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**Censorship in the Arts:  
The Case of George Gavriel's Paintings**

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Η παρούσα πτυχιακή εργασία υποβλήθηκε προς μερική εκπλήρωση των απαιτήσεων για απόκτηση πτυχιακού τίτλου σπουδών στην Παρασκευή Χατζηπιερή από τη Σχολή Ανθρωπιστικών Σπουδών του Ανοικτού Πανεπιστημίου Κύπρου.

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# Abstract

This work is an initial attempt to approach censorship and national identity in Cyprus via studying the case of the artist and high-school principal Giorgos Gavriel, who shared his paintings on Facebook in September 2020. By depicting controversial figures of Cypriot society being, among others, urinated and defecated upon, Gavriel's paintings and their social media dissemination provoked social and political turmoil, followed by a disciplinary procedure against him, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Gavriel's case is discussed via literature review and visual analysis methodologies, and conclusions related to censorship and national identity in Cyprus are drawn.

# Keywords

Censorship, national identity, Giorgos Gavriel, obscenity

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## Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	3
<b>Keywords</b> .....	3
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	3
Chapter 1 .....	5
<b>Introduction</b> .....	5
<b>1.1 General Introduction of Giorgos Gavriel and his censored artwork</b> .....	5
<b>1.2 Research Questions</b> .....	6
<b>1.3 Methodology and Limitations</b> .....	6
Chapter 2:.....	9
<b>Literature Review on censorship and national identity, with a focus on Cyprus</b> .....	9
<b>Censorship and its types</b> .....	9
<b>From Socrates to Gavriel: famous cases of censorship</b> .....	12
<b>Censoring Obscenity and Excrement</b> .....	14
<b>Censoring and national identity</b> .....	16
<b>The National Identity in Cyprus: a brief overview</b> .....	19
Chapter 3:.....	25
<b>The Case of Giorgos Gavriel</b> .....	25
<b>The chronicle: Giorgos Gavriel and his facebook posts of his art</b> .....	25
<b>Visual Analysis</b> .....	27
<b>Painting 1: Man urinating on Digenis' statue</b> .....	28
<b>Painting 2: Dog defecating on Digenis' statue</b> .....	30
<b>Painting 3: Dog urinating on Archbishop holding a mobile phone</b> .....	31
<b>Discussion</b> .....	32
Chapter 4.....	35
<b>Conclusions and Future Work</b> .....	35
Bibliography .....	36

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 General Introduction of Giorgos Gavriel and his censored artwork

Censorship in the arts might be considered anachronistic to Western liberal societies, however, its rare occurrences prove otherwise. The action is usually considered to come in the form of a prohibition of an artwork by the government, but a closer look at each different occurrence of censorship can reveal a lot about the politics, history, and the agenda of a nation. There are different reasons behind censoring an artwork but the most common are usually blasphemy, obscenity, and offense. This paper will examine the social and political aspects of a specific occurrence of censorship in the arts that happened in Cyprus, the case of Giorgos Gavriel, and how this case was used by the government to establish its national identity ideology.

In September 2020, Giorgos Gavriel, a high-school principal, shared on his Facebook account a series of his latest paintings depicting controversial figures of Cypriot society being, among others, urinated and defecated upon. In the following days, these artworks were widely shared across social platforms, and quickly picked up by the broader media. The controversy surrounding them split Cypriot public opinion in two, with half arguing that the images were obscene and either the artworks or Gavriel himself should be censored and the other taking a stark stance against any kind of censorship. The ruling government at the time took the side of those who found the images obscene and attempted to censor Gavriel (Antonopoulos,2021).

The attempted censoring of the artist himself as a high school principal was justified by claiming the artworks did not fit within the national narrative and the national educational agenda (Lyritsas,2021). For this reason, it is important to look into the connections that can be made between governmental censorship and the rise of nationalism, and how they are used in

combination as tools by governments to remain in power. To do that, one must look into the theory of censorship and the different ways it can affect work being produced.

My personal interest in this research was sparked by my own participation in a theatre production in Cyprus. Specifically, while working as an assistant director and researcher for the theatre production *Out of Necessity* in 2021, which dealt with issues of national identity, nationalism, and critique of the current government, there was an overall feeling and fear among the participants of the play that it would have been censored. This made me realize that while creating art in Cyprus there is an intrinsic feeling of self-censorship when touching upon certain topics. The censorship of Giorgos Gavriel has come to legitimize this feeling by setting issues such as National Identity and history above the acceptable scope of an artwork.

## 1.2 Research Questions

By using the case of Giorgos Gavriel's censored Facebook-posted artworks, this research will address connections between censorship, art and perceptions of offending national identity in Cyprus. We conclude that the ruling Cypriot government utilized Gavriel's artwork and the controversy surrounding it both to divert public opinion and to rekindle nationalist sentiment in the run-up to their re-election campaign. Our approach discusses the following two research questions: (1) How the notions censorship and national identity intertwine in modern-day Cyprus? and (2) Why Gavriel's artwork shared on Facebook was deemed by the Cypriot government offensive enough to be censored? We have approached these questions with the following methodology.

## 1.3 Methodology and Limitations

In terms of methodology, this worked followed the following approach. To address the first research question (i.e. How the notions censorship and national identity intertwine in modern-day Cyprus?) we applied the literature review methodology (ch.2) , focusing on the central concepts of the case study, i.e. censorship (including types of censorship and a brief history of famous

ensorship cases) the notions of obscenity and excrement in censorship, and the national identity in Cyprus as revealed in its historical route in the last few centuries, especially within the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the concepts of Helleno-centricism and Cypriot-centricism. To address the second research question (i.e. Why Gavriel's artwork shared on Facebook was deemed by the Cypriot government offensive enough to be censored?), we applied a visual analysis on three Gavriel's artworks (ch. 4) and discussed observations taking into account the modern-day Cypriot political context.

For the visual analysis, this work has been inspired by the Panofsky method, which we attempted to apply. Panofsky (1955) defined iconography as "that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form" (26). In other words, in Panofsky's method, the meaning of a visual artifact can be extracted through the interpretation of the different symbols and signs in the image to its contemporary time (Rose, 2016, p.199). The method proposed splits the visual analysis and interpretation into three levels of analysis: pre-iconographic description, iconographic analysis, and lastly interpretation. In the first stage, the researcher attempts to describe the visual elements of an image in a neutral descriptive way, without any attributions of meaning (Müller, 2011, p.287). The next step is an iconographical analysis where the visuals are analysed by attributing meanings to "their original temporal and spatial context" (Müller, 2011, p.287). The last step in Panofsky's Iconography is the iconological interpretation where through the thorough research and comparison of the signs and symbols found in the previous steps, meanings are constructed and attributed to "particular groups and motifs of pictures" (Müller, 2011, p.297).

In terms of limitations, we must stress that time and word-limit constraints have not allowed us to perfume more in-depth literature review on other key notions, including Helleno-centricism and Cypriot-centricism, Facebook and social media postings and impact, and the perceptions of historical / political figures as heros (or not). Also, we have not applied the content and web-analysis methodology, as initially planned, to deeper address the impact of the case study in the Cypriot and the world society, and the Panosfky method was partially applied. To the same end,

the pandemic constraints have not allowed further qualitative approaches such as interviews with the artist, the government and the public. All these comprise parts of future work (ch. 4).



# Chapter 2:

## Literature Review on censorship and national identity, with a focus on Cyprus

The notion of Censorship is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “the action of preventing part or the whole of a book, film, work of art, document, or other kinds of communication from being seen or made available to the public because it is considered to be offensive or harmful, or because it contains information that someone wishes to keep secret, often for political reasons” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). The word itself originates in Ancient Rome, where a magistrate called the censor was in charge of collecting and maintaining a register of all tax-paying citizens and their property. Apart from this, the censor oversaw overseeing public morals and conduct, giving “meaning to the term Rome” (Holquist, 2014, p.14). The censor was also in charge of clarifying which texts should be prohibited and which would therefore be destroyed. The dual role of the censor, acting both as an official who gathers information on the citizenry, as well as the one who controls the “flow of information and knowledge,” first defined the connection between censorship, power, knowledge, and surveillance (McGuigan, 2012, p.157).

### Censorship and its types

In his article *Censorship as a moment of power*, Demetris Christopoulos (2016) describes three types of censorship, each correlating to the point at which censorship occurs: (1) self-censorship, (2) preventive censorship, and (3) repressive censorship. Self-censorship takes place before an artwork or text has been created and is imposed by the creator themselves, either consciously or unconsciously. Christopoulos (2014) argues that ‘self-censorship is defined as a process during which the creator has consciously censored themselves due to external circumstances’ (296). Preventive censorship happens between public and private when the work is still being created before it reaches the public. This type of censorship is commonly found in authoritarian and

totalitarian states. Power intervenes at the time of the creation of the work before it has been published, and censors it in the name of the public morals or the community or for the safety of the creator (Christopoulos, 2014, 296). Repressive censorship occurs when an artwork, text, or other information is prohibited after it has already been expressed or published. This type of censorship is rarely found in contemporary liberal democracies as it is seen as blatantly oppressive. Christopoulos (2016) argues that power is inherently inclined to censor works of art and free speech, something which becomes more frequent in periods of political turmoil.

While Christopoulos identifies three types of censorship, Sue Curry Jansen distinguishes censorship into “constituent” and “regulative” (155). According to McGuigan, “[r]egulative censorship is deliberately prohibitive and official”. It is a type of censorship that is manifested in an obvious way by an institution of power, such as the banning of certain texts by the Catholic Church (Mc Guigan, 2011, p. 155). On the other hand, constitutive censorship refers to certain rules of discourse established by a community in order to function socially. Constitutive censorship relates partly with the non-deliberate self-censorship produced by the cultural subconscious created by societal norms. It is a fundamental way of censorship that is difficult to abolish or pin down since it is precisely based on the basic operations of a society's discourse. The issue that Curry Jansen poses is the difficulty in demonstrating “how regulative modes of censorship touch upon the deep mechanisms of constituent censorship thereby exercising much greater control than overt prohibition[.]”(156). In other words, how apparent prohibitive censorship connects with the deeply rooted, “invisible” modes of censorship that exist within a society.

Constitutive censorship and self-censorship are part of what some theorists call “New Censorship Theory”. The two key theorists that are credited as setting the ground for this new way of viewing censorship are Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Foucault’s studies concerning the concept of power show that power is exercised in more subconscious ways than “juridical-political”. “[C]onstituted and exercised by normative discourses,” these dominant discourses, while generating knowledge and what seems to be “truth,” also eliminate “other possibilities in terms of what can be said and by whom, in order to assure the cohesion of the social body” (Rosenfeld,

2001, 126). This is related to the concept of the *Panopticon*, a technical apparatus designed in the 18th century where guards “could see into the prisoners' cells without the prisoners seeing them, thus putting into effect an asymmetrical and efficient means of ocular power” (McGuigan, 2012, p. 157). Foucault argues that the effect of the Panopticon is to “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (McGuigan, 2012, p.157). This form of power is exercised subconsciously creating a limit between what is acceptable to express and what is not.

Even though Foucault avoids labelling this kind of control as “censorship” Pierre Bourdieu (1981) touches upon the issue in his essay *Censorship and the Imposition of Thought*. For him, the “non-regulative form of structural censorship [...] is the more profound form of domination within modern society because it results in largely unconscious self-censorship” (Rosenfeld, 2001, p.127). Drawing on the theory of Marxism, Bourdieu tries to find ways in which texts are produced and subsequently limited. As Rosenfeld (2001) explains, analysing “the form and content of any text or statement depends in good part on understanding not only the rules of access within that field but also which expressions and ways of speaking are valued[...] over others within the specific field to which the text or statement belongs” (127). This means that constitutive or structural censorship “depends on the conjunction[...] of market conditions with formal norms”.

What both theorists agree on is that when there is a decline in overt, regulative censorship where the state no longer uses excessive and obvious measures and prohibitions, there is a rise in constitutive censorship, a phenomenon which is most present in liberal Post-Enlightenment societies (Rosenfeld, 2001).

Mary Devereaux, in her essay, *Protected Space: Politics, Censorship and the Arts*, tries to approach the subject of censorship from a philosophical point of view, placing it into the context of the Culture Wars which emerged in the United States in 1993. Devereaux claims that battles fought over censored works of art “are driven by a theoretical conflict between two opposing conceptions of art”. The first conception sees art as something with an intrinsic value, in which both the work itself and the artist who produces it “can be guaranteed protection from government and other

forms of outside interference". The second conception sees the value of art as something directly connected to ideology, which cannot be evaluated without considering its political aspects. Devereaux then concludes that the conflict lies directly "between political and non-political conceptions of art" (Devereaux, 2013, pp. 208-209).

Similarly, in his essay *Art, Religion, and Censorship*, Stavros Tsakyrakis (2008) also identifies an ontological conflict that causes the censoring of arts, but in which the conflict lies between morals and the liberal state. Taking religion as one of the main institutions accountable for art censorship, Tsakyrakis argues that the claim of "taking offense" made often by the latter in the view of an "offensive" artwork is used as a pretext. He explains that it is not possible for individuals who claim that an artwork "offended their religion and their personality" to truly have their faith at stake just by viewing an artwork. Thus, he concludes, these 'religious' people are not worried about whether viewing a specific artwork can put their faith at stake but whether such artwork can influence the "weaker" faith of other people. Thus, by censoring an artwork to "protect" other people from it, the whole idea of individual freedom and consequently democracy is at stake (Tsakyrakis, 2008, p. 26).

## **From Socrates to Gavriel: famous cases of censorship**

Censorship is a timeless phenomenon. Perhaps one of the most notorious cases of censorship in the ancient world is the trial of Socrates in 399 BCE. Even though the city state of Ancient Athens was known for its democracy and freedom of speech, Socrates was condemned to death by the majority of the citizens for corrupting the youth with his ideas. Socrates never wrote any of his teachings, he preferred to orally teach through methods of dialectics. Thus, in order to effectively censor his teachings, the Athenian city-state had to censor his own existence. What is interesting in this case is that Athens did not have a specific law on censorship; on the contrary, the right of free speech especially on political matters, called *parrhesia*, was something the Athenians were proud of in relation to the other city states. However, in the case of Socrates the socio-political factors of the time resulted in viewing him as a threat to democracy, serving thus as a scapegoat who was partly responsible for the failures of the city-state. More specifically, Socrates was

accused of not believing in the gods of the city and instead introduced new gods to the public, corrupting the youth. The year of the trial, 399 BCE, the city state of Athens saw a decline in its power, since it was defeated by Sparta. It had lost the Athenian maritime empire, there was a civil war and a destructive revolution. Athens' failure was attributed to the displeasure of gods thus when Socrates was accused of promoting impiety to the citizens, he was seen as a threat to the city-state (Lewis, 2001, 2073-2274). The Socrates case of censorship shows a pattern that can still be observed in contemporary times. Socrates was used as a scapegoat, to justify the failure of the city state. In the same way in contemporary societies, institutions of power such as government or the church, use censorship not only to silence the creator of the censored content, but also to polarize the society and divert their own responsibilities in current matters.

Even though free speech was present as a concept since Ancient Greece in the form of *parrhesia*, the French Revolution and the European Age of Enlightenment constituted it as a prerequisite for most constitutions of liberal states (Rosenfeld, 2001, p.117). According to Israel (2011), the Enlightenment is divided into radical and moderate Enlightenment. Radical Enlightenment supports that truth and enlightenment should be accessible and available to all men in society. On the contrary, Moderate Enlightenment, as expressed by Voltaire, supports that "the vast majority of humanity [...] could not and indeed should not be enlightened[.]" (52). Stanley Fish (1994) in his article, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech and It's a Good Thing*, argues that true free speech cannot exist since "all affirmations of freedom of expression" are dependant "on an exception that [...] carves out the space in which expressions can then emerge" (103). He continues, arguing that restriction gives assertion to what is meaningless or wrong to say (p.104). McGuigan (2012) connects Fish with poet John Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644), one of the most influential texts on free speech and censorship. *Areopagitica* is a pamphlet written by John Milton in 1644, which "celebrates the vitality of books and condemns their destruction" (British Library). Milton argues against censorship by claiming that people "should be trusted to read different ideas in print and use reason to choose between them, rather than having temptation removed through censorship" (British Library). It seems that like the Moderate Enlightenment, "most people were excluded from Milton's free speaking intellectual universe: the

poor and disabled, the property less and ill-educated, women, Roman Catholic, Jews and Muslims” (Mc Guigan, 2012, p.157). In light of this, Stanley Fish argues that “free speech is used to justify all manner of oppressive discourse, most notable sexist and racist discourses” (Mc Guigan,2012, p.157).

The Marxist theory also challenges the concept of free speech. Even though Marx was an advocate of the deregulation of the press, he argued that press freedom could not work in practice since press access is only granted to the wealthy and powerful. Thus, however free the press is, it will only represent the interests of the rich. Furthermore, Marx argued that state censorship could have liberating potential if it helps to “counteract or prevent the tyranny of the market” (Rosenfeld, 2012, pp.124-125).

## **Censoring Obscenity and Excrement**

The term *obscene* is frequently used in cases of censorship as the reason for an artwork to be censored. Found in several different instances in the English language, the term can be used either to express a feeling of uneasiness, aesthetic disapproval, or even amusement. In cases of censorship, it most commonly implies that someone is deeply offended by a work that is somehow related to pornography (Poole, 1982). The two basic elements that connect the term 'obscene', are 'offense' and 'pornography'. In his essay *Obscenity and Censorship*, Howard Poole (1982) argues that to be deeply offended implies disapproval. The true object of disapproval according to him, is not the specific works of pornography, such as photographs, videos, or books but instead the intentions of the pornographer who created these works, and the feeling he or she wants to incite in other people; instances of nudity, for example, are not considered inherently pornographic since they can have educational purposes. What makes specifically pornographic depictions of nudity obscene and morally disapproving, is the intention of the pornographer to use this material for entertainment. Declaring a work obscene can be used as a justification for its

censoring. This justification lies in arguing that a “commonly accepted moral principle is violated” (Poole, 1982, p. 41) by viewing a pornographic piece of work.

In the introduction of the book, *The History of Sexuality Vol.1*, Michel Foucault (1990) also discusses the connection between children and obscenity. He tries to explain the subject historically, claiming that the concept of perceiving something as obscene, started in Victorian times when sexuality was absorbed by the “conjugal family” for the sole function of reproduction. The only “locus of sexuality” that could be acknowledged was the parents’ bedroom (p. 3). Acts or words which implied sexuality or talked about sex would be reduced to silence, or forbidden by a higher power. The fact that children didn't engage in sexual activity forbade them from talking about it as well as being witnesses to it and even any indication of the topic. Foucault (1990) describes this silence over sex as a characteristic feature of repression that “operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication and admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see and nothing to know” (p. 4). Foucault, therefore, argues that repression has been the fundamental link between “power, knowledge and sexuality”. He also accredits the repression of sex to capitalism itself. He argues that sex had no position in a society where the capacity of the labour force was exploited, reducing it in this way to the minimum of reproduction.

Although obscenity is more commonly understood as something offensive to modesty or decency, usually in a sexual manner, a broader understanding includes any material that could be understood as offensive to the senses, or disgusting (McDonald, 2006). In the case of Gavriel, the claims of obscenity were largely formed around the inclusion of figures urinating and defecating. Human excrement has been considered obscene as far back as biblical times. A verse in the fifth book of the Old Testament, titled *Book of Deuteronomy*, recommends that a tribe must designate a place outside their camp to go relieve themselves, there they must “dig a hole and cover up [their] excrement. For the Lord your God moves about in your camp... Your camp must be holy so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you” (Deuteronomy: Moses. 13:23). Exhibited within this holy text, are the two basic tenants that form our understanding of excrement as obscene. Firstly, that excrement is in and of itself indecent and must be covered up,

and second that the location one chooses to relieve themselves must be separate and hidden from public view.

Excrement, faeces, urine, toilets, and their depictions have often been used as a tool by artists to undermine public opinion, shock, or offend (Embuscado, 2016). One of the most famous uses of a toilet in art, is that of Duchamp's, just over a century ago, with his artwork *The Fountain*, which was also an early example of contemporary censorship in the arts. The artwork, which takes a simple urinal and turns it on its back, was submitted for an exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists, and although not clearly rejected, was never shown as part of the public exhibit (Cabanne and Duchamp, 1987). In more contemporary cases when censorship is not invoked, controversy still follows. Chris Ofili, *Holy Virgin Mary*, a painting of the virgin that included cow dung in its materials, is one of these "quick-to-offend" artworks (Embuscado, 2016). When the painting was first exhibited in New York as part of an exhibition in the Brooklyn Museum, it created massive uproar, was vandalized, and "famously caught the ire of former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who was appalled ... calling [the painting] "sick" and offensive to the Catholic church" (Quito, 2014). Despite these responses, in the coming years, the painting was widely heralded as a masterpiece and recently sold for over 4 million dollars, suggesting that public opinion on such pieces is malleable and can shift in time.

## Censoring and national identity

In the case of Giorgos Gavriel, the artwork was censored on the premise of using obscenity and excrement to offend Cypriot national symbols. A short discussion on *nation* and *national identity* follows.

The most basic understanding of a nation is a community of people bound together by a shared collection of features, that thus forms a national identity as defined by those features. According to Verdugo (2016), "[a] Nation is a geopolitical construct [...] [in which] being a member is based



on blood, ethnicity, history, ancestry, common values, kinship and language” (3). Although what binds a nation together is often deemed more overtly political, ethnic ties often overlap. Let’s approach nation and national identity through three concepts/ school of thoughts, namely the Essentialist/Primordialist, the Constructivist or Postmodernist, and the notion of Ethno-symbolism.

The Essentialist/Primordialist school of thought views national identity as something “fixed, based on ancestry, [...] common language, history, ethnicity, and world views.” For Primordialists, nationhood originates in the distant past, usually tying back to glorious times in a nation's history which are treated as “emotional givens” (Conversi, 2006, p.15). The Essentialist/Primordialist school of thought is connected with ethnic nationalism, and primordial visions are often imposed by “nation-states” through their official education and media as the only acceptable ones. This attachment to nativity in connection to ancestry, however, fails to include different minorities or migrants that reside in their “nation-states”. So the denial of any ethnic differences that are included within a “nation-state”, has repeatedly resulted in ethnic cleansing (Conversi, 2006, p.16). The Essentialist/Primordialist school of thought has become outdated in the context of ethnic studies but is an essential lens through which we can understand the reasoning behind historical nationalistic movements.

The Constructivists/Post-Modernists view the nation as a constructed mechanism that was created by the dominant classes to manipulate the public for their own advantage. Hobsbawm and Ranger’s *Invention of Tradition* (1983), locates the construction of the nation to “ambitious social engineers” who manipulate the public feelings to keep hold of power (Conversi, 2006, p.17). Another key figure in this school of thought is Benedict Anderson whose work *Imagined Communities* has been the most cited work regarding nationalism (Antonsich and Skey, 2017). Anderson (1983) proposes his own definition of a nation as an “imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 1983, p.6). This definition is based on the idea that the members of a nation cannot meet or know all of their fellow members which indicates that the community that one feels tied to within a nation, is an imaginary one (6). For

Anderson what played a crucial role in forming these imagined communities was the mass distribution of print and media that came along with the formation of Capitalism, since it enabled the scattered populations of a nation to access the same pieces of information in the same language (Anderson, 1983). This simultaneous accumulation of information gave the feeling of a community whose members all had access to a common pool of information.

Ethno-symbolism is an approach regarding national identity, which considers both schools of thought mentioned above. Ethno-symbolism emphasizes “the role of myths, symbols, memories, values, and traditions in the formation, persistence, and change of ethnicity and nationalism” (Özkirimli, 2017, p. 143). Ethno-symbolism lies theoretically between the Essentialist and Constructivist approaches. That is exemplified through its position on historical continuity before and after the creation of a nation. Unlike the Essentialist or Primordialist school of thought, it rejects the view of “stark continuity” between the past of an ethnic group and the “modern” creation of a nation, since the “transformations wrought by modernity” are too great to ignore. However, the Ethnosymbolic approach also rejects the Constructivist or Postmodernist school of thought's position on historical continuity, by arguing that “a greater measure of continuity exists between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’, or ‘agrarian’ and industrial eras[.]” (Özkirimli, 2017, p. 144). The main advocate of the Ethno-Symbolist approach, who has also coined the term is Anthony D. Smith, who argues that the Ethno-symbolic approach can be more helpful in understanding certain aspects of nationalism in three ways. Firstly, it can help “to explain which populations are likely to start a nationalist movement under certain conditions and what the content of this movement would be Secondly, and most importantly in the current research, “it enables us to understand the important role of memories, values, myths, and symbols” (Özkirimli, 2017, p.144). Thirdly it can explain the reason behind the widespread popular support of nationalism (Smith, 1996, p.362).

## The National Identity in Cyprus: a brief overview

To add to the discussion on identity-oriented censoring and to focus on Cyprus, we need to address the factors that can affect national identity, including social demographics, economics, political factors, and national hegemony related to a government's regime (Verdugo, 2016). In the case of Cyprus, all four aspects have influenced how national identity is perceived, with national hegemony and political factors being the most prominent. To understand the dominant perspectives on the national identity of the island, one must investigate the main historical events that have shaped the different national identities within it. To this end, an overview of the recent history of the island concerning the dominant ideologies on national identities of each period follows.

Nationalism in Cyprus has shaped the major historical events that changed the island's political status quo drastically in the 20th century. Cyprus, an island known internationally for its political conflicts, has had a turbulent contemporary history crucial to examining the shifting ideologies of national identity on the island. After three centuries of being part of the Ottoman Empire, Cyprus was put under British rule in 1878. At that time, there was no national movement present on the island; there was however an "ethno-national awareness among the Greek Cypriot elite" (Peristianis, 2008, p. 130). This ethno-national awareness was rising in connection with the 19th-century process of *the Megali Idea*, an irredentist strategy of the newly formed Greek Kingdom. This political program aimed to export Greek nationalist ideas to the periphery of the Greek Orthodox world, which were promoted mainly through "the educational network, the consulates, the cultural associations, and the press" (Peristianis, 2008, p.131). As Peristianis (2008) argues the majority of local society shared a common language, as well as myths, memories, and traditions with Greece, which gave ample ground for the imported nationalistic ideas from mainland Greece to thrive. Thus, through a series of actions, including the export of Greek teachers to the Cypriot educational system and the commemoration of Greek national celebrations, as well as parades,

the sense of a common historical continuity between the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the island and the mainland was strengthened, creating a shared image of a glorious Hellenic past (Peristianis, 2008). The nationalist agenda of the Greek motherland where Greek Cypriots were seen as descendants of the Ancient Greeks, led to the creation of the Unification movement (*Enosis*) on the island which strove for the union of Cyprus with Greece. Furthermore, under British colonial rule, the Church of Cyprus, which was the only local organized body of authority, endorsed the Greek Cypriot nationalist ideology greatly influencing the largely religious populous of the island. The Unification movement could be interpreted as using the Essentialist ideologies of national identity, where Greece served as the imagined community that which Greek Cypriots belonged. This movement of national identity has been termed as the Hellenocentric one (Spanou, 2020).

In the 1920s as a reaction to *Enosis*, a Cyprocentric approach to national identity emerged which was introduced by the newly-formed leftist political parties, mainly by the Communist Party of Cyprus (KKK). The party advocated that the Greek and Turkish population of the island should unite against British imperialism, demanding an independent island that would be governed by workers-peasants (Peristianis, 2006). As for the movement of *enosis*, the party stood starkly against it since it considered it “a ploy of the Orthodox Church and the bourgeoisie to keep the masses divided and under their control” (Peristianis, 2006, p.102). Even though KKK was not very popular among the masses due to its radical anti-Church ideology, its successor in the 1940s, AKEL, quickly earned the support of the population. While it supported the cooperation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots, its position against *Enosis* was not clear. By the late 1940s, influenced by the civil war in Greece, AKEL became a keen supporter of *enosis* with a caveat, proposing that the island should first go through a period of self-governance while still a member of the British empire, and only then be allowed *enosis*. When by 1948 the prospect of self-governance failed, AKEL changed lines and began vehemently promoting immediate *Enosis*, even expelling members of the party that were pro-self-governance. Through the course of these events, the Turkish Cypriot members of the party became alienated from it (Peristianis, 2008).

In 1955, the military struggle against British colonialism (EOKA) started with the island's right nationalist forces at the helm, with Archbishop Makarios as their political leader, and General Grivas as head of the military. AKEL was excluded from the struggle, and its members under the command of General Grivas were executed as traitors since they were viewed as untrustworthy due to their previous stance against *Enosis*. At the same time, the Turkish-Cypriots who had no place in the Greek Cypriot national ideal of *Enosis* started to institute their own claim for a Turkishcentric national identity which was also based on essentialist theory and ethnic nationalism; it drew ties with the Turkish nation based on "history, language, religion and culture" (Spanou, 2020). This Turkish-centric national identity was the ideological base of the Turkish Guerilla Force, TMT, which was created to counter EOKA. Similarly, to EOKA, TMT did not see as its natural enemies only the Greek Cypriots, but also the Turkish Cypriots who did not follow its ideas. Instigated by the British colonial rulers, TMT was used as part of their strategy of divide and rule. Bolstering this tactic, the British later formed a police force exclusively staffed by Turkish Cypriots to combat EOKA members (Pollis, 1996). This resulted in the escalation of conflict and violence between the two communities. As a reaction to *Enosis*, Turkish Cypriots strove for *taksim* (meaning from Turkish: partition) which aimed for the partition of the island and the unification of its two separate parts with their corresponding motherlands of Greece and Turkey. After the struggle in 1959, the right-wing nationalistic forces who led the EOKA struggle came out triumphant, managing to abolish colonial rule (Peristianis, 2006).

In August 1960, the Republic of Cyprus was established as an independent state with a constitution that included both communities on the island. In the first years of the Republic of Cyprus, the Hellenocentric view on national identity continued to be prominent, with the goal of *Enosis* unabandoned. At the time, the declaration of the Republic was still seen as a step towards a union with Greece. The Turkish Cypriot community, on the other hand, was satisfied by the constitution, since it offered them equal representation compared to the size of their community. The state functioned in its original constitutional form for three years until in 1963 waves of interethnic violence broke throughout the island, as a result of the Turkish Cypriot community's refusal to

uphold the amendments to the constitution that president Makarios proposed (Pollis, 1996; Papadakis et al, 2006).

While the bi-communal violence continued the Greek-Cypriots leaned heavily on the Hellenocentric national identity by continuing to promote the nationalist education in schools. Following the 1967 military coup in Greece, where the military dictatorship of Junta took power, the goal of *enosis* was no longer pursued by the Cypriot government, as it was declared by Archbishop Makarios as an “[un]realizable goal”. Two camps were formed in the Greek community of the island: a minority of “enosists” who still believed in an “immediate union with Greece at whatever costs” and the supporters of the independent state (Peristianis, 2006, p.103). The two camps were divided into Enotikoi/ Grivikoi (pro-union/ pro-Grivas) and Anexartisiakoi/ Makariakoi (independists/ pro-Makarios), named after their leaders.

In 1974, the extreme-right Grivas-supporters who were still pro-*enosis* conducted with the cooperation of the Greek military junta a coup-d’état to overthrow president Archbishop Makarios. Five days after the Greek-staged coup, Turkey invaded Cyprus on the grounds of restoring peace on the island. The Greek junta failed to defend the island from the Turkish invasion, and together with the coup was considered responsible for the Turkish invasion and occupation of the island, and thus its contributors were deemed as traitors (Pollis, 1996). The idea of *Enosis* and its followers were connected and seen as responsible for the events of 1974: the coup, the demolition of democracy, the invasion, the displacement of the population, and the division of the island in two (Mavratsas, 1998).

From 1974 until the mid-1980s, the Cypriot-centric national identity rose among the population and became the dominant national identity ideology of the Republic of Cyprus. The right-wing party (DISY) which endorsed the enosists and maintained the Hellenocentric national identity ideology, was kept out of power for many years. The goal of *Enosis* was replaced with the goal of reunification, stressing thus the symbols of the independent state, such as the Cypriot National Flag and the National Holiday for Cypriot Independence (Mavratsas, 1998). The dominance of

Hellenocentric national identity however, had a comeback in the 1980s. One of the key reasons was that nine years after the Turkish invasion, in 1983, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was established, a state only recognized internationally by Turkey, making it dependent financially and internationally on Turkey (Papadakis et al., 2006). The Greek Cypriots had started revisiting the idea of the Hellenocentric National Identity since on the one hand Greece was seen as the only ally they had against Turkey, and on the other hand, the cultural connection with Greece served as a form of resistance to the globalized world. Furthermore, in 1993 the right-wing DISY won the presidential elections with the agenda that Cyprus will be part of the European Union. This agenda was backed by the argument that Cypriots belong to the European Union since their Greek ancestors served as the backbone of the Western Civilization (Peristianis, 2006). Along with it, the election of DISY brought back the debate between Helleno-centric and Cypriot-centric national identity. While in power, the right-wing DISY tried to revive the Helleno-centric national identity, by reminding Cypriots of their glorious Greek ancestry and by diverting the responsibility of the events of 1974 to the Greek junta and the enemies of Greece. All the while, the Cypriot-centric ideology side held their stance that Helleno-centric nationalism was responsible for the events of 1974 (Mavratsas, 1998).

The revival of the Helleno-centric nationalism did not bring with it the pursuit of union with Greece, it did however revive Greek nationalism on the island and reframed the interpretation of recent historical events. The figure of General Grivas became the object of this re-interpretation. The Hellenocentric national identity side focused on the role of Grivas as the leader of EOKA, by presenting him “as undeniably the most important hero of Greek-Cypriot history” (Mavratsas, 1998, p. 132). Even going as far as supporting that Grivas had never cooperated with the Greek military junta and had no involvement in the coup. The Cypriot-centric side, which was mainly expressed through AKEL, responded to the revival of Grivas by reminding the public that he was responsible for the murders of communists, and was directly related to the demolition of Cypriot sovereignty and democracy (Mavratsas, 1998). The debate concerning Grivas is still active between the two sides. Statues of him are still erected to this day and he is still being promoted through the national education as the most important Greek-Cypriot hero (Dialogos, 2017).

The right-wing DISY managed to fulfil its agenda, and Cyprus entered the EU in May 2004. A few days before entering, the biggest international effort to solve the Cyprus problem took place in the form of a referendum for the constitutional arrangement known as The Annan Plan. Even though the plan was accepted by the majority of the Turkish Cypriots (66 percent) it was rejected by the majority (76 percent) of the Greek Cypriots (Papadakis et al, 2006). It seems that in the historical course of events the Helleno-centric national identity was more dominant among the population than its counterpart, the Cypriot-centric national identity. The latter is seen by a part of the population as the hope for peace since it appears to be the only way in which the island can be reunified. The far right-wing party ELAM (National People's Front) was originally formed in 2008 as a sub-division of the Greek neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn but has since then splintered off into its own party in its own right. Both share similar populist and ethnocentric ideals, while both have been accused of racism and implicated in acts of violence, especially against migrant communities (Ioannou, 2022)

The spread of Helleno-centric national identity in Cyprus is intertwined with the institution of the Church of Cyprus. During the British Colonial rule (1878-1960), it was the only organized body of authority on the island that represented the Greek Cypriots. Hence, its role was crucial in spreading the irredentist Greek nationalist ideas among the Greek Cypriots. The Church was at the forefront of the opposition against colonial rule and made the ideology of the struggle to carry its own ideology: "anti-communist, Greek, and Christian-Orthodox" (Novo, 2013). In the years since the death of Archbishop Makarios (1977), the Church's direct political power has weakened, although it still maintains an important "symbolic, and ideological role, with large commercial interests," and a stronghold on the Greek-Cypriot educational system (Trimikliniotis, 2012). Greek-Orthodox Christianity is the only religion taught as part of religious studies in public schools, "[consisting] of a purely doctrinal presentation from the point of view of the Orthodox Church (Emilianides, 2011).



# Chapter 3:

## The Case of Giorgos Gavriel

### The chronicle: Giorgos Gavriel and his facebook posts of his art

In August and September 2020, Giorgos Gavriel, a Greek-Cypriot artist, and a high school principal uploaded on his personal Facebook page photographs of some of his latest artworks.<sup>1</sup> The paintings depicted characteristic figures of Cypriot society such as the proclaimed national hero Grivas, the President of the Republic, the Archbishop, and Jesus Christ in controversial settings (Gavriel, 2020). Specifically, Jesus Christ is depicted naked, as a refugee in a Cypriot refugee camp and as a left-wing football team fan. In two other paintings, a dog is depicted urinating on the Archbishop and a policeman respectively. The statue of the right-wing national hero Georgios Grivas Digenis is portrayed in two paintings where in the first one a dog is defecating on it, and in the second the artist himself is urinating on it (figure 1). What followed, could seem anachronistic to the western audiences, however in the island-state of Cyprus state censorship in the arts is not an uncommon phenomenon to this day (Kyprianidou, 2018).

The artworks were soon discovered by conservative groups on social media platforms (eg. Facebook) and were widely shared and commented upon as blasphemous, provocative, anti-Greek, and offensive (Nomikos, 2020). Moving out of the domain of social media, the controversy surrounding the artworks broadly divided the Cypriot public as well as the political scene into two opposing sides, inciting a dispute on the limits of freedom of speech. Artists' Unions began

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<sup>1</sup> The choice of Facebook by George Gavriel to exhibit his artworks is not surprising. As Horváth(2014) explains, Facebook has changed the way internet works as a public sphere. While becoming the reflection of society, Facebook works as a handy tool for artists who want to spread their social message to a big number of viewers. Social media companies have recognised their role as being platforms of free speech even though their content moderation, the speech curation, as well as the restrictions of certain content, present considerable limits to their so-called free speech(Brannon,2019).

demonstrating against any possible dismissal of Gavriel as a high school principal (Shkurko, 2020). A larger part of the population, which included figures such as the current Archbishop and even the local Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights, believed that Gavriel had exceeded the limits of freedom of speech and made the case that he had offended “the right for Christians to perform their religion” (KYPE, 2020). The main argument against Gavriel was that, according to the Archbishop, “he had no place in the Education of [the] country” because his paintings were obscene and directly offended the institutions of the state (Kathimerini, 2020b).

This was the first time Gavriel’s artworks were the subject of such controversies since throughout his long career as an artist he had never exhibited any artworks that could be considered provocative. While working as an art teacher in the public education system he also had a total of thirteen personal exhibitions and was part of a lot group exhibitions in Cyprus and abroad. As it was described in the press release of his last exhibition before exhibiting the controversial artworks on Facebook, his work is characterised by the simplicity and balance of the elements of the painting where he does not seek to impress with cheap demonstrations of originality or with useless experimentation (Kathimerini,2020a). His exhibition “Antikatoptrismoï” (Reflections) earlier in 2020, had as a main subject real landscapes from Cyprus juxtaposed in surrealist settings. The controversial artworks that were exhibited initially on Facebook, were also part of his exhibition called “Pro-Shedia”(Drafts) which were exhibited in Gallery Gloria in Nicosia, on October 2020, one month after their initial release on Facebook. Even though Gavriel had a plenitude of exhibitions in his portfolio, what really mattered in this case of censorship was his profession as an art teacher and a high school principal in the public school educational system.

Since the artworks themselves could not be prosecuted, a disciplinary procedure was followed by the Ministry to determine whether or not Gavriel was to keep his position as a high school principal where he is expected to promote the educational goals of the ministry, such as monastery visits, the celebration of national days and national heroes (Lyritsas, 2021). The disciplinary procedure, which would decide on his possible dismissal, was aborted following the intervention of the

European Parliament's president of the Committee of Education and Culture, Sabine Verhoeven (Antonopoulos, 2021).

One might wonder, what was so offensive about the artworks that they could trigger such a response from both large swaths of the public and the state. To understand why this issue caused such turmoil one must take a closer look at the different institutions that influenced Cypriot society throughout its history, and their depiction in Gavriel's artworks.

## Visual Analysis

The research part of this thesis will focus in investigating the visual elements and symbols in three key artworks by Gavriel using Panofsky's method of iconographic analysis. The first painting (figure 1) that will be analysed is one depicting the artist urinating on the statue of Georgios Grivas Digenis, the second (figure 2) is a painting of a dog defecating on an identical statue, and the third (figure 3) depicts a dog urinating on the Greek-Orthodox Archbishop of Cyprus holding a smartphone. To analyse the artwork, this research partially follows Panofsky's iconographic method, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Although this sort of analysis can be structured in a linear trajectory, it is best to take a more holistic approach, weaving back and forth through descriptions, analysis, and interpretation.

## Painting 1: Man urinating on Digenis' statue



The first image under examination depicts a man urinating on a statue of another man while in the background a flag is visible on a white mountain (figure 1). Taking with these four basic elements into account, the statue of the controversial national hero Georgios Grivas Digenis, the person urinating on the statue (the artist Gavriel himself), the Pentadaktylos mountain range, and the flag of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in the backdrop, I will examine the symbolic meanings portrayed in the painting and their relations.

Starting with the statue, the artist's choice to render Grivas as such, rather than his actual personage, is crucial. Considering the recent re-emergence of Grivas as a national hero and the wave of monuments erected to commemorate him (Dialogos, 2017), the defacing of his statue displays not only a disdain for his actions but also for the exploitation of his image as a national symbol by the ideological followers of the Hellenocentric National Identity. However, it could be also be interpreted that the decision to urinate on a statue and not on a representation of an

“alive” Grivas was done so not to further offend the part of the population by whom he is considered a national hero.

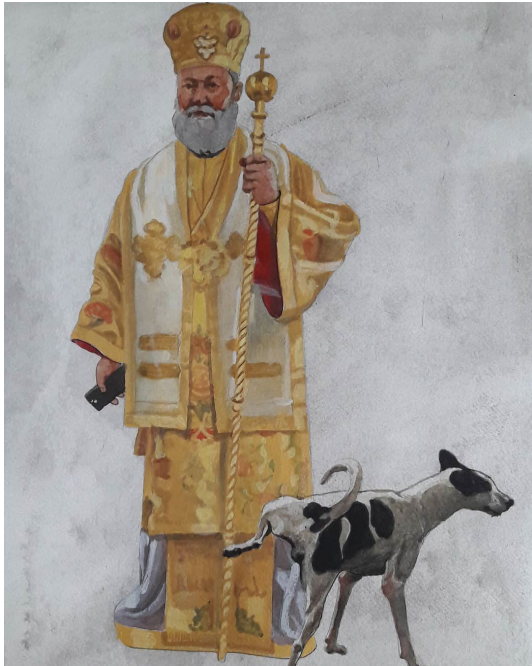
The inclusion of the TRNC flag in the backdrop, brings into focus the way Grivas' paramilitary organisation and ideology were conducive to the invasion of 1974, and by extension the partition of the island. As mentioned in chapter 3.2, EOKA B', the Grivas-led organization was widely held responsible for the events of 1974 by initiating them through the coup. By connecting these two symbols, Grivas and the TRNC flag, it could be said that Gavriel urges the viewer to be reminded of the link between Grivas and the ongoing partition of the island, even though there is an ongoing debate to whether Grivas was responsible or not for the events of 1974 (Mavratsas, 1998). It is also important to mention that the specific flag depicted is real, and not just a symbol. The Pentadaktylos mountain range is now part of the territory of the TRNC, and the flag painted in red and white dye across it was formed in the 1980s and is still maintained to this day. The flag is just under half a kilometre across and is considered the largest flag in the world (NCI, 2022). The mountain and flag are both clearly visible from the capital of Cyprus, Nicosia, and the surrounding villages and countryside, and are seen as symbols and painful reminders of the invasion and division of the island. Both the statue and the specific flag can be read as nationalist symbols for opposing segments of the Cypriot public, with the statue holding importance for the nationalists of the Hellenocentric national identity and the flag for nationalists of the Turkishcentric national identity of the island. It could be said that the use of that specific flag is a comment on the ways nationalist tendencies in either of the two main segments of the Cypriot population have more often than not provoked similar ones in the other. This element ties back to the divide and rule strategy imposed by the British during Colonial rule, as mentioned in chapter 3.2. By depicting himself as the person urinating on the statue, Gavriel expresses both his own stance against Hellenocentric national identity and by extension to the Cypriot right and extreme right wing ideology. In this way, Gavriel positions himself on the Cypriotcentric side of national identity for which Grivas and in general the nationalism that was colliding with the Hellenocentric national identity that he stood for, is held responsible and accountable for the division of Cyprus.

## Painting 2: Dog defecating on Digenis' statue



With the second painting (figure 2), the analysis will focus on the obscene elements of the composition, which also loop back to the first. The image consists of the same backdrop as the first sans the flag, an identical statue of Grivas, and a dog defecating on it in the place of Gavriel. The repetition of the same symbols here is noteworthy as it doubles down on the same sentiment expressed in the previous image, further emphasizing Gavriel's position. The dog defecating is a symbol that is considered obscene, as was Gavriel urinating in the previous painting. As discussed above, defecation and urination are seen as private matters and can be highly offensive. The painting of Gavriel is doubly so as he is seen urinating and nude which could be considered indecent exposure.

### Painting 3: Dog urinating on Archbishop holding a mobile phone



The third painting depicts the current Archbishop of Cyprus holding a smartphone while being urinated on by a dog. Beginning with the smartphone, Gavriel cynically comments on the corruption and commercialization underpinning the institution of the Greek-Orthodox Church in Cyprus. As mentioned before, the church in Cyprus has always been deeply rooted in the politics and education of the island, maintaining its supposed role as a harbinger of proper ethics, morals, and the Hellenocentric identity. For the Greek-Orthodox public of Cyprus, the Archbishop is seen as a holy figure, so by depicting a dog urinating his figure, Gavriel provokes the Archbishop personally, the followers of the Greek-Orthodox religion on the island, and the Hellenocentric national identity followers whose ideology is closely intertwined with the one of the Church's as explained above.

## Discussion

The kind of commentary and analysis that the artist proposes in these artworks is not uncommon in Cypriot literature or even within the media. What makes these paintings especially offensive are these two obscene elements. This made them an easy target for the groups on Facebook and the Cypriot government, as this kind of obscenity is still regarded as outrageous by a large amount of the Cypriot public. While the Facebook groups can be seen as initially acting out of their own offense, the Government's decision to double down on this sentiment largely legitimized their disapproval, further stocking these sentiments. The government officials as well as the groups on Facebook that were offended by the artwork share the ideology of Hellenocentric nationalism of Cyprus. The rise of nationalism on the island can be pinned down to different occurrences and the censoring of Gavriel can be seen as another attempt to legitimize and spread the right-wing Hellenocentric ideology (Ioannou, 2022).

On the question of why these artworks be censored, we need to take into account that since the election, the right-wing party DISY has gone through a series of scandals that have been almost unprecedented in recent Cypriot politics. In just the year preceding the case of Gavriel, DISY was widely implicated in the illegal Golden passports scandal (Pegg, 2022), exhibited xenophobia and racism in their practice in the refugee camp at Astromeritis, and seemed largely unaffected by the infamous "Red Lake" murders. One or two of these scandals alone could, in the case of many other European states, be enough to tarnish the reputation of a party inoperably. With the next parliamentary elections only a few months ahead, the party seemed to need a way to divert the attention from the above-mentioned scandals. In the context of the events preceding the case of Gavriel, it could be said that the ruling right-wing party DISY used the attempted case of censorship as a tool to provoke Hellenocentric nationalist sentiment across the island and in this way, re-establish the original connection it had with its voters. The results of the elections 8 months later showed that the ruling party had not lost much of his power after the serious political scandals. The ruling party DISY, came first in votes even with a minor drop of around 3 percent, while ultra-right wing ELAM raised around 3 percent more than they had in the previous election (Republic of



Cyprus, 2021), suggesting that a shift to even more radical nationalism has seen a rise across Cyprus.

Governments and societies censor to control and direct public by restricting access to information prohibiting certain themes, symbols, and ideas from being reproduced in art, often under the pretext of offensiveness or obscenity. Nationalism in Cyprus, can be seen as being used as a tool from the ruling class to remain in power and thus act as an ideological architect, according to Hobsbawm and Ranger's, *Invention of Tradition* (1983). Symbols of national heroes and religious figures seem to have a very important role in the creation of the nationalist agenda, as was seen in the Ethno-symbolic approach, so it is crucial for a nationalist government to defend them in a possible case of offense. The means of defence is regulatory or repressive censorship which is in the case of Gavriel was used to pinpoint the limits of free speech in the island of Cyprus. The multiple protests from artists and artists' unions on the island, have shown that this is not acceptable anymore by a big part of the public who demand that art on the island should be excluded from the right-wing government's nationalist agenda. The closer look at the National Identity history of the island indicated how dominant was Hellenocentrism among the population towards most of the years of the recent history of Cyprus. It would be impossible for Giorgos Gavriel or any artists who wanted to touch upon national topics, to publish such artworks 20 years ago, because of the fear of such censorship.

In the past years 20 years however, there is an overall sentiment in the Cypriot art scene of embracing the Cypriot-centric national identity, which is expressed through theatre plays being written and performed in the Cypriot dialect, the revival and continuation of Cypriot music, the curation of major exhibitions which constitute the importance of historical Cypriot painters, and many more (Pastellopoulos,2022). So even if Helleno-centric national identity is still quite dominant among Greek Cypriots, another big part of the population, most of it from younger generation have completely abandoned this ideology and have turned to a more Cypriot-centric approach to their own national identity. The case of Gavriel could be seen as one of the government's attempts to force Helleno-centric national identity ideology as the dominant

ideology of the Republic and re-ignite the national sentiment to their followers who were starting to lose faith towards their governance. The technique of using censorship to divert the attention from the mistakes of a governing power dates back to the case of Socrates. The recent rise however of far-right nationalism, makes the issue of censorship in the arts more current than ever, making cases as the one of Gavriel to serve as a reminder that the freedom of art and free-speech cannot be taken for granted.

# Chapter 4

## Conclusions and Future Work

Gavriel's censored painting shared on Facebook in 2020 included elements of obscenity and excrement on figures of national importance: a man urinating on Digenis' statue, a dog defecating on Digenis' statue, and a dog urinating on the Archbishop holding a mobile phone. By using visual analysis, this research attempted to indicate that the attempted censorship of Giorgos Gavriel was utilized by the government to legitimize and rekindle Helleno-centric nationalist sentiment in the run-up to their re-election campaign.

In terms of future work, more research needs to be done on these artworks, including baseline work on Helleno-centricism and Cypriot-centricism. Also, more content and web-analysis (e.g. work on newspaper articles and the web on the case), a full application of the Panofsky method for visual analysis and more qualitative research (e.g. interviews with the artist, the government, the public) will reveal more on intentions and impact. Moreover, more paintings by Giorgos Gavriel must be analysed to derive different results about censorship in Cyprus. In the same series of artworks, there are a quite a few paintings that picture Jesus Christ naked, as a refugee and as an antifascist football fan which were considered blasphemous. More research in the role that Greek Orthodox Christianity has in the Cypriot society and institutions could provide a better understanding behind the censorship of this case. Furthermore, the case could also relate to other instances of censorship cases that happened in recent years in Cyprus, e.g. the theatre production *Cock* in the village of Sotira in 2017, the confiscation of "obscene" photographs from Paola Revenioti's exhibition in Nicosia in 2014. The connections between these cases of censorship could reveal an overall rise in conservatism the past years in Cypriot society.

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