

Let's Talk About Peace Over Dinner:
**A Cultural Experience on Memory, Dislocation and the Politics of Belonging in
Cyprus**

Maria Photiou

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On Saturday 9th April 2011, Greek Cypriot artist Lia Lapithi invited a group of eighteen guests to join her for her own version of the Last Supper, a four-course dinner that took place in the warehouse of an old furniture factory in Nicosia, Cyprus. The dinner was the first project of a series of orchestrated meals that Lapithi hosted and participated, where the theme was hospitality and politics in Cyprus.¹ Significant to Lapithi's work are autobiographical experiences and the geo-political division of Cyprus. Born in 1963 in Cyprus, Lapithi experienced at a young age the traumatic 1974 division of Cyprus and the on-going occupation of half of the island by Turkey.²

This article explores the significance of an orchestrated meal for the politics of belonging and remembering in contemporary Cyprus. It analyses the representation of the event by Lapithi, who engaged in questioning the meaning of peace by serving food as a 'medium' and as a 'symbol of peace'. It also explores Lapithi's strategies in communicating her own memories and experiences as a refugee who can visit her family's house over the occupied northern side of Cyprus only as a guest. Through the discussion of food/taste and visuals, this article will consider how the dinner acts as a means of catharsis for the participants and develops a critical understanding of contemporary events in Cyprus and our reaction to them.

You Are a Guest in my House

Throughout her long practice, Lapithi has produced and presented a politically motivated art portfolio exposing social, political, and cultural issues in contemporary Cyprus. Her recent works have food as a point of departure, loaded with symbols and contradictions, evoking Cyprus' unsolved political problem. This is obvious in the 2006 video *Recipe for Marinated Crushed Olives*, which is now part of the collection

at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. In the video, Lapithi represents Cyprus as an olive that has been ‘crushed, then left to marinate in salt water to remove its bitterness, and then marinating in its oil while waiting for a solution to its problem to come’ (Lapithi, 2006).

Lapithi describes *Let's Talk About Peace Over Dinner*, Fig. 1, as an ‘interactive participatory artwork, a hybrid of performance art, installation and happening employing food and drink as media’ (Lapithi, 2011: 149). The event forms part of Lapithi’s on-going (since 2005) interactive project *You Are a Guest in my House* in which she explores the notion of ‘φιλοξενία’ (hospitality) in the current political situation in Cyprus. The word hospitality (φιλοξενία) in Greek derives from two words: ‘φίλος’ (friend) and ‘ξένος’ (foreigner). This becomes intriguing when we take into account the traditional Greek culture of hospitality: ‘ξένος’ (foreigner) is a guest; therefore a cordial welcome is expected. Lapithi invited her guests to a dinner that connoted to the Last Supper:

The Last Supper took place in the house of Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, both of whom originate from Cyprus. History suggests that Mark’s mother, a Cypriot woman, had cooked the last supper serving a Cypriot cuisine dinner. Similarly, in Leonardo Da Vinci’s Last Supper, the artist also assumed that as Mark’s mother was of Cypriot heritage she would have laid a “lefkaritiko”, a Cypriot distinctive handmade embroidered lace tablecloth. This Cypriot embroidery still exists in the Vatican today. Thus, I will also place my Last Supper in a Cyprus context. (Lapithi, 2011: 149)

Within the Cypriot context, Lapithi, as the artist/hostess, placed herself in the centre of the table and played a double role: ‘had it been the Last Supper one role would be “Judas” and the other “Jesus”’ (Lapithi, 2011: 150).

The diners consisted of ten women (including the artist) and nine men who were invited to share a meal and talk about peace, Cyprus, and whatever else would have arisen during their dinner conversations. The guest list included people of various occupations and different nationalities – Cypriot, Greek, Australian, and French, among others – who knew the hostess personally, and had worked and/or visited

Cyprus several times.³ A formal dress code was given to all guests: ladies in black and men in a dark suit and shirt. On entering the warehouse, guests would see an extended dining table with nineteen classic handcrafted wooden chairs. The setting of the dinner was deliberately formal, which contrasted the deserted warehouse setting. The table was decorated with a long ivory-white lined tablecloth, scented candles, and white napkins folded along the silver cutlery. On the front side of the table were floral arrangements of olive branches and wild flowers (daisy and chamomile) that matched Cyprus' national flag colours: yellow and green.

In front of the table, broken plates were positioned on the floor, the same type of plates on which the food was served and that were seen in Lapithi's video *Rembetiko* (2010). Interestingly, the custom of smashing plates derives from an ancient Greek tradition as a means of dealing with loss and mourning for a deceased person. After the commemorative feast, guests would smash their plates as a way of breaking curses and scaring away evil spirits. In recent years, the custom of smashing plates is commonly used during celebratory occasions, such as weddings, within the 'Greek concept of kefi (high spirits and fun) but at the same time trying to scare off and forget daily troubles' (Lapithi, 2010a).

According to the artist's note, once guests had arrived, they would find their names written in chalk on the floor behind their chairs. As the guests were part of Lapithi's life, some knew each other for many years, whereas others were introduced for the first time at the dinner. Once all the guests arrived and had settled in to their allocated seating places, Lapithi distributed the menus and asked her guests to follow specific instructions: during the ten minutes allowed to eat each course (waiters were instructed to take guests' plates regardless of whether they finished or not), guests were asked to talk to the guest on their right side during the first course and then to the guest on their left during the second. She also asked for guests to 'enjoy the meal and each other's company' and to 'be themselves, to ignore cameras and microphones and finally to improvise' (Lapithi, 2011: 149).

The dinner event was methodically documented: four cameras recorded the dining table, while a photographer captured about two hundred photographs throughout the dinner. The conversations during the dinner were recorded on the seven hidden voice

recorders. The distributed menus were in English and French, under the Greek heading *Ας Μιλήσουμε για Ειρήνη... Σ'ένα Δείπνο* (Let's Talk About Peace... Over Dinner). The menu consisted of a four-course meal and drinks: the starter was a poached egg, which was made to look like a nest, on a lobster, with olive bread and traditional Cypriot white wine. The main course was a pigeon stuffed with lotus, and traditional Cypriot red wine was served alongside it. The third and fourth courses were both desserts: a cone-shaped white chocolate and then sweet olives on crushed lemons. The dinner ended with Commandaria St John (traditional Cypriot sweet wine), and either coffee or olive-leaf tea. I would suggest that Lapithi employs the nineteenth century Russian manner of dining and order of courses: 'Only in Russia had each course consisted of one or two dishes, and the meal made up of a progression of individual foods, usually served to each diner by a servant'. (Bendiner, 2004: 142). Moreover, Lapithi aims to give a rather diplomatic approach to her dinner as the menus are both in English and French. For the menu production, Lapithi had conducted archival research that resulted in the information that fifty years ago, the political, and social dinners in Cyprus had their menus written in French.

The choice of food and drink are a significant point of reference that provide both literal and metaphorical food for thought for the diners. The number of diners is not coincidental – nineteen guests and plate sets to represent the nineteen peaks of the Pentadaktylos mountain range. Moreover, Lapithi had methodically decorated each of the plates with references to her homeland near Pentadaktilos. The first course plates were hand-painted with the message 'Δεν ξεχνώ', ('I don't forget'). For the second course, each plate was decorated with one of the nineteen mountain peaks of the Pentadaktylos Mountain Range, its peak height, along with the slogan 'Δεν ξεχνώ' (I don't forget) and its name in Greek. For the third course, plates were illustrated with the outlines of the Pentadaktylos mountain range, with the peak names in both Greek and Turkish at the centre.

Starter: The Politics of Remembering

The starter, Fig. 2, which was the egg and the lobster, were served a round bowl. On the bowl's periphery, handwritten, was the message 'Δεν ξεχνώ', a slogan literally translated as 'I don't forget'. Throughout the post-1974 years in Cyprus, memories of

the invasion and the on-going occupation became a key reference point for artists who experienced the event and became refugees in their own country after the Turkish invasion. Soon after the invasion, the new social formation of refugee identity was introduced as a result of the forced displacement. Therefore, refugee identity cards were issued to exiled persons whose usual residence or property before the invasion was in a Turkish-occupied area. Usually, the term ‘refugee’ is used for people who are ‘outside their country of origin’. In the case of the 200.000 Greek Cypriots who were ‘internally displaced’ in 1974, the term ‘refugee’ is used as a ‘convenient and realistic designation of their social status and identity’ (Zetter, 1999: 20).

Initially, the majority of Greek Cypriot refugees believed their exile in the south was a temporary one and that a return to their properties in the north was imminent. Peter Loizos offers testimony of a refugee’s thoughts in 1975: ‘Surely it’s a peculiarity of the Cyprus invasion that the refugees haven’t been allowed to go home yet? After most wars, the refugees usually go back, don’t they?’ (Loizos, 1981: 187). The desire and hope to ‘return’ to the occupied part was, and still is, for many, a return associated with a specific territory, engaged greatly by the ‘myth of return’. As Roger Zetter points out, this myth ‘evoke[s] a familiar, idealized past and sustain[s] the memory of collective loss’ while it associates the ‘concreteness of a familiar home or “point fixed in space” (e.g. the villages, farms and houses in the north of Cyprus)’ (Roger, 1999: 4).

The ‘myth of return’ was widely displayed by the Greek Cypriot government and became part of the lives not only of the people who experienced the invasion but also of the new generation, whose school education and social media was permeated by the *I do not forget and I struggle* slogan. The actual ‘I don’t forget’ phrase was created by the Greek author Nikos Dimou in 1974 as a tribute to the occupied parts, as Dimou (2016) explains on his website:

The ‘Δεν ξεχνώ’ symbol was created on August 14, 1974, the day Attila II cut Cyprus in half. Hearing the news on the radio, I had an image of Cyprus being stabbed, and visualised the Attila line as a slow flux of blood ebbing down the island. I was the owner of an advertising agency—I called my art director Dimitri Georgiopoulos, gave him a map of the island and the copy.

The rest is history. We printed a few thousand stickers, sent them out to the media and we were overwhelmed with requests for more. We printed as many as we could afford, gave out copies of the artwork to anybody requesting the right to print, prepared translations in many languages [...] This symbol has now practically become public domain – very few people remember its origins. But for me it remains something very personal: a tribute to the parts of Cyprus – Kyrinia, Bellapais, Salamis, Famagusta – which I had visited and loved three years before the invasion.

Later, the slogan ‘I don’t forget and I struggle’ became the primary objective of the Greek Cypriot educational system, with an aim to educate the post-1974 generation about the occupied parts of the country and introduce a sense of longing for unification. Therefore, young Greek Cypriots were cultivated into a post-war nationalism while simultaneously bearing witness to the invasion: expected to ‘not to forget’ the occupied parts and carry on the struggle for unification.

In *Let’s Talk About Peace Over Dinner*, Lapithi uses the event as a memorial and a reminder of the tragic reality of a country that forty years later still suffers from occupation and its current complicated political situation. Quite interesting are some comments from the audio recording, as a woman doesn’t seem to recognise what the slogan is and another woman comments “‘I don’t forget’ but we do forget. After so many years, people do forget’. (Lapithi, 2011: 349). Another discussion refers to the French village Oradour-sur-Glane 1944 massacre by the Nazi and relates the ‘I don’t forget’ slogan with the ‘Remember’ notice at the entrance of the village (Lapithi, 2011: 350).

Lapithi invites her guests to remember the place she comes from and pleads not to forget her hometown Lapithos, situated on the northern coast of Cyprus, on the edge of the highest peak of Pentadactylos. Lapithi’s installation offers a dynamic conception of the surrealistic situation of the refugees: they can only return to their homes as guests:

My house (or family home) has been sold by the occupation regime without our consent. Until the spring of 2003, we were not allowed to cross over to the

occupied northern side of the island and the Turkish Cypriots could not cross to the Republic of Cyprus in the south. After the “Green Line” crossing opened, many visited their houses as “guests” and this still continues to this day. Greek Cypriots visit their houses as “guests” to Turkish nationals and/or Turkish Cypriots living in their houses, and Turkish Cypriots have similar experiences. This remains a surreal situation for people from both sides’ (Lapithi, 2011: 8)

Lapithi testifies in her account the actual experience of the ‘return’: a return to a territory and a house that is now inhabited by strangers. The actual return brings into light the realisation that what was left behind and what was known as ‘home’ – material and symbolic – cannot easily be reclaimed. It also brings the knowledge that the ‘myth of return’ can no longer underpin a refugee’s longing for return forty years later. This is mainly because the concept of ‘home’ is ‘mythologized or idealised to the extent that the physical and symbolic past of 1974 can never be reclaimed, despite the insistence of many refugees to the contrary’ (Zetter, 1999: 7).

Like every refugee in Cyprus, the time that Lapithi spent in exile was a period of negotiating the new reality of the present that was based on the inter-relationship of the past and the future. Zetter’s contextualisation of the refugee’s triangular framework is highly significant in exploring refugees’ exilic situation and how they perceived the relationship between their past (home, village, and sense of place), their desires for their future and how they mediate in the present: ‘in this way, the concepts of myth of return home—with connotations of reclaiming the past—and adaption and transition—with connotations of future orientation—could jointly provide insights into the refugees’ contradictory attitudes’ (Zetter, 1999: 8).

Throughout the dinner, Lapithi invites her guests to remember what her and other Greek Cypriot refugees lost and cannot reclaim: their homes, land, villages/town, and a sense of place/belonging in both physical and symbolic terms. During the dinner a group discusses about the occupied parts and the current controversial housing issues that are confusing, as a women guest confess ‘I went in the summer and it was beautiful and it was horrible and it was beautiful and it horrible and it was beautiful’ (Lapithi, 2011: 162).

The loss of house is particularly significant for Greek Cypriot refugees, as it symbolises the loss of familiar values, traditions, and the loss of a dowry-house that traditionally parents offered as a wedding gift. Lapithi's guests refer to 'the key of the house' and the act of people locking the house before they fled from the war. In fact, many refugees, before departing, locked their houses and kept the key, as they hoped to return. The key to the home was for many refugees the only thing that linked their exilic life to their past lives and was the only material item refugee parents could offer as a heritage and as a memory to their children.

A significant part of Lapithi's practice is based on memories of the places and territories she had to leave as a child. For this, she often uses visual material that communicates her concerns on 'the erasing of memory' and the consequences of Cyprus' complex political situation. In her words: 'memory I have from the occupied parts where I was raised is slowly fading out and I do not know how to keep it active with the current conditions. I do not know how to "transfer" it to my children' (Lapithi, 2012). The 'transfer' reference is critical here as it brings together the relationship of material (house property titles) and oral (memories and experiences) heritage. Lapithi can offer the property titles (of the house in Lapithos) that she inherited from her parents to her children. The house's property titles are in the form of a physical document and, therefore, are inheritable. The question of memories and experiences as inheritance is crucial in Lapithi's practice where she provokes public's thoughts on contemporary politics in Cyprus:

'Memory, can it be transferred? [...] Are there conflicting/mixed messages from politicians? Is there a reasonable hope of return? Is there honesty from politicians to citizens regarding the Cyprus problem? Shall we leave it to the politicians or should everyone find his/her own sustainable solution? Shall we keep crying and looking back? Does this help towards the solution of Cyprus' problem? We, as citizens what we have to do to help this stagnant situation? [...] Are we considered traitors if we let memory to disappear? What is more important, to keep the memory or the matter? Matter–property–field–plot... is selling a betrayal of ourselves, whether [the property] it is in the occupied parts or not? [...] Are we trapped in a vicious circle? Can memory be

transferred? For how many years can it stay alive and not fade out? 5, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years? (Lapithi, 2012).

During the dinner a man talks about his mother's wish to 'return home', as she told him 'the only thing I want, just for once, is to go and worship the land I was born, to see my house. If I can, to show you which ones are your fields, your heritage, so that you know' (Lapithi, 2011: 166). He also describes his parents' return to their house that is currently occupied by Turks and the disappointment when they saw in the yard that only one lemon tree from the many they planted in 1974 had lasted. These accounts are noteworthy as they portray what the return is for many refugees—if not all— and how extremely emotive and intense it is to return as a visitor to their house and land.

Second course: Food as A Symbol of Peace

The main course, Fig. 3, consisted of a whole pigeon, stuffed with lotus and complemented by traditional Cypriot red wine. Here, Lapithi's symbolic approach is highly related to Cyprus' history. She offers to her guests a pigeon (dove) that is widely known as a symbol of love and peace. Within Cyprus' context, the coat of arms of the Republic of Cyprus depicts a dove carrying an olive branch in its beak over the number '1960', the year of Cyprus' independence from the British rule. Within the dinner setting, Lapithi places the pigeon on a plate with two pea pods. I would suggest that Lapithi employs the pigeon/dove and the two pea pods (connoting the olive branch) as a metaphor of past political agitations between the two communities. Having as departure point the 1960 Independence and the introduction of a common Cypriot flag, Lapithi advocates remembering and reconciling. The national Cypriot flag chosen in 1960 by President Makarios and Vice-President Fazil Kucuk was neutral and peaceful, displaying a map of the island in a copper colour and beneath this two olive tree branches.

The usage of lotus is also highly symbolic due to its association to the tale from the Odyssey in which Odysseus' companions, after eating it, 'left off caring about home, and did not even want to go back and say what had happened to them, but were for staying and munching lotus with the Lotus-eaters without thinking further of their

return'. (Quoted in Jannot, 2009: 83). Christina Vatsella's question 'we have to forget in order for peace to prevail?' is central considering the unresolved political issues in Cyprus and post-war trauma that cannot be easily forgotten (Vatsella, 2011: 18).

Lapithi serves lotus to her guests that, as Jannot points out 'promoted well-being, pacified and brought complete forgetfulness of difficulties and misfortune' (Jannot, 2009: 83). Therefore, she employs lotus as a media of oblivion and forgetfulness in order to talk about peace.

Each guest was served his main course on a plate that was hand decorated by the artist with one of the nineteen mountain peaks of the Pentadaktylos Mountain Range, its peak height, along with the slogan 'Δεν ξεχνώ' (I don't forget) and its name in Greek. Nineteen sets were created to represent the nineteen peaks of the Pentadaktylos mountain range: Orga, Kornos, Kyparissovouno, Kourdella, Saint Illarionos fort, Alonagra, Kakoskala, Bouffavento forest, Pentadaktylos, Yialas, Palaia Vrysi, Zygos, Kopsari, Olympos/Platani, Kefales, Kantara, Kantara fort, Kouzoules and Kairos. Lapithi's approach is highly significant as she invites her guests (and audience) to read the names of each of the mountain peaks, say them out loud, and remember their former Greek Cypriot origin. For some dinners, the names bring to mind pleasant memories from when they were young and visited the various places with their families, and others expressed their desire to visit these places.

Lapithi employs in her banquet a direct politicised strategy that links to her wider body of artwork that has as a theme of local politics. In reproducing the Last Super, Lapithi creates a collaborative event in which guests become participants. During the dinner, the artist is giving to the participants' unconventional experiences associated with symbolic recipes and decorated tableware. I would suggest that Lapithi's approach to gather a group of people and share the ritual aspect of a meal forms part of her strategy to create a common experience that connects memories, experiences, and stories related directly or indirectly to the history of Cyprus. By asking them to talk about peace and offering them as food the 'bird of the Cyprus democracy', Lapithi sets the ground to collect valuable testimonies. Some participants who experienced the invasion shared their experiences; particularly interesting is a woman's testimony, which reveals that during the invasion she and her family sought

safety at the same place that the dinner is being held. Another guest refers to the claim he is preparing to submit for compensation for his occupied property and belongings. Other guests talk about the memories they have from the occupied places before 1974, local and international politics, contemporary Cypriot society and the new generation, and their lack of trust in politicians. Besides the personal narrations, significant are the participants from other countries, who, as outside observers, view the past events from an unbiased viewpoint. For some, the dinner discussion brings to mind the notion of 'nostos' (the Greek word for homecoming) and the nostalgia of the occupied lands, particularly Pentadaktylos. Currently, Pentadaktylos (and all areas in occupied Cyprus) is renamed into Turkish, obscuring its preceding character as known in prior-1974 time.

Third course: *Nothing is Sweeter Than Home*

The third course, Fig. 4, was a dessert of a white chocolate peak served on hand painted plates which illustrated the outline of Pentadaktylos mountain range, with the handwritten name of the mountains in Greek and Turkish in the centre. Interestingly, the white chocolate peaks are the remnants of the Pentadaktylos range edible chocolate sculpture exhibited at the 'Symposium' exhibition, Fig. 5, in 2010 at Nicosia, Cyprus. Lapithi worked methodically to represent the nineteen mountain peaks in chocolate.

The exhibition is the outcome of Lapithi's longing to represent her memories of the places she was forced to leave as a child. The exhibition was about 'flavours and memories' having as a departure point Lapithi's own memories from the place she is originally from, Lapithos. Lapithi explains her desire to make an exhibition about her roots: 'That's where it all started. [I wanted] to put forward my sweetest memory of them all. That is why I made a 10-meter long sculpture of the mountain range, my chocolate Pentadactylos' (Lapithi, 2010b). The use of white chocolate is not coincidental, as Lapithi clarifies:

Initially I thought of doing it in black chocolate, a bitter taste, but then we would all leave from here with a bitter taste in our mouths, while I wanted to leave with a sweet taste, while the choice of white colour is like the washed-

out memories slowly fading out, like a ghost... so I wanted the viewers to take with them a sweet taste (Lapithi, 2010b).

The edible sculpture made of 250 kg of white chocolate acts as homage to the Pentadaktylos Mountain and the occupied places that the artist recommends us not to forget. During the opening, the audience was asked to eat the white chocolate sculpture – to break any part they wished of its peaks into pieces and then consume it. The audience invitation to taste Pentadaktylos is, according to the exhibition's catalogue, 'to literally embrace its replica and at the same time let themselves embark freely through their personal memories on a journey to its 19 legendary peaks.' (Lapithi, 2011: 10).

In the context of the dinner, Lapithi's guests are invited to join the tasting of Lapithi's edible sculpture and her memories that after so many years are fading out. Lapithi incorporates a new element in her dinnerware decoration: she writes the mountains' name in both Greek and Turkish. With this, Lapithi, exposes the present political situation of the two communities – Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot – which since 1974 have been engaged in their own vision of their 'imagined community',⁴ employing different patterns to emphasise their national identity. Such politicised patterns leave little space to negotiate and compromise for a solution to a peaceful reunification of Cyprus. I would suggest that by bringing the two languages together on a common platform (the platters) not only Lapithi negotiates the division but also express the desire for reunification.

The vision of reunification is also part of the guests' discussions; they reflect on the past events and feel regretfully self-critical for what happened between the two communities. The return to the occupied Cyprus revealed some similarities among Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriot refugees – both forced to displace within their own country. At the same time, there is a deeper reflection on specific ideologies each government employed throughout the years to separate the two communities. During the dinner, participants refer to justice and the willingness to compromise for a solution.

Dessert: The Taste of Sweet Olives

As the final dish, Lapithi offered another dessert, Fig. 6, for her guests: sweet olives on crushed lemon sorbet, served in small transparent glasses. Lapithi has used the recipe of sweet olives – an old family secret recipe⁵ – in her video *Olives in Syrup* (3 mins) (Lapithi, 2007). The opening scene displays the following story:

The story goes like this: on the peak of an occupied mountain the “visitor” comes across sweet olives. As soon as the olives melt in his mouth, something happens inside him that changes his life. It is called “the taste of sweet olives”; he becomes

Softer

Negotiable

Hopeful

The following scene shows the artist pitting green olives and preparing the recipe while listening to the lyrics of the 1973 song *Disillusion* by Abba:

Disillusion, disillusion's all you left for me. How can I forget you when my world is breaking down? You're all I had, you're all I want. Disillusion, disillusion now, that's all I have. Wishing, hoping, chasing shadows, did I see your face somewhere in the crowd? Thinking, wondering, what you're doing, I can't stop myself from crying out loud. They say my wound will heal and only leave a scar but then, they'd never shared our love. Disillusion, disillusion's all you left for me. How can I forget you when my world is breaking down. You're all I had, you're all I want. Disillusion, disillusion's now, that's all I have. Disillusion, disillusion's now, that's all I have.

While the song plays, the following text appears: ‘Note that: Declared objectives are often different from real intentions which remain shrouded in sugar-coated declarations’. Then, it changes to the text: ‘Women mostly offer it to men when delicate issues are to be raised’. The video ends with the text ‘Do not underestimate the symbol of olives’.

In the story, sweet olives are highly significant, as they become symbol of peace. Once the 'visitor' eats some of the sweet olive he becomes 'softer', 'negotiable' and 'hopeful' to respond to the question about peace. In fact, a man during the dinner says 'Listen, I cannot deal with the injustice, I can compromise with a compromising solution but that's different' (Lapithi, 2011: 172). Another man's thoughts mirrors the feelings of Greek Cypriot refugees at recent times:

What is good about the process, which is taking place now, at least for me, is that in one way or another ... psychologically, I think at last we have closure. In a way, I will be able to go on with my life one way or another. Whereas so far, it was simply a nightmare living with this situation. I think after this now, we are going to be understood and digested that is what the future will be like. And get on with their lives, one way or another. This is how I feel. (Lapithi, 2011: 298)

The man refers to the necessity of 'going on with his life' one way or another. Despite the 'disillusions' (as evidenced in the words of Abba's song) there is a hope to talk and negotiate on Cyprus' reunification. The sweet olives on crushed lemon sorbet leave a bitter-sweet flavour at the end of the dinner that is, as Vatsella points out, 'a mixed feeling of euphoria and bitterness, rendering palatably the sense of life that goes on, while there is a wound in the background, an unresolved issue that cannot be forgotten' (Vatsella, 2012: 123).

Significant is the video's text saying women mostly offer the dessert to men when 'delicate issues are to be raised'. I would suggest that Lapithi provides a reference here about Cyprus' situation as a male-dominated country and women's dissociation from important decisions, particularly during the problematic years of the 1968-73 inter-communal flight. The political conditions that were predominantly controlled by men and were taken as read by earlier generations in recent times led to the realisation 'we were *all* to blame', as Peter Loizos writes:

Why had they not heeded those leftists and assorted eccentrics who had argued that generosity to the Turkish Cypriots should be national policy? Why had Makarios not made a generous offer to the Turkish Cypriots during

the five long years of the Inter-Communal Negotiations from 1968-73? Why had he been so stubborn? Why no 'olive branch' to the Turkish Cypriots in those years? 'What wouldn't we have given the Turks, just to stay in our properties?', they now said. (Loizos, 1981: 134)

I would suggest that women offering the sweet olive dessert to men signify an act of negotiation for peace and coexistence between the two communities. The dinner ends with Commandaria St John (local Cypriot dessert wine) and traditional coffee (Cypriot or Turkish) or olive leaf tea. Lapithi follows the same approach here as she did with the food: drinks also act as a vehicle to expose local politics and the similarities between the two communities. Traditional coffee in Cyprus is a very strong black coffee prepared in a pot and served in a cup with the fine grounds in it and its known as Turkish/Cypriot/Greek coffee. After drinking the coffee some of Lapithi's guests had turned the cup upside down for one of the other guests to 'read the cup', and others started talking about the tradition of turning over the cup as a method of fortune telling. Here, the coffee cups act as a reminder of the past (tradition) and a token of the future.

For Lia Lapithi, a refugee artist, the entire dinner process acted as a personal catharsis in which she developed strategies to present the topic of peace in such a way that each element (food, tableware, discussion) cited a visual remembrance of Cyprus' ethnic conflict. For the participants, the catharsis derived via discussing peace, sharing their experiences of the past, the present, and their hopes for the future. The compulsory formal dress code contributed to the performing of the participants in the event that they took part in. Lapithi's version of Last Supper, a participatory event in the warehouse setting, becomes an innovative mechanism to record contemporary narratives in Cyprus. The direct approach to represent Cyprus' socio-political conditions of the 'I don't forget', and the return to the 'sweet' home contributes to the collection of valuable testimonies. Such testimonies can contribute significantly to the individual and collective memory. Lapithi's systematic documentation of the event not only provides a well-documented memory, but moreover, an innovative outlet for the making of new memories and oral histories. Such histories question the past (I don't forget) and endeavour to deal with loss and mourning (broken plates on the

floor). Lapithi's symposium inspires one to hope for a solution to a peaceful reunification of Cyprus.

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¹ For more details on the other orchestrated meals see Lapithi's website <http://www.lialapithi.com>

² Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkey invaded in response to a military coup, which was backed by the Greek government. Until today the two communities are separated, Greek Cypriot in the South and Turkish Cypriot in the North of Cyprus.

³ It is interesting that no Turkish Cypriot attended the meal. Lapithi stated that 'After the event I was asked on several occasions why there were no Turkish-Cypriots present. I had invited two, who could not make it. Having said that, it should be noted that this was a social evening in which "political balance" was not the central issue' (Lapithi, 2011: 151).

⁴ I borrow this term from Anderson, B., 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.

⁵ According to the artist this secret family recipe has been prepared since the Byzantine times.