



'A Bees Incident' is based on a visit conducted in May 2013 into the UN controlled buffer zone that separates Cyprus in a northern and southern part.

The buffer zone cuts through the island, being in some places only a few meters wide while spanning over a few kilometres in other areas. As recorded by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, 'its northern and southern limits are the lines where the belligerents stood following the ceasefire of 16 August 1974'.

Within the confines of this 'no man's land', official strict regulations and policies coexist along with the specific individuals assigned to administrate its control and the local civic actors claiming and occasionally renegotiating its 'terms of use'. Our interest lies in investigating the wider frame of social, political and economical relationships between the different groups' activities intersecting in the buffer zone while at the same time evaluating the potential contained in singular incidents as meaningful forms of exceptions or anomalies, disrupting the dead zones' ostensible neutrality.

Our video work traces a minimal incident, one of the many conflictual events resulting from the civil agricultural activities interacting with the presence of foreign troops on the divided island. Such minor conflicts and complaints normally surpass public awareness, as physical access to the buffer zone is highly restricted, and so is the flow of information regarding any activities within.

However, in this case—hereby named 'The Bees Incident'—accounts on an accident involving a bees swarm attacking a national guard soldier on sentry duty at one of the buffer zone 'gateways' leaked into the media sphere of the island, covering a partial aspect of the occurrence. Upon further investigation, different fragments and conflicting perspectives on the incident emerged.

The work seeks to trace and confront the multiple viewpoints and accounts of the different actors involved in the incident, incorporating the hypotheses, the doubts and uncertainties as an integral part of the narrative in construction. It questions the ontological status of the event as such, showing it as an ambiguous amalgam: a construct of consciousness and unconsciousness, narration and diffusion, of politics and ideology, of reality and fiction, contingency and causality.

By reducing the scale of observation and focusing on this singular incident in the buffer zone, we want to consider its value as a triggering event for addressing and questioning side-aspects of the ethno-national conflict and the management of the status quo in Cyprus.

The layered and obscured account that unfolds through the multiple recounting of a story leads to a broader reflection on micro-history and the validity of the historical narrative. It inquires as to the possible relations between the individual and the collective ontological mode, seeking to surpass the morbid political fractions petrified in the latter.

Can the isolated and fragmented story open imaginative passageways towards an alternative projection, towards subversive forms of communality as opposed to the commonplace function of the buffer zone as one of reducing shock by avoiding contact? And can the natural space of the buffer zone and its non-human agents be respected as stakeholders within this future process of becoming?

Naomi Hennig - Eleni Mouzourou, Sept 2013





The incident (if not the event, the socio-drama) exists in repetition, regularity, multitude, and there is no way of saying absolutely whether its level is quite without fertility or scientific value. It must be given closer examination.

Historical knowledge obviously, involves the construction of documentary series. Less obvious is the attitude that the historian must assume in regard to the anomalies that crop up in the documentation. Furet proposed ignoring them, observing that the hapax legomenon (that which is documentarily unique) is not usable in the perspective of serial history. But the hapax legomenon, strictly speaking, does not exist. Any document, even the most anomalous, can be inserted into a series. In addition, it can, if properly analyzed, shed light on still-broader documentary series.

There are people who imagine in good faith that a document can be the expression of reality... As if a document could express something different from itself:... A document is a fact. The battle is another fact (an infinity of other facts). The two cannot make one... The man who acts is a fact. And the man who narrates is another fact... Every piece of evidence provides testimony only of itself; of its proper moment, of its proper origin, of its proper end, and of nothing else...

The direction of an action to one and the same end is that which is called consent. [...] The experience we have of certain living creatures that continually live in such good order and government, for their common benefit, is in that little creature the bee, which is therefore reckoned amongst animalia politica.

VIDEO

Four channel installation on monitors, dimensions variable
- A Beekeepers Account, 2:17 min
- A News Report, 2:11 min
- A Complaint, 2:35 min
- Defensive Behaviour, 3:11 min

CREDITS

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Audio text sources:

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Defensive Behaviour of Honey Bees:

Organization, Genetics and Comparisons with other Bees.

by Michael D. Breed, Ernesto Guzmán-Novoa, and Greg J. Hunt
Defensive Behaviour of the Honeybee Apis Mellifera Cypria against Vespa Orientalis, by Alexandros Papachristoforou

Translations: Antonia Mouzourou

LEAFLET

Image sources:

A bee probe, about 20 times magnified

in: *Aus dem Leben der Bienen*, Dr. Karl von Frisch, 1931
www.flashearth.com

Video still, N. Hennig - E. Mouzourou

Bee City, Paul F. Moss & Thelma Schnee, 1951, Prelinger Archives

References (left page):

- Fernand Braudel, *History and Sociology*

- C. Ginzburg, *Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It*

- Renato Serra, *Partenza di un gruppo di soldati per la Libia*

Quoted in: *Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It*
Carlo Ginzburg, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 20, No. 1. (Autumn, 1993)

- Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, 1640

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