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History's remainders: on time and objects after conflict in Cyprus

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**History's Reminders:
Belonging, Temporality, and Unfinished Pasts**

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Abstract: In the aftermath of war, those who remain must rebuild lives in spaces that bear the scars of conflict. This essay focuses on one such space, the unrecognized state in north Cyprus, which has experienced waves of displacement, ethnic cleansing, and the appropriation and redistribution of “enemy” property. Families raise children in plundered spaces; grandchildren play in gardens replanted after war; houses are furnished with the remains of others’ lives. In such contexts, the questions of what belongs to whom, and who belongs where, or with whom, are particularly contested, while the future of these places and objects remains uncertain. This essay asks what everyday historical work may be done with looted homes and objects, and it shows how practices with and stories about belongings may also be ways of helping us to “belong” in history. [Temporality, materiality, history, memory, belonging, Cyprus]

“I was a carpenter, and I could make everything we needed, so we had no need to loot,” an elderly Turkish Cypriot told me not long after I began research on the 2003 opening of the border in divided Cyprus. In the wake of that opening, many Cypriots began to relate stories of their uprooting and resettlement. The old carpenter made this remark while recalling his return to his natal town after prolonged displacement. When Turkish Cypriots fled the town in 1964, he told me, his own house and his relatives’ houses were looted and destroyed. Upon his return twelve years later, he moved into an abandoned Greek Cypriot home. He mentioned his trade to underline his reluctance to do what many people at the time were doing: scouring the neighborhood for odds and ends that had been left behind in other houses. Under pressure from his wife, however, he took a look one day in a former neighbor’s house and there found a dowry chest, which he brought back and cleaned. Several

days later, when his mother came to visit, she looked at the chest in surprise and told him to open it. “There I found an Ottoman inscription, as my mother had told me I would.” It was his mother’s chest, looted by neighbors and returned to its original owner through looting.

In the aftermath of war, those who remain must live in the conflict’s ruins. This essay concerns the practices of living historically that develop from the remains of others’ lives. My ethnographic focus is spoils or loot, appropriated property that was left behind as the detritus after conflict.¹ I examine the everyday historical work done with such objects, and how objects may intervene to alter, stall, or give momentum to historical time. In the context of conflicts, in which history is often vehemently contested, much is at stake in such temporal orientations. The necessity for remaking time, as well as the process by which it takes place, may be seen in conflict settings in which our interlocutors speak in the colloquial of “putting the past behind us,” or “forgetting the past and moving on to the future.” Examining the historical work done through appropriated objects, then, not only helps us chart a path through a growing body of work on memory and materiality,² but also to understand how people remake everyday realities in the wake of war.

By the time the elderly carpenter told me his tale, Cyprus had been partitioned for 29 years. Since 1974, approximately 60,000 Turkish Cypriots and 50,000 Greek Cypriots live or have lived in properties that were abandoned or appropriated during the conflict.³ The Cypriots who moved into these homes were themselves displaced persons and had to live in the ruins of another’s sorrow. From those ruins, however, they built new lives. Moreover, until 2003 Cypriots were not even able to cross the ceasefire line to visit their former homes. In the intervening decades, places and things that technically did not “belong” to one nevertheless became “one’s own.” Houses and gardens, dowry chests and wardrobes, dining tables and workbenches that had been appropriated after conflict became the objects and conduits of work, memory, and social interaction. One raised children in plundered spaces;

grandchildren played in gardens replanted after war; like the carpenter, one grew old practicing a craft in a workshop not originally one's own. As a result, the passage of time, or the remembered past, seemed in tension with the trajectory of history, which pointed towards a future resolution of the conflict in which people would potentially be returned to their former places, and houses and possessions to their former owners.

In the 2003 opening, it was common to hear Cypriots talk about belongings, or use them to tell tales about the conflict. The carpenter's story of a dowry chest is such a moral tale, one in which the chest itself is a complex actor that is literally inscribed with the signs of its "true" belonging. In this story, the chest has its own history of circulation and return, a history that is other to the past of the narrator. It is precisely this temporal alterity of belongings, I will argue here, that is crucial for the ways in which Cypriots have attempted to reconcile the lived past with the unfinished history of a conflict. In such an unresolved conflict, property and territory may come to stand for each other, while the historical and temporal work done with belongings may be a way of creating or claiming belonging in history. What is at stake is a history that will allow them to feel "at home"—both in the houses where they actually live and, I will argue here, in the histories that justify their living in those places.

Indeed, the metaphor of a historical "home" is a useful frame for thinking about the historical work done with actual homes in the context of a conflict where the intimate spaces and objects of everyday life have been tinged with stains of war. The sort of history to which I refer, and the sort that is generally at stake in conflict contexts, is history with a capital H: A narrative that explains the conflict and constitutes the sort of historical memory that Maurice Halbwachs saw as outside of us, something learned from schools and newspapers, and as a result something that we struggle to make our own (Halbwachs 1980: 50-87). Paul Ricoeur refers to this simultaneous distance and familiarity of historical memory as the "uncanniness

of history” (2004: 393), invoking Freud’s use of the *Unheimlich*, the “unhomely,” something that should be familiar and yet is not. Ricoeur’s invocation of the Uncanny, then, points us to the idea of a historical “home,” a place that in Ricoeur’s analysis is at first unfamiliar but gradually becomes ours through what he calls “acculturation to externality” (ibid., 392). This idea of slowly accustoming ourselves to the unfamiliar in turn evokes the period of adjustment to a new house and the process of making it “ours.”

These descriptions suggest a fundamental unease that disappears through acculturation, though I would note that such acculturation is not stable. Such a historical “home” is also littered with the remainders of other histories, ones that may recede into the corners of consciousness but may also emerge to presence in particular historical and social contexts, disturbing our sense of familiarity or “homeliness.” Similarly, the intimate places and objects of our daily lives are what Heidegger called the “ready-to-hand,” things that recede from consciousness because they exist for us as part of the totality of our involvements in the world. Heidegger stressed that the objects of everyday life may become uncanny in moments of angst, when the everyday certainties of daily life are dislodged, and as a result the world around us appears unfamiliar (Heidegger 1996: 188-90). In a less subject-centered approach, however, we could say that the ready-to-hand, the process of making the unfamiliar familiar through acculturation, disguises the ultimate alterity of objects. Indeed, home always harbors the uncanny, argues Dylan Trigg (2012), because the glow of belonging that clings to home masks what he calls the “dark entity” beneath it, namely, the fundamental indifference of place to us.

Moreover, one of the main ways in which the indifference of objects appears to us is as a temporal alterity: the things in our lives have their own “lifespan,” a time of their own that in many cases outlasts ours. If in a state of angst a wardrobe appears uncanny to me, it is likely because it has lived other “lives” and is indifferent to my sense of mortality and the

passage of time. Similarly, what Ricoeur calls the uncanniness of history indicates that historical memory is an “externality” because it cannot be immediately assimilated to the temporal flow of my own life.

I suggest, then, that the homomorphism between home and history is grounded in temporal alterity, a potential uncanniness of both objects and historical narrative that appears at particular moments of anxiety or angst. The moment of anxiety for Cypriots was the opening of the checkpoints that have divided the island, a moment that not only required confrontation with the past but also portended radical change, even future uprooting. And I use the word “portend” here precisely for its connotations of augury and foreshadowing, bringing the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of the future to the foreground. Both Reinhard Koselleck (1985) and Paul Ricoeur (1988) have emphasized the importance of the “horizon of expectation” in relation to historical time, i.e., the role of anticipation and expectation in shaping how we view the present and past. Cypriots, however, have long lived in a context where the future is uncertain and the conflict is “unfinished.” Cypriots live in a prolonged ceasefire, a suspension of war, while ongoing negotiations promise a radical change in the status quo. Elsewhere, I call the uncertainty and anxiety produced by this knowledge a “threshold of anticipation” that implies an eventual crossing into another space of time, a radical reorientation of the present (Bryant 2012a: 339). In the moment of the checkpoints’ opening, that threshold seemed to have moved closer, to portend unpredictable change.

This was and remains especially true of the Turkish Cypriot community, from which I take my ethnographic examples here, as they exist in an unrecognized state with a de facto border, while the approximately 60% of the population that was displaced during the conflict lives in anticipation of their own potential uprooting. In the most basic sense, they live with the idea that negotiations to reunify the island may result in the dissolution of their

unrecognized state and its borders and the return to their original owners of the homes where they have lived for forty years. People describe their condition as one of *belirsizlik*, uncertainty, and in such a situation, the threshold of anticipation, a historical horizon, is felt at the threshold of the home that may potentially be taken away.

The conflict context, then, makes clear the role of the future in finding a home in history, emphasizing the future as a dimension of the living present, a present that is always in the process of making the past. In the argument that follows, I use long-term fieldwork in Cyprus to show how and why objects may be used to work through histories that are contested and anxiously incomplete. I argue (1) that objects contain a temporal dynamism that points them in uncertain ways toward the future. In the particular context of the opening, the capacity of houses, wardrobes, and photographs to emit or evoke other possible futures created anxiety that is overcome through using such objects for historical work. Such historical work depends (2) on the conjoining of persons and things through the polyvalent concept of *belonging*, which we use to describe relationships of care, interdependence, and right. I describe a context in which the *belong-ness* of belongings is contested, and in which (3) the claims of belonging are made by reworking relations of past, present, and future. Practices with and stories about belongings, then, may also be ways of helping us to “belong” in history.

On materiality, time, and belonging

The old carpenter’s “life history” of a chest describes its circulation and eventual return to its “true” owner. Moreover, the carpenter used the story to emphasize the “return” or “revenge” of history. The story would not have had this same effect, however, if the object had been, say, a television, suggesting that what makes the story effective as a historical tale is not only the trajectory of the narrative but is the type of object he describes and the various temporalities that it embeds. In Cyprus, a dowry chest is firstly a container of the hopes of

youth, the care of family, and the intimacy of marriage. The ornamentation that embellishes the chests is peculiar to regions of the island, giving such chests a particular localism. The wood is also local and corruptible, but the chest is nevertheless expected to pass to children and grandchildren, so from a human perspective its life may be measured in generations. And in this particular tale, the dedication in Ottoman script was a voice in a lost language, the language of their forefathers that Cypriots no longer know. As a result, the tale is embedded in a context where conflict and violation intersect with the brevity of youth, the passage of generations, and the perishability of wood.

The chest may be used to stand for a larger history, then, precisely because it has its own temporalities that are different from but intersect with the human. Of course, we often think of objects as “coming from” another time of which they are both an aesthetic representative and a symbol. In the context of linear, post-Enlightenment histories of progress, even teapots and typewriters appear anachronistically to represent the past in the present, either aesthetically or technologically.⁴ However, when I say that objects have their own temporalities, I wish to suggest not only this “polychronicity,” as Michel Serres (1995) called it, but also that objects incorporate differing scales of mortality and corruptibility, in other words different senses of the rhythm, speed, and trajectory of time.

Serres pointed to this when he discussed objects as not only polychronic but also “multitemporal,” meaning that they refer not only to a period of time but also to the way in which we understand the relations of past, present, and future, as well as the actors, both human and inhuman, enfolded within those relations. In the process of enfolding such relations, Jonathan Gil Harris notes, “the past sometimes acquires an explosive power to tear apart the present” (Harris 2009: 4). This explosive power of the past may be especially a facet of objects embedded in a conflict history in which dispossession, loss, and appropriation of homes and property is central to many people’s narratives.

However, objects acquire this explosive power not only because of the changing historical circumstances in which they are embedded but also because they have different “lifespans” from the human and so elicit, evoke, or emit other possible futures. Objects may be seen as “protentions,” or anticipations of the future in the present, in the Husserlian sense summarized by Alfred Gell: “Protentions are continuations of the present in the light of the kind of temporal whole the present seems to belong to” (1992: 228). In this sense, objects point to the possible, the potential, or the eventual in ways that may overlap with but do not necessarily correspond to what we know or experience as past, present, and future.⁵

I refer to this capacity of objects to bring other possible futures into our present as *temporal dynamism*. In thinking about this capacity of objects, I found it helpful to return to Aristotle’s distinction between form as actuality and matter as potentiality (cf. Marx 1978: 143; also Althusser 1970; Harris 2009). Whereas the physical (form, actuality) appears to fix the object as a product and representative of a particular time, the material and its potentiality suggests that the object is always within time, always yet to be made. For Aristotle, this is *both* an inherent quality of matter *and* a facet of our relationship with it. The temporal alterity of the object, then, is transcended not only through multitemporal relationships of the sort suggested by Serres but also through a *temporal dynamism* that makes the object available for historical work.

The dowry chest clearly both comes from another time and has its own time, a time that has outlasted its maker and will likely outlast the carpenter who told me its tale. In addition, his relationship to the chest, or his mother’s relationship to the chest, is an historical one, in the broad sense of history as that which relates to the past. Moreover, as I have suggested, it is likely historical in multiple senses, as the chest is gradually filled with the work of one’s youth; enters with the woman into marriage and becomes part of the creation of a new home; passes through generations; and represents the longer history of one’s people

in a place through particular woods and local motifs. But precisely because of this historical relationship the chest becomes both part of a network of actors and an object that may be used to talk about, think about, and rework historical time. This is both a quality intrinsic to the thing, something that may take place without human intervention depending on changing historical circumstances, and a form of relationship, implicating human and object in mutual histories. And so while an object in its form may be radically other to me, stubbornly and solidly representing a time not my own, in its materiality, what Aristotle would have called its potentiality, it contains a temporal dynamism capable of exploding, imploding, twisting or braiding the past.

Moreover, this temporal dynamism acquires its *momentum*, I argue, from the fact that the object is a *belonging* in a multitude of senses. *Belonging*, as I use it here, is a relationship of care, interdependence, and right. These three senses of belonging, furthermore, may be used to describe both our relationships with the objects that furnish our lives and our relationships with community, place, and history. The word *belonging* is of course etymologically related to *longing*, both words coming from the old English *long*, which had the meanings of yearning and grieving associated with the lengthening of time, but which also in its more archaic sense meant to be appropriate to, refer or relate to, be a part or dependency of. In both Turkish and Greek, one may use a phrase that would translate roughly as "those of ours" (in Turkish *bizimkiler*, in Greek *oi dikoi mas*) to refer to

persons who "belong" to one's group, or to objects that "belong" to one, things with which one is interdependent.

These meanings of possession, desire, and mutual interdependence help us to understand how objects may be employed to remake relationships to historical time. The temporal role of objects in creating histories becomes especially clear in conflict contexts where intimacy is violated and objects are appropriated. In such contexts, the questions of what belongs to whom, and who belongs where, or with whom, are particularly contested and are implicated in conflict histories. Under what circumstances would a dowry chest looted from a neighbor's home be considered mine? My answer to that question may invoke personal wounds, historical right, or my own years spent with that object. Whatever answer I give, however, would be an answer that would attempt to explain why the dowry chest is a *belonging* rather than simply a *possession*.

In other words, what is at stake in such questions is not just a claim to an object but is a claim to a home, to a place, to a territory, and to a history. Indeed, it is precisely the palimpsested ambiguity of belonging(s) that may give us an important window onto the ways that persons give historical meaning to their everyday worlds. This becomes an especially fraught endeavor in ongoing conflicts where histories are anxious and incomplete,⁶ and much is at stake in their resolution. In such a context, an "unfinished" history is one that is liminal, caught in the unresolved (historical) conflict. Where conflicts have still to be resolved, one can neither "move on to the future" nor "put the past behind." In this sense, history itself may be seen as having an untranscended temporality, one that is stubbornly and

radically other to me. As with things themselves, it may be the potentiality of the past, rather than its form and actuality, that make it into something both multiple and my own.

In what follows, the polyvalence of belonging helps us understand how the temporal dynamism of objects may enable historical work. The argument unfolds around a discussion of three forms of intimate property: the house, or immovable property; personal belongings or effects, those objects such as photographs and clothing that are inseparable from the owner; and the movable property within the house, or what we usually call our possessions or belongings. All of these objects, I argue here, have different relationships to our understanding of belonging and hence to historical time. What the conflict context shows us is how belonging may become a site of contest where property and history meet. Indeed, one of my aims here is to recuperate *belonging* as a key term for anthropological investigation at the intersection of time, memory, materiality, and community.

The plunder of the past

Over a twenty-year period between 1956 and 1976, Cyprus experienced waves of conflict-related displacement in which the homes and property of former neighbors were looted, vandalized, and appropriated. I returned to the island between 2003 and 2005 to conduct research on the opening of the ceasefire line that had divided it for twenty-nine years, an opening that allowed Cypriots to visit their homes but not to return to them. At the time, I focused on one town that had been divided by conflict and the encounters between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots that accompanied the opening (see Bryant 2010). Although what I write here builds on that study, it also takes my long-term research, beginning in the early 1990's, as background, and it utilizes further research conducted over the past decade, especially both formal and informal interviews with more than one hundred displaced Turkish Cypriots (see Bryant 2012b).

In order to understand how Turkish Cypriots have lived with these objects, it is helpful first to understand the history of their appropriation. Although the town where I worked, Lapithos, cannot metonymically stand for events in the island as a whole, there are enough repetitions in the description of events for me to use the town as an entry point for thinking about the intimacies of the conflict. In 1960 its population was 3500 Greek Cypriot and 400 Turkish Cypriot residents, a proportion that approximated the 80% to 18% distribution in the island as a whole. In the 1950's, the town had a strong Greek nationalist movement, and many of its leading men were involved in the Greek nationalist organization, EOKA (*Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston*, or the National Union of Cypriot Fighters), which was responsible for the 1955-59 struggle against British colonial rule that was to have led to *enosis*, or union of the island with Greece. In late 1958 Turkish Cypriots in the town began to organize their own branch of the underground organization TMT (*Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı*, or the Turkish Defense Organization), which had been formed several months earlier and aimed at *taksim*, or the goal of dividing the island and uniting its two parts with Greece and Turkey. One older man who had been part of the latter organization described to me the ways in which EOKA and TMT divided villagers: "EOKA would want an accounting: 'Christo, why did you sell your donkey to a Turk?' And the same thing with the Turks: 'Hüseyin, did you sell your sheep this morning? If you sell them to Turks, that's okay.' That's how everything started. That's how the division started."

It is important for the argument here that many Cypriots date the dissolution of intercommunal relations to the prohibition on exchange relations. In 1960, instead of *enosis* or *taksim*, the decolonization process gave Cypriots an independent republic with a power-sharing constitution and special privileges for the Turkish-speaking minority. At the end of 1963, this power-sharing arrangement broke down into violence. Around 20,000 Turkish

Cypriots fled their homes and villages, while more than 90% of the community sealed itself in militarized enclaves, where they lived in squalid conditions for more than a decade.⁷

In relating this period today, many Lapithos Turkish Cypriots express the most shock and anger when describing how after they fled the town, neighbors they had known their whole lives looted and plundered their homes.⁸ The widespread destruction was a common theme among most of the displaced Turkish Cypriots that I interviewed from around the island. One Greek Cypriot from Lapithos described the scene to me: the streets littered with broken glass and discarded clothing, walls razed and doors battered. When Turkish Cypriots returned several years later to visit their villages, they encountered destruction. One old woman told me, in a theme I heard repeated often, “when we returned to our homes, not even a needle was left. . . . When we returned, we didn't find anything—they took the roof, the windows, the doors.”

In my conversations with Greek Cypriots from the town who discussed this looting, most described it as something done to prevent Turkish Cypriots' return. This intent was not lost on their Turkish Cypriot neighbors, who today discuss not only the violence of this act but also the sense of violation, both of the intimacy of the home and of relations of interdependency in the village. What was shocking to many people was that the plunder of neighbors' property destroyed reciprocity as a foundation of moral order. It attacked it because plunder is, in its most basic sense, a destruction of exchange relations, by taking with no obligation to give back. Plunder is an act that says, “I owe you nothing.”

In 1974, a coup led by Greek nationalists and backed by the junta government in Greece provoked a Turkish military intervention that ultimately divided the island. Greek Cypriots fled the army's advance or were expelled to the south, and a new Turkish Cypriot administration was established in the island's north through ethnic cleansing and the appropriation of Greek Cypriot property.⁹ Turkish Cypriots who had fled their villages a

decade earlier began quickly to return, settling in Greek Cypriot houses, their own homes in ruins. Almost half of the Turkish Cypriot community fled from the south to the north, where they also settled in Greek Cypriot homes or were settled there by the administration. Greek Cypriot houses, lands, and stores were distributed first by lot, and several years later based on a point system.¹⁰ However, many Turkish Cypriots returning to their own villages just found houses that they liked and squatted, looting still-empty homes for refrigerators and furniture. “You arrived in a house and half the things were missing,” one older woman told me. “So you'd go to some neighbor's house and take what you needed.”

The environment of the period, and the role of looting in it, is poignantly described in the story of one boy, Sami, who was eleven years old in 1974 and had gone for a summer visit to his grandparents' village of Gaziveren. During the next tumultuous two weeks, the coup and Turkish military intervention began, his father was taken prisoner, and he and his mother were locked in the village school and became witnesses of a massacre when a Greek Cypriot soldier threw hand grenades through the school window. After their Greek Cypriot captors fled from the advancing Turkish army, the neighboring Greek Cypriot villages were also abandoned. He described waking one morning to an empty village, and encountering his friend Ismail, who told him that everyone had gone to a neighboring village to loot. “What's loot?” the boy asked.

He would soon learn about loot when he rode on his bicycle to the neighboring village and found all of Gaziveren there. “There were people coming out of houses and going into houses. The whole village was there! Young people, old people, all of Gaziveren! It was like a festival, with kids running around everywhere.” He rode his bicycle to the village square and found boys his age sitting in the coffeeshop, playing backgammon, drinking cola and eating potato chips. “One of them went and got a cola, and I said, ‘I want a cola!’ He told me to go and get one. I asked him how much it was, and he told me it was free. ‘Are the chips

free, too?’ I asked.” Moreover, it was Coca-Cola, a brand that they had not seen in the enclaves, and he relates how in his excitement he opened another before finishing the first. “I drank one, and before I finished it I opened another one. Before that one finished, I opened another one! And I ate chips. We had been hungry and thirsty a few days before, and now this abundance!”

During the immediate post-war period, a new lexicon developed in the north of the island to talk about what their fleeing neighbors had left behind. Listening to people describe the period, I soon began to realize that *ganimet*, or plunder, had a slightly different meaning from *yağma*, which also was used for spoils, but usually in the sense of “to pillage.” So while Greek Cypriots had pillaged Turks’ homes (*yağmaladılar*), the word was almost never used for what Turkish Cypriots themselves did in the wake of their neighbors’ flight. *Ganimet* has the connotation of booty, the spoils of war. It is something that is *helal*, lawful or legitimate, in popular interpretations of Islam. And in that period, it acquired the connotation of right or revenge, after the previous decade of deprivation.

Indeed, the period of *ganimet* appeared as the completion of a history, one that had begun with their own departure from their villages and the looting of their own homes. *Ganimet*, then, is intimately implicated in the question of belonging—who belongs in a house, or to whom the house belongs; which belongings are usable, and which are inalienable from their owners. One saw such divisions made in the immediate post-war period, when Turkish Cypriots scrambled in competition for property but had more ambivalent relationships to the objects they found in their new homes.

The primary division was between those “inalienable objects” that might be seen as inseparable from their owners, and other objects that did not, in the early period, have the same stain of the other. In the immediate post-war period, “inalienable objects” tended to produce two reactions: either their destruction or their preservation. The social psychologist

Vamık Volkan, who returned to Cyprus not long after these events, was sent by the new administration to assess and aid displaced villagers. Then, he found that many people had burned personal belongings, such as clothing and blankets (Volkan 1982). Some people told me that they had found photographs and other personal items and had immediately burned them, but others told me that they had saved many of these personal items, putting them away in wardrobes and cupboards, unable to destroy them but also unable to live with them. On the other hand, china and chests, clocks and cupboards, were appropriated to furnish the new homes in which displaced persons settled.

Indeed, in the period of *ganimet*, neighbors competed to see who had gotten the best goods from the empty houses around them, and only some who did not want the objects of the enemy or who feared the objects might bring a “curse” (*beddua*) refused to loot. In a novel written during that immediate post-war period, Özker Yaşın, otherwise known as a nationalist poet, sardonically describes this looting fever and recounts the euphemisms given to loot, such as *buluntu*, or “found things.” The post-war period of *ganimet*, then, was one in which almost everyone seems to have engaged, and in Yaşın’s novel there is a comic scene in which Turkish Cypriot neighbors even loot from each other (Yaşın 1976).

With the division of the island and the inability of Cypriots to cross, the alterity of these objects became part of what Ricoeur calls a “reserve of forgetting”—those aspects of memory and history that are forgotten but available to consciousness. Vamık Volkan noted that when he returned to the island in 1977, Turkish Cypriot refugees had settled into their houses, were plowing their fields, and had gone on with their lives (Volkan 1979). When I first began research in Cyprus in 1993, *ganimet* was not part of public discourse, and although people worried about what would happen to the houses where they lived in the event of a political solution, this was expressed as a desire not to be displaced again. At that moment, only two decades after division and a decade after their declaration of

independence, it seemed that any political solution would entail a global exchange of properties, in which they would give up titles for their properties in the south in order to retain the properties where they lived and worked in the north, thus putting a legal stamp on a *fait accompli*. In other words, although Turkish Cypriots knew that the houses where they lived and many of their furnishings had once belonged to others, the presence of Turkish troops, a longstanding *de facto* division, and just the passage of time gave them every reason to think that these houses and objects were now “theirs.”

Indeed, those other “cataracts of time” contained in objects (Kracauer 1969; also Pinney 2005)—i.e., their other pasts and futures—remained hidden, unseen, and lost to consciousness for more than twenty years after the division.¹¹ For those two decades the non-recognition of the state in the island’s north appeared to cocoon it from the potential international consequences of this *de facto* appropriation. It was in the late 1990’s that changes in the legal and political order began to alter the relationships that Turkish Cypriots experienced with the property they used. In 1994, a European Court of Justice case forbade the import into Europe of any products bearing a TRNC stamp, curtailing Turkish Cypriot exports significantly. And in 1996, a Greek Cypriot displaced woman, Titina Loizidou, won a test case against Turkey in the European Court of Human Rights regarding her property in the island’s north. The court demanded that Turkey pay a large settlement and return her property to her. Although the initial response to that judgment was muted and Turkey appeared to ignore it, soon hundreds of Greek Cypriot property-owners had applied to the court to hear their own cases. In the wake of that and other subsequent legal decisions against the north’s property regime, the houses that many Turkish Cypriots “owned” or occupied in north Cyprus no longer seemed *helal* or *meşru*, legitimate.¹²

In a coincidental overlap, Yael Navaro-Yashin conducted research in Cyprus in a period that intersected with my own, and she also focused on the homes and objects in

Cyprus' north. Her research occurred during what I am calling here the post-1996 period, a period in which the sovereignty of Turkish Cypriots' self-declared state seemed in question and certain persons, especially on the left, developed a more vocal critical stance on their legal relationship to the homes where they lived. In recent publications, Navaro-Yashin describes these homes and objects, and indeed much of the landscape of north Cyprus, as emitting a melancholic affect that she claims is derived from the originary violence of their appropriation (Navaro-Yashin 2009, 2012). Much of her narrative seems to hinge on an attempt to uncover why Turkish Cypriots are not disturbed by the ruins of war around them, or why they do not sense the melancholy that for her appears to ooze from every rock and rusting piece of metal in the island. In her narrative, the melancholy of her subjects appears to be primarily unconscious and only available to the ethnographer, who must read its symptoms in such everyday practices as cleaning homes (2012: loc. 2415) and hanging family photographs on the walls (*ibid.*, 2478).

As one theorist of originary violence, Paul Ricoeur, noted, originary violence is originary precisely because it is forgotten¹³; I would add to this that just because it is forgotten does not make it symptomatic. Moreover, if Navaro-Yashin's point is that sad places make us feel sad, it seems a truism to say that sadness is in the eye of the beholder. In short, if our interlocutors tell us that they want to remain in the houses where they live and act as though they do not see the sadness we see, as anthropologists it seems to behoove us first to understand how people actually interact with the objects and spaces around them rather than how we think they should act in regard to them. From the narrative above, it should be clear that while Navaro-Yashin's observations of melancholia may have held true for a certain group of people at a particular ethnographic moment—what I identify here as the post-1996 period—they should not be assumed to have historical saliency, to apply across the board, or even to have continued unchanged after the 2003 opening of the checkpoints.

Rather than melancholy, I suggest that most Turkish Cypriots have experienced instead anxiety—anxiety in relation to the future, which is also an anxiety in relation to the houses where they live. This anxiety began to manifest itself after 1996 as a critical discourse on *ganimet*. Indeed, it was only in the post-1996 period that houses and other immovable property also began to be referred to as *ganimet*. Whereas in the past the word was used to refer only to movable property that had been looted in the post-1974 period, during the time that I was conducting research the usage of the word changed. Much of this was attributable to a proposed peace plan that would have returned much Greek Cypriot property and brought a certain number of Greek Cypriots back to the island’s north. That plan, however, would also have laid the basis for many displaced Turkish Cypriots living in Greek Cypriot property to keep that property after a settlement. When the plan failed at an island-wide referendum, it nevertheless provoked a construction boom on appropriated land that Turkish Cypriots had previously hesitated to build on. Dozens of construction and real estate firms suddenly emerged, selling new bungalows on Greek Cypriot land to foreigners. One local academic referred to this as a “second period of looting” (*ikinci ganimet dönemi*), and this way of describing their condition stuck. At this point it became quite common to hear Turkish Cypriots critical of this boom wryly refer to the country where they now live as a *ganimet ülkesi*, a country built on spoils. Indeed, it was in this period that the word *ganimet* began to lose its meaning as “spoils of war” and gain the meaning of “plunder.”

The difference, of course, is that while “the spoils of war” appear to draw history to a close, to signal the completion of a history, “plunder” has no such connotation of right. And while it may be a truism to say that every state is founded on theft, to call the place where one lives a *ganimet ülkesi* is wryly to acknowledge that one’s own theft lacks legitimacy. Unlike a view of *ganimet* that sees it as the “spoils of war,” a view of *ganimet* as plunder calls history into question. It emphasizes the entanglement of past and present, indeed the

transformative nature of the past for the present. It emphasizes not that history has come full circle, that it has reached completion, but that it remains incomplete.

History as ruin

The 2003 opening of the crossing points that divide the island was a moment filled with initial euphoria, followed by anxiety and considerable confusion for many.¹⁴ Many Greek Cypriots found the homes that they remembered occupied by others who did not intend to leave. Others remarked that the house was not a home anymore without the community of which it had been the center for them. While Turkish Cypriots also commented that the site of their memories was not a meaningful place for them anymore, many also encountered the destruction of their property, either wilfully or by time. For most, this was a discouragement to further return, and some who visited their homes did not even wish to knock on the door. One man from a village in the island's southwest that has recently experienced a rise in property prices said that he would want to take his land back. However, he does not want even to visit his village anymore:

We were thinking, we came here and settled in Greek Cypriots' houses, and we've looked after them, that is, the condition of the houses has gotten better, not worse. . . . But when we crossed to see our house, we experienced a huge disappointment when we found that it had fallen down from neglect, it was like a cold shower, and after that I didn't even want to go to my village again. . . . The place where I spent the first fourteen years of my life is now a heap of dirt that could fit in the back of a truck.

And a woman who is today in her early seventies and who lost the home that she had bought with her husband in the port city of Limassol similarly commented, "When I saw my own house I couldn't even knock on the door. It was like it wasn't Limassol, at least not my Limassol. The Turkish neighborhood was all run down. They hadn't even painted our house the way we had looked after things. . . . At this point Limassol doesn't mean anything to me."

The figure of the house had for almost thirty years been incorporated on both sides of the ceasefire line into larger, communal tales of the conflict and hence into moral projects (see Bryant 2010). In Cyprus, “the house” has been both a discourse of property, territory, and right, and a figure of loss (see Lyotard 2011; also Carroll 1987). Indeed, the house is often made to stand for “the conflict” insofar as it represents the tangible losses and gains that resulted. In general after 1974 Greek Cypriot both official and personal histories have engaged in a remembrance of the lost home that insisted on the temporariness of the present and the future as a return to the past. In contrast, Turkish Cypriot official histories engaged in a politics of forgetting in the creation of a new state, and indeed Turkish Cypriots did not write poetry or songs for their lost homes or relay secondary trauma to their children (Bryant 2012a).

I remarked above that *ganimet* was not a word used for the homes that Turkish Cypriots appropriated until after the construction boom that led to the “second period of looting.” This was because the home was considered a necessity and a right, given the property that Turkish Cypriots had left behind. The house as property was always tied up with the history of the conflict, in which the resolution of the “property problem” was somewhere in the future, a resolution that was also outside oneself, at the point when the conflict itself would be resolved. The house, then, and one’s ownership or possession of it, may be assimilated to a larger temporality of the conflict, one that may see the past as past, or that may see the past as stalled in a continuous present.

While the house came to represent the temporality of conflict, in the opening of the checkpoints this was complicated by new questions of belonging. Both the house that used to be one’s own and, for many Turkish Cypriots, the houses where they currently live became uncanny, places where they did not belong but should, or where they did belong but should

not. Calling into question the “belonging” of property, I suggest, also brought into question one’s own situatedness in relation to the history of the conflict, one’s “belonging” in history.

During the period after the checkpoints opened, many people began repeating stories about how they came to possess the houses where they live, and of the care that they put into those homes. Quite a few of the stories that I heard at this moment used the house and the objects in it to reflect a history come full circle. In a story that I relate in full elsewhere (Bryant 2010), for instance, an elderly woman described to me how her own house in 1964 had been destroyed by a man she knew, a wealthy Greek Cypriot with an official position in the municipality. In 1968, when she was able to return to visit the town, she had gone to this man and told him that he should repair her home, because she wanted to return. When he refused, she said, she took his home in 1974 as compensation. And when, after 2003, he returned and cried on the terrace, she said simply, “Let him cry!” Many others, however, talked about children and grandchildren who had grown up in the houses, or about money invested in them. For instance, a middle-aged man from a small village in the island’s southwest had received property in exchange for his family’s losses. But the house was in ruin, and he had spent years and much money restoring it. When the Greek Cypriot owners returned in 2003 and asked him, “Is this not paradise?”, he replied, “It is, because I made it so.”

These are not *only* tales of reciprocal plunder or revenge; they are also ways of telling the history of the conflict through the home. These stories narrate personal experiences, but they take the form of tales, and ones with moral lessons. Like the story of the dowry chest, these are tales with a lesson learned and completed, in which history comes full circle. It is, in that sense, a way of relating what Igor Kopytoff (1986) calls the “cultural biography” of an object to the history of the conflict. And it does so through histories of belonging and appropriation, theft and return.

The moral lessons of these stories, however, hinge on the figure of the house as ruin. Whether it is one's own house that is now "a heap of dirt that could fit in the back of a truck" or the house of the other that one turned from debris to paradise, Turkish Cypriot narrations of their relations with the houses where they live depend today on figures of ruination. And the figure of the house as ruin, I suggest, works in counterpoint to the house as right. This assimilation of the house to historical time is often expressed as a temporality of the law or right, of a judgment either passed or still to be made. That judgment will determine *to whom the house belongs*, a matter that can be settled only in the final judgment of the conflict itself.

But the ambiguity of the concept of *belonging* is that it mediates between *care*, *interdependence*, and *right*. While one may possess a title deed to a house, within the context of a territorial conflict, one remains uncertain of one's right of belonging and is helpless to resolve the issue. Understanding one's relationship to the house through narrations of ruin, however, evokes the other senses of belonging. Expressions of failure to care for something connote that the object/place does not belong to one, while turning debris into paradise suggests belonging and a phenomenological relationship to the house through time spent there. And if the house was at the center of networks, the dispersal of those networks means that it is no longer a place where one belongs. The ruin comes to stand for the destruction of interdependence and the beginning of both a new community and a new social time.

Through narrations of the house as ruin, then, we may see that belonging and temporality are mutually implicated in inextricable ways in what makes history familiar to us, a history accepted as ours, or conversely, what makes it uncanny in Ricoeur's sense. But if the house comes to stand for the *time of conflict*, there remain other objects within the house that evoke or are implicated in other temporal facets of the history with which they struggle. The examples that I will give are the personal effects or belongings of the other, and those other objects, "movable property," that filled people's homes and acquired new meaning after

the opening of the checkpoints. As I noted earlier, in the post-1974 period, those things that people recognized as personal effects, especially clothing and photographs, were not seen as *ganimet*. Almost no one appropriated these; they either kept them or destroyed them. In what follows, I call these objects that are imbued with the stain of the other *remains* and argue that they are implicated in the *time of the other*. I distinguish them from the movable property, seen as *ganimet*, that I claim became historical *remainders* of what I refer to as the *time of the forgotten*.

Remains of the other

Şerife had been recently married and settled in her husband's home in south Nicosia when intercommunal conflict began in late 1963. They fled this home, leaving behind all their belongings, and took refuge with Şerife's family in the north of the city. They expected to return within days; instead, they would not see their home again for forty years. While they were able to stay with her family for the following decade, after 1974 they were allotted a Greek Cypriot home in a village outside Nicosia. When they arrived in the house, Şerife saw that the Greek Cypriot owners had fled as quickly as her own family had a decade earlier. She gathered all of the Greek Cypriot family's personal belongings and locked them in a room. That room would remain locked for the next three decades, until the Greek Cypriot owners visited after the opening of the checkpoints, and she was finally able to relieve herself of these things that she had been able neither to destroy nor to give away. After the room was cleansed of these Greek Cypriot belongings, she says that she finally felt that this house where she had lived for so long was "hers." However, even after this action the owners kept returning, wanting to visit the place of their childhood and its current residents who had been so hospitable. "They keep coming and coming," she told me. "At this point I just want to give the house back and find someplace else."

The return of personal items was something that occurred often during the checkpoints' opening, and these were scenes that appeared to show the "humanity" of the other. Photographs had been kept in closets, wedding dresses packed away in chests. These objects were weighted with what Annette Weiner (1994) calls a "symbolic density," as they appeared to bear the imprint of the other. For the post-conflict context, where such objects appear as the debris of violence, I use the word "remains" to describe them. I call them "remains" because, as should become clear below, the historical work done with them resembles that done with actual physical remains in other contexts. Such remains clearly belong to specific others, persons who in turn belonged to a known time and place, and they were either destroyed or hidden away until they could be returned. As such, remains show the humanity as well as human temporality of the other, making it also possible to incorporate that other into one's own narrative.

One of the primary ways in which people understood the return of personal effects was as a form of "humanity," *insanlık* in Turkish. An elderly woman whom I will call Fadime told me of sending wedding photographs to the owners of her house. Even before the checkpoints opened, an English couple who knew the owners had arrived at her door to ask if anything had been left. Fadime wrapped the photos, put them in a bag, and sent them with the English couple. "The people took the photos out, and when they [the owners] saw them, they supposedly said, 'My God, the people living in our house are this good that they sent us these photographs.'"

She told me of how years passed, but then one evening after the checkpoints opened the children of the woman in the wedding photographs arrived at her door, bringing their mother's greetings. "They were very pleased," Fadime recounted. "In fact, I wouldn't do anything to a guest who comes to my home." They came, and they looked, she said. Later, the mother and father came. "We sat and talked, found people we knew in common. They

came quite a few times. . . . I felt sorry for her,” she insisted. “It could be Greek or Turk, she was also a bride. They kept coming and coming. Come see us, come see us, they would say, but we still haven’t been able to go. What can I do? I haven’t gone. They came, if I want I’ll go. But we can’t live mixed anymore.” This way of telling the story is a typical one in which a generalized humanity, both her own and the other’s, comes to the fore—although the moral of the story is that “we can’t live mixed anymore.”

The objects that I am calling *remains*, I wish to suggest, are inextricably braided with our stories of the other, and in that sense they lend themselves to tales of conflict bound up with the humanity of the other, as well as to moral projects. Many of these objects were photographs, and for that reason I find it useful to turn to Roland Barthes’ observations on photography, where he remarks—as happened in the cases here—that photographs cannot be “refused or transformed. . . . The only way I can transform the Photograph is into refuse: either the drawer or the wastebasket” (Barthes 1981: 91-93). The reason for this, he observes, is that the photograph violently forces upon us time’s passage and hence impending death. “Whether or not the subject is already dead,” he says, “every photograph is this catastrophe” this “defeat of Time” (ibid., 96). Photographs are close to human time, to the time of mortality. Similarly, wedding dresses and other remains also have a relationship to the corruption of the human body and to the cycles of life, to birth and death. It is in this sense that remains are not only symbolically dense, inalienable, but also have voice, speak to us and witness about the other’s mortality, thereby forcing us to “see,” to face the humanity of the other (see also Das 2007). This may be through a recognition that often emphasizes their generalized humanity (“Greek or Turkish, she was also a bride”) or through the particularized denial of destruction.

That remains “speak” in this way may also be seen in the contradictions of the ways that such objects become part of moral projects. As I note above, these objects may be both

particularizing, speaking of particular persons and families, and generalizing, allowing us to speak of humanity. When incorporated into narratives of the self, they become ways of pointing to one's own humanity and ability to recognize the other. While I have described here the return of objects—photographs, wedding dresses—that I call remains, one may compare these practices to Simon Harrison's description of the return of actual physical remains that had been taken as souvenirs by Allied soldiers who fought in the Pacific War. Allied soldiers had collected the skulls of Japanese soldiers as souvenirs, a practice facilitated by the wartime dehumanization of the Japanese. However, Harrison notes that the passage of time and changing norms had altered the ways that veterans and their families viewed these objects: the skull was no longer a decorative item but had become "a reproachful human presence," someone "to whom restitution was owed" (Harrison 2008: 830).

As a result, many of these veterans began to search for ways to return these remains to the families, most of whom had never possessed physical remains of their loved ones that could be properly buried. However, Harrison notes that there is no aim to establish bonds between the families but rather to put the past to rest: "The purpose of these acts of giving and accepting . . . is conciliation achieved by creating not social bonds between the two families, as would happen in gift exchange, but the material preconditions for a kind of mutually benevolent forgetting" (Harrison 2006: 786). In this way, one may "finish" the past and enable forgetting even without producing a neat narrative of reconciliation.

So to save a wedding dress or photographs may be humanity, what in Turkish is *insanlık*, but it is humanity of the sort that partakes of what Simmel calls the simultaneous closeness and distance that defines a relationship with the stranger. While the Cypriot women who preserved other women's photographs and wedding dresses may have been unwilling to destroy them, for many this was not only a recognition of the other's humanity but also a proof of their own. At the same time, the return of such belongings may be seen as a way of

“cleansing” the house where one has lived for so long and finally claiming it as one’s own. So this simultaneously particularizing and generalizing form of history may also become a form of “closure,” a way of “putting the past behind us.” At the same time, in the context of Cyprus, that act of closure is an explicitly political one, drawing narrations of a permanent partition into the story of the self.

History’s remainders

In contrast to remains, many houses were scattered with what I call *remainders*, or all the other detritus of their lives that Cypriots encountered when they visited their homes and villages after the checkpoints’ opening. Remainders, as I describe them here, are those objects of a more ambiguous nature—tables and chairs, beds and sofas, clocks and silverware—that lead a mute existence, cannot speak to us about the past, but that in particular circumstances may come to bear an uncanny quality. These were the original *ganimet*, and I heard many stories about the anxiety produced by such objects after the checkpoints opened.

For instance, Birol was originally from Lapithos and had been only eighteen when they fled the town to live in tents and makeshift housing for a decade. The first time I met her, she apologized to me for the state of her house, saying, “We lived in tents for ten years, and I never had a chance to learn to look after a house.” She had married while still in the enclave, and when she returned with her husband to the town, they were given a Greek Cypriot house on one of the main roads. She tells me she destroyed all the photographs and personal items she found: “I took them out into the garden, and I burned them all.” She burned intimate items, but she kept certain pieces of furniture that she found. “Now the Greeks of this house come,” she tells me, “the *cira*¹⁵ brings her grandson. And they walk through the house, and she says, ‘This was ours, this wasn’t. This was ours, this wasn’t.’”

I was witness to similar scenes in which Greek Cypriots, emotionally wrought by the experience of return, entered rooms that had changed, that were no longer the rooms of their memories, and burst into tears at the sight of a familiar wardrobe or a dresser. This, in turn, has led Turkish Cypriots who now possessed these objects either to defiance or to a more uncanny sense regarding them. Some people refused to give back objects when asked; others gave objects, even when the Greek Cypriot “owner” had been mistaken, and it was not the original that they had thought it was. An elderly woman who had been displaced twice told me that she had given a copper pan to the Greek Cypriot owner of her house, even though she had bought the pan herself only a decade earlier. “*Tiksindim*,” some people said, a word used to mean loathing or repulsion but that also in this context refers to what we would think of as the revulsion of the uncanny. Indeed, for many people on both sides of the ceasefire line, the mute objects of daily life have, in the opening, become uncanny reminders of the intimate violation of conflict, both that committed by others and that committed by oneself.

For many Greek Cypriots returning to their homes, questions appear in the form of battered cabinets and tattered books, in the form of dowry chests in the windows of antique shops. For Turkish Cypriots, they began to appear in the corners of their own homes, in the lamps and chairs, the silverware and tables, which suddenly appeared to embody other histories. I should note, however, that unlike the empty house or personal effects, these remainders of others’ lives do not call forth such histories unbidden. Ruins point to the long duree of the conflict, while remains point to mortality, the cycles of life, and humanity. Reminders, however, are mute, giving away nothing of their pasts and possible futures. Like the objects one finds in a room left by someone one has loved and lost, the accumulated objects of a life point to thoughts to which one is not privy, fantasies one cannot know, dreams that are half-realized. In these remainders, then, one is confronted with the incomprehensibility of the other, the incomprehensibility of history itself, visible in pieces

that cannot be made to fit one's image of the whole. They require an act of imagination: the act of imagining a girl brushing her hair in front of a mirror, a family sitting to dinner at a table. Such objects entangle me through imagination in the memory of the other, making them into reminders of the original division itself that had expelled the other.

“Remainders,” then, were those objects that in the post-1974 period had been looted or appropriated as part of a history come full circle that was also, at the same time, an originary rupture, a division that would signal a new beginning. And so when I call these objects “remainders,” I refer not only to those things left after everything else has been taken away or destroyed, but also to those remainders of history that can never be fit into neat narratives—a young girl in front of a mirror, laughter at a dinner table, dreams left unfulfilled. And this, in turn, recalls the word's mathematical meaning, as what is left over in division, that part that cannot be divided by a particular number. In the context of the Cyprus conflict, houses and lands were allotted in the island's division, but dressers and tables, chairs and chests, were those things that were left over, not only requiring one's active participation in their appropriation but also recalling a ruptured intimacy, the intimacy destroyed with the looting of homes and the overturning of exchange relations. This founding act of violence was hidden, and indeed forgotten, in the justification of *ganimet*, in the transformation of belongings into possessions. That founding act of violence was a rupture, but a rupture that like all founding events had been “forgotten.” But the transformation of those objects back into belongings through the reappearance of the other has the capacity to make the intimate space of the home uncanny. Such belongings recall the originary act of dispossession, the recreation of community after catastrophe that also has the status of the forgotten.

I wish to suggest that one of the ways in which remainders, or the mute objects of daily life, have this effect is through their non-contemporaneity, their inability to be incorporated into the cycles of human life, as well as their mobility. Objects circulate, are

bought and traded, are thrown away and broken. They may remain in a corner or be sold to an antique shop. The fate of objects is not only unpredictable, random and contingent but is also, for these reasons, unavailable to some neat form of closure.

The sense of objects' fate being outside oneself and unpredictable became clear in the border opening when many people began to speak of the houses where they lived and the objects that they had found as parts of a history in which they were caught up. So, when Greek Cypriots began to visit, many Turkish Cypriots would refer to them as "the Greek (Cypriot) of this house" (*bu evin Rumu*). It was a way of pointing to a form of belonging while at the same time putting stress on the house rather than its owner, on the property that was contested rather than the person contesting it. Similarly, many people refused to return the movable property or even certain personal items when the original owner asked for them. One Greek Cypriot friend reported that the Turkish Cypriot living in her house had refused to give her a painting that her father had bought. And another young woman explained to me that she had similarly refused to return a clock. "The only thing left in this house when we found it was this clock," she recounted. "One day [the Greek Cypriot owner] came, and he looked up and noticed it. And he said to me, 'Why don't you let me take that clock?' And I told him no. He protested, 'But it's our clock!' 'No,' I said, 'it's the house's clock.'"

While photographs had to be returned or destroyed, furniture and other belongings might be cast as *buluntu*, "found things," what belonged to the house, rather than its owner. In saying that "it's the house's clock," Hanife does not claim the clock as her own. Instead, she claims her right to use it until this unfinished history ends, until the conflict reaches a conclusion. In other words, she refuses to let the clock become a reminder of the forgotten, instead assimilating it to the temporality of conflict. She refuses what she recognizes as the clock's temporal dynamism that might remake the present.

Some final thoughts on time and belonging

In societies whose everyday is shaped by unresolved conflict, history with a capital H—events of the past, their meaning, their trajectory towards the future—acquires an excessive significance in the movement and momentum of the present. History is both very close, something that one has lived, and quite distant, something taking place in corridors and meetings to which one is not privy. Calls to “right the injustices of the past” or to “put the past behind us” have the capacity to alter, stall, or given momentum to historical time. At this “threshold of anticipation” (Bryant 2012), the future is the space in which all will be rectified, while the present is a liminal state of waiting for the anticipated future rectification.

I have alluded several times to what Paul Ricoeur (2004) calls the uncanniness of history, of history as something both familiar and other to us, something to which we must become acculturated. Like the houses where we live, history harbors the potential for the uncanny, though I have suggested that the opposite of this uncanniness is to be “at home” in history, or to belong there. However, I would take the metaphor of the house a step further to remark that conflict histories are experienced at the threshold, the *limen*, of that home, the place where one is welcomed or not.¹⁶ May one go in, or must one stay out? Does one belong or not? Indeed, who does belong in this particular home?

It is this sense of *belonging in history* that is at stake in people’s practices with *belongings*. And it is in this sense that what happens in people’s homes and to people’s homes may not simply be part of the conflict or analogized to the conflict but for many people may *be* the conflict. These are not simply practices that express *what* belongs to *whom*, but more importantly *who* belongs *where*, or *with whom*. These are practices and narratives that build on the temporality of objects—the time of the conflict, the time of the other, and the time of the forgotten are a few of these temporalities. I do not think that these examples exhaust either the temporalities of objects or the practices possible with them. But

in a time of rapid social change, these are some of the ways in which the people I know have used time to feel at home in history.

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¹ The analysis of such appropriated objects may be contrasted with those studies that examine the use of objects to remember lost homelands in exile (see, e.g., Slyomovics 1998, Turan 2011).

² As with the growing body of work on memory, the literature on materiality has burgeoned in the past decade. While I reference work on materiality and temporality throughout the essay, I should note here that this article also builds on a body of work on materiality and loss, especially Drazin and Frolich 2007; Gibson 2004 and 2008; Miller and Parrott 2009. An edited volume by Sherry Turkle (2007) provides a number of suggestive essays on ways in which we “think with” objects. And a small body of recent work has begun to address the absent presences of post-conflict landscapes and the ways in which persons live within them (esp. Bartov 2008, Bear 2007, Biner 2010, Hirsch and Spitzer 2010, Mazower 2004, Mehta and Chatterjee 2001). The work of Barbara Bender and Tim Ingold on temporality and landscape and Dylan Trigg on the phenomenology of memory and place may also be taken as background here (see Bender 2002, Ingold 1993, Trigg 2012).

³ Although almost all Turkish Cypriots initially settled in Greek Cypriot property upon their arrival in the island's north, the number of Greek Cypriots who were settled in Turkish Cypriot property is less than a third of the number of displaced. In addition, the Republic of

Cyprus built refugee housing on Turkish Cypriot land and settled several thousand Greek Cypriot displaced persons in that way. This is obviously not the same as the experience I describe here, which is that of settling in a house abandoned during conflict by the “enemy.”

⁴ The perception of objects as coming from or representing another time may also be attributable to what Pels (1998) has called their “untranscended materiality,” a problem in turn attributed to the ideological separation of subject and object (see, e.g., Appadurai 1986; Pels 1998; Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988; also Stallybrass 1998, 2002).

⁵ I thank an anonymous reviewer for help in clarifying this point.

⁶ Of course, “incompleteness” may be seen as an inevitable way of living in and theorizing about the world, even a way of doing so that opens new political potential (Deleuze 1995, 1997; Biehl and Locke 2010). However, as should become clear below, “incompleteness” is also a source of anxiety, presenting the potential to reshape the past by altering the future.

⁷ For more details on this displacement, see Bryant 2012b.

⁸ Unlike murders of the period, neither Greek Cypriots nor Turkish Cypriots have suggested that persons outside their own villages were responsible for this looting and destruction. In some cases, Greek Cypriots who did not participate in this destruction told their former Turkish Cypriot neighbors who had committed the acts, when those neighbors returned after 1958 to find their homes in ruin. After the initial plunder, many of the houses appear to have become ruins that were subject to various forms of careless or thoughtless damage afterwards. For instance, in Lapithos the two mosques were plundered, and one Greek Cypriot who was a teenager at the time told me that one of the ruined mosques became a meeting-place for teenager lovers, while he witnessed one boy burning the *mihrab*, or pulpit.

⁹ Although Turkish Cypriots proclaimed the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983, it remains unrecognized by any country besides Turkey.

¹⁰ For an explanation of this system, see Scott 1998 as well as my Bryant 2010.

¹¹ Although there were certain voices, primarily on the left,

¹² On the court cases themselves, see Özersay and Gürel 2008.

¹³ “[T]here exists no historical community that has not been born out of a relation that can, without hesitation, best be likened to war. What we celebrate under the title of founding events are, essentially, acts of violence legitimated after the fact by a precarious state of right” (Ricoeur 2004: 79; see also Ricoeur 2010: 25).

¹⁴ For an extensive discussion of the opening, see Bryant 2010.

¹⁵ A word in the Turkish Cypriot dialect used to refer to a Greek woman. It derives from the Greek *kyria*, meaning woman or lady.

¹⁶ Readers of Levinas will recognize here a reference to his use of the door as symbol of welcome, and certainly my reading of belonging and time has been much influenced by Levinas’ work. In particular, Levinas’ critique of the primordial rootedness of Heidegger’s “homeliness” (1996) allows for a reading of the home that takes into account the presence, and welcome, of the other (see also Gauthier 2011).