences that I see.

Once again, there are many interesting issues raised here, which we will come back to later in the paper. For now, let us hear two more 'narratives of freedom'. Although the most striking accounts were related by female interviewees like Theodora, note that, to some extent, the same contrastive experiences applied to young males (the second of the two quotes below).

> Um, it was weird because I was allowed so much more freedom here, I mean, I was kept on such a tight rein [in South Wales], I remember being 14 and coming out here... and I was allowed to go to night clubs, you know, and go out with my cousins in Paphos... go to bars, go to have ice-cream outside, you know, in a restaurant at 12 o'clock at night and have a pizza, you know, after the disco, and stuff like that, it was very odd. My parents were around in

Paphos having a night out and they'd let us wander around and go off and walk on the promenade and get ogled by all the boys and... I suppose it was just safer for them, and they had more time, I don't know, perhaps they were just more relaxed, being out here, you know, and they trusted people that were around, the people who I was with... it was so much easier and I don't know, they were just, they had a better handle on being parents here than they did in the UK, it was quite weird (Maya, 42, GC).

> Oh yeah, I remember coming over, my first holiday I remember, I was six, I remember the beach of course. Cyprus was very different back then. I remember the beach, I remember staying in the village, we had a house in the village, I remember staying in the flat here in Limassol... I remember my cousins, playing with my cousins. I remember the food of course... Cyprus was brilliant because you got to play without any restrictions... you don't have to be home by a certain time, my parents felt safe leaving me out with my cousins, they'd never have to ask where we were. I remember I learnt to ride a bicycle in Cyprus and as soon as I learnt I was out everywhere, whereas in England I wouldn't have dreamt of getting a bicycle. I remember I wasn't allowed to play anywhere apart from our garden in England, whereas in Cyprus as long as there's someone that they knew with me I could be anywhere... I felt a lot freer as a child in Cyprus (Harris, 29, GC).

'They were going to marry me off here': teenage and later experiences

For some, however, during the later teenage years, views of Cyprus were more mixed. Particularly in the villages and away from the towns and beach life, Cyprus seemed a duller place with not much to do. In other cases, interviewees realised that the trips were a chance for family members to introduce them to a potential marriage partner, which they generally did not appreciate.

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Yeah, we came here every year for about five-six weeks and we loved it, I mean up until I was about 13 or 14 I loved it, we'd count the days with my sister to come over, because we were freer here... we used to go to my mum's village in the mountains and we'd just run around all day with other kids... But when we started getting teenager-ish and we wanted to go out, they were a bit stricter; that's when I started to hate it... I didn't want to come here any more (Anti, 38, GC).

The first time I came I was six, in 1965, and then I came again in 1972... and '74... and I didn't come back for eight years after that, in '82, yeah... I didn't want to come here when I was older ... because there was pressure from my father's family, that they were gonna marry me off here, and I just did not want that (Tania, 48, GC).

For Greece the picture is somewhat different. On the one hand there seems to be more continuity of pleasant feelings through the various phases of childhood; and on the other hand we find more young people, particularly in their college and university years, visiting Greece independently from the US, so the encounter with the homeland may be less family-oriented. But, for both Greece and Cyprus, it is difficult to generalise about these 'older child' visits because of the diversity of views and experiences. Three contrasting Greek-American voices:

We got here as fast as we could and my dad would get us out in the countryside... we spent most of the time just visiting family and you know having huge feasts... like these long visits to people and their friends... the relatives... you know often boring visits where we had to wait and wait until they finished talking and stuff and really dull (Dora, 34 GA)

... and when we were here... we were always around our Greek cousins and I have Greek-German cousins and they would always come down from Germany and we would always spend time together and ... because we didn't share another language, we would have to speak Greek together so my Greek was emphasised more and I think I really had a great time. I never had a bad experience coming here on vacation. Whether it was with my parents or by myself because I think that when I was around 18 or 19 years-old I started travelling to Greece by myself and every year or so I would come here with friends and we would travel to the Greek islands and we always had a great time... (Loukia, 34, GA).

And because my mom has so many sisters we met every summer and spent our time between [names a series of places where various sisters lived]. We spent a lot of time near Plagiari [close to Thessaloniki] because it was closer to the beach and there was more room to stay. So there I have [names her aunt, her cousins and their children], it's just one big happy family. Easter-time we'd skewer lambs in the yard, summertime we'd have lunch all together after the beach, oh, it was just great, wonderful. In Athens I have [names another aunt and cousins] ... and I'd spend half my time there... we went to the beach... and every evening we'd go out, you know, when we were younger just for a coffee, juice or a walk, and then as we got older in high school for a beer or clubbing, this and that. Agrinio, I stopped going to Agrinio [her mother's rural village] in high school because it was boring. Can I talk about my memories [of Agrinio]? (Magda, 36, GA).

'We took a bath with the chickens': on tradition, backwardness, authenticity and nostalgia

The question at the very end of the last extract leads into the next key theme from the childhood narratives, reconstructing what was seen as a traditional and now disappeared (or fast disappearing) way of life. So Magda's retrospective continues:

My favourite memories of Agrinio are, I guess, it's culture shock, coming from San Francisco in America to a house that had no inner plumbing, and today I have an extremely irrational fear of bugs and I swear to God it's from that house. There was a hole in the ground... with spiders and cockroaches, ants, big ants, I've never seen ants so big, moths at night, mosquitoes, all kinds of creepy crawly things, and you had to squat there. It was awful... every time I went in there, there was the stench and the bugs. That was a bad experience but looking back I think it did me good. I don't know how, but I like it that I have the memory of that... The good memories I have from that house is playing in the yard with the chickens, yeah because the back of the house was a hencoop and I didn't mind waiting for the water to heat up on the wood-burning stove and to pour it into the tin buckets to take to the bath in the hencoop [laughing]. We took a bath with the chickens! [...] I remember my grandmother, old lady just in black with long braids, and I was always kind of afraid of her. She looked scary to me; missing teeth. I have images of her chasing a chicken round the yard and finally grabbing it, cutting its head off and that thing running around headless until it dropped. I had been looking from the window, I was so ... mesmerised, shocked. And I would tell these stories to my friends back in San Francisco and they thought I was lying [...] I remember the taste of the food; it was so good; the chicken had a different texture and a different smell and some flavour, and the bread, there is no bread like that... the smell of bread baking and the wood-burning stove... anything that was cooking just tasted so good. I was always a stick because I never ate in San Francisco but when I was in Greece I always ate and put on a few pounds. I loved the food, the chicken, the tomatoes, the cheese, the fruit; I remember eating pizzas and ham... and just getting soaking wet from the juice of the pizza.

Sights, sounds, smells and tastes all emanate powerfully from this evocative account, tinged with nostalgia on the one hand and more than a hint of scariness on the other – the toothless grandmother, the headless chicken and the foul-smelling toilet. The quote resonates closely with Agnew's (2005:10) remark about migrant memories being 'surrounded by an emotional and sensatory aura that makes them memorable'. Such reminiscences emerged time and again from the accounts of early visits, especially of the older participants whose childhood visits were in the 1960s and 1970s. The villages, especially, are remembered as sites and spaces of consumption, gifts, hospitality, food and family warmth. Here, 'our Greek (or Cypriot) cousins' figure prominently, both because they are generally so numerous from families of this era, and because they are the obvious same-age kin members with whom to play and 'hang out'.

Some more quotes from the narratives, first on the themes of family love and hospitality:

It was always a fantastic experience, because I came here and I had aunties and uncles and cousins and they adored me; you know, I was their brother's son or their sister's son, and they'd spoil me and give me a lot of attention (Angelo, 36, GC).

Loads [of family]... yeah, they're like cockroaches... my mother is one of nine children, so there's lots of aunts and uncles and cousins, extended family, great aunts, and even neighbours that we'd call uncle and aunt... Everybody made such a fuss of you, all aunts and uncles, pushing money into your hands, that was always a good thing! [laughs]... and eating everywhere you went... In Cyprus you get that sense of welcome... of hospitality... you must sit down, you must eat... (Marc, 35, GC).

Some expressed nostalgia for a rural way of life that has all but disappeared:

...when we first came here in the 70s, like Greece was so different... We would go to the village... we'd ride

donkeys and… it's not like that anymore… When you come to Greece [nowadays] you've still got beautiful places, but in the 70s, for instance there was almost no trash back then, people didn't use packaging, like they would re-use it, like the cans that they put flowers in… it was a different context to the States where we had grown up [where] there were all these consumer things and the packaging and trash (Dora, 34, GA).

Others were particularly struck by the sensual experiences of these childhood and earlier-life visits – the colours of the landscape, the smells, heat etc:

...and those years later when I was in Germany, there was one thing that still attracted me to Greece: the colours and odours still stored in my mind since my childhood. I mean the thing most people like in Germany is the dark green colour of the German forests – I never liked that. I remember the light green colour of trees in the summer, the dried-up land... (Lydia, 34, GG).

Every time I got off the plane and that heat hit you in the face, and the smell of Cyprus, the dust, it was strange, very strange, I can't describe, you know, it felt like I'd been away and come home, instead of the other way round (Mike, 57, GC).

Linking childhood visits with adult relocation

If 'memories are the glue that holds past and present together' (Agnew 2005: 19), what are the links between memories of childhood visits and later decisions to relocate to the ancestral homeland? The relationship between the return visit and return migration has been addressed for the Caribbean by Duval (2004), although in the context of first-generation visits and return. Duval argues that 'migrants use such trips both to retain ties to their former homeland and to aid in their social reintegration upon permanent return'; the return visit is seen as a 'conduit' through which migrants are able to maintain 'social

visibility' in their 'external' homeland, as well as a 'transnational exercise bridging identities' between the two poles of the migration (2004: 51, 54, 62). However, two things differentiate our study from Duval's and make our research questions inherently more complex. First, since we are dealing with the second generation, notions of 'home', 'homeland' and 'return' are more fluid and harder to pin down. Second the connections we are trying to make are between childhood visits (it was adult visits in Duval's case) and return, which takes a lot of the direct agency away from the explicit decision-making link. In fact, Duval himself notes (2004:52) that the return visit, at whatever age it takes place, may not be explicitly causal, but may instead be the means by which social and kinship relations are maintained, which in turn may have only an indirect influence on the reasons for returning on a long-term basis.

The narrative evidence that we have collected does not give a consistent answer to this question about visit-return links. Sometimes a direct causal connection is made, but in other cases different factors are at play, such as the way an individual's return is embedded within wider family dynamics of migration and return, or of marriage or relationships (or their break-up), or just serendipity.

'I felt I was coming home': essentialised readings of return

Mike's remark at the end of the last quote reveals that, for him, Cyprus has always been home, despite being brought up in London and not making visits to Cyprus in his early childhood (in an earlier quote he said he was taken on holiday to English seaside towns since return visits to Cyprus were not feasible when he was a young child in the 1950s). Mike maintained that he always felt Cypriot and always knew that one day he would come and live in Cyprus, although, unusually, this did not occur until he was 53:

[Growing up in London] I felt Cypriot in every way, although to listen to me now I'm very English...Cyprus was always a

good destination for a holiday, I mean although you've got the pick of the world I always wanted to come to Cyprus, 'cause I liked – I'm talking about the 60s and 70s when Cyprus had villages, you know – I just loved that way of life. It's gone now, which is sad... to find it now you have to go up into the mountains... I knew one day I would come to live in Cyprus, it's something that's always been inside, I don't know how or when but I knew... I knew I would eventually settle here... (Mike, 57, GC).

Mike's essentialised view of himself as incontrovertibly Cypriot, and of Cyprus as his natural home, was echoed in other narratives – each, however, reflecting different circumstances, as one would expect, and each reflecting, again in different ways, the link between childhood upbringing (including homeland visits) and subsequent 'return'. Thomas had been pressurised by his parents to continue with the Greek High School in Germany rather than attending the German one any longer. This preserved his 'Greekness' (above all his competency in the language), and combined with regular summer visits, shaped his later decision to move to Greece to attend university and develop a career:

> ...I had just finished the third year in High School and I had to choose whether or not to continue with the Greek High School on a regular basis without attending the German one any longer. I had just had a very nice summer in Greece. My mother would tell me constantly to continue with the Greek school, for us to return to Greece, you know the usual things we are told... And she got her way, she managed to convince me [...] I simply wanted to return to my homeland. Every summer we would go to Greece and during the summer Greece is always very beautiful with a lot of sun and sea; we were nostalgic for this when in Germany. I can say that this was the basic reason (Thomas, 29, GG).

What we see here is a kind of 'family narrative of return' – led in Thomas's case by his mother – which, together with the idyllic summer visits and the warm climate, nurtured the desire of Thomas to 'return' to Greece, which he does at the age of 19, independently from his parents. Another example, this time from Cyprus:

> My father would bring us over, he has eight brothers and sisters, my mum has six, and most of them were living over here. So he would take us around the whole of the island, you know, meeting them, making sure we knew our roots, and knew our family, knew who we were, you know. And that was what did it [made my mind up about moving to Cyprus]. I never wanted to go back home [from these visits], never; whenever we were leaving I'd be, like, 'oh I'm so sad, I don't want to go, let's stay here' ... So I always wanted to [move to Cyprus] one day, yeah, yeah, I did. My mum and dad, you know, I think every Cypriot family over there [in England] always says, you know, 'once we get ourselves [this or that], once we get enough [money], once we're old... we'll go back'; it's always like that, I think it's inside them somewhere... they always want to go home (Alexandra, 37, GC).

What is also interesting about the way the parental narrative of return is passed on to the second generation is that it often results in the second generation inheriting this desire and turning it into reality, whereas the parents themselves do not return, at least not when their children do. This perspective is developed more explicitly in research carried out by Tracey Reynolds (2008) in the Caribbean. According to Reynolds, the family narrative developed around the 'myth of return' is integral to the British-based second generation's return orientation; these narratives 'act as important social resources in sustaining the second generation's emotional attachment to the family homeland and in influencing the decision to return' – alongside, of course,

other practical considerations (Reynolds 2008:2).

Our final example of the 'coming home' narrative connected to an essentialised 'I am Greek' identity formation comes from Stamatis. Given his age (63 when interviewed) and his parents' modest background as economic migrants in the US, Stamatis did not 'reconnect' with Greece until his first visit in 1966, aged 21. The visit was prompted by his father inheriting some land which needed a family visit to sort out. Stamatis went off backpacking, meeting up with relatives and getting acquainted with the country and its politics. In this fairly long extract, he takes us through the events leading up to this first visit, its significance to him and his subsequent expressions of identity; he also reveals an unusual awareness of the 'layers of reflection' inherent in memory reconstruction and interpretation. Perhaps this is not so surprising as he subsequently pursued a peripatetic career as an academic, writer and political activist, moving back and forth between North America and Greece, finally settling in the latter in his 50s.

> No, we didn't really have the means [for me to visit Greece as a child]. My family was fairly modest in income. The reason we ended up reconnecting with Greece is that my dad – we lived in California at that point – my dad was notified by the Greek consulate in San Francisco that he had inherited some property... and he had to go there to settle up the legal situation... So my parents planned a vacation, a trip to Greece... and I decided to go that summer ... an event that was deeply emotional... two and a half months in Greece, and that was my reintroduction to Greece, the summer of 1966. [...] Lots of memories... for me it was like, um... I guess it turned out to be a life-changing experience, although I didn't think of it that way at the time, but it was. I ... you know, this goes back through layers of reflection where you kind of change what the original experience was about so it was hard to

get back what it really meant to you the, um... But I immediately felt at home in Greece... Thinking back on it, it has to do with my mum, for whom the feeling of *patrida* (homeland) was very important, and I mean from that first trip my parents would go every summer to Greece. Well they did get somewhere in advancing the property situation, but it remains unresolved as of today and I don't expect it will ever be untangled and I don't really give a damn [...] I wanted to be Greek, and I wanted to be Greek so bad that I told people I could speak Greek when I couldn't speak Greek... I am learning, I am getting there, you know. Anyway I don't know what it was exactly but there was that sense of *patrida* which was the core sense... (Stamatis, 63GA).

'It's like taking someone from Siberia and putting them on a beach in Havana': other transnational childhoods

In our combined sample of ninety-plus participants, there was a minority – small but significant – who had spent longer periods of time in the parental homeland as children. Their experience of 'childhood transnationalism' was therefore less fleeting than the periodic short-term holiday visit, the main focus of this article. We found two different patterns of longer-term childhood presence in the ethnic homeland. First, there were children who were 'sent back' by their parents to be cared for by relatives for a number of years. This pattern was mainly a feature of the Greek-Germans, where the primary objective was to enable both parents to work, and therefore earn, in Germany. The child would be raised in Greece, often into school years, and so would experience part of their childhood and education there, and part in Germany. The second pattern was when the entire family returned to the home country, so that the children, who may well have had prior experience of regular holiday visits, were then taken back to continue the latter part of their schooling in Greece/Cyprus. In the second pattern, the link between childhood visits and an independent adult return cannot be made.

Instead the respondent makes three-way connections and comparisons between the first part of their childhood abroad (including holiday visits), the second part of their childhood in the homeland, and their subsequent life as adults.

It is not possible to categorise or generalise either of these two patterns of childhood return as 'positive' or 'negative' for the individuals concerned because of the small numbers involved, and because of the individual and personalised circumstances and relations beyond the immediate migration story, which are obviously highly diverse. What we do in our case-study material below is to take a few examples to illustrate varying experiences and outcomes. Because of the different temporality of their childhood-into-adulthood mobility patterns we also comment, via their narratives, on their adult lives in their 'two countries', which is also the topic of the final main section of the paper, which follows this one.

We take each of the two patterns outlined above in turn. Lydia, 34, is a second-generation Greek-German who spent part of her childhood back in the village of origin of her parents in Thrace in the care of her grandparents. As the first part of her narrative reveals, she came from a family with a history of migration even before her parents moved to Germany. The following passages from her interview are in three parts: family migration history, her childhood split between Thrace and Germany, and her subsequent reflections.

> I come from a family of refugees. My grandparents were born in Eastern Thrace [in Turkey] and in 1922, when the population exchange took place, they moved to the opposite side of the Evros River [the Greek-Turkish border] to [names village], where they started their life all over again. I thus come from a family that was well acquainted with poverty. My parents got married in [names village] – it was a traditional arranged marriage [spouses selected by parents]. They both had a common goal and that was to have a family and escape poverty and hunger. So they

migrated to Athens, made some money, then returned to the village and then, during the military junta, they left for Germany... My father was the first to go, and then my mother joined him. They didn't know a word in German. Those were tough years for my parents. They worked hard because... they wanted to send money to their parents at home. [After me] my brother was born, he too like me spent the first years of his life with our grandparents in the village. We used to see our parents once a year.

[...]

Looking back, I think I had a lovely childhood in [names village] with my grandparents who kind of replaced my parents. My grandmother raised me beautifully... I didn't have many toys; there wasn't even a bathroom inside the house; the toilet was outside in the yard. But I had many friends and we played out in the streets, and I think that has helped me a lot, that's shaped my personality. My childhood in Germany was lovely as well. I remember the time my father came to take me to Germany. I wasn't feeling scared although it was the first time I was in an airplane. I wanted to go to Germany without knowing what that meant... I did not speak German and I refused to go to the German kindergarten, saying that I did not want to become German... now I know that was a bad decision... My parents were both working [in a meat factory] so we [my brother and I] had to spend many hours a day alone or being cared for by Greek neighbours and friends. I went to German elementary school. Twice a week we had lessons in Greek language – a Greek teacher used to teach us history, maths and theology. Judging from the first reports I got from the German school I was a D student because of the German language... When I was 13 years old we moved to another city because my parents had bought a restaurant there. There were no Greek people in this new town [and]

I was the only Greek person at school amongst Turks, Yugoslavs and Palestinians. That had a positive effect on me because I had to adjust and improve my [German] language skills. So in the 10th grade I graduated as an A student [and was able to switch] to finish at the German High School. This was a very hard thing to do, but the German law allowed me to do that because, although coming from a school for immigrants, I had excellent grades... I met a different class of people there, rich kids that used to ride their Vespa to school and wear expensive clothes... After some personal adventures, I started studying at the university in 1993. In 1994 I left home and went to a student dorm. My room was 11 square metres, the most beautiful 11 square metres of my entire life. I graduated in 2000.

[...]

Besides my studies, there was a long period of self-quest; what is important to me, what does it mean to me being a Greek woman in Germany. The role of Greek women in Germany is a far cry from the role of Greek women in Greece. It was a great dilemma for me. My parents were very strict in order to protect me... They wouldn't allow me to go to parties and they told me not to get involved with a German boy because we would be leaving soon. I took my time trying to solve these dilemmas... many of them are still unresolved, but it's OK now, I live with them.

Lydia appears to have enjoyed both her Greek and German childhoods, to have found sublime happiness at university and now was 'OK' with the dilemmas of being an adult Greek woman in both Germany and Greece (where she now resides). These dilemmas are much more problematic – and dramatically expressed – in the case of Petros (aged 38), another Greek-German who had experienced a divided life, both in childhood and as an adult. Born in Stuttgart, Petros had been taken back at age 14 to northern Greece

when his parents spontaneously decided to relocate their family back to their home town, Drama. Petros finished his education, including an engineering degree, in Greece, served his time in the army and then, unable to find employment, 'returned' to Germany (to Berlin) for further study and a job. Finally, he 'returned' to Greece when his father became seriously ill.

Our presentation of Petros' narrative is also in several parts: first his memories of childhood visits to Drama from Germany.

Every summer I was in Greece for my summer holidays... I was lucky to be coming over here every summer... I would see my friends, we would fool around and I would leave... I would play with my cousins in the fields, in the barns, and we would go to the seaside... all these memories remain with you...

But when he returns to live there long-term things begin to change:

Now I was returning, and I was returning to things as they had been... and when you grow up you believe that your cousins still love you... [but] people move on in relation to you. They move on and they never have this dilemma...

The dilemma – which in the case of Petros and his multiple migrations is a kind of double nostalgia – is enlarged upon in the following extract, where it is defined as a 'curse', a word he repeatedly uses.

All of this is the title of your life – 'nostalgia'. I tell you it is the word 'curse'. I have thought about it... it is a curse because it is a curse for someone to have to face this dilemma... People who grow up with two languages, they have this curse... it's like having grown up without knowing who your parents are in a way... Who is the mother? Who is the father? Will I ever be at peace? You are never at peace... You are constantly searching and you will never find a point where you will say: this is it.

Then, in this next segment, Petros reverses the argument – this time from 'curse' to

'blessing'. He compares, first, the way of life in Germany and Greece:

> In the same way that it is a curse it is also a blessing because I was lucky enough to experience two cultures... two entirely different cultures: the urban, the harsh, the everything planned, the German system; and the Greek which is all confusion, the 'come on, so what?' Granny, granddad and all that... This enriches you as an individual... But this is, as we say, a knife which cuts at both ends.

This was followed by a more complicated set of remarks in which he distances himself first from the Greek friends of his adolescence, and then from the Greek migrant community in Germany:

> [referring to his small-town Greek friends from his later childhood]... I left them ... with the same thoughts and ideas, faults in their character and taboos that they had since back then... they were still thinking in the same manner... And then I came back from Berlin with a thousand experiences which I could no longer share with them because whatever I would say was considered as something ... too exotic for them, or they were not interested in listening to it...

> [...]

> ... I was ashamed of the kind of people the Greeks living in Stuttgart were. They were a stereotype... all of them knew each other... they disliked the Germans... and I did not want to be like them... They were an island... An isle... even the kids of the second and third generation... I understood that I had nothing in common with them... I felt a kind of boredom... it was as if I had gone up to the top of a mountain and I had met with people who were uncultivated... coarse in their ways. I am speaking very harshly but these are the impressions I have.

Finally, he spells out the cultural expectations of his potential life as a Greek-German in Stuttgart alongside what he had achieved, going to university in Greece.

> When I decided to study [i.e. go to university] two of my father's brothers... living in Germany... [they thought] this boy wants to go to college to get educated... They had stereotypes of the Greek society over there [in Germany]: you will find a job in the Mercedes plant, you will get married to a Greek girl and that was it, that was your life... [I remember] I was in the car going from one uncle's house to another... And I informed my uncle that I had decided to get an education. No-one said anything in the car for twenty seconds and in the end my uncle said: 'You have no business going to college, stay at the Mercedes plant where you belong, you are fine there.'. He did not say it as an order, but as a piece of advice.

Our third example – Nicholas, aged 31 – is from Cyprus and illustrates the pattern of childhood return with the family. In some respects the back-and-forth migration trajectory of Nicholas is similar to that of Petros, but in other respects it is different – mainly in the positive interpretation that Nicholas makes of his life-path. Nicholas was born in Liverpool; his Cypriot-born parents ran a fish-and-chip shop. He 'returned' to Cyprus aged 12 when the family came back, disillusioned by the deteriorating quality of life and security situation in Britain, the decision precipitated by the theft of a pot plant from their front garden. He then spent his university years in the UK before returning to Cyprus in his twenties to find work as a journalist; this time the return was an adult decision. His narrative starts with growing up in Liverpool and the events leading up to the family's return to Cyprus in 1989.

> Yeah, so we did all of that, the Greek community in Liverpool, you know, weddings, Greek school on Sundays.. erm... I didn't really like any of that, I hated the weddings [...] My parents were thinking of moving back, and I think the final straw, er, we had some plant outside our front door, and two

months before, the house next door got broken into, a burglary, and we were in the house at the time, and we didn't notice that the whole house was gone, they managed to take everything out, right under our eyes, so that unnerved them a bit. And the final straw as that plant pot – yeah – whoever stole that plant pot was the reason [laughs]… because after that they just decided to sell up, pack it in, and go back to Cyprus.

[…]

When we moved here in '89… for me it was easy because I went from an industrialised, bleak, depressed, high crime city to, er, a very bright, open, free – there was very little crime here – erm, place where I could, you know, from being indoors most of the day I could, all of a sudden, I was out playing basketball until the sun went down, in the streets you know, and nobody cared where I was or what I was doing, nobody feared for my life, it made a huge difference… How can I put this?… It's like taking someone from Siberia and putting them on a beach in Havana you know… So I had a great time: I went from a government school in Liverpool to a private school [an English-speaking school in Cyprus] with swimming pools, a running track… you could say I jumped up… I jumped a class [smiles].

In this extract above we see again the familiar contrast in freedom allowed to children in Britain and in Cyprus, but this time transposed from the fleeting freedom of the holiday to a permanent childhood lifestyle. This is an important point which, as we will see later, also feeds through to the thoughts and experiences of second-generation returnees bringing up their own children in Cyprus. For now, let us return to Nicholas' interview and hear what he had to say about his identity, comparing life in Liverpool and Cyprus, and different aspects of Cypriot society.

My dad was very happy with the move and very happy about staying [in Cyprus]. When my parents came back it was fantastic for them – because don't forget we moved because of the plant pot – and then when we came here we never locked the car… the windows were left open, the ground-floor windows, and you slept and let the draught go through… and, er, for me too, from a material point of view, my life really changed… From an identity perspective, obviously it mixed up my identity completely… it took me years to find out what my identity was… well, yeah, I'm almost there [smiles].

[…]

Actually, I think that when you're in school, especially in that kind of private school, where everyone is like the son or daughter of a diplomat, ambassador, UN [personnel] or Lebanese businessman… you can call it like a cosmopolitan elite… it's kind of like a bubble. And when you leave you realise, not everyone is jet-setting around the world, you know… I went straight into the army after school, and I met people from our society that I'd never had the chance to come across… *Then* you're learning what the country is really about, 'cause you meet people in the army from *all* walks of life. So then you're confronted with… 'Who am I? Do I belong to this group? Do I belong to that group?'… I mean there were hard times… There was an issue, I had to let people know that I didn't like being called a Charlie [common Cypriot name for a returned 'English Cypriot'].

[…]

And especially after I finished university [in Britain] that was when the actual process started of deciding who I was and what I thought I wanted to be… this kind of constructive deciding… So I got a job back here, I started renting a house, I started speaking the language more, being involved in the press, I got into local issues much more, I knew who were the ministers, the deputies, the parliamentarians, I could discuss [these issues] in the local coffee-shop with anyone…

[...]

This is home for me now, even though, when I go to Liverpool, the accent warms me, because I love Liverpool people, you know, and I feel a lot of memories there when I go back but... erm, this is home for me now... this is my port [smiles] yeah, yeah, I'll end up here...

Whilst each of these three cases – Lydia, Petros and Nicholas – is obviously unique in their individualised version of a mobile, transnationalised childhood, there are some remarkable common threads. All of them had parents who came from humble backgrounds and were economic migrants, either factory workers in Germany or 'fish-and-chippers' in England, and all of them were able to override the challenges of language and school moves to access university education, and from that a much higher socio-occupational class than their parents. Yet, again in all cases, this combined social and spatial mobility has estranged them to some extent from the cultural and class anchoring of the three reference groups of which they are themselves part – the host society (Germany, England), the homeland society (Greece, Cyprus), and the migrant society (Greek-Germans, British-Cypriots). They end up in hard-to-classify identity back in their 'homeland' country.

Reflecting on relocation

In the final section of the paper we examine the themes which are revealed by the participants when they talk about heir recent lives in Greece and Cyprus. As this is a broad agenda, parts of which we have already discussed elsewhere (Christou and King 2006; King and Christou 2009), we focus here more specifically on the contrasts that participants draw when they compare their experiences of resettlement with their earlier childhood visits. Some clues have already been given on how these comparisons play out: for instance the ways in which Greece and Cyprus have changed over the intervening period – no longer a place of rural simplicity. And Petros hinted that his early childhood

playmate cousins had grown up and moved on; he questioned whether they loved him any more and lamented that they were no longer interested in what he had to say.

'Now you have to speak Greek': no longer a visiting child

This change in the 'atmosphere' amongst family and friends – not as present and welcoming as remembered from childhood visits – is the first theme we explore. This quote, from Cyprus, represents a typical reaction:

Everyone [in the family] seems very busy and I found out very quickly that it's one thing when you're here on holiday and everyone makes time for you, and that it's a different thing when you actually move over here, 'cause everyone just kinda disappears. I didn't get that help, or I didn't feel that hospitality that I got when I was here on holiday, I just felt very, very much alone. And I had no friends, 'cause when I was here [on holiday] I was here with my family, and 'cause I wasn't studying here [i.e. at school or university] I didn't make any friends either. So I was just really really alone (Theodora, 28, GC).

Angelo experienced a similar 'shock' when he returned to Cyprus, but he shows a greater awareness of the reasons for the difference ('I came as an adult, not as a child') and even suggests that the lack of a warm family welcome was a good thing as it acted as a reality check:

The most exciting thing for me was to see all my family. But none of them showed any interest, and... that ... was a really big shock; to me it was so different from my experiences as a child, which I think I was clinging to , as a means of making my stay here a rationalised thing, the decision to move to Cyprus. So that was what changed: I came as an adult, not as a child, which is very different... In fact it has been good in a sense that it has killed that romantic, romanticised image of mine, that came from childhood... it has brought me down to earth (Angelo, 36, GC).

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Over in Greece, Rebecca, who had relocated from Germany, experienced a different reaction because she had gone back to her father's village, where she was made to feel she had to 'behave' in a different way – as her father's daughter, and speaking Greek.

> Because I came out of Germany where I lived a normal teenager life, in a normal environment as far as I was concerned, into a little village where rules and regulations... you know, you're on a show when you walk through the village, and all that stuff... For me it was like 'what do they want from my life?' And the other thing I remember, you might call it cultural, was this idea that as soon as I was here, as soon as I moved here ... all of a sudden there was this expectation: 'Now you have to speak and understand Greek', because you have to show off as the daughter of a Greek man that you can be Greek too... I've felt this pressure all the time (Rebecca, 41, GG).

The final extract that we include in this subsection widens the discussion from relatives and friends to a general comparison between 'life on holiday' and the everyday reality of living in urban Greece. It brings out the contrast between holiday visits to the beaches and islands, and the frustrations and annoyances of living in Athens.

> I never had a bad experience being here [on holiday]. So I wasn't afraid when Spiro [her husband] said, let's get up and move. I said: 'OK, how bad can it possibly be?' [laughs] It was harder than we thought [...] My experience was much better when I was on vacation and I think part of it was because I was on vacation. I was here to relax and I wasn't looking at what was going on in the street and didn't care that a guy just honked me ten times and I didn't, you know, have to deal with the everyday hustle and bustle, especially in a big city like Athens... It was summer time and the Greeks were on vacation themselves and it's more laid back in the summer... we would go to the beach, we would hang out at cafés... and have a really nice time. But to do it now... ah... you work all day... we're getting older now and we don't like to go to clubs and you know, OK, going out to the café sometimes but we don't want to stay there for ten hours because we have other things to do... we have to clean our house and we've got to go shopping... doing the laundry... you know, running around to try to get our Greek papers – everything else that is combined with living in Greece... (Loukia, 34, GA).

Loukia's contrastive analysis between life and landscapes on holiday and those of her current everyday life in Athens opens up other debates on how the 'homeland' societies have changed in the years (often two or three decades) separating childhood visits and adult relocation. Within this domain, two themes were dominant in the narratives – consumerism and immigration – and both were critiqued, often harshly, by the 'returnees'.

'We too developed xenophobia': reactions to immigration

Both Greece and Cyprus have passed in the space of two decades from being countries of mass emigration (up to the early 1970s) to countries of mass immigration during the 1990s and 2000s. Most authorities agree that Greece has around 1 million immigrants (in a population of 11 million) whereas in Cyprus there are an estimated 100,000 immigrants in a total population of 800,000 (Baldwin-Edwards 2004:4; King and Thomson 2008). For many interviewees, this 'migration turnaround' (King *et al.* 1997) corresponds to the period between their childhood visits and their adult return; hence large numbers of immigrants and a de facto multi-ethnic society are part of the social setting they have had to come to terms with as settled residents. Their reactions to this new and perhaps unanticipated reality are quite mixed and ambivalent. To some extent these reactions can be seen in the light of their upbringing in their birth countries, where in nearly all cases they grew up in large or medium-sized urban centres. On

the other hand many of them also related how they were raised within a tight Greek or Greek Cypriot community with little interaction with other ethnic or migrant groups, or even with the host society outside of school. Coming from countries with a long-standing immigration history and a (sort of) multicultural social model (except in Germany where Greek migrants were seen as guestworkers or low-class restaurateurs), their memories of an 'authentic' Greece or Cyprus were often challenged by a reality of large-scale recent immigration – Greece primarily from Albania; in Cyprus from a diverse mix of East European (Russia, Ukraine, Poland) and Asian countries (Sri Lanka, the Philippines). Here are some reactions from our participants:

> We too developed xenophobia, we Greeks changed too, we have become more suspicious… It is simply that Greece was not prepared economically and socially to put up with this [immigration]… The Germans were ready when they took this step to bring in foreigners. Greece was not ready and consequently people have changed… a sort of sordidness has been brought forth (Martha, 30, GG).

> In Cyprus it has changed quite a lot from a country of out-migration, like our parents who moved to England; now it has lots of new immigrants… I like it, I like it. Um, who am I to say for people not to come into the country – I'm for everyone to live where they want, and I think multicultural places make it very, erm… if it weren't for the crime… 'cause Cypriot people aren't criminals… on the whole there's no crime in Cyprus, and it's now where all the different cultures are coming in, it's becoming more and more… it's gonna spoil it a little bit here (Angela, 41, GC).

The second quote above perfectly illustrates an ambiguity which runs through may of the interviewees' reactions to immigration: they understood its inevitability as part of globalisation and development, they were able to make historical connections of sorts to earlier phases of migration to Germany, the UK or North America, they generally welcomed the advent of a multicultural society, but they had reservations – about the scale of recent immigration, about the country's unpreparedness for it, about high rates of 'illegality', about cultural difference, and about possible links to crime. Note how Angela's account elides from multiculturalism to crime. At the same time, some participants were very critical of Greeks' and Cypriots' racist attitudes towards immigrants from poor countries. Given that two of the authors have already discussed some of these issues with reference to earlier work on second-generation Greek-Americans (Christou and King 2006), we present here some more of the Cypriot material.

Nicholas was particularly enthused by the 'new multiculturalism' of Nicosia:

> Nicosia for me is like, the only place [in Cyprus] where you can go and feel multicultural, especially on Sunday, you know, you can walk by and see Bangladeshis playing cricket in the park – or they could be Sri Lankans, I don't know… You see they have picnics, festivals and concerts. Like last Sunday I went to the Nepalese New Year celebrations, that was great, I didn't realise there were so many Nepalese in Nicosia… I mean, for me that was fantastic… A lot of Chinese, we never had so many Chinese, they're not so much… er… they're kind of, not as, er, they don't interact with society in the same way as the other cultures do. Now we get a lot of Russians… especially down in Limassol … you get a lot more English in Paphos […] But for me, I like the idea of it being multicultural, I do (Nicholas, 31, GC).

Marc on the other hand denied Cyprus was truly multicultural and focused more on trying to 'explain' Cypriots' racism towards foreigners as unintentional and based on ignorance rather than malice:

> … and from a country that's been ethnically cleansed 35 years ago [referring to the Turkish partition of the

island and the population exchange of 1974], all these new faces are coming: Nigerians, Cameroonians, Sri Lankans, Indians. It's not so much racism [towards them], it's curiosity and ignorance that provokes this kind of reaction, it's not maliciousness. I don't find Cypriots particularly vicious in their attitudes, just ignorant of other cultures, because they've been divided and they've been kept pure all of this time, and anyone who has been born in the last 35 years has grown up in this vacuum. It's not multicultural, despite the shitloads of immigrants that are in the country, 'cause they're second-class citizens, they're an underworld, they're the cleaners, they're the people that dig up the road, they're not part of society. No [I don't find Cyprus racist], I do find it extremely prejudiced, though. You get looked at and judged from what colour you are, [how you] are dressed … erm, I wear a suit and I get treated much differently than if I turn up at some kind of business like this [looks at his casual trousers and t-shirt] (Marc, 35, GC).

'Cypriot girls are so Prada, Gucci, Audi': on materialism and snobbery

Marc's final comment in the previous quote opens up another theme which resonated through the majority of the narratives, especially of the older participants whose earlier memories of Greece and Cyprus were two, three or more decades ago. Alongside immigration, there were woven a series of discourses about globalisation, Europeanisation, materialism, consumerism, sharply rising living costs, and snobbery. Let us return to Marc's interview.

… one of the things I forgot to add to my hate list – 'What do I hate about Cyprus?' – is that the girls, people generally, from their twenties onwards, erm, let's say from twenty to forty, I mean Cypriots, are very snobby, uptight. It would be nice to find a relationship with a Cypriot girl, but some of them are so Prada, Gucci, Audi, how much money you got… and

they're nowhere near as friendly as the English girls, to have a relationship; to be completely cool about something, to go up to a girl in a bar and say 'hi, would you like something to drink?' She'd be, like, 'yeah' and you start chatting away. In Cyprus you don't get that; you get this cold, like this [mimics a snobby look], they turn around, look you up and down, like you're a piece of crap. This is what I don't like about the younger generation in Cyprus. How can a culture that's so warm and welcoming come to split away from that? That hospitality that I experienced as a kid … seems to get less and less. The young people are more and more snobby, have turned more into materialism and being uptight about things… just not cool and relaxed at all.

Part of the context for this has been the transformation of the Cypriot economy since the first generation emigrated in the 1950s and 1960s. No longer poor and rural, Cyprus has enjoyed high growth based on a productive mix of light industry, intensive agriculture, offshore services and tourism. These trends were well in evidence before Cyprus entered the EU in 2004 (King and Thomson 2008:283-287). Meanwhile, second-generationers relocating from the high-price UK property market, especially from London, have been able to access the Cypriot housing market at a high level, and some are also able to use liquefied assets to initiate a small business.

Greece has witnessed a paler version of the trends just outlined for Cyprus. The economic booster effect of joining the EU took place twenty years earlier, and the Greek economy has profound structural problems of inefficiency, unemployment and informality. Moreover economic life appears to have gotten much more difficult since the country adopted the euro in 2002. Peter (73,GA) had relocated to Greece in the early 1970s and emphasised the dramatic change in cost of living during his long period of residence in the country:

[Back then] the style of living was so easy and cheap. That is another big,

big factor... it does not make economic sense to live here any more... [Nowadays] Greece is very, very expensive – more expensive than the States and more expensive than most European countries... So getting back to when I lived here in the 70s, you can't imagine how cheap it was. We used to pay the maid $5 a day for an entire day, so you could live really well. I mean, going out to eat was an everyday occurrence because it was so cheap... and the cost of living was just so low... It's totally changed now. It's totally the reverse...

From a different age-group, Theodora and Nicholas articulated a similar critique of the materialism and rising cost of living in Cyprus in recent years, again making the historical comparison with the years of their childhood visits.

> It's all about how you look over here, it's so ... materialistic, and I don't know how they can do it, because it's so fuckin' expensive as well, because coming here on holiday I thought Cyprus was so much cheaper, but actually living here, and now that the euro has kicked in, it's really expensive. But everyone has to have a big house, they have to have their expensive car, they have to have their labels, they have to have their Louis Vuitton, and their Gucci ... even if it's totally tasteless, because they think it's fashionable or they saw someone else with it, even if it's a Russian millionaire who can afford to spend their money on rubbish. But .... What I've learned is, everyone is sacrificing so much to keep up this image, and basically they all either have two jobs or they are in serious amounts of debt (Theodora, 28, GC).

> Did Cyprus change a lot over the years? Yeah, definitely ... it's huge ... I mean apart from development, everything is building, financially like, it was always a place for offshore companies, but somehow they're really come into their own, mainly through Russian money [laughs], there's a lot of that. So the

banks are lending like crazy, 'cause it's easy credit, and ... there seems to be a lot more money, but not just that, it's also like ... we're adopting the whole individualistic lifestyle as well, to a much greater degree than before, you know, like ... yeah, you did get the feeling it was friendlier ... fifteen years ago (Nicholas, 31, GC).

Closing the cycle: from childhood visits to child-rearing

Despite their sometimes critical opinions towards the rapid but inevitable changes as a result of globalisation and development, the general social environment of Greece and especially Cyprus is seen as very favourable to bring up the next generation – the children of the second-generation returnees. In this way the generational migration cycle is repeated, with the experiences of one childhood being reprised in the bringing up of the next.

Theodora, who was so critical of the materialism of Cyprus in the quote above, came round, later in her interview, to a much more positive evaluation of the country as a place to bring up children. Like many interviewees, she focused particularly on the safety angle, but also mentioned the more gregarious social life and the physical environment of sea and mountains, so favourable to outdoor activities:

> Don't get me wrong, I said a lot of bad things about Cyprus, but there is a lot of good things too. Like the safety ... I've reached an age where I am like, 28 and I got a serious relationship, a boyfriend, and if I think about having a life together, about having a family, I'd be ... could I raise a family in London? What life am I gonna give them? I would probably turn into my mum. As much as I hated that she was so strict with me, I would have even more reason to be with them now... you hear about stabbings go on and all. Whereas over here kids have such a wonderful life, they have a better upbringing – they go to school, half-eight, they finish at midday, they can go

to the beach, they have the mountains, they can be safe, you know, as long as you mix them with the right people. And you do socialise more here, although the sun can make you feel a bit lazy, whereas in London... I was too tired, I just worked too far away [from home]. Whereas here, in the summer, it's just one big massive party; like now, it's September, every night something is going on, someone is coming over, and you know ... you got the sea, you got the mountains, you can go on walks, have activities... weekends away, or day trips away; we're actually going out more than I ever did in England.

There are strong parallels between the arguments raised by Theodora about Cyprus and findings on Caribbean second-generation return migration. Research by Reynolds (2008:15-16) and by Phillips and Potter (2009:244-245) reveals many cases of second-generation British-born taking their young children to the Caribbean in order to bring them up (or have children there) in a 'safer' environment. Phillips and Potter (2009) theorise this type of return as the 'lure of the ancestral home' offering a better quality of life, especially in the face of social, economic and educational disenfranchisement in the UK. Stories of racial disadvantage and prejudice loom large in the British-Caribbean narratives (Reynolds 2008:15-16). Two other factors are important in motivating the Caribbean returns. First, local education is seen as more disciplined and achievement-oriented, and not a school setting where 'black kids' are stigmatised by the system or peer-pressured away from studying. Second, and especially for single mothers, a return to the Caribbean improves their quality of life, and that of their children, because of support from relatives, including retired parents who have also returned.

Apart from the racial element, which is much less evident in the Cypriot narratives of life in Britain, there are many similarities between Cyprus and large Caribbean islands like Barbados. They are post-colonial insular spaces whose societies have been heavily inflected by emigration in the past and by return now, and which have recently experienced strong economic performance led by tourism, offshore finance and light industry. Yet in other respects this child-oriented pattern of second-generation return embodies a certain irony. As Reynolds (2008:12) puts it:

> It is perhaps a strange paradox that first-generation parents migrated from the Caribbean to the UK in search of better opportunities and economic success for themselves and their children. Yet their children are motivated to return back to their parents' homeland to achieve those same ambitions for themselves and their own children.

And with this return of the second generation, plus their children (how to define them – as third-generation or as the second generation of the second generation?), the cycle starts to repeat itself once again. These children, born in Greece or Cyprus of returned second-generation Greek or Cypriot parents, will have their own transnational ties back to their parents' birth countries (Germany, the US, the UK); maybe their grandparents still live there. Rose, now aged 54, relocated from her birth-country, the United States, in 1977 to Greece; she and her family took a holiday back to the US in 1994; for the children it was a trip to their 'other homeland'.

> Oh, it was fun, it was fun. The kids loved it at that point, they really liked it a lot. They considered Boston fantastic. My son was ... because my son is into athletics... when he saw all those playing fields, the baseball fields [laughs] ... He didn't want to leave... No, they like the States a lot. We took them to Disneyland you know... and of course we went back so they could meet the other side of the family where I grew up... it was fascinating, you know, we had a good time.

Conclusion

Taking Greece and (Greek) Cyprus as homeland countries, this paper has examined the discourses and memories of childhood visits paid to these homelands by second-generation Greeks growing up in Germany and the United States and Greek-Cypriots born and raised in Britain. This topic has been rarely explored in the literatures on the second generation, return migration, and transnationalism. Hence, very few comparative studies are available.

Return trips with parents are generally remembered in glowing terms, for reasons of climate, time spent by the sea, the warmth of family and especially cousins, and above all *freedom*. Children were allowed to do things, go places, and stay up late, to a far greater extent than their parents would have permitted in the respective immigration countries. This can be explained by the generally 'safe' environment in Greece and Cyprus, and the surrounding safety-net of cousins and relatives who can be 'trusted' to look after the holidaying children, as well as the parents' levels of confidence and familiarity in the homeland. But also holiday visits are times of the year when the normal boundaries of family discipline are relaxed, matching the generally relaxed mood of parents on vacation.

Looking back, many participants understand and identify with this feeling when talking about their own (future) children, believing that Greece and Cyprus are safer and pleasanter places to bring up children than large cities in the US, UK and Germany; this comparative link is especially strong with the Cypriot participants.

Visits home as teenagers however were sometimes seen as less enjoyable and more constraining – but, again this is often true of all teenagers' views of holidays with parents. Some interviewees remembered being bored at that age on family holidays, or that they were constantly being watched and evaluated (cf. Levitt 2009, referring to Indian Gujarati return visits). Likewise children who were 'sent back' (mainly from Germany) to spend some years of their childhood in Greece were not always happy with such an experience.

Although some interviewees articulated a more or less direct causal connection between childhood visits and the subsequent decision to return to live in the homeland as adults, more often such direct links were not evident, and the adult return was seen as an individual project, albeit sometimes beset by family circumstances. Reactions to the experience of longer-term settlement were rather consistent amongst second-generation returnees: the warmth of the 'family embrace' fades as the pressures of everyday living take over, and both Greece and Cyprus have 'moved on' since the childhood years. Socially and economically, both countries are seen to have become less pure and authentic, and more materialistic and consumeristic. Immigration is noted as a significant recent phenomenon, with varying reactions. Joining the euro-zone appears to have made both countries much more expensive to live in.

Our final point turns around how this modernisation and Europeanisation of Greece and Cyprus is interpreted by the 'returnees'. One reaction noted from the Cyprus case was surprise at how liberal their Cypriot cousins' upbringing had become, compared to their own sheltered childhoods in supposedly more liberal, open, cosmopolitan societies in the US or Northern Europe. There are complex processes going on here to do with rural vs. urban cultures, class and generational differences, and host and homeland communities. Most Greek and Cypriot migrants left their homeland at a time of economic stagnation and originated from rural areas. Since their departure economic and cultural globalisation has enveloped their homelands, along with EU accession and integration. Tourism, too, has been a powerful agent of modernisation, whilst rural-urban migration has drained the traditional character out of village communities. Meanwhile, international migrants have clung to their traditional values, reproducing microcosms of rural Greece and Cyprus in urban

London, Liverpool, Stuttgart or the Greek districts of New York. Levitt (2009) refers to this holding on to old values from the homeland by migrants abroad as the 'ossification effect', seeing it as a spatio-temporal disjuncture between emigrants' and non-migrants' actual and metaphorical journeys. This effect points up the contradictions and in-between positionalities of second-generationers both when they visit and when they relocate long-term; the positionalities and relationships can fundamentally change between these two types of return encounter. As Carling (2008) emphasises, relationships with non-migrants, both those who are positioned within transnational social fields, and those who are not, are all part of the 'human dynamics of migrant transnationalism', within which the second generation, and their visits home, are an under-researched component.

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