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**APPROACHING CULTURAL TRAUMA THROUGH MUSEUM EDUCATION
A PROJECT FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN ON THE ASIA MINOR CATASTROPHE**

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**ΠΡΟΣΕΓΓΙΖΟΝΤΑΣ ΤΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΙΚΟ ΤΡΑΥΜΑ
ΜΕΣΩ ΤΗΣ ΜΟΥΣΕΙΑΚΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ**

ΕΝΑ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΓΙΑ ΜΑΘΗΤΕΣ ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΟΥ ΣΧΕΤΙΚΑ ΜΕ ΤΗ ΜΙΚΡΑΣΙΑΤΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΣΤΡΟΦΗ

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο δείχνει τον τρόπο με τον οποίο οι εκθέσεις για τις «δύσκολες μνήμες» μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν στη σχολική εκπαίδευση. Πολλά μοντέρνα μουσεία δημιουργούν εκθέσεις για πολιτισμικά τραύματα, συμμετέχοντας στον διάλογο για το παρελθόν και επηρεάζοντας έτσι τη δημόσια χρήση της ιστορίας. Πώς αντιλαμβάνονται τα παιδιά τις εκθέσεις αυτές; Το άρθρο παρουσιάζει συνοπτικά κάποιες από τις οδηγίες που παρέχονται από διάφορους επιστημονικούς φορείς όσον αφορά τη διδασκαλία της εβραϊκής γενοκτονίας, του σημαντικότερου πολιτισμικού τραύματος του σύγχρονου κόσμου. Οι οδηγίες αυτές μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν για τη διδασκαλία και άλλων πολιτισμικών τραυμάτων, τόσο στο μουσείο όσο και στο σχολείο, βοηθώντας τους μαθητές να προσεγγίσουν κριτικά το παρελθόν και να αποφύγουν τον φανατισμό. Για

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τον λόγο αυτόν, προτείνεται η χρήση του μουσειακού θεάτρου, ώστε να διευκολυνθεί η ιστορική κατανόηση και να ενισχυθεί η ενσυναίσθηση προς τον «Άλλο», τόσο στο παρελθόν όσο και στο παρόν. Επωφελούμενοι από την προσέγγιση αυτή, δημιουργήσαμε ένα αντίστοιχο εκπαιδευτικό πρόγραμμα στο Μουσείο Προσφυγικού Ελληνισμού «Φιλίω Χαϊδεμένου», το οποίο παρουσιάζεται συνοπτικά στο τελευταίο μέρος του άρθρου. Το πρόγραμμα αφορούσε ένα από τα πιο σημαντικά ελληνικά πολιτισμικά τραύματα, τη Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή του 1922 και την επακόλουθη προσφυγική κρίση. Σκοπός μας ήταν η κατανόηση του Άλλου/Ξένου μέσα από τη διδασκαλία για τους Μικρασιάτες πρόσφυγες, καθώς και η ανάπτυξη της ενσυναίσθησης απέναντι στους σύγχρονους πρόσφυγες-μετανάστες. Οδηγίες για τη διδασκαλία της εβραϊκής γενοκτονίας και τεχνικές εκπαιδευτικού θεάτρου χρησιμοποιήθηκαν τόσο στο μουσείο, όσο και στη σχολική τάξη.

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ABSTRACT

The paper shows the way in which ‘difficult memory’ exhibitions can be used in school education. Many modern museums create exhibitions about cultural traumas, participating in the dialogue about the past. How do these museums exhibit traumas thus influencing the public use of history? How do they reach children? To a significant extent, these questions have been answered through the study of the most important cultural trauma of the contemporary world, the Jewish Genocide. The article briefly describes some of the guidelines provided by various institutions and scholars for teaching the Jewish Genocide. These guidelines can be used for the teaching of other cultural traumas in both schools and museums, helping students to critically understand the past and avoid fanaticism. For this purpose, I suggest that museum theatre should be employed in order to facilitate historical understanding and enhance the empathy for the historical and contemporary ‘Other’. Commenting on the benefits of this method, we created a relevant educational programme in the Museum of the Asia Minor Hellenism “Filio Chaidemenou” in Athens, which is briefly featured in the last part of the article. The programme dealt with one of the most important Greek cultural traumas, the Asia Minor Catastrophe in 1922 and the subsequent refugee crisis. Its aim was the comprehension of the Other/Stranger, through the teaching of the history of the Asia Minor refugees, and the development of empathy towards modern refugees and immigrants. Guidelines for teaching the Jewish Genocide and educational theatre techniques were used at both the museum and the classroom.

Introduction

Educators are often reluctant to teach traumatic historical events to young children. They fear that they will not be able to approach such complex issues with the appropriate emotional distance and historical accuracy. On the other hand, it is no longer possible to ignore socially important memories, especially in the “memory boom” era (Gazi 2010: 345). Museums can significantly help educators approach traumatic events. In particular, the use of museum theatre can provide the necessary tools for experiential and active learning as well as for the enhancement of children's empathy. Moreover, relevant museum education programmes can use the traumatic past as “paradigmatic” memory in order to avoid similar traumatic incidents in the future.

Handling cultural trauma in educational processes

In every society, traumatic historical events disrupt the existing social cohesion and change the identity of a group (Alexander 2004: 1; Kokkinos 2005: 140). Events like the Jewish Genocide or the dropping of the atomic bomb have a global effect, influencing social groups that are not directly involved. Such traumatic events are transformed into *cultural traumas*. According to Smelser, *cultural trauma* is

a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is a) laden with negative affect, b) represented as indelible and, c) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions (Smelser 2004: 44).

Cultural traumas hold a prominent place in societies, also leading to their adoption by children through their families and social environment. Formal education is another major factor in shaping children's perception about cultural traumas. Educators need to approach these issues critically, and, thus, help students understand the events of the past and obtain the appropriate historical background, in order to avoid fanaticism and normalise relations between rival groups. Such a process encourages social tolerance, an essential aspect in the struggle against social discrimination. Meanwhile, dealing with controversial or traumatic events helps students develop historical consciousness, and brings them into contact with opposing views and diverse sources, while it also enhances critical thinking, observation and multiperspectivity (Kokkinos & Gatsotis 2010: 18, 21).

Modern approaches to history education emphasise the procedures through which children learn to think historically (Nakou & Barca 2010). Learning how to interpret and understand the past critically may prove more important than memorizing facts and dates of an ‘approved story’. As part of a democratic way of life (Lee 2010: xiv-xv), history education is a complex process which is often linked to social fights for a better

future. Therefore, the answer to *why we teach history?* might well be that history courses can provide children with the tools they need to better understand the world around them and their place in it as well as their relationship to each other (see Kokkinos & Gatsotis 2010: 37).

As scientific institutions researching, preserving and exhibiting the past, contemporary museums employ various methods of representation. Although museological and museographic choices employed by museums in their exhibitions of traumatic heritage and historical events vary, they do have some common characteristics. Thus, most modern museums avoid extensive references to faceless figures and emphasize specific and selected events. The interest is being shifted from known historical figures to ordinary people represented through their testimonies and their personal belongings. Museum narratives present the victims' whole lives, before, during and after the traumatic event. A key element in these exhibitions is also the respect shown for the dignity of the victims.¹ For this reason, images of corpses, impoverished people, tortures or whatever may offend the victims are often avoided and the museum narrative is given in milder ways, although this is not always the case. Attention is also given to the space, real and/or mental, assigned to the perpetrators, so that their memory does not overshadow the victims' memory (Harel 2010: 54).²

Often, museums dealing with traumatic events help visitors discover their family background, maintaining genealogical databases and search services.³ Besides investigating their family histories, visitors can submit the story of an ancestor or their personal stories related to the exhibition, thus contributing to historical research and offering a personal element in the exhibition.⁴

Museums, as places of public representation of the past, work symbolically to prevent traumatic events in the future. Memory adopts a moral character that promotes a critical approach to the past and the development of a socially-aware life attitude (Alexander 2002: 55). Importance is given to the connection of the past with the present and the future, rather than simply providing historical knowledge.⁵ As Todorov suggests, the memory of the traumatic past should be used to prevent analogous disasters in the present (Todorov 2001: 22). This 'paradigmatic' use of memory also functions as a way of enhancing social empathy, since the projection of traumatic events experienced by a group strengthens the bonds between its members, who now share a common memory. Society members gradually become aware of the trauma and its impact, thus developing sympathy and solidarity towards the victim group (Demertzis & Roudometof 2012: 10-11). In this way, as Alexander (2004: 23-24) has shown, "new forms of social integration" are developed, which strengthen the ties between different national, religious, and ethnic groups.

Museum theatre – Educational drama

In the last decades, the shift from object-centric to human-centric museums has strengthened their educational character.⁶ By trying to create attractive programmes

for the public, museums are increasingly using new technologies (see Henning 2006), various artistic activities –mainly painting– and theatre.⁷ The main focus of this paper lies on drama, as it is considered a useful tool for handling traumatic events both at school and the museum.

Drama is variously used in educational processes. In this paper, I will focus on *educational drama*, a kind of theatre that does not mainly aim to produce a show or to offer entertainment. This moves between professional theatre, children's play and education (Somers 2000: 1).⁸ Attention is paid to the theatrical process during which the participants play, communicate with others and understand various issues related to life (both past and present), by using their bodies and imagination. Educational drama is influenced by psychological and psychoanalytical theories on children's play. Freud argues that play helps children transform an unpleasant experience into a pleasant one. When children turn their experiences into a game, they take an active role and manage to control a situation in a way that would not be possible in the actual world (Freud 2011: 17, 48). Furthermore, the repetition of the unpleasant experience helps children address their negative feelings (Freud 2011: 20). Similarly, Axline (1974: 17), a pioneering psychologist in the play therapy field, states that play helps children face and control their negative feelings, thus leading to selfhood.

Educational drama, however, includes roles which are not fixed as in the traditional theatre. These are usually improvised and spontaneous, without a pre-existing written text and do not entail external spectators, although participants can take on the role of the audience (Avdi & Chatzigeorgiou 2007: 20). The existence of a final product, such as a theatrical performance, is not necessary for the process, and, therefore, is not the primary objective, as in the traditional theatre. During the educational drama, children feel free, in a field of safe experimentation, where there can be no mistakes. Participants experiment without feeling the stress they would feel in the real world (Birbili 2009: 4; Alkistis 2012: 71; Karavoltso 2010: 4). The involvement of children in the theatrical process and the exploration of alternatives to situations and problems of everyday life strengthen their critical abilities, challenging entrenched values and attitudes (Sextou 2005: 18). Furthermore, through the theatrical act, the participants learn how to use their bodies and voices, and how to move and express their emotions in non-verbal ways.

In cases where the aim is the development of children's empathy, educational drama is a suitable means for putting the child mentally in the place of another person (Alkistis 2012: 73). Playing a role is not always necessary when trying to enable children to identify themselves with other persons, and there are cases when such a strong identification should be avoided. Moreover, effective action and taking up the role of a historic personality helps experiential learning and understanding, while it also encourages historical empathy. Historical empathy is characterized by the ability of the person to place him/herself in the position of a historical person and judge historical events not in the present, but within their specific context (Kokkinos & Gatsotis 2010: 26; Repousi 2000: 196-197).

The museum environment, which is addressed here, has an innate sense of theatricality. It transfers the spectator to another place and time, in an environment flooded with objects, images, sounds, special lights and music. According to Vergo, it generates feelings that transcend the spectator's vision; it generates emotions, while it is equally linked to with the museographic and museological choices of curators, as well as the pace and the flow of the exhibition narrative (Vergo 1999: 52). This theatricality of the museum space makes it a suitable environment for educational theatre programmes.

When approaching a traumatic historical event, museum theatre is a particularly helpful means. It is a multi-sensory experience that is easily understood by children and it creates a concrete sense of the past, in contrast to traditional history discourses and museum exhibitions that can be impersonal and generic. The main asset of museum theatre is its ability to generate emotions (which, however, should be carefully handled and incorporated into the educational process) as well as engage the audience with the past and its remains (Hughes 1998: 53).⁹ The use of museum theatre in teaching about traumatic events aims to broaden the way we perceive historical events and their significance. It gives an experiential dimension during the museum visit and allows visitors' emotional involvement (Kokkinos 2012: 37). Reviews of museum theatre programmes show that they facilitated the understanding of the exhibition narratives and provided a pleasant experience for the participants (Baum & Hughes 2001: 365).

As to the place of its realisation, theatrical action can be performed in a theatre or an auxiliary space of the museum or even within an exhibition. In the latter case, a number of constraints need to be taken into account, such as the limited space, auditory problems, other museum visitors and the security of the exhibits (Bridal 2004: 37). However, the implementation of actions in an auxiliary space outside the exhibition might take away the "magic" of the museum from the activities.

Central to the whole process is the role of the animator. The animator acts supportively, especially when the participants are children and makes them feel safe and free. He/she directs the action following set goals and balancing between children's play and theatre (Somers 2000: 4). Since this is an educational process, the animator asks questions, organises the debate, assigns roles, helps children choose and ponder over their roles, and assumes a role when necessary (Avdi & Chatzigeorgiou 2007: 29).

The museum theatre process requires an environment of security and trust between the children and their animator, who potentially can help children free themselves from shyness, fear of failure and the usual classroom behaviours. Respect and collaboration between team members are essential. In this way, everyone feels like an equal member of the team and all can think and express themselves without restrictions (Sextou 2005: 139). More importantly, there is a great necessity to create a secure atmosphere of playing and acting, especially when the subject matter is painful or stressful for some of its members. This is why the activities of the educational drama are not mandatory, nor of predetermined duration and course.

Museum education and cultural trauma

Museum education programmes normally consist of a three-stage structure: the preparation before the museum visit, the visit, and the stage after it. Such structure is appropriate and particularly useful when implementing a museum programme on a cultural trauma, as children are gradually and smoothly introduced into the subject matter. Moreover, the knowledge gained in the museum is deepened, extended and elaborated in the classroom through activities that follow the museum visit.

Designing, however, a programme that refers to a cultural trauma is a difficult and complex process for those involved. Traumatic issues should motivate the children mentally and emotionally, but not burden them with feelings of fear, hatred and disgust. For this reason, basic principles regarding the teaching of the Jewish Genocide, as briefly presented below, are often used in the teaching of other traumatic historical events by many educational organizations worldwide, especially when addressing children.¹⁰

According to the provided guidelines, educators should have a clear view of which aspects of the Genocide they will approach with the students. It is useful to have the students write down their own questions and include them in the lesson plan. Keeping in mind rationale questions and statements helps both educators and students focus on the important parameters of this major historical event, while approaching it in a meaningful way for the students (Totten & Feinberg 2016: 2-3).

One of the principles shared by all organizations involved in Holocaust Education is the specification of the numbers regarding the historical facts and the focus on people and their stories (see International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance n.d.). The impersonal quote of statistics represents the victims as mere numbers in a broad context of destruction and does not help children realise that these were real people who suffered (Elsby n.d.; International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance n.d.). Especially when the subject in question is unfamiliar, it is common for children to ask if the events really happened, or if the victims were 'ordinary people like us'. For this reason, the museum education programmes designed for primary schoolchildren usually refer to personal stories of the victims.¹¹ Through these stories, children understand that the victims were people who lived ordinary lives until they were disrupted by a sudden event. The relevant exhibits illuminate aspects of the everyday life of ordinary people and emphasize the personal, individual element (Dalkos 2004: 87; Solomon 2013b: 100). History is not about the general and the intangible any more, but it is about the tangible and specific (Shuh 1999: 84).

It is also recommended that a programme dealing with the Jewish Genocide includes the pre-war life stories of the victims. Showing Jews as members of families and communities that were torn apart during the war helps students understand that the Genocide refers to actual people, not just nameless victims. With regard to survivors, it is important to present their post-war story as well, in order to give a message of hope and show that, despite the trauma, these people managed to rebuild their lives

to a greater or lesser extent. In particular, the photographs of the victims' lives before and after the traumatic event aid to the personification of the story.

The use of testimonies and oral histories in the museum is also proposed, especially if those are captured in audio or audio-visual recordings. Oral testimonies are increasingly used in museum exhibitions to give social actors' personal perspectives and not just the official view of historians. They are more vivid and comprehensible compared to the 'emotion-free' scientific historical text. Through the testimonies, children personify the presented story, and thus understand and remember it better (University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute 2009: 3-4). At the same time, students prefer to listen to or watch some story rather than read it, especially when it is presented with the everyday language used by the witness. But when studying such issues, the oral testimonies should be combined with traditional historical data in order to avoid inappropriate generalisations, misconceptions and the generation of new stereotypes.¹²

An education programme about the Genocide should not contain images that could traumatize children psychologically (Imber personal communication; Imber 2012). Although most modern museums avoid using images that evoke terror and repulsion, the exhibits, the texts and the images seen by children as well as all references to violent events, such as killings and tortures, need to be scrutinized and carefully examined before used (Imber 2012).

One danger that lurks when studying traumatic events is the loss of optimism about the future of the world. This is why such project plans should also refer to people who helped the Jews during the war, thus giving a message of hope. Children come in contact with the positive side of human behaviour as well, learning about the people who risked their lives to help their persecuted fellow citizens (Imber 2005: 37). Importance should be given equally to peace issues, people's struggles for freedom, justice and solidarity (Kokkinos 2012: 352).

It is also important to make careful use of language, to avoid oversimplifications. Children often try to understand facts in terms of good, and evil and tend to generalise their findings, structuring stereotypical attitudes towards the groups involved, for instance, "all Germans are Nazis" (Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research: 14). In addition, Holocaust Education organizations propose that relevant educational programmes not only aim at the cognitive field of history education through the juxtaposition of a multitude of historical facts, but to the involvement of the emotional field as well. Indeed, the term 'museum experience', often used in current museum studies literature, does not just refer to that of the museum exhibits, but to their interaction with the visitor (Solomon 2013a: 59). The premise of the unique, individual experience in museum gives space to the triggering of emotion and moves away from the "cold" view of the exhibits. In this context, the arts are used to assist children's perception of the past. In particular, the immediacy and verisimilitude of drama tends to be impressed upon the memory of

children, generates experiences and enhances communication among team members (Kokkinos & Gatsotis 2010: 56-57).

However, when using educational drama to approach traumatic issues, educators need to take into account a number of parameters so that the process has a pedagogical impact without negative effects on the children's psyches.¹³ The activities should be playful and vivid, despite the tragic subject in question. This may hinder the cognitive goals of the programme but retains its intrinsic playful character of educational drama activities (Lenakakis 2013: 60).

Another point that deserves attention is the role given to those involved. Is it pedagogically useful and psychologically safe to have children act as perpetrators? How stressful is it to put the child in the position of the victim? As to the first question, the answer is rather easy. It is unnecessary and harmful to place children in the perpetrators' role and hurt, even symbolically, the team members. There is also the risk that some children will be enchanted by the power of life and death that the perpetrators have over the victims (Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research: 11). As for the second question, that is, whether we can ask children to impersonate the victims, is rather difficult to answer. There are educational programmes about difficult memories, where the children pretend to be the victims (for example, refugees).¹⁴ These programmes may be too stressful or embarrassing for some of those involved.

Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that some children may be immigrants or refugees themselves, thus feeling uncomfortable during the programme. For this reason, it is preferable that children play neutral roles (like observers or journalists), rather than the perpetrators or victims. The participants can pose as the victims through 'detached' techniques, such as pantomime, still image, role-on-the-wall or thought-tracking.¹⁵

In the often limited time of a museum education programme, it is easier to make good use of pantomime and still image. The non-mandatory character of the actions might push some children to avoid participation for various reasons. Even in this case, children can decide the extent to which they are involved with the topic, through monitoring, debating or commenting on the action.

The types of objects that might be used in the actions should be carefully selected. Sets and costumes impress children, help them get into their roles and create the right atmosphere. Moreover, costumes help participants understand that they are going to play a character, hence they change their appearance. However, too many sets and costumes can be distracting for children who focus on striking objects and not on action. For this reason, it is proposed to use simple everyday objects, such as pieces of fabric, which can be converted into clothing, bundles, covers, etc.

The role of the animator in programmes dealing with difficult memories is crucial. It should be clarified from the beginning that the animator plays the role of the director, that is, he/she directs and interrupts actions when children deviate considerably from

the envisaged subject, find it difficult to proceed with the action or appear to be embarrassed. The animator has to maintain the emotional balance of those involved, alternating experiential and reflective techniques, kinetic and static techniques, activities with unpleasant themes to more pleasant themes (Avdi & Chatzigeorgiou 2007: 27). Class teachers are also encouraged to inform the animators about the group that is going to attend. In this way, any unpleasant situations for the participants could be avoided.

From theory to practice – “The Stranger and I”

Museum visits are part of school life. The National Curriculum in Greece mentions that school visits, which include museum visits,

should not happen in a random and scrappy way, but they should be part of activities that are integrated in the educational process (Presidential Decree 201/1998: 13, C1).

Museums often design curriculum-connected programmes in order to strengthen their collaboration with schools and maximize their audience. Many museums provide educators with the necessary material in order to implement the programmes themselves (Dalkos 2000: 24). The educational material usually involves information about the museum and its exhibits, museum maps, museum-based games, digital activities related to the museum or exhibition visited, and printable worksheets for activities before, during, or after the visit (Nikonanou 2010: 134).¹⁶ Unfortunately, despite the efforts of museums and educators, the museum visit often remains a fragmented experience due to the lack of teachers’ appropriate training and their limited time availability to deal with topics beyond the curriculum.

The desire to create a museum programme that is profoundly connected to the aims of history education led me to organize the programme “The Stranger and I”, which is briefly presented below. The programme referred to the Asia Minor Catastrophe, one of the most important traumatic events in Modern Greek history whose impact is still felt in society.¹⁷ The main aim was to enable students develop an empathetic attitude towards refugees and ‘Strangers’, by approaching and understanding the story of Asia Minor refugees. It also endeavoured to enhance the students’ understanding of the events related to the Asia Minor War and the subsequent Catastrophe, the identity of the Asia Minor refugees, the difficulties they faced upon their arrival in Greece, and their contribution to the development of the Modern Greek state.¹⁸ Emphasis was given to the story of the ‘other side’, focusing on the atrocities committed by the Greek army during the war and the stories of the Ottoman ‘exchangeable’ populations as defined by the Lausanne Treaty.¹⁹ The goal was to help children dismiss the stereotype of the ‘uncivilised’ non-Christian Turks, who threaten the Greek and European civilisation (Mazower 2010: 47).²⁰

The programme took place in 2012, with twenty 5th graders (11-year-old students) in the seaside town of Porto Rafti (East Attica, Greece) and the *Museum of the Asia Minor*

Hellenism “Filio Chaidemenou”, in Athens.²¹ Emphasis was given to the use of educational drama, as it was considered that it would increase experientiality and emotional involvement, and facilitate participants’ empathetic reactions.²²

In the first stage of the programme (i.e., before the museum visit), the Asia Minor Catastrophe was examined, so that, during the visit, the children would have already acquired some basic knowledge of the subject. This stage had primarily cognitive objectives. After an introduction, the historical context of the events was presented. Importance was given to the events before the Asia Minor War, and the coexistence of Turks and Greeks in Asia Minor during Ottoman times.

During the museum visit, we approached the difficult subject of the Asia Minor War and refugees. Initially, children were given a worksheet with questions about the life of Greeks in Asia Minor. They took a tour of the first part of the exhibition, collectively filled in the worksheet and then discussed their answers (Pictures 1 and 2).



Pictures 1 & 2. Participants in groups answering the worksheet during the museum visit.

Then, in the second part of the exhibition that dealt with the Asia Minor Catastrophe, a role-playing game was employed. The set of the action was the exhibition space. Children playing the role of journalists “encountered” the Asia Minor refugees three times, watching them from ships in the flaming Smyrna (Izmir), upon arrival in Greece, and, ten years after the Catastrophe, in their new lives in Greece. They described what they saw in photos and exhibits (and what they imagined that they had seen), they asked questions to refugees and tried to understand the latter’s feelings (Picture 3). In another action, the students observed photos of people from Asia Minor from their early days in Greece, discussed the feelings of the refugees at the time and captured important moments using the technique of the still image (Picture 4).



Picture 3. Participants acting as journalists describe the Catastrophe of Smyrna.



Picture 4. A student acting as journalist meets the refugees in the railway station of Thessaloniki.

After visiting the museum, the programme's scope was broadened as it focused on social attitudes towards refugees and immigrants across time and place. In this third part, which took place at school, more emphasis was put on the children's reactions. Their views about 'Strangers' were discussed, and positive attitudes towards social diversity were strengthened. A museum exhibit triggered the children to write a story about the condition of being a refugee, using the "unfinished story" technique.²³ The stimulus for the unfinished story was a) a towel used by Ligeri Kourti, an Asia Minor refugee, to cover and protect her wounded head during the Catastrophe (Picture 5), and b) a family photo in which Ligeri still wears the towel on her head (Picture 6). Using these objects as main stimuli, children wrote a fictional story of the towel's journey from Smyrna in 1922 to the museum's exhibition.



Picture 5. The towel used in 1922 by Ligeri, a Greek refugee from Smyrna, to cover her wounded head.



Fig. 6. A family photo of Ligeri wearing the towel on her head.
(Courtesy: Museum of the Asia Minor Hellenism "Filio Chaidemenou", Athens)

Through the programme, the children approached the events of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, the Greek State's inability to protect the Greek inhabitants of Asia Minor, the cosmopolitan identity of many Asia Minor refugees, their contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of Greece after 1922 and the racism they suffered from some natives. Children also watched testimonies of 'exchangeable' Turks and discussed the difficulties the latter faced after being forced to leave Greece.

The analysis of the project's results was based on observations made on all video-recorded sessions that were held in both the classroom and the museum. Notes were taken during the whole duration of the project, while a considerable written material was produced by the participants. Considering my in-depth acquaintance with the students, I had the possibility to detect changes in their attitudes towards all discussed issues.

As far the cognitive objectives of the project are concerned, the students gained considerable knowledge on the Asia Minor Catastrophe, a historical event which most of them ignored or had a very vague idea about its significance. The stories they wrote during the project demonstrated that they understood the problems the refugees dealt with and the effort of the latter to keep alive their identities and memories. Even students with difficulties in writing texts created long and historically plausible stories. In the 'unfinished story' stage, students' stories included the difficult ship journey of the refugees from Smyrna to Greece, their relocation until their final settling etc.

The realization that Greeks also committed atrocities during the war, the cases of Turks helping Greeks to safely leave the Asia Minor and the traumatic stories of the 'exchangeable' Turks who were forced to leave their homelands deeply impressed the students. Their comments revealed that they had dismissed the usual evil-good stereotypes about good Greeks and evil Turks.²⁵ The programme led to the conclusion that violent and reprehensible acts do not stem from people's ethnicity, but from the fact that, in situations of intense violence, people might engage in extreme acts, whereas all members of a society neither have the same ideas or principles nor do they make the same choices.

During the programme, the students realized the reasons people leave their homelands; war, natural disasters, political reasons, poverty and lack of jobs were among the students' answers to the question "*Why people migrate?*". In the "consciousness corridor" activity, the participants debated on whether the 'hero' should *leave* his/her homeland and become a migrant. In our discussion after the activity, children mentioned that it is very difficult to consult the hero to leave his/her place, given the multiple factors one should consider before making such a choice.

In the pantomime activity, the children showed the difficulties the 'Strangers' encounter during their journeys and in the country they settle, as well as their positive contribution to a society. The pantomimes included a 'Stranger' trying to rent a house in the new country, an attempt to enrol a 'Stranger's' child at a school, and migrants and natives cooking together as a sign of their positive interaction. In the role-on-the-

wall activity, students mentioned, among other things, loneliness, fear, hunger, anger and helplessness as feelings and thoughts of the immigrants/refugees. The only positive feeling that was mentioned was satisfaction because a 'Stranger' managed to reach to a new country. On the natives' perceptions and feelings about the Other, the students mentioned that the 'Strangers' are considered unwelcome, uncivilized, dangerous and different. On the other hand, there were also positive images toward the 'Strangers', such as love and sympathy.

The comments and the responses of the children during the programme and their participation in the activities showed that their original fear and ignorance towards migrants and refugees was transformed into understanding for the difficulties 'Strangers' encounter. They also understood the terms *racism* and *xenophobia*, and used them in our discussions to describe relevant negative social attitudes towards ethnic diversity.

The programme used mild ways for putting children in the place of the 'Stranger'. Role-on-the-wall and educational drama techniques were particularly helpful as they enabled children to feel empathy for the 'Other', without being overwhelmed by the negative feelings the Stranger experiences.

All drama activities that took place were not based on pre-written scripts.²⁶ The participants gradually created their own long scripts and played their roles without shyness. A positive aspect of the educational drama activities was the participation of the whole class. Even students with limited class participation developed and expressed their own opinions on the state of the refugee through acting, and discussed about the topic with their classmates.

The performed activities motivated the students and brought them 'close' to the historical events. This unique museum experience which was "different from all the others" (in the words of a student) became the stimulus for subsequent visits and formed a positive image for the museum as an institution.

The students' willingness to participate in the programme and their keen interest in the classroom and museum activities led to the conclusion that the programme was a new, pleasant experience for the whole class. As a student commented, our project "wasn't exactly a lesson" and, in fact, it had more benefits than a usual history lesson about the Asia Minor Catastrophe or a typical museum visit.

However, during the project I had to deal with several obstacles, which should be mentioned here. The initial shyness of many children, as they had never before been engaged in similar educational activities in a museum or in the classroom, the lack of security, normally provided by a textbook, and the considerable time pressure (the class timetable had to be modified, in order to have the sixteen periods needed for the planned activities) were some of them. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, I claim that the programme can be repeated in its entirety or in part, for the acquaintance and understanding of the Other and/or for the teaching of the Asia Minor Catastrophe.

Epilogue

The increasing social sensitivity about traumatic historical events and the emergence of exhibitions related to difficult memories, or *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989) challenge educators to approach these issues with young students. Handling the traumatic past from childhood enables children to address the negative feelings that accompany a cultural trauma but also to use the latter in the context of a paradigmatic memory (Todorov 1998: 169; Kokkinos & Gatsotis 2010: 22).²⁷

Museum education could act as an extension to school activities regarding the handling of cultural traumas. The multi-sensory stimuli of an exhibition consisting of objects, images, audio-visual testimonies, texts etc. provide a rich and fruitful learning environment, different from that normally offered at school. Most importantly, museum exhibits act as proofs of the past for the school-students, while the museum visit is an exciting event that may involve interesting and ‘unusual’ activities.

As shown in the case study presented, educational drama techniques used at both the museum and the school help the students understand the historical events related to the trauma and approach them in a personal and experiential way. Increased emotional involvement and empathy towards the refugee, the migrant and the ‘Stranger’ does not entail a devaluation of the cognitive objectives; on the contrary, it may allow the acquisition of knowledge to its fullest.

The project “The Stranger and I” confirmed that it is possible to deal with sensitive historical issues with children. Without asking students to memorize dates and facts, we managed to teach historical events related to the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the following refugee flows to and from Greece. Moreover, we managed to show the history of (and from) the other side. This educational approach to traumatic past events enabled students to cultivate empathy towards the ‘Stranger’ and to realise the racism refugees and migrants suffer from, the difficulties they have to deal with, as well as the benefits of a multi-cultural society.

The question remains: Can the teaching of traumatic historical events ultimately have beneficial effects on society? Personally, I think that it can. I hope that the sustained effort made in schools and museums will stimulate even more people to deal with difficult historical issues and that this article serve as a minimum contribution to this direction.

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Notes

¹ The excessive emphasis on the horror prevailing in some exhibitions is criticized as “Disneyworld of horror”, see Giesen 2004: 142.

² For example, in the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem, the biographies of the perpetrators are presented in small black boxes, which contain images and biographical information, visible only when the spectator lifts the lid. Moreover, some of these boxes feature built-in speakers, which broadcast excerpts from speeches given by each perpetrator that the visitor needs to listen carefully to distinguish each voice. Upon finding these black boxes, it is up to the visitor to read or not the information about the perpetrators, while the closed lids “seal” their stories and protect those who do not wish to come into contact with them (Yad Vashem Museum: personal visit).

³ Examples include the databases of Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Ellis Island Museum. Retrieved 25/07/2017 from: <http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/auschwitz-prisoners/>

⁴ An example is the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, where the visitor is encouraged to share his/her personal story. Retrieved 25/07/2017 from: <http://www.pier21.ca/share>.

⁵ In the case of the Jewish Genocide, museums seek to serve as symbols against war atrocities and ensure that “Auschwitz will never happen again” (Thanassekos 1998: 94).

⁶ For example, in Great Britain, during the 2000s, government guidelines emphasised the educational role of museums. For this reason, funding was provided for recruitment and educational programmes that would improve the relationship between museums, schools and society, see Hooper-Greenhill 2007: 3.

⁷ This combination is reflected by the neologism “edutainment” (i.e. education and entertainment), see Nikonanou 2010: 17.

⁸ Similar terms include “educational theatre”, “drama in education”, “theatre in education”, etc.

⁹ J. Weinberg, one of the founding members of Washington's Holocaust Museum and director during its foundation, claimed that his previous theatrical experience proved to be useful during the exhibition's design, helping him create feelings in the audience (Hughes 1998: 32).

¹⁰ These are guidelines mainly provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Remembrance International Alliance and the Shoah Foundation.

¹¹ Yad Vashem's lesson plans intended for elementary school students (9-12 years old) are based on personal stories and include pre-war and post-war photographs of those involved.

See: http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/uri_orlev.asp and http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/butterfly.asp (retrieved 25/07/2017). In USHMM's lesson plans, photos of the victims are used. Activities are structured and based on these photos. See for example:

<http://cc.assets.ushmm.org.s3.amazonaws.com/resources/deconstructing-the-familiar-images.pdf> (retrieved 25/07/2017).

¹² The generalization and idealization of traumatic events is one of the risks involved when studying such issues, as La Capra points out citing the example of *Schindler's List* (Kokkinos & Gatsotis 2010: 22).

¹³ Jacob L. Moreno was the first to include theatrical techniques in the psychotherapeutic process, through *psychodrama* (Moreno 1953). Apart from psychodrama (see among others, Blatner 1996, Karp et al. 1998), educational drama is influenced by *play therapy* (see Axline 1964, Oaklander 1978) and *drama therapy* (see among others, Jennings 1992; Jones 1996).

¹⁴ For example, in the *Pack and Run* programme of the Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2010: 2) children act as refugees. Similarly, in the British Red Cross programmes (British Red Cross: 8, 10) children are proposed to act as immigrants.

¹⁵ In *pantomime*, children play roles only with their body without speaking. In a *still image*, children choose one pose and with the animator's signal they stay still in the pose they choose. In *role-on-the-wall*, a large sheet of paper is given to the group, in the middle of which there is the outline of a body. Children are invited to write down the thoughts and feelings of the hero inside the outline in order to "build" the character. *Thought-tracking* is a way for children to place themselves in the position of the hero and present their thoughts (Avdi & Chatzigeorgiou 2007: 86-96).

¹⁶ For museum educational manuals, see the webpage of the National Archaeological Museum, one of the most visited museums in Greece. Retrieved 25/07/2017 from: <http://www.namuseum.gr/education/edmaterial-gr.html>

¹⁷ The term *Asia Minor Catastrophe* refers to the violent displacement of approximately 1,500,000 Greeks from Asia Minor and Pontus. Displacement was followed by massive population purges, forced labour, torture, destruction of property and forced migration, see *History of the Greek Nation*, vol. XV: 247. The horror of events, their political and ideological significance, the number of losses, refugeeism and the sudden reshuffling of the social fabric of Greek society have rendered the Asia Minor Catastrophe immensely important in the modern Greek collective memory, see Liakos 2011: 11. Greeks, however, were not the only ethnic group that was affected by the Turks during that period. Measures were taken against Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrians and especially Armenians. In the case of the latter, the purges were so massive that historians consider them genocidal, see Akcam 2006: 133.

¹⁸ Racism that Asia Minor refugees faced from fellow Greeks is an unsettling memory in the official Greek history. In the history textbook for the 6th Grade (12-year-old students), when the students learn about the Asia Minor Catastrophe and its consequences, there is no reference to the issue at all.

¹⁹ The *Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations* signed by the Turkish and the Greek governments in Lausanne in 1923 led to the expulsion of the Greeks and Turks living in Turkey and Greece respectively (with some exceptions), see Hirschon 2005: 377.

²⁰ As a result of that belief, any hostile or violent action by the Christians against the Muslims is justified, whereas acts by the Turks would shock and horrify the Europeans (Mazower 2010: 34-42).

²¹ The *Museum of the Asia Minor Hellenism "Filio Chaidemenou"* is a folklore museum in Nea Filadelfeia, an area on the outskirts of Athens, inhabited in the 1920s by Asia Minor refugees. The museum was realized due to the life-long efforts of the refugee Filio Chaidemenou, who settled in the area in 1922. The exhibition consists of two essential parts: the first part refers to the life and cultures of Greeks in Asia Minor, from antiquity until the early 20th century, and the second one to the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the flows of Greek refugees to Greece.

²² Theatre activities are used in migration and refugee museums to impart a human element to the exhibitions. They usually focus on individual experiences, to avoid generic references to the socio-political dimensions of the phenomenon, see Venieri 2011: 9.

²³ The *unfinished story* technique is an educational drama technique used to approach sensitive issues. The participants are asked to complete a given story, writing it not as having a fictional capacity. In this way, participants feel less stressful because they express their opinions, feelings and thoughts indirectly, through a character (Birbili 2009: 12, Papadopoulos 2005: 8).

²⁴ The *consciousness corridor* is an educational drama technique. The participants are divided into two parallel rows creating a corridor through which a 'hero' walks. Participants report their thoughts and feelings about the hero or argue about the problem the hero faces (Avidi & Chatzigeorgiou 2007: 92). The *consciousness corridor* technique is proposed by the British Red Cross Manual (British Red Cross 2011: 10) for teaching about refugees. The technique was modified so that the participants to my programme would *not* have to play the roles of the Strangers.

²⁵ The Manichaeian distinction between good and evil and the over-simplified generalizations are "pitfalls" that should be avoided when studying traumatic and controversial subjects (Kokkinos & Gatsotis 2010: 33).

²⁶ Contrary to most educational drama programmes applied in schools, which focus on physical expression rather than on written accounts (see Nikonanou & Venieri 2015).

²⁷ See USHMM's views on the subject at:

<http://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/why-teach-about-the-holocaust>

<http://www.holocaustremembrance.com/node/315> (retrieved 25/07/2017).