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“A life spent on the fringes of life-and more specifically, on the fringes of history.” (Vassilis Vassilikos) Refugees of the Greek Civil War and their role in Greek Reconstruction

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“A life spent on the fringes of life- and more specifically, on the fringes of history.”¹

Refugees of the Greek Civil War and their role in National Reconstruction.

¹ Vassilis Vassilikos, *The Few Things I Know about Glafkos Thrassakis*, trans. by Karen Emmerich (New York: Seven Stories Press 2002), p.9.

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“A life spent on the fringes of life- and more specifically, on the fringes of history.”²

Vassilis Vassilikos wrote his semi-autobiographical novel *The Few Things I know about Glafkos Thrassakis*, from which the above quotation is taken, as a personal testament for the need to document the lives of the 140,000 political refugees of the Greek Civil War (1946-9).³ This dissertation will analyse the impact of these refugees on Greek reconstruction from 1949 to 1989. These people fled persecution due to their Communist beliefs and settled around Europe, the Soviet Union and her satellite states. Many did not return to Greece until 1983. Gatrell calls for history to integrate refugees into central narratives with acknowledgment of the world that refugees made “not just the world that has been made for them.”⁴ Calling for this history to be integrated is to recognise that the refugees did not exist in a vacuum during their exile.⁵ Their lived experience had major ramifications on national identity, trauma and reconciliation throughout the reconstruction period. The novels *The Few Things I know about Glafkos Thrassakis* by Vassilikos (hereon known as *Glafkos Thrassakis*), and *Achilles’ Fiancée* by Alki Zei, the two major sources for this dissertation, reflect this impact and challenge typical narratives of passivity.⁶ Both authors were refugees themselves, and their texts reflect their own lives as well as the experiences of their communities in exile. The works emphasise the crucial role these communities played in managing collective trauma, preserving Greek identity and contradicting Right-wing narratives which sought to de-Hellenise them. Through analysis of cultural sources, with corroboration from oral testimonies, this dissertation will illustrate how instrumental the 140,000 refugees were in the relative reconciliation of the Left.

The Greek Civil War arose following the end of the Nazi occupation in the Second World War. It was fought between the Right-wing government and the KKE (Greek Communist Party) and its military arm, “the DSE.” The government, supported by American aid, won the war in 1949.

² Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.9.

³ Loring Danforth and Riki Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and The Politics of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2012), p.31.

⁴ Peter Gatrell, ‘Refugees- What’s Wrong with History?’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 30, 170-189 (2016), p.179.

⁵ Dan Stone, ‘Refugees Then and Now: Memory, History and Politics in the Long Twentieth Century: An Introduction’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol.52, 101-106 (2018), p.102.

⁶ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*.

Alki Zei, *Achilles’ Fiancée*, trans. by Gail Holst-Warhaft (Athens: Kedros Publishers 1992).

DSE fighters and communist sympathisers were either imprisoned, exiled or executed.⁷ Kissane writes that civil wars inflict “deep wounds on societies’ sense of themselves”, split identities and promote extreme violence.⁸ This was especially true of the Greek Civil War. Indeed, it was only in 1989 that the conflict was legally recognised as a ‘civil war’, not a “bandit” insurgency.⁹ Etzioni defines reconstruction as the “restoration” of institutions, assets and infrastructure to similar pre-war levels.¹⁰ This dissertation however argues that this definition ignores the ideological divisions which caused the conflict. In Greece, although material and institutional reconstruction was relatively successful under American supervision, the government’s legitimacy hinged on the same violence and oppression of the civil war, which culminated in the military coup of 1967, known as the Junta. Democracy did not return until 1974. This dissertation therefore presents reconstruction as a social and cultural process of transformation which prevents further violence and conflict.¹¹ This framework centres on ideological rebuilding and the repair of national identity, in which the politically exiled played a critical role.

Refugees however have rarely featured in Civil War reconstruction historiography to date. Until the end of the Cold War, scholarship (especially within Greece and America) tended to reflect traditional partisanship and Cold War narratives.¹² More balanced works of the late 1980’s and early 1990’s similarly contained only passing reference to those living in exile. The prominent scholars of Greek reconstruction, Woodhouse and Clogg, only allude to refugees as disapproving intellectuals in exile or as statistical examples of governmental oppression.¹³ There is a tendency in these national histories to focus on governmental policy and material rebuilding, as per Etzioni’s framework. Kapetanyannis for example, whilst acknowledging the dominance of the Left’s position by the 1980’s, makes no reference to the return of the

⁷ *After War was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation and State in Greece, 1943-1960*, ed. by Mark Mazower (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2016), p.5.

⁸ *After Civil War: Division, Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Contemporary Europe*, ed. by Bill Kissane (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2015), p.1.

⁹ Gioula Koutsopanagou, *The British Press and the Greek Crisis, 1943–1949: Orchestrating the Cold-War ‘Consensus’ in Britain* (London: Palgrave 2020), p.302.

¹⁰ Amitai Etzioni, “Reconstruction: An Agenda”, *Journal of Intervention and State-building*, vol.1, 27-45, (2007), p.27.

¹¹ Van Boeschoten, ‘Enemies of the Nation, a Nation of Enemies’, in *After Civil War*, ed. by Kissane, p.96.

¹² *After War was Over*, ed. by Mazower, p.8.

¹³ C.M. Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Colonels* (London: Granada Publishing 1985), p.56.

Richard Clogg, *Short History of Modern Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986), p.165.

thousands of exiled communists crucial to this emerging situation, focusing analysis instead on the rise of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) centre-left party.¹⁴ Even Clogg's study of *The Greek Diaspora in the Twentieth Century* fails to mention this significant group of Greeks abroad. Indeed, it was his acknowledgement of their potential relevance which was the springboard for this study.¹⁵

Modern historiography has relied on the multi-disciplinary approach of psychologists and anthropologists to catalyse social and cultural additions to this narrative. Precise, multi-disciplinary scholarship such as Mazower's volume on identity and family, as well as Danforth and Van Boeschoten's study of 'The Paidomazoma' (the evacuation/kidnapping of 25,000 children into the Soviet bloc) have opened useful avenues of psychological analysis.¹⁶ Refugee scholarship, mainly through the use of oral testimonies, has centred analysis on individual refugee agency, successfully challenging conceptions of exile. These works have proven that conceptions of 'refugees' are often restricted by national borders in which 'stateless' exiles cease to retain individuality, identity or significance. Other studies include specific analysis of the refugee experience, such as Králová's recent study on Greek refugees in the former Czechoslovakia, which argues that tradition, nostalgia and community were crucial coping mechanisms for the political exiles.¹⁷ There has been a relative social and cultural turn in the field. Katsan for example has discussed the "impossibility" of return for refugees (as presented in nostalgic literature) but falls short of evaluating beyond presentations and storylines, focusing more on language than historical impact.¹⁸ Greek reconstruction scholarship has therefore been characterised by two parallel historiographies: political and international narratives on the one hand, and cultural or societal histories on the other, with little overlap or interlinking.¹⁹ A cultural study on the importance of refugees to reconstruction is therefore a critical step in civil war historiography. This dissertation will draw upon Hannah Ewence's

¹⁴ Vasilis Kapetanyannis, 'The Left in the 1980's: Too Little Too late', in *Greece 1981-1989: The Populist Decade*, ed. by Richard Clogg (Suffolk: Macmillan Press 1993), p.78.

¹⁵ Richard Clogg, *The Greek Diaspora in the Twentieth Century* (Hampshire: Palgrave 1999), p.15.

¹⁶ *After War was Over*, ed. by Mazower, p.11-17.

Danforth and Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War*, p.3-4.

¹⁷ Katerina Králová, 'The Voices of Greek Child Refugees in Czechoslovakia', in *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, vol.38, 131-159 (2020), p.136-149.

¹⁸ Gerasimus Katsan, "Be it ever so humble. Nostalgia for home and the problem of return in Post-War Greek Novels", in *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700*, ed. by Dimitris Tziouvas (Surrey: Ashgate 2009), p.205

¹⁹ *The Greek Civil War: Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences*, ed. by Philip Carabott and Thanasis Sfikas, (Hampshire: Ashgate 2004), p.3.

work on fictional literature, and her arguments over how authors create spaces for communities of memory and collective action.²⁰ *Achilles' Fiancée* and *Glafkos Thrassakis* will be the basis for drawing together wider collective experiences of refugeedom, proving how cultural texts, and refugees more broadly, had a significant impact on national reconstruction.

This dissertation does not seek to critique *Achilles' Fiancée* or *Glafkos Thrassakis* in terms of their literary merit. Instead, the works are used to help in understanding the experience and attitudes of refugees during the period. It should also be emphasised that both Vassilikos and Zei were very popular within Greece which suggests a high degree of resonance with the population. *Achilles' Fiancée* has been called "one of the most notable literary contributions to this [civil war] debate," and was what Bruce Merry termed "a runaway success" selling over 100,000 copies in the first three years.²¹ *Glafkos Thrassakis* is regarded as one of Vassilikos' most important works as a critical "portrait of the artist as a political exile."²² Through their works they not only told their own story but also helped shape attitudes and debate within Greece.

There is general agreement on the definition of 'refugee'. The most applicable is the legal definition enacted by the United Nations in 1951. That definition states that a refugee is someone "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality."²³ The 140,000 refugees satisfy this definition of fleeing persecution due to political opinion. Their stories and impact deserve analysis.

²⁰ Hannah Ewence, 'Memories of Suburbia. Autobiographical fiction and minority narratives' in *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject*, ed. by Joan Tumblety (London: Routledge 2013), p.162.

²¹ Dimitris Tziouvas, *The Other Self: Selfhood and Society in Modern Greek Fiction* (The University of Michigan: Lexington Books 2003), p.216.

Bruce Merry, *Encyclopaedia of Modern Greek Literature* (London: Greenwood Press 2004), p.481.

²² Mary Park, 'My Subject, Myself', *The New York Times Book Review*, 30 March 2003, p.14.

²³ United Nations, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, (1951), p.14.

<<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocol-relating-status-refugees.html>> [accessed 10 April 2021]

Dissertation Structure and Source Information:

The exiled Greeks were a large reminder of the extended civil war. Chapter 1 will demonstrate how the Greek state used refugees to help define its own conception of nationhood from 1949 to 1974. The alienation and de-Hellenization of Greek communists dominated reconstruction until the fall of the Junta. Refugees were not passive players in this process: through their connection with the United Democratic Left (EDA), they greatly influenced domestic politics from afar. Our understanding of early reconstruction is enhanced when the presentation of the refugees is brought into the national narrative.

Refugee studies must also advocate the agency of the exiled on both an individual and collective level. Far from being de-Hellenized and passive, the Greek refugees were active in their own conceptions of the nation, memory and their future.²⁴ Chapter 2 will look at how the exiled built communities of memory to manage their trauma. Furthermore, it will be argued that their nostalgia for Greece provided a framework which did not rest on violent revolution but collective spirit, tradition, resistance and most crucially, a desire to return. Chapter 3 will highlight the importance of this return, both to the refugees themselves and to the nation. The 1980's witnessed the hegemonic cultural dominance of the Left. The returning refugees were crucial to this process.

Whether engaged in political or cultural activities, "a sense of history was close to the surface of refugees' self-expression."²⁵ The semi-autobiographical works, *Glafkos Thrassakis* and *Achilles' Fiancée* serve as unique examples of this self-expression. Both authors have been incredibly influential in Greek literature and share similar political leanings. Zei (born 1925) fled to the Soviet Union from 1954 to 1964, before living in Paris until 1974 to return to Athens.²⁶ Her plot follows the life of Eleni and her journey in exile. Eleni lives in Tashkent, in the Soviet Union, before moving to Paris with her young daughter. Eleni is heavily based on Zei's own life. Vassilikos (born 1933) lived in exile in Paris and Berlin from 1966 until the fall of the Junta in 1974.²⁷ His plot is multi-layered and features an unnamed narrator (Vassilikos)

²⁴ Liisa Malkki, 'Refugees and Exile: From Refugee Studies to the National Order of Things', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol.24, 495-523 (1995), p.511.

²⁵ Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online 2013), p.12.

²⁶ Alki Zei Website, *Life*, (2014). <<https://www.alkizei.com/en/life>> [accessed 10 April 2021]

²⁷ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.viii.

writing an epic biography of the writer Glafkos Thrassakis (also based on Vassilikos) and his life outside of Greece. He highlights the refugee experience through often comedic short stories and diarised notes.

Although complementary, there are notable differences between Zei and Vassilikos which allow for slightly differing insights and analysis. The most obvious is that Zei fled war, whilst Vassilikos lived through immediate reconstruction in Greece before fleeing in 1966. Zei's plot is a journey through Eleni's private sphere, in which feeling, emotion and gender are given prominent roles from which a wider, relatable experience can be drawn. Comparatively, Vassilikos details a biography designed for the public sphere. His book is about uncovering an author's life and work to be produced for wider consumption. *Glafkos Thrassakis* is more explicitly political and should be understood as an active commentary of the domestic situation. Used together they are incredibly informative sources covering exile, domestic politics, the private and public spheres and how these spaces and experiences interacted with and influenced the Greek refugees.

Methodology:

The challenge of refugee scholarship is in exploring the agency of people marginalised in history. Typically, oral histories have been crucial to uncovering their experiences. This is principally fulfilled in this dissertation by consulting 'The Memory of Nations' project. This database contains transcripts of interviews of forty-two Greeks exiled to Czechoslovakia because of their, or their parents', political beliefs.²⁸ Their responses have been incredibly useful in formulating arguments and reinforcing my own evidence within direct historical testimony. This oral source pool is further reinforced by the selected statements of the 114 children of Danforth and Van Boeschoten's study on the children of the Paidomazoma.²⁹

This dissertation will focus on a different source of refugee agency: the literary output of Vassilikos and Zei. This is a unique approach to Greek refugee study and will be useful for a

²⁸ Memory of Nations, (MoN), 'Sixty Years After. Memory of Greek Civil War Refugees in Czechoslovakia, 1949-2009' (Institute of International Studies: Charles University).

<<https://www.memoryofnations.eu/en/sixty-years-after-memory-greek-civil-war-refugees-czechoslovakia-1949-2009>> [accessed 10 April 2021]

²⁹ Danforth and Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War*, p.13.

number of reasons. Although valuable, oral testimony taken sixty years after the events in question is susceptible to a lot of external pressures. Essentially, as Alistair Thomson argues in his study on World War One veterans, memories are malleable and are heavily shaped by “significant pasts” in which we compose a more comfortable sense of our life.³⁰ How we view our present significantly alters how we remember our past. The usefulness of printed novels and other cultural outputs is that they are in effect frozen in time. *Glafkos Thrassakis* was published as part of three interconnected volumes in 1974, 1975 and 1989, and *Achilles’ Fiancée* in 1987. They therefore encapsulate views and memories uninfluenced by events such as the fall of the Soviet Union, the relative reconstruction of Greece, the economic disasters of recent years as well as personal memories such as the birth of grandchildren. The civil war and subsequent exile were the most recent and pivotal event for both authors. The books were chosen due to the authors’ contribution to Greek literature and because of their direct refugee experiences. Both works are examples of ‘auto-biographical fiction’ and uniquely portray both individual and collective memory.³¹ Clearly the works are personal, however rather than completely factualising and individualising their lives in an autobiography, the authors have chosen to fictionalise their exile and include wider communal feeling within their storylines. Furthermore, unlike oral testimonies taken decades later, cultural output such as the works of Zei and Vassilikos had significant wider contemporary impact on refugee and national history. This makes them incredibly informative historical sources, as examples of both refugee agency and refugee impact. On a more practical note, they have allowed my own individual analysis to develop rather than adopting similar conclusions through the lens of other historians’ questions and angles of research.

There are limitations to basing study on cultural contributions. Due to linguistic barriers, both books, and indeed other sources used such as newspapers, magazines and films are often translations. This adds distance between the authors’ work and analysis. However, both works have been translated to global acclaim. Vassilikos even worked closely with Emmerich to ensure the translation satisfied his standards.³² Furthermore, as a historical study there will

³⁰ Alistair Thomson, ‘Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend’, from *Memory and History*, ed. by Tumblety, p.4.

³¹ Ewence, ‘Memories of Suburbia’, in *Understanding Memory*, ed. by Tumblety, p.162.

³² Karen Emmerich, *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic 2017), p.6.

be limited analysis on language and linguistic skill: this should reduce the impact of the translation. The novels, magazines and films are clearly not historically neutral. That is not how they are to be used. Instead, they will be used to show how the Left began to take control of its own narrative, whilst being corroborated by the oral testimonies of a wide number of refugees. By never losing sight of the authorship, agency, wider contexts and intended audience, this study will be as historically accurate as possible. Highlighting literature produced by refugees themselves it is argued, allows their own voice to shine through. The two works will serve as “real evidence” of “a life spent on the fringes.”³³

³³ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.9.

Chapter 1: Refugees and the Nation.

“You’re the ones who take children away and turn them into Turkish janissaries.”³⁴

These words were addressed to Eleni, the protagonist of *Achilles’ Fiancée* by Ersie, her old school friend. Zei’s dramatic portrayal of this meeting between friends around 1945 emphasises the extent to which civil wars split national identity.³⁵ Simply, the split is enacted with a winner, who controls the narrative and a subjugated loser. Under the policy of ‘Ethnikofrosyni’, the official state doctrine of anti-communism, the governing Right constructed a powerful external enemy long after an armed threat ceased to exist.³⁶ Refugees were large and visible reminders of this extended war and were crucial to the Right’s violent legitimacy. As highlighted by the accusatory dialogue above, communist refugees were de-Hellenized by the State and presented as murderous kidnappers. The continued presentation of ‘war’ narratives fixed the government’s political memory in civil war moments. This chapter will analyse, through cultural sources such as propaganda, novels and films, how refugees were actually intrinsically connected to the national identity as much as there was an attempt to separate them in general Cold War narratives of anti-Sovietism. Furthermore, it will be emphasised how the refugees remained significant actors in domestic politics through the Left’s links with European communism throughout early reconstruction. Acknowledgment of this relationship between reconstruction politics and the exiled greatly enhances understanding of the period and provides key context to how the Left’s cultural dominance became so successful with the fall of the Junta in 1974.³⁷

The ‘iron curtain’ has often been analysed as an impenetrable barrier which separated civilisation from barbarism.³⁸ Once the refugees fled the border, they ceased to be important

³⁴ Zei, p.29.

³⁵ *After Civil War*, ed. by Kissane, p.1.

³⁶ Mary Ikoniadou, ‘We are, and we remain Greeks. The Radical Patriotic Discourse in *Pyrros Magazine*, GDR 1961-1968’, in *The Politics of culture in Turkey, Greece and Cyprus: Performing the Left since the Sixties*, ed. by Leonidas Karakatsanis and Nikolaos Papadogiannis (Abingdon: Routledge 2021), p.3.

³⁷ Nicolas Demertzis, ‘The Drama of the Greek Civil War’, in *Narrating Trauma: on the Impact of Collective Suffering*, ed. by Ronald Eyerman, Jeffrey Alexander and Elizabeth Breese (Yale: Taylor and Francis 2011), p.147.

³⁸ Andrijana Teodorovic, *Refugees of the Greek Civil War: Politics and Ethnicity* (Budapest: Thesis submitted to the Central European University 2007), p.28.

to national historiographies. There is a tendency for reconstruction scholars of the period 1949-1974 to focus on material and state recovery.³⁹ Influential studies by historians such as Close, Koliopoulos and Veremis focus on governmental policy, the economy and international politics.⁴⁰ Cold War narratives are given prominent places in the historiography. Yet as Van Boeschoten argues, the most damaged sector of society after civil wars is national identity.⁴¹ Mazower's unique volume does successfully expand analysis to a social and cultural history of "domestic" identity, including a specific refugee history of return in the mountain village of Ziakas.⁴² Although useful, the focus of Mazower's study remains internal. This dissertation will argue that the refugees must be placed at the centre of the wider national narrative of which they used to be part. As Gatrell argues, states make refugees, but "refugees can also make states."⁴³

The legitimacy of the Right post-1949 depended on the continued civil war legacy of which the refugees were a crucial part. By prolonging wartime narratives through the presentation of a large external refugee threat, the government could justify domestic violence and oppression which cemented its power. This is highlighted by Kazamias' study on the continuity of government propaganda.⁴⁴ The 1948 government poster, 'The Red Jackals', depicted three wolves surrounded by darkness encroaching on Greece. Similar presentations can be found in the 1971 film *Grammos-Vitsi* where communists are told that they "lost every sense of humanity. Go away...go find the jackals."⁴⁵ These sources illustrate the dehumanisation of communists, as well as usefully emphasising the idea of encircling, devious beasts. A "nationalist anti-communist fundamentalism emerged" which was "defensive, exclusive and parochial."⁴⁶ The far Right's "imagined community" centred on portraying people previously

³⁹ Van Boeschoten, 'Enemies of the Nation', in *After Civil War*, ed. by Kissane, p.96.

⁴⁰ David Close, *Greece since 1945: Politics, Economy and Society* (New York: Longman 2002), p.16-138.
John Koliopoulos and Thanos Veremis, *Modern Greece: A History Since 1821* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2010), p.127.

⁴¹ Van Boeschoten, 'Enemies of the Nation', in *After Civil War*, ed. by Kissane, p.94.

⁴² Riki Van Boeschoten, 'The Impossible Return: Coping with Separation and the Reconstruction of Memory in the Wake of the Civil War', in Mazower, p.122-142.

⁴³ Gatrell, 'Refugees- What's Wrong with History?', p.175.

⁴⁴ Alexander Kazamias, *The Visual Politics of Fear. Images of anti-communist propaganda in post war Greece* (Guest Lecture: University of Oxford 2017), p.1.

⁴⁵ Kazamias, p.3-4.

⁴⁶ John Koliopoulos and Thanos Veremis, *Greece: The Modern Sequel* (London: Hurst 2002), p.100.

considered Greeks as animals.⁴⁷ This allowed for continued domestic oppression. The Central Service of Information by 1962 was estimated to have 60,000 paid informants, with the prison island of Makronisos utilised throughout early reconstruction.⁴⁸ Domestic persecution was the main motivation behind refugee flight: Agorastos Dimoschakis, born 1927, spoke how “a great terror began in Greece... Whoever was a Communist, whoever was in a youth organisation, was afraid.”⁴⁹ Indeed, Vassilikos’ protagonist Glafkos Thrassakis is forced to flee twenty years later than Eleni by “a conviction under Law 509.”⁵⁰ Law 509 was enacted in Greece in 1947 to outlaw the Communist party. A person’s political convictions in 1945 could determine his or her fate in Greece between 1945-74. The presented threat of invading exiled ‘communists’ ensured the Right could dominate reconstruction throughout the 1950’s. The excluding nature of Greek national identity hinged on the exiled refugees.

The political exiles, although depicted as either faceless or foreign, remained rooted in uniquely Greek civil war moments thus paralysing memory and reconstruction. The nation could not simply forget the exiled: they were visible and significant reminders of the continuing conflict. They remained fixed in Greek identity. Although there is a temptation, as Teodorovic argues, to place the political refugees as a product of “the Cold War divide,” the narrative remains specific to the Greek civil war.⁵¹ The most impactful case study here is the Paidomazoma. The rounding up of children, dismissed by America, remains a contested civil war legacy. The nationalist imagery employed by both sides continued throughout immediate reconstruction.⁵² Indeed, as late as 1971 Queen Frederika wrote that she learnt that “an animal will not abandon its young, but... that some communist women would.”⁵³ The imagery is directly tied up with Greek identity and motherhood, whilst once again dehumanising the communists. The 1968 film, *Borders of Treason* (which was part-funded by the Greek armed forces) depicted the same narratives as war-time propaganda, featuring men kidnapping children.⁵⁴ By contrast, the United Nations reported that guerrilla radio broadcasts detailed

⁴⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso 2006), p.6.

⁴⁸ Peter Siani-Davies and Stefanos Katsikas, ‘National Reconciliation After Civil War: The Case of Greece’, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.46, 559-575 (2009), p.564.

⁴⁹ MoN, “Sixty-years After”- interview with Agorastos Dmioschakis.

⁵⁰ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.3.

⁵¹ Teodorovic, *Refugees of the Greek Civil War*, p.8.

⁵² Van Boeschoten, ‘Enemies of the Nation’, in *After Civil War*, ed. by Kissane, p.98.

⁵³ Frederika of Hanover, *A Measure of Understanding* (London: Macmillan 1971), p.138.

⁵⁴ Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema* (New York: Continuum 2012), p.139.

how they moved the children due to lack of education and political oppression: to protect Greece's future.⁵⁵ These children were intrinsically connected to the national identity of both sides in a very personal manner and remained a visual reminder of the continuing trauma and conflict. Zei summarises official attitudes when she writes that Eleni read a conservative newspaper "campaign that has begun for us: GOD FORGIVES, MEN NEVER."⁵⁶ It was not the case that the nation progressed without the refugees. The exiled were rooted in the memories of the civil war thus constantly affiliating refugees with the national identity and ensuring their prominence in domestic politics. Reconstruction scholarship focusing on material success under the Marshall Plan has failed to recognise the entrenched civil war narratives preventing progressive reconstruction. These narratives rested on exiled refugees and a continued communist 'threat.'

Although separated from the Right's national identity, this 'impregnable' barrier between nationhood and refugees was challenged in important ways. The EDA (United Democratic Left) was a political expression of the exiled KKE and relied heavily on direction from the refugee organisations around Europe.⁵⁷ The party regularly met with European communist organisations, trade unions and even British Labour MP's to discuss the political refugees. The 1963 international amnesty, led by the EDA, was attended by over 200 people.⁵⁸ This had an impact on domestic politics. The EDA won 24% of the vote in the 1958 election and 15% in 1961. This was a significant number considering the extent of voter manipulation.⁵⁹ In 1964, the Centre Union Party won 52.7% of the vote, removing the Right from power.⁶⁰ One of the first acts of the 1964 government under George Papandreou was to allow for the repatriation of refugees, emphasising their importance to domestic politics.⁶¹ This is rarely touched upon in reconstruction scholarship. Kornetis noted in his oral history of Greek students that there

⁵⁵ United Nation Special Committee on the Balkans, *General Report: General Assembly Official Records* (New York 1948), p.31.

⁵⁶ Zei, p.324.

⁵⁷ Kim Christiaens, 'Communists are no Beasts: European Solidarity Campaigns on Behalf of Democracy and Human Rights in Greece and East West Détente in the 1960's and Early 1970's', *Contemporary European History*, vol.26, 621-646, (2017), p.625-7.

⁵⁸ Christiaens, p.626.

⁵⁹ Close, p.101.

Thomas Gallant, *Modern Greece*, (London: Arnold 2001), p.194.

⁶⁰ Gallant, p.194-5.

⁶¹ Gallant, p.196.

was “continuity in politics” of the Left from 1945 to the 1960’s.⁶² One student, Triantafyllos Mitafidis described for example how the atmosphere of political suppression gave them “the consciousness of the refugee.”⁶³ The challenge to the Right of the mid-1960’s culminated in the military dictatorship in 1967, based on the same violent legitimacy as in 1949. A rise in domestic communism and an invading KKE army were cited as justifications for the coup.⁶⁴

Our understanding of Greece post-war is therefore greatly enhanced with this closer analysis of the refugee situation and their impact on national community. By presenting the communist refugees as the antithesis of the Greek nation, civil war trauma was prolonged. Political reconciliation could not develop whilst thousands lived in exile. The refugees, far from passive and inconsequential, became focal points of both sides’ partisanship. This chapter has sought to use a cultural source base to emphasise how refugees reflected a crucial external pressure on Greek reconstruction. In comparison to Cold War narratives, this pressure was uniquely Greek. Vassilikos poetically reflected that “the worst, however, was after the sun’s defeat: for a while the clouds held its memory.”⁶⁵ The refugees were crucial to the Right’s civil war narrative and legitimacy, and also to the Left’s growing resistance. This makes their absence from national historiographies all the more glaring.

⁶² Kostis Kornetis, *Children of the Dictatorship: Student Resistance, Cultural Politics, and the “long 1960’s” in Greece* (New York: Berghahn Books 2013), p.106.

⁶³ Kornetis, p.106.

⁶⁴ Gallant, p.198

⁶⁵Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.29.

Chapter 2: Lived Experience.

“Here today, there tomorrow.”⁶⁶

Contrary to state propaganda, Greek refugees never lost their sense of national identity in their years abroad. The quotation above from Vassilikos reflects the famous toast referred to in multiple oral accounts: “and the next year in the homeland.”⁶⁷ A desire for return never left the exiled. Greece remained part of their identity. Furthermore, theirs was a community which is rarely touched upon in Civil War scholarship. By seeking to uncover “something of their lived experience” (Marfleet), we can see that the political exiles were neither static nor passive.⁶⁸ Apostolidou usefully highlights how “exilic” literature used nostalgia to romanticise pasts in order to endure their exile.⁶⁹ This chapter, whilst acknowledging the importance of nostalgia, will argue that the refugees of the Greek Civil War were far more active in their exile than simply yearning for a romanticised past. Through their shared trauma and communities, refugees such as Zei and Vassilikos promoted ideas of a return for their futures. Through their re-negotiation of their civil war trauma, a desire for armed class struggle was replaced by a promotion of collective national interest in what Ikoniadou has termed, “radical patriotism.”⁷⁰ They were therefore crucial to the reformulation of the wider Greek Left. Through cultural avenues, communities and individuals could meet, manage their trauma and actively influence their own refugedom and return.

There is a shared and defining characteristic of their lived experience: a desire to return to Greece. As mentioned, Apostolidou argues that the refugee narrative (of exiled writers) centred on romantic pasts.⁷¹ Melpo Axioti’s *My Home* for example emotively describes the

⁶⁶ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.219,

⁶⁷ MoN, “Sixty Years After”- interview with Nikos Karagiorgis.

—— interview with Stylianos Kandaras.

—— interview with Athanasios Vidras.

⁶⁸ Philip Marfleet, ‘Refugees and History: Why we must Address the Past’, in *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, vol. 26, 136-148 (2007), p.145.

⁶⁹ Venetia Apostolidou, ‘The Politics of Memory in the Fiction of Greek Political Exiles in Europe’, in *Greek Diaspora* ed. by Tziouvas, *The Other Self*, p.216.

⁷⁰ Ikoniadou, p.9.

⁷¹ Apostolidou, p.216.

landscapes of Mykonos, making little reference to her life in exile.⁷² There was indeed a romanticism which went past partisan-civil war narratives. George Agathonikiadis, born 1947, spoke how his grandfather told him “exaggerations” about Greece: that “the trees were taller than here” and that “he gifted my subconsciousness with an amazing love for a country that I didn’t know.”⁷³ Similarly, Nikos Karagiorgis, born 1940, stated how his parents “longed for their return...[and] often told us stories from their younger days.”⁷⁴ Both Zei and Vassilikos clearly reflect these oral testimonies with how they present their exile but additionally leave space between author and plot (via characters, varying locations, short stories) to allow for collective experiences from around the diaspora to enter the narrative. This proves that this nostalgia, and desire to retain their Hellenic identity was, at some level, a shared refugee experience across the diaspora. Vassilikos writes how for Glafkos “nostalgia for his homeland” never left him, describing his relationship with Greece as that “between the earth and the smallest planet in the solar system: whatever weighs .04 kilos on the planet weighs 2.5 kilos for me.”⁷⁵ *Achilles’ Fiancée* is a particularly emotive source in this respect. Through allegiance to her husband, Eleni is forced to follow Achilles to Tashkent in the Soviet Union where she longs for Greece, her family and freedom. Her nostalgia was “one that nothing diminished, and that hurt whenever you touched it,” and was synonymous with her collective community, where often “a great nostalgia would spread over us.”⁷⁶

The collective community, as referenced by Zei above, emphasises how the refugees were active in their exile and in their friendships, sharing their nostalgia and managing their trauma. Apostolidou argues that authors sought “to avoid their contemporary life in Eastern Europe.”⁷⁷ It is perhaps unintentionally dismissive of the significance of the refugee experience to relegate all cultural output to descriptions of idyllic landscapes. There is a danger that this line of argument promotes a sense of passivity and hopelessness. In reality, evidence suggests that the community effectively and explicitly dealt with the struggles of exile. Ikoniadou’s study on *Pyrros Magazine*, which was aimed at Greek youths living in East

⁷² Melpo Axioti, ‘My Home’, trans. by Gail Holst-Warhaft, in *Greece: A Traveller Companion* (San Francisco: Whereabouts Press 1997), ed. by Artemis Leontis, p.213-223.

⁷³ MoN, “Sixty Years After”- interview with George Agathonikiadis.

⁷⁴ MoN, “Sixty Years After”- interview with Nikos Karagiorgis.

⁷⁵ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.6, p.57.

⁷⁶ Zei, p.152, p.220.

⁷⁷ Apostolidou, p.216.

Germany but was circulated around Eastern Europe, recognised and gave prominence to the refugee experience in its publications.⁷⁸ There was a connection with their current exile through demands for amnesty and circulations of news and stories from around the diaspora.⁷⁹ A notable conclusion to be drawn from Ikoniadou's work was this sense of community among the exiled Greeks. Both Zei and Vassilikos emphasise the importance of communities to their lived experience. Vassilikos describes how Thrassakis' life in Berlin revolved around coffee shops, talking politics, and going to tavernas.⁸⁰ Oral testimonies similarly stress the importance of community. Stefanos Gikas, born early-1940 emotionally remembered how "we all became friends. One boy took me home to his village for Christmas That's when I understood what a family was."⁸¹ The refugee experience should not therefore be contextualised simply with a longing for their past.

The communities were important spaces within which refugees could share trauma and plan for the future. Although there was acknowledgement and understanding of the lasting impact of their struggle (what Katsan has termed "the impossible return"), these exiled communities and friendships were founded on a future return to Greece.⁸² Zei's personal and emotive account for example reflects a very precise conception of nostalgia, crucially linking her romanticised past with a desire to return for the future. Zei criticises a character (and wider stereotypes) because he simply "wants her [Eleni] to be his little refugee, eyes brimming with nostalgia."⁸³ The nostalgia presented by Zei was not simple homesickness demanding sympathy, but a deep meaningful feeling rooted in shared experience and collective desire to return. There was no avoiding of the trauma of their exile. By the end of the book, Eleni meets Eugenios. There is acknowledgement of their lives as refugees, and how this binds them:

"You remember everything from the old days...with you we are the same. You'll talk about being expelled from the Party; I'll tell you about Achilles... about Tashkent."⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Ikoniadou, p.3.

⁷⁹ Ikoniadou, p.3-17.

⁸⁰ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.285.

⁸¹ Danforth and Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War*, p.140.

⁸² Katsan, "Be it ever so humble" in *Greek Diaspora*, ed. by Tziovas, p.205.

⁸³ Zei, p.152

⁸⁴ Zei, p.358

Clearly, the sentiment expressed in these passages reflected Zei's own experiences at the time and are likely to have resonated with those that read them within Greece. Kostas Tsimoudis, born 1937 stated that the children he lived with in exile "are still like a family...closer than brothers and sisters": there was a clear bond between refugees.⁸⁵ Similarly, Georgia Zerva spoke how "the relations were like brothers", "even the one's I didn't get to know" emphasising the collective, familial spirit rooted in experience.⁸⁶ Their time as refugees was not exclusively based on a nostalgia for the past but on their lived experience and communities, manifested in a desire to return for the present and future. This directly rejects the Right's animalistic partisan propaganda of Chapter 1.

This acknowledgment of civil war pain and struggle manifested in the desire for progression, as presented by Zei, had a significant impact for the wider Left. The refugee communities, as Christopher Mais argues, possessed many of the "requirements for constructing a collective memory" and fostered belonging which gave "the means to shape and circulate a narrative."⁸⁷ They were crucial sites for the reformulation of the wider Left's identity. Zei situates this reformulation during her exile. For Eleni, her Communist beliefs, publicly confirmed through her marriage to the outspoken Achilles, clash with her private world, in which she battles personal pain and forges friendships and new lovers with whom she plans for the future. Zei writes that Eleni asks, "would it ever have crossed your mind...that we would be sitting at the table with right-wingers, centrists and our own people?"⁸⁸ From this it is possible to discern Zei's own voice, as well as the changing attitudes of both sides. Set around 1964, and the election of George Papandreou, there were indeed signs of ideological reconstruction. As a recently returned refugee and influential author, Zei in writing that all her characters were "hoping that democracy is victorious in the election", was emphasising how the refugees desired to return to their homeland peacefully.⁸⁹ This marks a definitive change from 1949-52 KKE order of 'guns at the ready.'⁹⁰ *The New York Times* reported in 1975 how the "exiles'

⁸⁵ Danforth and Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War*, p.121.

⁸⁶ MoN, "Sixty Years After"- interview with Georgia Zerva.

⁸⁷ Christopher Mais, *Exiles in Exile: The Case of the Greek, Marxist-Leninist Political Refugees in the Eastern Bloc in their own words* (published doctoral thesis, University of Leiden, 2019), p.29.

⁸⁸ Zei, p.322.

⁸⁹ Zei, p.327.

⁹⁰ Maria Squillaci, *The Socialist Camp, the USSR and the Greek Political Refugees. An Unsettled historical issue* (published master's thesis, University of Bologna, 2012), p.50.

longing for home has always been open [public].”⁹¹ Zei explains to the reader that it is only Eleni’s husband, the stereotypical stubborn soviet-style communist who refuses to see that “the snow has thawed.”⁹² The anti-partisan message from this exiled author is clear and would have been clear to those who read it in Greece.

This message of progressive reconciliation was in stark contrast to the Right’s continued civil war narratives. Over time and through contact with different contexts (such as the harshness of Tashkent, the wonder of Paris, the power of Moscow), the refugees were in many ways less paralysed in civil war histories than their counterparts in Greece. This is not to diminish their struggle as refugees, rather to argue that their continued grappling with nostalgia, community and identity, led to a greater understanding of what reconciliation could mean or resemble. The oppression of the Right, of which the refugees were a visible reminder, allowed the wider Left to present itself as a movement of resistance: of progress.⁹³ This was an active process in which the refugees were a critical part. It was precisely because the refugees were out of Greece, that they were able to organise resistance without fear of direct persecution. Vassilikos in particular had a massive role in leading condemnation of the Right’s violence. His book, *Z* (1966), was based on the assassination of the centre-left politician Grigoris Lambrakis in 1963 and became a bestseller.⁹⁴ The title, (referring to the Greek ‘Ζει’: ‘he lives’) became a symbol of resistance often found graffitied in urban areas.⁹⁵ Vassilikos provocatively wrote:

“There is no death when by falling you help a people to rise.... Long Live Z. No More blood!
He Lives! Peace-Democracy!”⁹⁶

Through his words Vassilikos immortalised Lambrakis, whilst his book served as a focus for resistance for the wider domestic Left. The words above encapsulate, and influenced, the Left’s role in resisting the Right. When asked why he wrote the book from exile, Vassilikos

⁹¹ Henry Kamm, ‘Greeks in Exile Long to Go Home’, *The New York Times*, 21 May 1975, p.6.
<<https://www.nytimes.com/1975/05/21/archives/greeks-in-exile-long-to-go-home-50000-in-soviet-bloc-since-1949.html>> [accessed 28 April 2021]

⁹² Zei, p.309.

⁹³ Ikoniadou, p.9.

⁹⁴ Vassilis Vassilikos, *Z*, trans. by Yiorgos Chouliaras (New York: Seven Stories Press 2017).

⁹⁵ Bruce Murphy, *The Encyclopaedia of Murder and Mystery* (New York: Palgrave 1999), p.541.

⁹⁶ Vassilikos, *Z*, p.191-2.

responded: “in order to influence the members of the jury.”⁹⁷ This emphasises its aim of protest and an awareness of the need (and ability) to influence public opinion in Greece. Although the book was banned, and although Vassilikos was abroad as a political refugee, his work and use of real archival sources had a major impact on resistance within Greece. The subsequent film directed by Costa-Gavras (also exiled), led to the release of political prisoners including the composer Mikis Theodorakis. Theodorakis, forced into exile, famously scored the music for the films *Z* and *Zorba the Greek*.⁹⁸ As a result, he was hugely significant both in Greece and abroad. He became a symbol of the Greek Left’s patriotic resistance. At the funeral of George Seferis (an influential Greek writer) in 1972, tens of thousands sang songs composed by Theodorakis in defiance of the Junta.⁹⁹ Exiled academics such as Vassilikos therefore drew international attention to Greece and influenced resistance to the far Right. Throughout the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Left redefined itself as pro-democracy rather than simply anti-Right.¹⁰⁰ Refugees such as Vassilikos and Costa-Gavras were crucial players in this renegotiation.

This chapter has sought to prove that the refugees were far from passive players during their exile. Contrary to national narratives, the refugees never lost their sense of Greek identity and constantly desired a return to their homeland. Although formulating resistance to oppression, in both texts, and in the oral testimonies, there is a striking lack of blame. There is of course acknowledgment of their situation and why they were living outside their homeland but there was no desire for vengeance. It is important to remember that both texts were leftist narratives published in a volatile political situation. This is particularly significant for Vassilikos, who although far more political than Zei, similarly acknowledges the futile nature of partisan violence. The lack of score-settling and desire to simply tell their stories as they saw them is testament to both authors and their experiences. Vassilikos writes that Thrassakis “sought a Communist Greece, but one in which the rights of the political minority would be upheld.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Vassilikos, *Z*, p. viii.

⁹⁸ *Z*, dir. by Costa-Gavras (Office National pour le Commerce et L’Industrie Cinématographique, Reggane Films and Valoria Films 1969).

Zorba the Greek, dir. by Mihalis Kakogiannis (Twentieth Century Fox 1964).

⁹⁹ Kornetis, p.112.

¹⁰⁰ Siani-Davies and Katsikas, p.565.

¹⁰¹ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.285.

This is an outlook which developed through their exile, expressed in two texts which greatly contributed to the drive to achieve relative reconstruction in Greece.

Chapter 3: The Return

“As soon as I start to undress, it will appear on my back...engraved forever: Achilles’
Fiancée.”¹⁰²

For Alki Zei’s protagonist Eleni, her time as a refugee would never leave her, physically imprinted onto her skin. There is a tendency in refugee scholarship, known as the “sedentarist bias” (Malkki), to assume that a return to the homeland resolves all trauma caused by exile.¹⁰³ Once home, they disappear into the national narrative that previously excluded them. This chapter will look to promote refugee agency by analysing the refugees’ impact on Greek reconstruction upon their return. The futile violence of the Junta led to a shift in Greek politics from Right against Left, to pro and anti-democracy.¹⁰⁴ Although polarisation and partisanship remained, from the mid-1970’s politics no longer rested on a governmental legitimacy rooted in violence. Demertzis, in his study of war trauma, successfully argues that by the 1980’s the Left had gained hegemonic legitimacy over this new narrative.¹⁰⁵ This chapter will prove that refugees were crucial to this process upon their return. Through works such as *Achilles’ Fiancée* and *Glafkos Thrassakis*, the refugee experience became a microcosm of wider national civil war trauma which focused on personal emotion not partisan politics.¹⁰⁶ Gatrell has argued that refugees have used history as a “means to express their predicaments and a channel... for collective action.”¹⁰⁷ Both Zei and Vassilikos were part of this collective action in a multi-dimensional manner. First, they themselves returned as refugees. The difficulty of returning is a major theme of both books as both keenly felt the past in their present. Secondly, both texts made physical contributions to the emergence of the Left’s narrative. The message they portrayed was shaped, and helped to shape, the acknowledgment of trauma. Finally, both authors, by the end of their books, acknowledge progression and optimism for the future. By placing refugee agency within wider efforts of Left reconstruction, we can see

¹⁰² Zei, p.359.

¹⁰³ Malkki, p.509.

¹⁰⁴ Siani-Davies and Katsikas, p.565.

¹⁰⁵ Demertzis, p.147.

¹⁰⁶ Tziouvas, *The Other Self*, p.46.

¹⁰⁷ Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, p.12.

how their very personal and intimate journeys as exiles had a significant impact on national reconciliation and memory.

With the fall of the Junta in 1974, the dominance of the Right's partisan narratives was successfully challenged: there was a move towards reconciliation through acknowledgment of trauma. Van Boeschoten has provided a useful framework for analysing reconciliation, differentiating between "thin" and "thick" forms. The latter is a total restoration of relationships with mutual forgiveness; the former is more "open-ended and fragmented", where divisions remain but progress is made.¹⁰⁸ Van Boeschoten rightfully suggests that "thin" reconciliation was the most achievable for Greece.¹⁰⁹ Governments of the late 1970's and 1980's prioritised policies aimed at progression, often however via official repression. Most famously 17 million police surveillance files were burnt emphasising the policy of forgetting 'to progress.'¹¹⁰ There is therefore a tendency to assume a broad suppression of trauma.¹¹¹ Van Boeschoten concludes that this occurred at a rural level in the northern villages of Ziakas and Lia, with villagers preferring to "retreat into silence."¹¹²

There is convincing evidence however that the urban Left deliberately and explicitly publicised their civil war memory. The return of refugees (the majority of whom had returned by 1983, relocating to cities) was a crucial driver behind this momentum. The people who returned were not the same refugees who fled Greece in 1949. Some lived for thirty years outside of their homeland. There was an acknowledgement that their lived experience as refugees had an impact on these people for the rest of their lives. Zei and Vassilikos clearly reflect this and present narratives rooted in personal pain. They emphasise that their civil war healing may never be complete. Vassilikos for example describes the returning Communist Katharosporis arriving at a new airport on Makronisos, the notorious prison for internal communists. Katharosporis "wants to honor the island not for what it is, but for what it once was."¹¹³ This is of course exaggerated for effect but Vassilikos's message is clear: even after 30 years, civil

¹⁰⁸ Van Boeschoten, 'Enemies of the Nation', in *After Civil War*, ed. by Kissane, p.96.

¹⁰⁹ Siani-Davies and Katsikas, p.560.

¹¹⁰ David Close, 'The Road to Reconciliation', in *The Greek Civil War*, ed. by Carabott and Sfikas, p.273.

¹¹¹ Apostolidou, p.216-225.

¹¹² Van Boeschoten, 'Enemies of the Nation', in *After Civil War*, ed. by Kissane, p.108.

¹¹³ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.73.

war pain remained. Similarly, a refugee evacuated to Bulgaria stated that “I am a child of war. That feeling never left me; it still haunts me today.”¹¹⁴

Importantly however Zei and Vassilikos acknowledge wider national civil war memory and use their fiction to extrapolate their characters into wider symbols of generational trauma. This was an important moment in the process towards Van Boeschoten’s “thin” reconciliation. Eleni’s friend had “wanted to be a surgeon, but he didn’t have time. No-one of our generation had time. War, December, civil war, dictatorship.”¹¹⁵ Zei was clearly expanding the focus from partisan to national trauma. Vassilikos, by writing through a selection of short stories, also conveys a wider community of memory which hinged on personal pain rather than vengeful anger. He even acknowledges the wider suffering of Greece as he returns “to a world that had lived through a nightmare different from mine.”¹¹⁶ As vehicles for civil war trauma, Zei and Vassilikos presented their memory in a manner which was personal, relatable and deliberately avoided slipping into traditional partisan narratives. The extent of the reconfiguration of the Left was exemplified by the success of PASOK in the 1980’s, led by Andreas Papandreu. PASOK presented itself as the left-wing party that combined histories of resistance with the nationalist, progressive views of the public. This was in comparison with the more publicly partisan (and revolutionary) KKE.¹¹⁷ PASOK won 47.7% of the 1981 vote emphasising its mandate.¹¹⁸ Although Papandreu failed to enact many of his political or economic promises, he did deliver far reaching social reforms such as reinstating state pensions for all and allowing further repatriation of refugees. Interestingly, Vassilikos became deputy director of the Government television network and labelled Papandreu “a total pragmatist.”¹¹⁹ This idea of reconciliation via pragmatism, emphasised by the refugees’ return, was an influential movement behind Greek reconstruction in the 1980’s. Indeed, Konstantinos Katsianikos (born 1941) spoke how his sister “was a victim of the civil war, and not some ideology or some such drivel. She met with and married an enemy.”¹²⁰ Similarly, Anastasis Pomakis (born 1951)

¹¹⁴ Danforth and Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War*, p.43.

¹¹⁵ Zei, p.162.

¹¹⁶ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.271.

¹¹⁷ Close, ‘The Road to Reconciliation’, in *The Greek Civil War*, ed. by Carabott and Sfikas’, p.264.

¹¹⁸ Mario Modiano, ‘Greek Socialists Sweep to Victory’, *The Sunday Times*, 19 October 1981, p.1. <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/archive>> [accessed28April2021]

¹¹⁹ Nicholas Gage, ‘The Paradoxical Papandreu’, *New York Times*, 21 March 1982.

<<https://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/21/magazine/the-paradoxical-papandreu.html>> [accessed26April2021]

¹²⁰ MoN, “60 Years After” - interview with Konstantinos Katsianikos.

remembered how his father reconciled with his worst enemy agreeing “it was the biggest load of bollocks they ever did.”¹²¹ This level of reconciliation was of course rare but highlights the acknowledgment of shared pain and a wider movement towards reconciliation, as championed by Zei and Vassilikos.

The return of the refugees was therefore a very visual illustration of the end of the Right’s dominance and marked a new chapter in reconstruction. It is important to place *Achilles’ Fiancée* and *Glafkos Thrassakis* in wider cultural contexts to prove how returning refugees were a central turning point in civil war memory. The political refugees, as the *Washington Post* wrote in 1982, had come “to symbolize political discrimination in Greek life.”¹²² Their return was monumental and widely reproduced. From the 1980’s, cinema centralised the refugee experience as a major theme. Theo Angelopoulos’ *Voyage to Cythera* (1984), features the return of an old refugee to Greece who is deeply disappointed with what he finds.¹²³ The emotive film won Best Original screenplay in the 1984 Cannes Festival.¹²⁴ The importance of the refugee experience to such an acclaimed director as Angelopoulos is particularly significant as it shows how the refugees’ return influenced even the most prominent domestic directors, even those who never fled Greece.¹²⁵ Similarly, *Happy Homecoming Comrades* (1986), directed by Lefteris Xanthopoulos, dealt with the difficult return of 1,800 refugees returning from Hungary. The film won best New Director in the 1986 Thessaloniki Film Festival.¹²⁶ A 1978 review of contemporary Greek poetry wrote that these:

“New poets are like the chorus of a tragic spectacle they do not fully comprehend but are bound... to report the waxing and waning of their certitudes and fears.”¹²⁷

¹²¹ MoN, 60 Years After” - interview with Anastasis Pomakis.

¹²² Andriana Lerodiconou, ‘Greece Opens Door to Exiled Communists’, *The Washington Post* (December 29th, 1982). <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1982/12/29/greece-opens-door-to-exiled-communists/90ed7da3-9b93-462b-a6a0-b7206ad3259d/>> [accessed 6 April 2021]

¹²³ *Voyage to Cythera* dir. by Theo Angelopoulos, (Artificial Eye DVD 1984).

Vrasidas Karalêes, *A History of Greek Cinema*, (New York: Bloomsbury 2012), p.209.

¹²⁴ Cannes Festival, *In Competition: Feature Films* (1984). <<https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/films/taxidi-sta-kithira>> [accessed 6 April 2021]

¹²⁵ Ronald Bergan, ‘Theo Angelopoulos Obituary’, *The Guardian*, 25 January 2012.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/jan/25/theo-angelopoulos>> [accessed 6 April 2021]

¹²⁶ Margit Rohringer, *Documents on the Balkans: History, Memory, Identity: Representations of Historical Discourses in the Balkan Documentary Film* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009), p.163.

¹²⁷ Despoina Ikaris, ‘Editorial’, *The Charioteer: An Annual Review of Modern Greek Culture*, vol.20, 1-132 (1978), p.9.

The strength of the partisan convictions of early reconstruction was clearly and publicly challenged by these cultural outputs.

Cultural works written by refugees, or works centralising their stories, were therefore clearly significant players in this national movement. Of course, partisanship remained: complete, or “thick” reconciliation was impossible.¹²⁸ The explicitly anti-communist novel, *Eleni* (1983) for example, written by Nicholas Gage was based on the execution of his mother by Communist guerrillas and sparked great outrage.¹²⁹ The screening of the subsequent film sparked protests around Athens.¹³⁰ However, books such as *Eleni*, which billed itself as a story of “a savage war, a mother’s love and a son’s revenge,” were clearly provocative, perhaps inevitably inviting protest.¹³¹ Polarisation remained. David Close has identified how the electoral campaigning throughout the 1980’s remained politically volatile, with some parties (even PASOK) resorting to civil war narratives.¹³² Despite this, he reports that by 1989, an opinion poll found that only 37% of the electorate blamed another side for the civil war, with 41% blaming both sides equally.¹³³ This was not simply due to a disinterested youth: as late as 1986, a Eurodim survey of Greater Athens found that a majority of those aged 21-24 expressed an opinionated view of famous civil war heroes.¹³⁴ The impact of cultural media in disseminating a different message to the often politicised political parties must not be underestimated. Zei and Vassilikos were esteemed authors who greatly influenced this movement. Vassilikos’s conclusion is particularly significant given his overtly anti-American and anti-Right stance. He chose the resting place of his protagonist, Glafkos, to be in Berlin “between the borders of the two worlds, between the East and the West.”¹³⁵ Vassilikos, although acknowledging the intense trauma he suffered, questions the intense partisanship which led to war via the death of his hero in the metaphorical middle ground. Refugee scholarship transformed individual

¹²⁸ Van Boeschoten, ‘Enemies of the Nation’, in *After Civil War*, ed. by Kissane, p.96.

¹²⁹ Nicholas Gage, *Eleni* (London: William Collins Sons and co 1983)

¹³⁰ Henry Kamm, ‘Greek Communists Protest Film Eleni’, *The New York Times*, 24 March 1986, p.16.

<<https://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/24/movies/greek-communists-protest-film-eleni.html>>

[accessed 28 April 2021]

¹³¹ Gage, cover.

¹³² Close, ‘The Road to Reconciliation’, in *The Greek Civil War*, ed. by Carabott and Sfikas, p.267-8.

¹³³ Close, ‘The Road to Reconciliation’, in *The Greek Civil War*, ed. by Carabott and Sfikas’, p.270.

¹³⁴ Close, ‘The Road to Reconciliation’, in *The Greek Civil War*, ed. by Carabott and Sfikas’, p.259.

¹³⁵ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.285

suffering and pain into cultural trauma from which the Left gained hegemony in the reconciliation process.¹³⁶

The literary contributions by Zei and Vassilikos were therefore not simply “passive reflectors of history” but important contributions to how the Left challenged traditional narratives.¹³⁷ They reflect far more than the journey of the two authors. A universal understanding that violence should play no part in politics emerged after the excesses of the Junta.¹³⁸ Jannis Ioannidis, born in 1949 in Yugoslavia, spoke of his excitement of meeting “Greeks for the first time...I felt for the first time that I did have a homeland.”¹³⁹ Return was a source of great excitement both amongst those exiled and those remaining in Greece. There was a growing enthusiasm and a desire, as shown above, to come to terms with the past and look to the future. By the end of *Achilles’ Fiancée*, Eleni has a daughter and a new Greek lover who understands her emotional and physical scarring. Zei’s novel ends before Eleni finally returns to Greece but there is a real sense of hope. Similarly, Vassilikos writes that his generation was like “the second son” in a family in which the first son dies heroically. “As the generations grow further and further away, they grow freer and freer of these inherited anxieties.”¹⁴⁰ Both authors, recently returned refugees, acknowledge that Greece will progress. Similarly, Van Boeschoten, in his study of the oral testimonies of the villagers of Ziakas and Lia, argued that the villagers’ memory of the civil war has “become less black and white. They in fact look for positive lessons that can allow them to come to terms with the past.”¹⁴¹ Zei and Vassilikos recognised this with the acknowledgement of personal pain and how although this will shape Greece for ever, it will not hinder her progress. Although the oral testimonies taken in 2010 perhaps inevitably show a more compassionate memory after many decades, the cultural movement by the Left towards ‘thin’ reconciliation (not forgiveness), as exemplified by refugees, was prevalent in texts such as *Achilles’ Fiancée* and *Glafkos Thrassakis* by the 1980’s.

¹³⁶ Demertzis, p.147.

¹³⁷ Ewence, ‘Memories of Suburbia’, in *Understanding Memory*, ed. by Tumblety, p.160.

¹³⁸ Siani-Davies and Katsikas, p.566.

¹³⁹ MoN, “Sixty Years After” - interview with Jannis Ioannidis.

¹⁴⁰ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, p.204

¹⁴¹ Van Boeschoten, ‘The Impossible Return’, in *After the War was Over*, ed. by Mazower, p.140.

The texts have been re-remembered and reconstructed ever since. This makes them an incredibly dynamic source. They have provided a medium for history and memory to interact.¹⁴² Zei stated that she wrote for the youth to “share with them the significant moments my generation has gone through and contribute to the collective memory.”¹⁴³ *Glafkos Thrassakis* is taught in Greek high schools to this day.¹⁴⁴ In 2019 Vassilikos was elected as an MP for SYRIZA, a radical-left party. The works and their authors therefore continue to have relevance in contemporary Greece. They simultaneously serve as uncorrupted snapshots of refugee and civil war experiences and also as new sites where memory and history interact. The refugee experience they presented not only depicted wider narratives of national civil war trauma but also serve as physical contributions to histories of memory to the present day. The Left’s hegemonic hold over civil war trauma in the 1980’s was rooted in the refugee experience and in how the returning refugees presented their own civil war memory. They were of vital importance to Greek reconstruction.

¹⁴² Ewence, ‘Memories of Suburbia’, in *Understanding Memory*, ed. by Tumblety, p.10.

¹⁴³ Erriketi Chini, ‘Alki Zei’, *Politismos Museum* (2018) <<http://mag.politismosmuseum.org/alki-zei/>> [accessed 6 April 2021]

¹⁴⁴ Vassilikos, *Glafkos Thrassakis*, cover.

Conclusion:

This dissertation has sought to prove the importance of refugees to Greek reconstruction from 1949-1989. Refugee historians champion the use of oral testimony in order to assess “their lived experience” in their own words.¹⁴⁵ Although useful, this dissertation has attempted a unique historical method of analysing Greek refugees away from historians angled questions (often unintentional but inevitable). *Achilles’ Fiancée* and *Glafkos Thrassakis* clearly demonstrate refugee agency. Although they have been used in relation to this study’s research questions, the content has not been moulded or reworked. The research questions and authors’ aims are similar. Both authors sought to portray a generation of people who lived for thirty years outside their homeland. Both explicitly sought to portray the fluidity of identity that remained rooted in Greek tradition and memory. Both authors knew that their work served as part of wider contributions to civil war reconstruction. Through these works, this study has explored how refugees became crucial to notions of national identity, how they reformulated their own collective memory and how their return sparked a cultural movement which gave the Left a vehicle to reshape dominant narratives. The result is a far more nuanced understanding of Greek Civil War reconstruction. Their impact should not be underestimated.

Civil wars from 1945 to the present day have been considerable contributors to mass refugee movements.¹⁴⁶ The presentation of these people as stateless, foreign, even devious, must be challenged by historians. This dissertation has sought to contest these narratives and present a more balanced historical picture. Highlighting their significance in further studies will have wider ramifications for how they are regarded today.

¹⁴⁵ Marfleet, p.145.

¹⁴⁶ Susanne Schmeidl, ‘Exploring the Causes of Forced Migration: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis, 1971-1990’, *Social Science Quarterly*, vol.78, 284-308 (1997), p.302.

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