

**No Man's Land:
Mythology of War,
Masculinity and Homeland in
Greek and Serbian Aftermath Cinema**

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Declaration

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Summary

This thesis explores the dynamic between cultural mythology and trauma in aftermath cinema. After a society has experienced a significant disturbance, it is common to reckon with the stories that tell of its beliefs, traditions, and expectations leading up to the turmoil. Here, the aim is to consider how films portray an ordeal as having irrevocably injured or altered a collective identity. The first section explains how mythology will be operationalised and surveys the predominant theories about trauma at the national level. The second section analyses films produced in the two societies a decade after strife: 1980s Greece and 2010s Serbia. Focusing on the themes of war, masculinity and homeland in the respective countries, an inverse correlation between mythology and trauma emerges. The more a film mythologises conflict, the less it implies the collective identity has been damaged. *On the Milky Road* (Kusturica 2016, Serbia) depicts the Yugoslav Wars (1991-2001) as another chapter in Serbia's mythology of a "heavenly people" under siege. In contrast, *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević 2011, Serbia) shows myths of Balkanisation to be exploitative and traumatic. *Voyage to Cythera* (Angelopoulos 1984, Greece) is a contemplative critique of Greece's struggle to discuss the myths and reality of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) which was prolonged by the Colonels' Junta (1967-1974). *The Stone Years* (Voulgaris 1985, Greece) condemns the officially sanctioned corrupt mythology imposed from 1946-1974 for the havoc it wreaked on the lives of Greek communists. The conclusion considers Greece's subsequent and Serbia's contemporary cinematic trends to see how they engage with other social issues. Lastly, this thesis argues that film is a viable local alternative to the universal method of standardising national memory.

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0. Introduction

A game is an imitation of life. *Homo ludens* is never more conspicuous than in the playhouse.

J. L. Styan *Drama Stage and Audience*

0.1. Objective

When coming to terms with an experience that negatively affects a population, cinema can be a meaningful though complex means of exploring and articulating “what just happened.” Narrating and exploring the collective beliefs that lead to the ordeal itself and the aftermath is a significant part of ordering what may feel like chaos and integrating it into the collective memory. This thesis evaluates how “cultural mythology” functions in films, specifically whether its values and norms are challenged or reinforced in the aftermath of “conflict” and, if so, how this happens. In this context, cultural mythology refers to the body of culture-specific values and expectations communicated through myths, while conflict includes war, as well as periods of turmoil.

This project explores how mythology is operationalised within the cinemas of two different countries: Serbia after the Yugoslav Wars ended in 2001, and Greece after 1974 when the junta fell. Cinematic texts are evaluated on three themes –war, masculinity, and homeland – by depicting symbols, tropes, and expectations. We may ask questions of a specific film such as “did the conflict prevent the character or group

from embracing myths?” or “did the characters reject the myths as irrelevant or harmful?” Beyond filmic narratives, the tripartite analysis indicates if a film expresses that the conflict caused a “dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion” (Eyerman 2004, 61). Thus, how cultural mythology is utilised within the production indicates whether the film asserts that the turmoil has wounded the collective identity in focus. In doing so, it highlights the role of cinematic narratives in the process of the articulation and acknowledgement of injury necessary to proclaim the hardship a “cultural trauma.”

In what follows I explore the function of cultural mythology within films produced in the aftermath of turmoil through three axes of war, masculinity and homeland. Additionally, this project considers cinema’s role in the process of social signification necessary to declare trauma. Mythology is a large part of a culture, but it also exists in a symbiotic relationship with it; it comprises collective memory. It demonstrates the rationale for socially acceptable behaviours and adverse outcomes of deviance. It encourages adherence to norms and the inclusion of individual members. A presentation of a methodology for examining mythology in the context of film will come from the analysis of four films from the two nations’ aftermath societies.

A fair question is “Why Greece and Serbia and why not the German Holocaust or the Fall of the Berlin Wall?” The answer is that while these are historical events that continue to influence society, there appears to be enough research on these topics to apply the knowledge to the less documented and studied situations of Greece and Serbia. The atrocities of World War II impacted how societies confront psychic pain, support returning soldiers and civilians, fulfil the duty to remember and identify

expressions of resilience. Film was increasingly utilised to (de)construct narratives about what just happened.

The cases of Greece and Serbia were chosen as the focus for this exploration for several reasons. First, each of these countries produced distinctive and rich works of cinema a decade after their ordeals that demonstrated reckoning with their mythology while looking in the mirror, rather than confronting a foreign power. Second, each of these countries is located in Southeastern Europe. This region was of particular interest because it was impacted by World War II and is within the sphere of Europe, but frequently overshadowed by the bigger players on the world stage such as Germany. Third while the works available to analyse harboured many similarities, they also presented an opportunity to explore contrasting visions, because the times of turbulence differed in the two countries, as did their political ideologies and aims; Greece being officially staunchly anti-communist while Serbia (as part of Yugoslavia) was a haven for many Greek communist exiles. These differences were both a result of and led to distinct mythologies. Finally, in Europe, there has been an attitude shift towards trauma narratives that have occurred since, and because of the Holocaust. By plotting the two countries' contributions to aftermath cinema on the timeline it is apparent that the time required to process events time has shrunken, but not disappeared. As receptive as societies have become to addressing painful periods, there is still a disparity in the amount of literature available about Greece circa the 1970s and Serbia circa 1990s. Granted, they were far from the only ones and I look forward to expanding this survey to include productions from other countries to make salient the trajectory towards postmodern polyphony. The importance of the trend towards voices achieving social signification is not to be underestimated. And it started with the exhaustive research into the Holocaust and the Fall of the Berlin Wall and other seismic events. Standing on

the shoulders of giant collections of literature, we are in a position to evaluate the less investigated but significantly disruptive recent periods in Greek and Serbia.

The countries' respective periods of strife officially concluded approximately forty years ago for Greece and twenty years ago for Serbia. I recognise that the content of painful memories is unique to each culture, but Eyerman suggests that, due to advances in transmission, the time necessary to construct an event or period as a cultural trauma has been diminishing internationally (2020). The expedited communication rate challenges an integral part of the psychoanalytic approach to cultural trauma: the period of latency that had to elapse before an incident could be discussed. In the earliest films to address the Holocaust, the period of latency was measurable (Elsaesser 1989, 2001). With significant cultural change underway, it is important to continually evaluate the methods we use to investigate incidents at the sociological level. For this reason, in the theoretical framework discussion on cultural trauma, I discuss the psychoanalytic approach, then advocate that we move away from it toward the more practical, "purpose-built" social constructivism according to Ron Eyerman, Nicolas Demertzis, among others.

It would be inaccurate to say that time has become so compressed it is no longer a factor in coming to terms with upheaval. The temporal distance from the end of Colonels' Regime 1974 to the present made researching narratives about the Greek experience a far easier task, leading to a significantly longer chapter. By contrast, at the time of writing, there are still Serbian defendants on the stand at the International Court for Transitional Justice (ICTY). This is not to say that a judge determines when an event gets relegated to the past. Rather, critical information about the Yugoslav Wars is still coming to light for two decades. We may conclude that aftermath societies have progressed beyond requiring a period of latency to produce films that narrate the

experience. However, this progress is not uniform across all aspects of life. For this reason, the analysis in this thesis may seem at times unbalanced, as the analytical framework for the Greek case is much richer and more extensive than the Serbian one. Twenty years from now, this might have been different. As it is, however, the presentation of a more mature and well-developed case alongside one where the historical record is still being written should be seen as a strength, not a weakness, with the material available about Greece allowing me to perhaps foreshadow issues and frameworks that are yet to emerge in Serbia.

The genre of what I term “aftermath cinema” emerges from what I describe as an “aftermath society”. These terms were created to encompass the myriad forms taken by strife, conflict, and trauma at the cultural level. In the ten years since the end of the Yugoslav Wars and the fall of the Junta, Serbian and Greek societies have had the time move from crisis toward stability. After a decade, there has been time for reflection, not just reaction. The four examples of aftermath cinema studied herein, portray and engage with the aftermath society in which they were released. They are not the widely acclaimed films like *Pretty Village Pretty Flame* (Dragojević 1996) or *Z* (Costa-Gravas 1969) that focus on battlegrounds or assassination. Instead, the aftermath films represent the diffuse efforts to gauge the palpable impact of disruptive events on civilian life and national identity, away from the frontline and after the soldiers returned home. I use the term aftermath cinema to describe the films that explore the legacy of that conflict or that oppressive regime or any event that changed life for the society as a group.

1980s Greek aftermath cinema engaged more thematically in nuanced intranational dialogue than 2010s Serbia. A facilitating device that appeared in many films of different genres was the depiction of authority as absent or untouchable. This

made space for the characters in *Voyage to Cythera* and *The Stone Years* (the films that will be discussed below to explore the Greek case) to connect on a personal level. This empathy-based approach led to more mild-mannered portrayals than the symbolic worlds of *A Serbian Film* and *On the Milky Road*. Operating in the extreme but safe space of the imaginary, the two Serbian films are outliers on the typology. Kusturica celebrates Serbian mythology uncritically and utilises its symbols as evidence that explains, recurs, and resonates with his narrative of the Yugoslav Wars. Conversely, Spasojević holds the same mythology responsible for the fate suffered by the nation, and more specifically, blames the individual and social charters encouraged by the mythical Balkan Male for the traumatic subjugation of the Serbian people. Rather than see it as a means of sustaining national identity, Spasojević treats mythology as the axe perpetrators wielded against other groups as well as their people. It does not heal or reassure, it hurts and undermines, prompting Miloš to remove himself and his family from its grasp.

After surveying the sample pool, war, masculinity and homeland emerged as popular sites of myth creation and exploration. The three topoi are perennial battlegrounds between the symbolic and the real precisely because the concepts are open to interpretation. It is there that narratives meant to explain, recur, and resonate are stress-tested, often with results of great consequence for both realms. Though the same three themes of war, masculinity and homeland are addressed in each film, the distinct mythologies and circumstances culminating in the period of suffering demand recognition and compromise when evaluating them. To not adopt the analysis to the context of each film to a degree would be to inappropriately universalise by painting the two aftermath societies with the same broad brush. This project makes a concerted effort to build on existing literature, with particular attention paid to Lea David's

arguments in memory studies against the one-size-fits-all approach in human rights ideology and commemorations. In exploring the relationship between mythology, trauma and mass-consumed films, audience reception could be logical avenue to pursue once more films have been evaluated. However, more parameters must be established to determine impact. For this inaugural effort, it was decided to confine the methodology to content analysis of the manifestations of war, masculinity and homeland based on the two countries' existing anthropological, cultural, historical and political literature. For both conceptual and practical reasons, I choose to exclude audience reception at this early stage in the investigation of the relationship between mythology and cultural trauma. Abstractly speaking, despite having already dedicated six years to researching the correlation, this is a broader question, or more specifically, a reflection, rather than a formula to be solved. The evolving nature of societies means that even if a postulate emerges, it will likely be relevant to a very particular set of circumstances or point in time, as demonstrated by the factor of time elapsed since the catastrophe ended. This is not to say that insights and cannot be gleaned from this fascinating field. Far from it. Rather, this thesis abstains from such an undertaking because of technological advances in media sharing over time that creates challenges for data collection. In yesteryear, we could gather data about the popularity of a film from established channels such as box office returns or movie rentals. The myriad diffuse and discrete means through which movies can be disseminated (e.g. online streaming and DVD sales from vendors both official and otherwise) make the task of collecting quantitative information about reception a methodological labyrinth, complete with a minotaur. Hence, the scope of this initial foray remains theoretical and comparative, with the hope that one day, the findings can be substantiated by the audience.

0.2. Definitions

0.2.1. *Cultural Mythology*

The above objective situates the thesis at the juncture of film studies, cultural studies, and trauma studies. The interpretations of cultural mythology and cultural trauma used here reflect this position. Cultural mythology is defined here as the corpus of myths that belong to a particular society. These are myths that typically address issues and priorities that reflect 'the society's attitudes and beliefs to which they belong. These stories are products of the dynamic network Maurice Halbwachs characterises as collective identity and cultural memory (Halbwachs 1992), and the cultural storehouse identified by William Doty (Doty 2000). Doty, an anthropologist influenced by Emile Durkheim and Bronisław Malinowski, takes a functionalist approach to myth and asserts that “[m]yth and ritual are seen as the graphic media that enforce the community's values and make them visible to all its members” (Doty 2000, 130). This stance is but one of many valiant efforts to make visible the elusive, fluid concept of what Slavoj Žižek calls the “Nation-Thing” (Žižek 2003, 201) – a phrase that aptly describes the amorphous and ambiguous nature of national identity.

National identity is reflected in cultural mythology, and vice versa in a circular relationship. Ivan Čolović, a Serbian anthropologist, notes that

[I]t is unrewarding and methodologically mistaken to present myths as a collection of clearly distinguished motifs and *topoi*, or a catalogue of unambiguously shaped ideas and concepts because mythic discourse is characterised by fragmentedness, fluidity and ambivalence. (Čolović 2002, 7)

Čolović cautions us against attempting to place myths or their elements into tidy, static categories. His advice is not so much avoidance of the impulse to classify/taxonomise, so much as advice to let mythology exist organically, like the society it represents and explores. To offer a visual analogy, utilising cultural mythology to understand a national identity or “Nation-Thing” can be likened to looking in a funhouse mirror to identify that same mirror’s distortions. In addition to the myths themselves being less than concrete, Čolović points out that what makes the ideas explored in the mythology tricky to gauge is that the evaluation of myths is constant and perennial and what counts as tradition varies. Conservative members of a culture may lead us to believe that cultural value audits only occur when unrest occurs at the national level, but this is inaccurate, as Kai Erikson demonstrates. Writing about communities in the aftermath of a natural calamity, he notes, “For one thing, these disasters often seem to force open whatever fault lines once ran silently through the structure of the larger community, dividing it into divisive fragments” (Erikson 1991, 189). Erikson proposes that catastrophic events lift the veil on existing tensions in society. Continuing with the funhouse mirror analogy, such mirrors are always present though we gaze into them more in times of uncertainty. In other words, the cultural storehouse inventory becomes more palpable and less opaque after a societal disruption through profound interrogation. This project is dedicated to examining that gaze which is a prerequisite to announcing cultural trauma.

0.2.2. Cultural Trauma

The above definition of cultural mythology and its influences allow this thesis to determine if and how a particular film seeks to draw attention to a collective injury to

lead to the announcement of cultural trauma. Collective injury may be considered the negative impact experienced by many individuals within a group either directly or indirectly. As psychological trauma impacts an individual's identity, collective injury affects the group, and cultural trauma recognises this. Nicolas Demertzis notes:

A dislocating event, for example, a civil war, does not in itself constitute a "cultural trauma." To become one, such an event must undergo a process of social signification; namely, it has to be signified and become socially accepted and constructed as "trauma." (Demertzis 2013, 145)

In other words, an adverse event may occur, but it can only be considered a cultural trauma in retrospect, once it has been articulated as an ordeal more significant than an individual or even collective injury. Jeffrey C. Alexander explains that cultural trauma occurs when it has been decided by members of the group that "they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander, "Towards a Theory" 1). I focus on the aftermath, after the dislocating or horrendous event, to use the words of Demertzis in which the process of signification begins.

The postmodern shift in Western societies away from "grand narratives" towards a collection of smaller narratives (Lyotard 1984) has created a space to explore the concepts of collective identity and cultural memory, two cornerstones of cultural mythology. The demise of nation-states' romantic grand narratives and the rise of hegemonically unsanctioned or previously overlooked stories have allowed groups from the local to the national level to re-examine who they are, what drives them and where they are headed. The emergence of previously untold accounts has laid the foundations for a "memory boom", or the proliferation of research in the area of memory studies

(Caruth 1995; David 2020; Erll and Nünning 2010; Radstone and Schwarz 2010; Leys 2010; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy 2011). A prominent topic within the discipline is the historical injury suffered by groups and its subsequent impact. Ron Eyerman and other sociologists have introduced the social constructivist term “cultural trauma.” This phrase was first used to identify the mechanics of past events that led to unhealed wounds. It was reserved for historical occurrences because the journey from injury to widespread recognition took time. Lately, the concept has been deployed to predict whether and why contemporary events will have lasting consequences.¹ By the above interpretation, with which this thesis aligns itself, the films considered herein contribute to the process of social signification Demertzis identifies. Indeed, movies are a valuable tool for social signification because they are vehicles for symbols, tropes, and expectations and are designed to be widely disseminated.

0.3. Film, Myth, and Trauma – A Typology

This endeavour applies an interdisciplinary interpretation of cultural mythology informed by anthropology, classical studies, and cultural studies to investigate films from what will be referred to as “aftermath cinema” which is critical to triaging societies in the aftermath of conflict, occupation or other damaging event occurring at the national level. In doing so, it draws attention to the role of films in the process of social signification that distinguishes cultural trauma from collective injury. The results

¹ In “Covid-19 as Cultural Trauma” Nicolas Demertzis and Ron Eyerman argue that while Covid-19 is a compressed trauma, it will not result in a cultural trauma (Demertzis and Eyerman 2020).

of the case studies analysed herein suggest a relationship between mythology and trauma, allowing a typology to emerge (see Figure 0.1). An inverse correlation arises between mythology and trauma when confronting the ordeals in Serbia and Greece's aftermath cinemas. The smaller the presence of mythology, the more pronounced the impact of trauma (see Figure 0.1 and Figure 0.2). In other words, the more a film draws from the past endured suffering – real, fictional, or anywhere in between – the less traumatic present events appear. Conversely, the more a narrative eschews the past, the more traumatic the negative event is perceived. The two films from Serbia, *On the Milky Road* (Kusturica 2016) and *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević 2011), reside in opposite quadrants of the typology. The 2016 production by Kusturica relies on mythology to diminish the trauma of the Yugoslav Wars. By contrast, what little mythology appears in Spasojević's film is inauthentic and rotten. This confirms that interpretations of events are multifold and should be expected even among members of the same community. Consequently, I am aware that deconstructing and evaluating the mythology that informs and is informed by society is reflective of the ongoing postmodern shift towards the questioning of national narratives.

In part, this undertaking uses close textual analysis to determine whether a film, as an impressionistic account of “what just happened,” narrates in the aftermath that the suffering was traumatic. As a whole, this project seeks to lay tracks to move the process of pronouncing cultural trauma about past events to more contemporary events by studying productions released within fifteen years of the end of pronounced social and economic instability.

0.4. Case Studies

Serbia and Greece have distinct histories, cultural memories, mythologies and experiences with “conflict.” Yet, the nations both witnessed a proliferation of films that consider where cultural mythology led each society following unrest at a national level. The intention behind selecting countries whose otherwise arguably most salient shared characteristic is their geographic location in the Balkans is to focus on cultural mythology film analysis rather than the countries themselves. This thesis’s scope focuses on the mechanics of cultural mythology in post-conflict films in Serbia and Greece rather than on these countries’ political history.² Nonetheless, some contextual background to the relevant conflicts in both countries is necessary to evaluate how the films utilise cultural mythology post-conflict.

0.4.1. Serbia

Serbia was a member nation of the Federal People’s of Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1992. Guided by the principles of “Brotherhood and Unity,” leader Marshal Josip Broz Tito shaped the country to be a third economic model after refusing to align with capitalism and having moved away from communism in 1948. When Tito died in 1980, dormant tensions arose in several areas, leading to the socialist federation’s bloody, prolonged death. By 2001 Serbia was distanced from its former confederates. Due in part to American and English media coverage, and a Eurosceptic foreign policy, it was and

² There are many excellent studies on the history of Greek cinema. A good starting point for a study of the field is the work of Lydia Papadimitriou and Vrasidis Karalis, who both offer enjoyable, comprehensive and critical histories (see Bibliography). Locating a volume on the history of Serbian cinema is another matter, worthy of its own treatise. Despite Belgrade being the home of the Yugoslav Film Archive (whose impressive website exclusively uses the Cyrillic rather than the Latin alphabet) founded by Tito, a well-known cinephile, to get an overview of the history of Serbian cinema, the interested researcher must look beyond film studies to mediums from a range of periods, as attempted in this thesis. It is worth bearing in mind that Serbia produced movies both with and independent of the other Yugoslav republics. Since the end of Yugoslavia Germany has become a notable source of film funding. However, some Serbian filmmakers report that Germany is biased towards war-related productions (Eror 2019).

continues to be treated with caution by much of the international community (Stahl 2013).

The two Serbian films selected for this study are Emir Kusturica's *On the Milky Road* (2016) and Srdjan Spasojević's *A Serbian Film* (2011). *On the Milky Road* deploys cultural mythology to assert an "exceptionalist" perspective of Serbia as the land of a "heavenly people". The narrative conveys the idea that people are indebted to an idea of national identity crafted by their ancestors. Like their ancestors, these descendants continue to defend their homeland from what they perceive to be threats to their way of life. Ongoing battles and invasions by foreign powers do not traumatise the residents of the mountain village. Instead, the constant fighting reinforces the villagers' belief that the myths which guided Serbs from yesteryear remain relevant in the present. Though heartbroken, the characters do not see the carnage unleashed upon the hamlet as different from earlier ordeals afflicting previous generations. The stories handed down from their predecessors convey to the residents that war is eternal, and only the enemies change. Kusturica gives a magical realist makeover to the many Serbian mythological symbols and tropes, such as those identified by Čolović (2002), deploying the themes in the manner explained by Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*. Kusturica demonstrates that mythology insulates a people from trauma by depicting recent events as merely another chapter in an epic of Serbian identity.

Conversely, *A Serbian Film* challenges Kusturica's mythological martyrdom from the opposite end of the typological spectrum. The 2011 production vehemently counters the bittersweet fairytale rhetoric, but this comes at a price. *A Serbian Film* does not enjoy the same popularity with mainstream critics and audiences, and mention of the film often prompts reactions of revulsion among Serbian and international viewers

alike.³ Its notoriety arises from the fact that it is a self-aware graphic metaphor for the chaos of postwar Serbia. The film articulates sentiments seen in the postwar German Expressionist classic, *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (Wiene 1920) which sought to express the mass betrayal and disillusionment. Spasojević depicts Miloš, a present-day, retired porn star who is lured back to make one last film for a mysterious director named Vuk (“wolf”). The dynamic between Miloš and Vuk is the “Hunter-Captive” model articulated by Raya Morag in her research into post-Vietnam War masculinity (Morag 2009, 155). The descent from being a celebrated, fantastical figure of male domination to disposable consumer artefact is made more striking through Tomislav Longinović’s rendering of the “Balkan Male” (Longinović 2005). The film avoids references to cultural mythology and instead identifies the shallow, commodified stereotype of “Balkan virility” as a cause of cultural fragmentation and exploitation. Furthermore, it asserts that the voyeuristic West is culpable for imposing the concept of Balkanisation. *A Serbian Film* proposes that the existing values and attitudes otherwise meant to scaffold a society are paradoxically the cause of its demise, leading to the film’s positioning on the typology as high on the trauma axis and low on the mythology axis (see Figure 0.1).

These two films confirm the impression voiced by Radmila Gorup and Dijana Jelača that there is an array of perspectives on the value of mythology and the turmoil facing Serbia and the rest of former Yugoslavia today (Gorup 2013; Jelača 2016).

Between the two extreme poles of *On the Milky Road* and *A Serbian Film* lie the two Greek films, *Voyage to Cythera*, a 1984 film by Theo Angelopoulos, and *The Stone*

³ On a 2016 trip to Belgrade, I met Nenad Jovanov, father of the *Serbian Film* cinematographer, Nemanja Jovanov. Nenad Jovanov is the famous ‘Last Perfumer of Belgrade’ (Avramovic 2015) I told him of my love for Serbian cinema, especially Spasojević’s 2011 film. Jovanov admitted his son’s involvement in the film and covered his face in shame. Two viewers from outside Serbia, a Korean-American and an Irish person, both reported depressive emotions lasting for days after watching the film.

Years by Pantelis Voulgaris, released in 1985. Both films are contemplative and circumspect yet distinct in their deployment of cultural mythology to address the ramifications of the Civil War (1946-1949) and the subsequent military dictatorship (1967-1974).

0.4.2. Greece

During World War II, the British army fought alongside the Greek (primarily communist) partisans to drive out the Nazis. As the war drew to a close, the British government concluded that it was economically undesirable for Greece to align with the communists and confer with the Soviet Union. The British outlined their concerns for the Greek postwar government elite, who concurred with their allies' concerns. The Greek national army supported by the British military and paramilitary units drove the anti-fascists into prison, hiding, or exile. The Greek national government obstructed both adamant and accused members of the Communist Party from participating in society. Besides, Greek society was undergoing a highly-charged, multivalent transition period caused by internal migration (both enforced and voluntary), the Marshall Plan, and British and later American oversight. This period of tremendous flux led to widespread poverty and uncertainty.

In 1967 several colonels staged a coup, which they claimed was a temporary measure to return Greece to its path to greatness. This junta – the so-called “Regime of the Colonels” – ended up lasting over seven years. The government elite and its willing and complacent participants attempted to create – and more problematically, enforce – a single, unified and unilateral Greece by trawling history for symbols and rhetoric to define Greek identity (Antoniou et al. 2017; Kornetis 2014b; Koumandaraki 2002;

Trubeta 2010). However, this narrative was incongruent and did not reflect the region's rich, heterogeneous heritage spanning from ancient Greece through Byzantium to modern Greece (Livianos 2006; Efstathiadou 2011; Koutsourelis 2016; Yannaras 2016; Lambropoulos 2001; Tziovas 2001; Triandafyllidou and Parakevopoulou 2002; Karalis 2012). Government policy and implementation removed from sight the communists who fought the Nazis and others who posed a threat to Greece's rebranded image. This resulted in a hidden population and diaspora whose homeland would not let them home.

Voyage to Cythera and *The Stone Years* will be evaluated in the Greek chapter because they portray the nation in the aftermath of the Civil War and the Junta and they tell the accounts of the Greeks who were rejected by their homeland. Both films could be considered depictions of what Dina Iordanova calls "hushed histories" – events that official arbiters permit to leave unspoken, to fade into oblivion (Iordanova 2008). In *Voyage to Cythera*, Spyros (Manos Katrakis), a Civil War communist who has been living in exile in Ukraine for thirty-two years, receives permission in 1984 to return to Greece. His mere existence is a reminder to his family and the government of the unaddressed painful history. Once home, he battles with his daughter and neighbours, whose financial concerns trump more idealistic allegiances to their homeland. These same neighbours chose compliance and survival over resistance and principles during the war, showing that little has changed and that few wish to remember or learn from the past when trying to save themselves. A central theme is the diminution of Spyros's masculinity in society. Drawing from Achilleas Hadjikyriacou's thorough analysis of masculinity in postwar Greek film (Hadjikyriacou 2015), we analyse Spyros's decline from the once-virile rebel fighter to a man barred from the local *kafenio* until the government sweeps him out to sea like Gregor Samsa from Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Angelopoulos treats the film literally and figuratively like a stage.

Characters parade from various historical periods – scripted or mythological, fictional or biographical – positioning viewers as Brechtian people-watchers at a crossroads. The equal assertion of collective injury and mythology leads this film to be placed at a midpoint on the typology.

The Stone Years is a more exclamatory narrative that takes an unwavering stance on the impact of the government’s efforts to rid Greece of communists. It is based on the true story of a young couple whose communist views make them anathema to the Colonels’ Greece. Both the national and official cultural mythology (in this case two separate mythologies) is deconstructed by Eleni, who acts with agency, thereby challenging the cultural mythology of the female at the time (Cowan 1991, Lozios and Papataxiarchis 1991, Hart 1990). For example, she plays a leading role in the underground communist network, seizing back the narrative about communists at her trial. While incarcerated, she forms a sisterhood with the other political prisoners to raise her child born out of wedlock. Only with the fall of the Junta in 1974 can Eleni and her husband live together with their child outside of prison and out of the shadows. However, achieving the mythologised status of domestic bliss poses a threat to someone as independent as Eleni, which begs the question, what defines the “home” in “homeland”? The trials – literal and figurative – and tribulations the couple face as symbols of the Greek communist experience are made tolerable by integrating their own cultural mythology about the heroics of the communists who fought in the Greek Civil War.

0.5. Conclusion

The questions in these four films invite their domestic audiences to interact with their respective national histories, memories, and mythologies. This provides viewers with an

opportunity to evaluate how the portrayal of events reconciles with their own memories or those they inherited which Eyerman refers to above, or watched elsewhere as “screen memories” (Jelača 2014) or “prosthetic memories” (Landsberg 2004). Jelača uses the term “screen memory” psychoanalytically in the context of trauma signify a screen to conceal other memories. She also draws from Allison Landsberg’s term “prosthetic memory” to describe the experience of having a memory constructed externally, like film, rather than internally, such an experience one witnesses oneself. Given that mythology informs society and that films employ the symbols found within mythology superficially or more critically, it follows that film is an ideal means of integrating an event into a cultural narrative, and thereby into a culture’s mythology. Consistent with the postmodern trajectory towards fragmentation (which some find to be a disruptive experience with lasting consequences in its own right), each film offers a singular perspective leading to a greater appreciation of the myriad individual and collective responses and expectations that emerge after a conflict ends.

Even though the texts address suffering at a national level, neither they nor any film can pretend to speak for a nation, nor does any nation possess a unilateral narrative, especially during the present period. Though writing about Greece specifically, Lydia Papadimitriou’s advice applies to the consideration of all national cinemas, “Its national identity, therefore, should not be seen as unified, but as the product of a multiplicity of factors coming together at a particular time and in particular form,” (Papadimitriou 2009, 74). By highlighting mythology in movies, it is hoped that cinema will be more widely recognised as a means of exploring the aftermath. As Nietzsche points out, “Myth is a metaphor for the inexpressible” (Styan 1975, 239).

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework of Myth and Trauma

It would be nice to begin with a clear and concise definition of ‘myth’, but unfortunately that can’t be done. Bruce Lincoln, *Theorising Myth*

1.1. Introduction

Myths are ubiquitous, but a definition is elusive because myths constitute an integral part of and reflect the cultures in which they thrive. Given the context of identity in the face of adversity (exemplified in cinema in the next chapter), this thesis employs an operational definition of myth synthesised from a legacy of literature based on observing groups and cultures. Anthropological, classicist, cultural and sociological texts traversing societies such as ancient Greece, the Trobriand Islands, Navajo of New Mexico, and contemporary Western society have been surveyed to understand how communities develop and maintain a sense of identity. The result of the enquiry is a four-part operational definition of mythology: it is a storehouse of myths which encapsulate cultural values, though it is also a means of governance for both the group and the individual within the group, two roles referred to here as *social charter* and *individual charter* respectively; finally, myths can be manipulated to alter the behaviour of the group. It may be helpful to think of mythology functioning as a kind of collective memory of legends in general terms. Barbara Misztal describes collective memory as “a social and cultural process which analyses institutions’ aims and operations responsible for that construction, while also examining objects, places and practices in which

cultural memory is embodied” (Misztal 2003, 3). It is critical to understand that the core process of utilising myth for identity is psychological identification. Groups and individuals must identify with myths for the myths to enter the community’s mythology (a corpus of myths) and it is through mythology as a kind of collective memory they seek to maintain and reinforce their sense of ipseity.

1.2. Myth: A Functional Definition

1.2.1 Mythology: A Repository of Cultural Themes and Values

Mythology is a collective storehouse that each generation audits, whether it is searching for its origins or adapting its legacy to the present. Myths are often construed as entertaining, heroic tales from ancient Greece, yet they are a part of a larger social construct, structuring and being structured by their community. Mythology is a means by which a community maintains its identity through its connection with its past. This expression of cultural heritage is sustained by psychological identification, the same process that prompts audiences to respond to characters and perspectives in film and drama. This critical concept of resonance will be explained through spectator theory that we may fully appreciate if a myth does not resonate with an audience the myth relinquishes its place in the storehouse. To illustrate this, let us turn to ancient Greece to see how mythology operated in society and on stage, comparable to on-screen today. We then return to the present see that, although millennia have passed, communities still utilise their collections of narratives in the same way as part of collective memory. First, however, the theme of identification shall be presented to clarify the operation of resonance and, by extension, mythology as a cultural storehouse.

1.2.1.1. Psychological identification

Identification, or resonance, has been a cornerstone of human relations since before Aristotle described the term ‘catharsis’ in *Poetics* circa 350 B.C.E. It stands to reason that one must relate to that or whom she or he observes to experience purgation. In the frame of myth and cultural trauma in film, of interest here is the more Durkheimian concept of social catharsis, or what sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander calls ‘symbolic extension’ in which one can relate to another person expressing an emotion or an experience. For example, in “On the Social Construction of Moral Universals”, Alexander describes the world’s reaction to the discovery of Holocaust concentration camps. He argues, “For an audience to be traumatised by an experience that they themselves do not directly share, symbolic extension and psychological identification are required” (Alexander, “Social Construction” 199). According to Alexander, the Allies liberating the camps could not relate to the camp survivors because:

The starving, depleted, often weird-looking and sometimes weird-acting Jewish camp survivors seemed like a foreign race. They could just as well have been from Mars, or from Hell. The identities and characters of these Jewish survivors were rarely personalised through interviews or individualised through biographical sketches; rather, they were presented as a mass, and often as a mess, a petrified, degrading, and smelly one. (ibid.)

The Allies were unable to relate to those who defied the odds by staying alive because they were barely recognisable as humans. Alexander states, “This depersonalisation made it more difficult for the survivors” trauma to generate compelling identification’ as a consequence of their unfamiliarity (ibid.). In broad terms, camp survivors were not

warmly received by civilian populations because the civilians struggled to see themselves in many of these traumatised, alien people.⁴ In other words, sympathy follows empathy. Thus, in the absence of empathy, there will be an absence of sympathy. Psychological identification, which formed the basis for the civilian populations’ reception of camp survivors, is analogous to how audiences perceive characters in film, drama, and myths. Accordingly, myths that resonate with audiences are entered into the audience’s collective mythology.

Myths were performed theatrically in ancient Greece as a spectacle mobilising the same intrinsic, psychological processes as modern cinema. Susan Bennett, theatre critic and spectator theory scholar, recognises that both art forms – myth and theatre – quench the human desire of voyeurism. According to Bennett, both theatre and film are governed by Laura Mulvey’s spectator theory. Mulvey hypothesises that the dominant social framework and its institutions shape the viewer’s unconscious. Additionally, the familiarity of the spectacle correlates with the pleasure enjoyed by the viewer (Bennett 1997, 76). Identification with fictional characters occurs on multiple levels. Theatre scholar Anne Ubersfeld writes in *The Pleasure of the Spectator*, “signs refer to what corresponds to them in the experience of the spectator. The fictional universe set before him summons up the referential universe of the spectator, that of his personal as well as his cultural experience” (Ubersfeld 1982, 131). Ubersfeld’s impression of a ‘referential universe’ is substantiated by Halbwachs: “The individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realises and manifests itself in individual memories” (Halbwachs 1992, 40). Mulvey’s

4 I offer two images of Holocaust survivors being rejected by civilian populations: in *Maus* (1991), Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel biography of his Holocaust survivor father, Polish civilians depicted as pigs abuse and even hang returning ‘mice’, and in the German film *Phoenix* (Petzold 2014) when the wife returning from the camp is told by her husband to improve her appearance with hair dye, makeup, and new clothes, or else their friends will not recognise her.

premise, along with Ubersfeld's and the various other spectator theories associated with Bertolt Brecht, Jacques Lacan, Christian Metz, Aristotle and others are founded upon psychological identification – recognising oneself in others. Simply put, if audiences do not identify with characters and themes in myths, their own emotions will not be aroused.

When a layperson encounters the word myth, they may think of ancient Greek tales of heroic feats. Indeed, mythology provided ancient Greece and continues to offer contemporary communities with a cultural repository. In both ancient Greece and today, the recital of a myth before a community audience re-animates the community's past; its memory of previous recitations and reception, and, more subtly, the reasons why it was told. Each time a myth is recounted, the story and its actions and decisions reinforce the group's values. The repository is neither filled nor depleted by any one generation; rather, it is sustained by the stories that resonate with audiences of every generation. If a culture does not identify or no longer identifies with a myth, then the story is removed from the repository, leaving only relatable narratives.

The classicist G.S. Kirk considers myth's sole function in ancient Greece to be that of entertaining audiences. According to Kirk, when a myth no longer served its purpose of amusing the audience, it is removed from the reciter's repertoire. In other words, Kirk ascribes ancient Greek audiences the role of judges, deciding which tales are admitted to the popular archive. Eric Csapo, himself a classicist, supports Kirk's assertion that myths must be actively admitted to a culture's library. Csapo suggests:

One cannot simply assume that cultural inertia will ensure a story's survival.

There is a considerable amount of collective labour involved in making and preserving a myth ...Each moment of its survival depends upon its *continuing* importance to the society that transmits it. (Csapo 2005, 162)

Upon surveying extant Hellenic myths and counting how many times each theme appeared in the corpus, Kirk compiled a list of *Commonest Themes in Ancient Greek Myth* (see Appendix A). This list is an inventory of the most critical mythical themes in the Homeric era. A modern parallel of Kirk's compendium could be a tabulation of Hollywood film formulae. Kirk assigns this 'theme's popularity to the notion that "the originators and transmitters of many of these myths must have found ingenious solutions intrinsically satisfying, which is why there are so many dilemma/solution sequences in Greek myths" (Kirk 1970, 190). Put another way, Kirk concludes that the ancient Greeks enjoyed solving puzzles. One example is the most frequently occurring theme "tricks, riddles, ingenious solutions to dilemmas" which hinges on problem-solving, distinct from 'the reflection of serious social problems, or the symbolic affirmation of an institutional norm" (Kirk 1970, 187, 191). Kirk lists just two items on this enumeration of dilemmas to community-oriented concerns: "family stresses" (theme 13) and "displacement of elders" (theme 9) (Kirk 1970,187). The former he attributes to a "broad response to a continuing human characteristic rather than a specific reaction to extreme social concerns" (ibid.). Kirk concedes that the latter may be related to external concerns, but he is more inclined to consider it a reflection of the "frustrated resentment of old age itself" (Kirk 1970, 199). The scholar describes the popularity of specific themes over others as nothing more than, "mechanical usefulness" or "continuing taste for their style or content" (Kirk 1970, 190). One cannot gauge the usefulness, style, or what prompted a shift away from once resonant, now extinct themes.

Paradoxically, Kirk considers myth recital as secular entertainment, and of no broader sociological importance whatsoever. As noted above, myths are vehicles that transmit values. Kirk argues that certain themes are more popular than others because

they more successfully entertain audiences. However, themes must resonate with audiences for them to be entertained. In the parlance of literature, values may be called themes. For all his astuteness, Kirk fails to see that if audiences, more specifically community members, observe myths as solely entertainment and thus, apart from the social factors affecting their own lives which comprised their society, they could not psychologically identify with characters or their decisions and thus, not experience Aristotelian catharsis. Therefore, Kirk's conclusion is disproved by his own findings which indicate that popular myths, such as the stories containing the themes he enumerates, reflected the values, or, at the very least, the social issues facing ancient Greek audiences.

The sociologist and expert on nationalism, Anthony Smith, concurs with Kirk that mythology acts as a repository of themes for a culture and that audiences within a culture determine the contents of mythology in the name of 'nation-building'. Smith explains the practice of ridding a cultural storehouse of irrelevant myths in the context of nation-building over generations.

This "nation-building" activity operates within a definite tradition; it is not made over entirely anew by each generation, but inherits the mythologies and the symbolisms of previous generations. A new generation may come to reject the interpretation of its predecessor, and question its values, myths and symbols, forsaking its holy sites for new ones and replacing its golden ages and heroes by others... (Smith 2011, 235)

Smith goes further than Kirk by locating the construction, and subsequent refurbishment, of cultural mythology within the context of civil society rather than entertainment as Kirk suggests. Smith suggests that even the acceptance or rejection of a certain myth is decided by values specific to that culture. Put another way,

adjudication is culture-specific. Smith writes, “all this questioning and replacement is carried on within definite emotional and intellectual confines, which constitute far more powerful and durable barriers to the outside than any physical boundaries” (ibid.). Indeed, the decisions about which myths remain are based on which myths most closely reflect the populace’s values or, in other words, which myths with the public most closely identify. The “emotional and intellectual confines” to which Smith refers are the parameters of collective memory shared by the community, or nation, and, via this sharing, providing it with potentially cohesion.

Creating nations is a recurrent activity, which has to be renewed periodically. It is one that involves ceaseless re-interpretations, rediscoveries and reconstructions; each generation must re-fashion national institutions and stratification systems in the light of the myths, memories, values and symbols of the ‘past,’ which can best minister to the needs and aspirations of its dominant social groups and institutions. (ibid.)

Nationalism as a politically damaging concept will be addressed more fully in the “Manipulability of mythology” section, but we may gather that members of dominant social groups who exploit national mythology to generate enthusiasm can only do so if myths that represent community values—in this case, perceived as offering glimpses of “past” halcyon days or as records of when a nation achieved its potential—are present within the nation’s mythology. Resuming focus on more practical aspects of nation-building, nations typically comprise smaller groups. There is rarely unanimity regarding interpretations of the past’s offerings, and even distinct, contemporaneous versions of the same myth may exist. Smith acknowledges this in his discussion of multiple *ethnie* within one superficial grouping, for example, by external superpowers (ibid.). Because different myths are preferred by audiences in different regions based on the influence of

dominant institutions, or broadly, dominant paradigms, it is reasonable to assume that mythology has a moderating role upon the behaviour both of and within a community, otherwise known as a social charter.

1.2.2. Mythology as Social Charter

The second function of mythology is to serve as a social charter or to dictate behavioural guidelines (including expectations and precedents) to a cohesive group; another way to describe this is as the legal branch of mythology. After all, a social charter is based on the principles of mythology articulated above; as culture-specific and the culture as a whole, figuratively speaking, selects myths with which audiences should identify. Additionally, as Kirk and Smith indicate, a cultural repository of myths only includes myths of relevance to its populace. They are cognisant that values of the public shift generationally and regionally. On this premise, a social charter, endorsed by a community's mythology, only enforces social behaviour that resonates with the community and its underlying power relations.

But who enforces the social charter within the community? Above, Smith terms those who mandate such decorum as “dominant social groups and institutions” (2011, 235). This view is substantiated by arguments that originate in ancient Greece, though they also appear in the more contemporary society of the Trobriand Islands. Richard Buxton, a classicist, and Bronisław Malinowski, an anthropologist, find myths themselves are imbued with authority. Buxton situates the social charter within cultural practices in ancient Greece, such as state-sanctioned mythical performance and ritual (Buxton 1994, 27). In the same vein, Malinowski observes with the Trobrianders that the social charter is reinforced each time a rite is performed or a myth recited (Kirk

1970, 20). The presence of a social charter concedes that authority figures in the community – the statesmen or the elders – manage the application of myth in the community’s daily life. We shall see how this is exploited in our section on manipulability and revisit nationalism. First, let us examine how Buxton and Malinowski identify a mythology-based social charter in two societies.

Buxton believes mythology’s function is to explain existing cultural practices and show the adverse consequences of not heeding them, ultimately strengthening cultural norms articulated in the social charter. He offers two arguments to support his case; 1) the symbiosis of dramatic myth and ritual promote law-abiding behaviours 2) the identification of mythology’s techniques of persuasion to define decorum in a sacred, therefore official capacity. Buxton posits that the roles of dramatic myth and ritual are to provide an imaginary (but sacred) sanctuary where alternative cultural practices and subsequent consequences could be assessed without disrupting the actual societal norms – a possibility that could be applied to film.

Buxton believes it is crucial to differentiate ritual from myth. The difference between ritual and myth is that “myth took the metaphors of ritual literally,” and “mythology expresses openly or in extreme form that which in ritual remains hidden or disguised” (Buxton 1994, 129, 154). The classicist considers ritual to be the enactment of mythical narrative, but within a confined temporality and with correspondingly confined consequences. Buxton exemplifies this with the Dionysian ritual, where, in the end, everyone returns home intact; “If the women who took part in the *oreibasia* had actually killed their kin as opposed to merely abandoning them temporarily, they would have been committing... murder” (Buxton 1994, 153-154). This ritual diverges from the myth where Pentheus is torn to pieces by a pack of possessed women, including his mother. The ritual objectives are achievable and simple enough to be completed within

a designated time frame, thus bringing its participants more closure than the myth (where themes do not necessarily end and whose content has an enduring upon the actors). By bringing myths to life through performance, audiences are informed of why societal rules are what they are by demonstrating what happens in their breach. According to Buxton, mythical performance contributes to the cultural charter by demonstrating traditionally acceptable solutions to problems facing the community.

One way in which tragic didacticism has been understood is as a function of the incorporation of moral exempla... The value of this concept of myth-as-paradigm is that it highlights the question of how far mythology was functionally significant in relation to Greek behaviour. (Buxton 1994, 193)

As implied by the collaboration of myth and ritual, the spheres of the sacred and the secular are fused. Myth, bolstered by the resemblance to sacred ritual, forges and reiterates the examples that society follows. In dramatic performances, community members don masks and re-enact dramatic myths in which traditions or contemporary issues (e.g. the Athens/Argos alliance mentioned in Aeschylus's *Eumenides*) are contemplated in the "safe space" of the stage.

One of the functions of Greek myths is to probe the interstices of Greek culture, its ambiguities and paradoxes, its conflicts and contradictions... Myths focus on extreme dilemmas, which expose in the starkest terms the competing claims which may present themselves to an individual. Shall I be a deserter, or a killer of my daughter?.. Myths explore: the nature of Greekness (the *Odyssey*) and of heroic worth (the *Iliad*), the paradoxes of social marginality (*Iphigenia in Taurus*), the pressures on a wronged but hardly innocent wife and mother (*Medea*). (Buxton 1994, 211-212)

Performance provides actors and audience members with the space, time, and safety to ponder alternatives (e.g. leaving family, committing a crime, etc.) without exploring them in reality and suffering consequences. As Vernant and Vidal-Naquet note in this respect “We know that the Greeks did not consider the artists producing their works through *poesis* to be their true authors. *They create nothing*” (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 2005, 82). This reframing returns the act of exploration and explanation to the realm of cultural reinforcement, likening the ancient Greek festivals to what philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin labels “inside out” in *Rabelais and His World* (Bakhtin 2004, 687). They resemble the “...official feasts of the Middle Ages, whether ecclesiastic, feudal, or sponsored by the state, did not lead people out of the existing world order... they sanctioned the existing pattern of things and reinforced it ...using the past to consecrate the present” (Bakhtin 2004, 686).

All festivals where myths and rituals were performed were sponsored events; it is in the sponsor’s interest—in the case of ancient Greece, the city-state—to manage the messages being disseminated to the polis. A more contemporary example of managed messages is the regulation by the formation of communist states in the twentieth century. Shari J. Cohen recounts that these regimes, in attempting to create founding myths: “went to great lengths to create new myths and to instil these in society through... political socialisation mechanisms” (Cohen quoted in Walker 2005, 18).

Returning to ancient Greece, mythical drama has immanent techniques that make it more persuasive, or help it to achieve *peithō* (Buxton 1994, 165):

Tragedy lacks the first-person stance characteristic of the epic bard or praise-poet, so its claims to immortalise are bound to be indirect. In most cases, tragic references to the power of narrative to confer fame point outwards beyond the

frame of the drama, exploiting the audience's sense that they are witnessing events simultaneously past and present. (Buxton 1994, 170)

Naturally, each medium has its own method of persuasion. Myths and their enactments (recital, tragedy, and ritual) were endowed with authority, some of which was perceived (e.g., in the case of nursemaids telling children tales) and some state-sanctioned (such as dramatic performances at festivals) (Buxton 1994, 165). Buxton does not suggest a framework for dramatised myth, but the myths themselves suggest a causal relationship.

In many cases, Greek myths lay out the causality and motivation of the events they narrate in a way which seems transparent and problem-free. An example would be the common sequence of transgression leading to retribution, such as that found in Dionysus' prologue... Semele's sisters have denied the divinity of Dionysus: '*therefore (toigar)*', says the god, 'I have driven them from their homes in madness...' (Buxton 1994, 211)

Semele's sisters did not believe in Dionysus so he punished them with madness. In more general terms, by their very nature, the arts create narrative explanation by placing seemingly disparate events, chaotic in their own right, on an integrated timeline, thus—intentionally or unintentionally—constructing a narrative.

Buxton proposes that myth was omnipresent in ancient Greece. It may also be true in contemporary societies. Buxton suggests that myth remains in the background, regularly informing its audiences about their own expectations as well as those of society (Buxton 1994, 20). We must keep in mind that ancient Greek festivals where myths were presented were state-sanctioned and therefore perhaps not as 'safe' a space as Buxton asserts. He suggests that the sacred and the secular are fused based on plausible evidence of artefacts (ibid.). Yet, without direct field observation, it would be rash to assume that the secular and sacred spheres are as symbiotic as he suggests.

Bolstered by first-hand observations and testimony, we may be more confident of Malinowski's findings which revolutionised the field of anthropology.

Malinowski considers myth to be both a social charter and its justification. He finds that a social charter acts as a manual that dictates the "organised behaviour of man" (i.e. culture), and the repeated myth dictates organised behaviour (Malinowski 1984, 173). To ensure the continued satisfaction of the group, they create and adhere to a social charter as an individual concern, and when shared by other individuals, it becomes public and organised (Malinowski 1984, 217). "The myth comes into play when rite, ceremony, or a social or moral rule demands justification, warrant of antiquity, reality, and sanctity" (Malinowski quoted in Segal 1999, 79). Malinowski's view contrasts with Kirk's preference for studying mythology on its own because, like Buxton, Malinowski sees myth as a cornerstone of the social charter that is connected with ritual and daily behaviour. Malinowski clarifies "We are not so much concentrating our attention on the text of narratives, as on their sociological reference" (Malinowski 1984, 201). In the case of the Trobrianders and other oral cultures, Malinowski finds charters to be based on "history, legend, or mythology" (Malinowski 1954, 219). With this observation in mind, he defines mythology, in this sociological context, by its function:

[Myth] is a story which is told in order to establish a belief, to serve as a precedent in ceremony or ritual, or to rank as a pattern of moral or religious conduct.

Mythology, therefore, or the sacred tradition of a society, is a body of narratives woven into their culture, dictating their belief, defining their ritual, acting as the chart of their social order and the pattern of their moral behaviour. (1954, 249)

Malinowski, the cultural scientist, arrived at this definition by studying the function of mythology in the community. In this account, Malinowski witnesses myth and magic in action during a storm:

The onslaught of the wind was terrific, and I had to muster all my nervous energy to keep up the white man's burden of dignified impassivity... When the wind was at its worst a loud chant suddenly arose from one of the platforms. The hereditary wind magician of the community was about to calm down the storm in order to prevent any destruction which it might wreak... He addressed the wind... He asserted that no harm could be done to the village... What was the effect of his imprecations on the wind does not matter to us sceptics, but the effect of his voice on the human beings was truly magical... It was evident that the villagers now felt safe... They behaved quite differently after the magic had been chanted. And immediately after he had finished his spell the magician took the practical situation in hand: he gave orders what to do, orders which were immediately obeyed in a disciplined, organised manner. (1954, 189)

Myths enforce the social charter by explaining roles the citizens have to assume in a storm. Scarborough echoes Malinowski, “[M]yth is not primitive philosophy or science, not the detached speculations of the intellect, not knowledge for knowledge’s sake; rather it serves basic, everyday needs in the life of a people” (Malinowski quoted in Scarborough 1994, 17). The community’s belief in religion, myth, ritual, and wind magic allows it to be reassured that this potential disaster has been experienced before and that there is a protocol to combat it and protect the village. The spell immediately contextualises what could have been a chaotic and traumatic experience, and the villagers respond by assuming their prescribed roles. For Malinowski, this is the function of mythology and religion: to dispel fear and provide a framework through a

precedent. He writes, the “functional, cultural, and pragmatic aspect of any native tale is manifested as much in its enactment, embodiment, and contextual relations as in the text” (Malinowski 1984, 206). These stories and related practices convey insurance against the uncertain or unexplainable, which allows the group to continue to operate or facilitate its return to harmonious operation as dictated by decorum. It is not possible to discern whether anxiety reduction is a by-product or the goal of Malinowski’s construct of a mythological social charter. The state apparatus Buxton describes and the oral cultures Malinowski studies do manipulate myth for the community’s benefit. Now we consider how mythology aids the individuals within the community.

1.2.3. Mythology as Individual Charter

Myths contain and express collective memory, but how and why do community members internalise these messages? Similar to psychological identification, a myth that resonates with an individual can draw the individual back into the group’s fold. We have now seen how a social charter helps a community adhere to its mythology. In the same vein, mythology mediates between an individual and their society, operating as an anecdotal narrative containing unwritten expectations for listeners to internalise.

Two of the same proponents who have written about cultural discourse regarding mythology escort us from the sociological plane to the psychological. We shall return to Malinowski’s and Buxton’s ideas on this shortly, but in this context, their research also presents a different aspect of the community. Malinowski appraises us of the fundamental role of the individual in society. Buxton enumerates the manifold locations of myth and its invocations in Hellenic culture to indoctrinate and ascribe functions to its members. Two additional voices – those of anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn and

cultural theorist William Doty – can also be noted here, which deepen our understanding of this function of mythology upon the individual in society. Kluckhohn supplements Malinowski's theory with his own findings based on observations of the New Mexico Navajos (Kluckhohn 1942, *passim*). Doty highlights the dominant and contested myths in contemporary Western civilisation (Doty 2002, *passim*). He verifies that the role of myth as the purveyor of predominant norms has changed little. Despite this, the multitudinous *ethnie*—including groups of the same ethnicity but of differing social experiences of whom Smith speaks above—who are typically subsumed under an umbrella nation, are increasing their presence as adjudicators and calling into question myths that once formed the core of national mythologies. Despite their disparate areas of expertise Malinowski, Buxton, Kluckhohn and Doty all validate the notion that myths assist individuals in navigating society, and ultimately helping them adhere to the social charter or bring about change within the individual's culture.

We revisit Malinowski briefly here not for a previously unconsidered argument but his construct of the individual in a group and to introduce Kluckhohn. Though he is best known for the impact of mythology on society through the social charter, Malinowski is an appropriate starting point for discussing myth and the individual. He approaches the relationship between a culture's mythology and the individual from a more Weberian mindset than the Durkheimian standpoint. Malinowski suggests that when a sufficient number of individual members symbolically experience the same, or similar, trauma, it becomes a group that demands recognition; a problem that affects individuals within a group becomes a group problem. He writes, "The cultural fact starts when an individual interest becomes transformed into a public, common, and transferable systems of organised endeavour" (Malinowski 1954, 217).

Despite the inverse approach to group formation, Malinowski appears to agree with the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who notes, “Individual memory is a part of or an aspect of group memory... The framework of collective memory confines us and binds our most intimate remembrances to each other” (Halbwachs 1992, 54). Barbara Misztal substantiates the notion of group bonding through memory:

[M]emory plays an important role in maintaining the order and cohesion of the group. Since in oral cultures all relationships must be explained in terms of the past, memory coordinates and cements social relations. (Misztal 2003, 29)

Even though Malinowski says a group is made of individuals, the converse is also true. Individuals form a group through their mythology, collective memory, or shared past. Thus, individuals may have memories that are not shared, but these individual memories are informed by the person’s group membership and collective experiences and expectations.

Kluckhohn demonstrates that myths resonate on an individual level, with their effect manifested in reducing personal anxiety. Kluckhohn writes in *Myths and Rituals*, “Rituals and myths supply... fixed points in a world of bewildering change and disappointment” (Kluckhohn 1942, 65). The resonating themes are placed in a cultural storehouse, ready for use by the community as a palliative process. Indeed, the New Mexico Navajos have endured much change, disappointment and anxiety. The Navajos practise myriad adjustive responses to mitigate their high morbidity and mortality in relation to the general American population. Kluckhohn attributes the shortened life span, and endemic ill health to the prevalence of economic depression and unsuitable living conditions, which continue to plague the Native American community.⁵

5 See. Castor, Mei L., Michael S. Smyser, Maile M. Tualii, Alice N. Park, Shelley A. Lawson, and Ralph A. Forquera. “A Nationwide Population-Based Study Identifying Health Disparities between American Indians/Alaska Natives and the General Populations Living in Select Urban Counties.” *American Journal of Public Health*. 96.8 (August 2006): 1478–84.

Kluckhohn argues that myths exist in communities to alleviate the anxiety caused by uncertainty in light of a poor health index (Segal 1999, 45). When an individual is exposed to a myth, it situates him or her in an already understood context or dilemma, making it less “bewildering” to use Kluckhohn’s term. Kluckhohn defines anxiety as “anticipation of disaster” exemplified in a succinct statement by a member of the tribe Kluckhohn had studied, “No living person has died – but he has seen others die” (Kluckhohn 1942, 69). Myth and ritual mitigate this anxiety, serving as “adjustive responses”. Kluckhohn distinguishes these from “adaptive responses” which are performed to improve survival chances, such as running away from a lion. On an individual level, “adaptation” in the form of stories and behaviours does not necessarily reduce the likelihood of the feared event or threat from occurring. Still, it relieves the associated tension and offers the anxious person the impression of control over the uncontrollable. He argues that their ability to reduce anxiety ensures myths and rituals are transmitted through the generations, gradually building what Kirk terms a “cultural storehouse of adjustive responses for the individual” (Kirk 1970, 24). This storehouse may be likened to a culturally specific emergency kit of myths: individuals adhere to social norms by reciting the appropriate myth to diffuse the particular fear. Given the many fears, real and imagined, it is beneficial that an individual practically enters the collective framework and memory before he or she is born, as Buxton reminds us.

Buxton points to evidence indicating that members of the ancient Greek community were indoctrinated from infancy. Buxton believes that individuals echo and pronounce mythical narratives to reify collective values and actions enacted by mythological characters. Of particular interest is the context in which these myths are recited, or as Buxton views it, the interaction between the mythical and the real worlds

(Buxton 1994, 5). In ancient Greece, children were encouraged to memorise the myths for competitive recital:

On one of the days of the Apatouria (for the registration of male infants into the hereditary association known as the phratry), children took part in a contest as if they were rhapsodes (professional reciters). (Buxton 1994, 20)

Adult women taught children myths which were reinforced when the children became students. Buxton offers the evidence of vases depicting typical school scenes such as a child being tested, “on the recitation of a piece of poetry; another depicts a boy holding a roll of papyrus, on which are written the opening two words from what we know as *Homeric Hymn 18*” (Buxton 1994, 20). Before formal schooling became a regular practice, children learned poetry in choral groups (Buxton 1994, 23). Victories in athletics were celebrated with odes likening the champion’s feat to those of gods and heroes (Buxton 1994, 25). It is safe to assume that the presence of mythology in ancient Greece was comprehensive, especially when it was utilised to evaluate the community’s principles.

Buxton’s most perceptive observation is that the community used myths to discern its own values. The reflective nature of mythological drama allowed it to be another means of exploring ancient Greek culture.

Tension, disruption, questioning: it has been suggested that the very structure of tragedy – with the deeds of heroes being played out before and examined by a collective group, the chorus – mirrors what is distinctive in the genre’s narrative stance, as the city-state confronts the mythical past and questions it anew.

(Buxton 1994, 32)

Audiences and actors alike could investigate current issues on stage through direct reference and allegory, reinforcing their self-awareness. A contemporary parallel might

be analysing television shows for their principles and the impact on actors and audiences. Buxton marvels at the exploration that myths promote and how society can reconcile what it takes from myths with real life, but he acknowledges there is a catch: “How could the *polis* tolerate such self-doubt? Perhaps because, when it came down to it, the whole enterprise was impossible to mistake for anything other than ‘play’” (Buxton 1994, 33). As “play”, such self-doubt would always stop short of actually subverting the dominant paradigm. In our current postmodern era, the dominant paradigm and institutions are being interrogated by numerically smaller but more vocal audiences whom mythology is meant to serve, or subjugate.

Returning to contemporary Western civilisation, Doty illuminates the values in myths presented in contemporary arts and media as well as the proliferation of mythical narratives (Doty 2002, 144). He considers them to be the metonymy of “orientation points”. For him, the objective of mythology has not changed. He writes, “Each mythic grasping of meaning contributes to significances yet to come and determines where a society sets its horizons and its limits as to what it considers ‘truly human’” (Doty 1999, 116). He proposes that postmodernism has dismantled the (perception of the) grand canon, making space for newly emerging narratives and ensuing variations. Parodies and other reformulations of myths make them more contemporary and relatable while continuing to offer a connection to a tradition. Perhaps most importantly, these burgeoning myths may be construed as dialogues with the dominant institutions and paradigms, in which individuals question the roles society has assigned them.

To fully appreciate how Doty’s commentary on myth’s role on the individual and society, it is essential to provide Doty’s definitions of postmodernism and myth. To Doty, the two are distinct but integral to each other. In his understanding of postmodernism, he echoes Lyotard’s belief that the “grand narratives” have died and

out of the ashes rises a plethora of unofficial, individual narratives (Lyotard 1984). Similarly, myth, according to Doty, is a Saussurean tool to identify stories from which individuals extrapolate meaning. Doty applies the term postmodernism to, for example, what we as residents in postmodern society have witnessed in the media: previously unheard voices—often differing from the “official” or mainstream voices—describing their reality and what its meaning to them.

I do advocate... something of a postmodernist/post-phenomenological perspective opening onto mythography/mythology/mythologies that recognises its/their multidimensional/polyphasic resources for determining existential standpoints of regularised/moral positions that may provide orientation points within the widely bemoaned fragmentation of both modernism and postmodernism. (Doty 2002, 145)

Doty and other contemporary cultural theorists map additional previously “unseen” references that can be made visible in postmodernism. Doty’s theory takes a functional approach. To him, postmodernism is a label for the polyphony of identities, in contrast to the singular, unified representation of identity associated with modernism. It is important to note that Doty applies the term descriptively rather than prescriptively. Postmodern society’s orientation points lie within its mythology. Doty asks us to frame the latter construct, not within the sacred, but within the sociological to “[tie] things back together’ or ‘re-ligare’, from which the word ‘religion’ derives” (ibid.). Myths let us explore the boundaries of our lives. Doty explains:

[M]ythic narratives provide the coherence of life-as-lived... At the junctures where coherence is struck dumb by tragedy... myths centrifugate identities and significances that societies choose to enforce and celebrate. (Doty 1995, 194)

Doty does not single out one “tribe” or group within a community but points to how any given group or individual’s myths and memories may contrast with others’ experiences within a nation, or internationally. He acknowledges that tension occurs between differing myths, but still encourages caution around orientation points, myths and the delegitimising agendas of the media in which we are immersed:

[W]e ought to take very seriously... various rhetorics and literary types of communications, such as myths and related materials [and] sites of. . . production and consumption—where they originate, who is responsible for creating them, who for their interpretation, and which agencies train us to interpret and appreciate myths and symbols. (Doty 1995, 189)

Consider how parody and pastiche, two cornerstones of postmodernism, assist us as individuals in locating our own orientation points, and subsequently, the myths that emerge from them. There is currently an acceptance of parody and pastiche in postmodern (re)generation as evidenced by the large body of work consisting of (inter)textual and visual material, particularly in film. The adage “every joke contains a grain of truth” applies to parody and pastiche. To fully appreciate the proposed joke based on a concept or symbol, one must confront and interpret the original text. Once it is apprehended, it may be manipulated to convey another meaning, thereby redirecting the narrative’s moral or purpose. When sufficient texts have been repurposed through parody or pastiche within a myth, the myth itself is diverted for a different purpose.⁶ The refurbished myth and the refurbishing process yield information about both the individual and their culture’s priorities.

⁶ Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* offers legitimately empowering new myths based on legends. (Carter 1995)

[T]he self-reflexive, parodic art of the postmodern [underlines] in its ironic way the realisation that all cultural forms of representation ... are ideologically grounded. Parody sharpens our critical perspective toward ideology, but postmodernism paradoxically manages to legitimise culture ... even as it subverts it... It is the function of irony in postmodern discourse to posit that critical distance and then undo it. (Doty 2002, 149)

To reject an emerging myth because it is revisionist or inauthentic is to devalue its architect's experience. Furthermore, such a rejection overlooks the discourse between a community and its members, reflected in the multiple extant versions of ancient Greek tragedies. Regardless of whether a myth is static or emerging, it expresses values. Whether the cultural audience finds the values, resonant depends on how they are introduced and portrayed to the society.

1.2.4. Manipulability of Mythology

In addition to the proposition that myths draw from the cultural storehouse once it earns its place by withstanding the erosive effects of time, we must also consider the possibility of a myth being manipulated to restructure cultural identity. It is because a myth is integral to its host society, acting, as we have seen, as repository, social charter, and mediator, that to manipulate a myth may exploit and potentially damage a populace's trust. Here I demonstrate how and why myths get revived or created to achieve nationalist or normalising agendas. Roland Barthes reveals how myths are created and disseminated to normalise behaviours and beliefs (Barthes 1993).

Barthes demonstrates in *Mythologies* that any "expressive language" can be used to generate a myth that would exist as long as the populace were swayed by it. Doty

builds on Barthes's argument that anything can be a myth. However, we have seen that the mythological status of a narrative applies only for the duration that the narrative resonates with its audience. In "Myth Today", the final essay in Barthes's anthology *Mythologies* (1993), he posits that any expressive language can become a myth. Barthes's linguistic/semiotic model of a myth is an inversion of the approaches discussed above. He does not attempt to gather myths to gain a better understanding of cultural traditions. Instead, he demonstrates how myths are created to initiate traditions and values. He deals with contemporaneous material drawn from the popular sphere, rather than the historical and sacred material analysed by classicists and anthropologists. This approach allows Barthes to comment on the schematic and adaptive behaviours of culture. He observes modern, secular myths occurring in everyday language, addressing everything from consumer goods to ideologies. The covert processes of rewriting and resignification make myths ideal for exploitation as propaganda. A naturalised myth suggests "things have always been this way" making it a powerful means to further an agenda to benefit its creator. "Mythical speech is made of a material which has already been worked on to make it suitable for communication" (Barthes 1993, 110).

Barthes explains, "Myth is speech *stolen and restored*" (Barthes 1993, 125). The speech he refers to is the social language that has already been uttered – expressive communication open to interpretation. Before an idea is mythologised, it has "meaning", historical value. When it adopts mythical "form" this literal, contextual meaning is vacated, making space for the figurative and abstract, allowing for the situated concept to re-animate and appropriate the idea. He writes, "The relation which unites the concept of myth to its meaning is essentially a relation of *deformation*... The meaning is always there to *present* the form; the form is always there to *outdistance* the

meaning” (Barthes 1993, 122-3). This could be called connotation in classical linguistic terms.

Why go to all this trouble to re-allocate words and symbols? The explanation Barthes offers can be summed up in one word: motivation (Barthes 1993, 126). Motivation is not unimodal but is selected from among many options. To prevent motivated myth (e.g. propaganda) from revealing its agenda, it may be ‘naturalised’ – retrofitted into tradition or culture. Barthes argues that this is the *raison d’être* of myth: “it transforms history into nature... it is not read as a motive but as a reason” (Barthes 1993, 129). As described above, to mythologise is to strip a signifier of its history and imbue it with a form that is then sculpted into a concept. This concept may be further naturalised, further concealing its origins. Here lies the hazard of such myths. Barthes describes this procedure in a detached manner:

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. (Barthes 1993, 143)

Barthes’ theory, in an overtly political sense, opposes the notions of values and community that are highlighted as positive by the other surveyed mythologists. He describes how these parasitic myths, now devoid of temporal meaning they once enjoyed as non-metalanguage, become naturalised to fend off oblivion. Barthes informs his readers these naturalised myths are recognised for their stereotypical suffixes such as “it has always been this way” (Barthes 1993, 153). Kluckhohn says that myths dispel anxiety by providing cause-and-effect narratives of similar situations to the one the individual faces (Kluckhohn 1942, 69). Malinowski proposes that myths realign individuals with the cultural expectations of their tribes (Malinowski 1984, 173).

1.2.5. Summary

I have shown that a narrative of a protagonist's deeds, or "a hero's journey", is but one relatively small facet of mythology. Mythology continues to influence our actions as individuals and as groups. We practice traditions and, often unbeknownst to us, myths may be altered and inserted into our lives for nefarious purposes. Doty describes the plurality of figurative threads and unfamiliar or repurposed symbols within mythology. An example of a concept unfamiliar to the casual observer is science. Doty devotes many pages in his volume *Postmodern America* to the mistaken belief that science has overtaken mythology (Doty 1995, 200). Though the text is focused on the United States, many Western societies consider themselves too advanced to accept at face value the myths of yore. Now they have rational explanations for events and no longer require a myth's reassurance detailing the cause of a flood, eclipse or illness and placing these in a broader context. Self-congratulation for our society's progress is nothing new; even this perceived break with myth has "traces of myth in a postmodern society that celebrates its own "mythlessness" because it considers itself truly "scientific" – a claim that societies have made ever since the earliest myths were reappropriated by later generations" (Doty 2002, 189). Effectively, thinking we no longer need myth suggests "it is useful to characterise the way scientific values have themselves become ahistorical and transcendent as religious values were earlier" (Doty 2002, 200). I hope that arguing for the four functions of mythology—that it is a repository, a social charter, a means to assist an individual in society, and that it can be manipulated to achieve a particular goal—and substantiating them with expert opinions has dispelled the concept of "mythlessness".

The theories above offer diverse perspectives on what mythology is, and how and why it works. They share the objective of shedding light on the *process* of constructing narratives. No single theory, in its entirety, is a manual of how to construct or deconstruct a myth. Below is a functional definition of myth, crafted from traversing the ancient to the postmodern in this survey. Synthesising these interpretations creates a theoretical lens through which the case study films in the following chapter will be evaluated for their mythical content and for the purposes that content serves. The definition will be to address the process of social signification for cultural trauma, its narratives and their representations in film.

The seemingly simple quest to define myth is open to very complex and nuanced interpretations. Examples have come from multiple sources including classical literary scholarship, religious studies scholarship, semioticians and anthropologists. The outcome of this research is a blended and contemporary definition that incorporates the insights of the selected theories: *Myths are narrative accounts that EXPLAIN, RECUR, and RESONATE with the emotional needs of those who share the narratives.*

Buxton postulates that myths **explain** traditions and behaviours. Kirk addresses **recurring** themes by offering his readers a list of the most common Greek motifs. Malinowski and Kluckhohn draw from field-based research with tribes once considered ‘primitive’. Malinowski also finds that myths explain cultural practices. Kluckhohn, moving from the group to the individual level, argues that myths **resonate** with personal experiences.

Buxton and Kluckhohn emphasise that explanation is integral to a myth’s function as a social charter. Explanation engages the myth’s audiences, thereby allowing the myth to shape cultural values. Kirk focuses on recurring mythological themes, rather than its function as a social charter. Malinowski is aligned with Buxton

and Kluckhohn in the perception of myth as a social charter yet his principle contribution, with regard to this definition, is how audience members relate to and apply the myths to which they are exposed. Doty likewise emphasises resonance. Resonance is what catalyses the process of reforming myth to make it more relevant.

These four defining features of myth contribute directly to the cohesion of a collectivity. The cultural heritage it creates informs the collective identity individuals are born into and pass on. And collective identity is what is considered injured in a cultural trauma.

1.3. Cultural Trauma

To apprehend the larger aim of the function of mythology in films addressing cultural trauma, we must understand its role within cultural trauma. To date, there have been two dominant approaches to cultural trauma: psychoanalysis and social constructivism. Here we outline both approaches and then present the rationale for narrowing the study's theoretical focus to one of these approaches while acknowledging the contributions of the other. More generally, it may advance our understanding of cultural trauma as a process of social signification, and the role films play in that process. Much has been written about the two schools of thought presented here. Here psychoanalysis is defended by historian Dominick LaCapra in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Sociological constructivism is represented by the Yale Group including sociologists Jeffrey A. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, and Neil Smelser. Combined, these theorists offer a conceptualisation as well as insight on the most prevalent cultural traumas of western society, from the multi-generational shaping of the African-

American identity (Eyerman) to the Holocaust (Giesen) to life in the Eastern Bloc (Sztompka) immediately after the fall of communism. Without claiming universal applicability, the temporal span and spectrum of impact covered by the selected literature indicate that there are generalisable elements of constructivist theory from one circumstance to the next. The key texts in cultural trauma studies are surveyed to describe cultural trauma's purpose in this thesis to highlight the importance of understanding mythology in film. If this project were situated in sociology alone rather than traversing mythography, sociology, and film studies, it would behoove this author to include the arguments of less cited theorists and research projects that tested the core principles of the two approaches reviewed here. Nonetheless, given the scope of this work, cultural trauma is charted not as a concept unto itself but as a location where myth and film meet. To that end, let us consider the two dominant approaches to the topic of cultural trauma.

The two main schools of thought in cultural trauma utilise expression by way of the arts to manifest and represent trauma. How the final product is viewed is determined by the approach utilised to utter the expression in the first place. Within psychoanalysis, scholars such as LaCapra and Cathy Caruth construe expressions in the form of literature, film and drama as attempts to locate trauma that survivors can never completely apprehend. Such evidence of "working through" may only occur after a period of latency, more familiar as public silence or avoidance of culpability (Jelin and Kaufman in Alexander et al. 2004, 7). This theory is premised on Freud's theory of trauma and its focus on the compulsion to repeat an action and its subsequent transference (Freud 2003). Within cultural trauma, this model encourages investigation of historical events and the literature it generated on the basis that truth claims made in the present may come from those still trapped in the past.

Conversely, constructivists, such as Alexander et al., consider the arts as a means of articulating the trauma to either reconstruct what happened in order to label it traumatic or to commence reconstituting the collective identity—both involve the actor(s) attempting to claim ownership of a narrative. The collective identity upon which the constructivists build is rooted in Emile Durkheim's work and elaborated upon by Maurice Halbwachs. Halbwachs explains, "One may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realises and manifests itself in individual memories" (Halbwachs 1992, 40). In other words, any perception of trauma is based on the concept that the individual is operating within the framework of their community. Thus, the psychoanalytic and constructivist approaches differ irreconcilably on the role of mythology (as employed by collective identity) and the manifestation of trauma. This survey outlines the objectives of each approach in relation to mythology providing a lens to view the films from the countries of Greece and Serbia in the next chapter.

Referring to the preceding section on mythology, it may be helpful to consider psychoanalysis as a version of the individual charter and constructivism as the social charter. Psychoanalysis and constructivism broach cultural trauma from widely distinct viewpoints. The two approaches will be evaluated for their use of myth and expression and potential applicability in the present work. The point of psychoanalysis for the individual analysand, or in this case, the group as analysand, to articulate their own subjectivity, with little interest in exploring the causes of the trauma. By contrast, constructivism accords mythology primary status in shaping collective identity in that it calls for the articulation of precisely why the events impacted the victims in the manner they did. In other words, in psychoanalysis expression is the location of psychic fault lines, whereas, in constructivism, it is part of healing from cultural trauma.

1.3.1. Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis was the dominant approach until the social constructivist theory of cultural trauma emerged in the early 2000s (Jucovy 1992). Part of what makes constructivist methodology better suited to treating large-scale psychological damage is that it fills in the gaps found in the sociological application of psychoanalysis. Here we attend to these breaches and consider the arguments in favour of and against mass psychoanalysis.

In the 2014 edition of *Writing History, Writing Trauma* LaCapra includes a new preface in defence of psychoanalysis in cultural trauma. He insists that to dismiss the model for use on groups is an error of analogy and suggests Freud was wrong in his own renunciation of applying psychoanalysis to large-scale trauma: “It is true that Freud at times saw the problem in terms of drawing an analogy between the individual and the collectivity, but I think he was misled” (LaCapra 2014, xviii). Freud wrote his survey of the impact of collective memory and trauma in the religion of Judaism as the riptide of Nazism crept into Europe. In *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Freud applies the model he uses for individual patients to the Jewish members of the Egyptian exodus. The two main tenets he proposes are that Moses was Egyptian and that the guilt of killing Moses is what drives Jews, generation after generation, to practice their religion. However, LaCapra, the psychoanalytic historiographer and Holocaust scholar, might accuse Freud of commingling absence and loss, resulting in Freud’s description of the Jews as being trapped in a melancholic state resulting in generalised victimisation.

When absence and loss are conflated, melancholic paralysis or manic agitation may set in, and the significance or force of particular historical losses ... may be obfuscated or rashly generalised. As a consequence one encounters the dubious ideas that everyone (including perpetrators or collaborators) is a victim, that all history is trauma, or that we all share a pathological public sphere or ‘wound culture. (LaCapra 2014, 60)

Nonetheless, after World War II, many individual Holocaust survivors and their children subsequently found themselves suffering from trauma. Former concentration camp prisoners continued to practice survivalist behaviours after they had been liberated. Such actions, beneficial in the past but maligned in the present. It seemed logical to utilise psychoanalysis to make survivors aware of the transference in their conduct—that they were behaving towards new stimuli in the same way they behaved toward the traumatising stimulus—as Freud had done with neurotics who had experienced trauma on an individual level. However, psychoanalysis of individual trauma permits the treatment of both “imagination and reality (perception)” whereas there is less space for fantasy on the international stage (Walker 2005, 9).

The international community sought justice to prevent the re-occurrence of an atrocity like the Holocaust. Common sense suggested that Holocaust survivors could be interviewed with the intention that survivors’ “truth claims” to use Dominick LaCapra’s term could bring perpetrators to justice. Given that the human mind is not a camera, this method did not prove as reliable as anticipated. Their memories were influenced by their emotions, leading to some witnesses’ integrity to be questioned. Drawing on Henri Bergson, Peter Berger calls attention to memory:

As we remember the past, we reconstruct it in accordance with our present idea of what is important and what is not ... the past is malleable and flexible,

constantly changing as our recollection re-interprets and re-explains what has happened. (Berger 2011, 217)

In her research on cinema addressing the individual trauma of incest and the international trauma of the Holocaust Walker finds that “real catastrophes can disturb memory processing ... Forgetting and mistakes in memory may actually stand, therefore, as testament to the genuine nature of the event a person is trying to recall.” (Walker 2005, 4). Walker offers an example first proposed by Dori Laub from her experience with witnesses of the Holocaust. Laub recalls a testifier who asserted that four chimneys had blown up in an uprising at Auschwitz. In fact, only one chimney blew up. The witness’s “pseudomemory” as Laub calls it, informs listeners of the impact the explosion made upon her: “hyperbole best expresses that the resistance at Auschwitz was resistance against all odds,” (Walker 2005, 5-6). To be sure, pseudomemory can generously lend itself to what LaCapra calls “empathically unsettling” visceral descriptions of events.

Many scholars, particularly literary theorists, within the field of Holocaust studies would see these descriptions as an end in themselves. Indeed, as the adage goes, “a burden shared is a burden halved”. However, these testimonies can be exploited for their psychological authenticity or veracity to the testifier. Arguably the most controversial figure holding this belief is Cathy Caruth. Some features of her psychoanalytic approach to cultural trauma are shared by other scholars, such as her understanding of trauma as an event that cannot ever be fully grasped by the victim, and that symptoms appear after a period of latency. What makes her methodology ethically uncertain is that she construes individual survivor narratives as an opportunity for others to witness what is inside the walls built by the human psyche. She elevates, “the truth and force of reality that trauma survivors face and quite often try to transmit to us”

(Caruth 1995, iv) without recovery as a goal but to apprehend “history ...only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence” (Caruth 1991, 18). Wulf Kansteiner and Harald Weilnböck object to Caruth’s emphasis on narrative, and more broadly critique how the deconstructive trauma paradigm to which she subscribes encourages exaltation of trauma to the point of granting it cult status, risking the “empirical experience of trauma by way of ontological speculation” (Kansteiner and Weilnböck 2010, 237). To separate the cause from the manifestation and to celebrate the individual’s articulation of suffering is not only objectionable but brings no insight into the suffering, and subsequent recovery, of traumatised communities.

Traditionally, it is customary to expect wrongs to be righted in a judicial setting. Thus, as trauma studies strive to gain interdisciplinary cooperation, it is important to delineate appropriate boundaries where the psychoanalytic approach may be operationalised in addressing cultural trauma. The acceptance of pseudomemory and fantasy construction is possible in individual treatment, but when psychoanalysis enters arenas of investigation for crimes against populations, such as the ICTY, its usefulness greatly diminishes. One reason for this is the purpose of understanding the origin of trauma. Let us consider LaCapra’s Freudian definition of trauma:

The trauma as experience is “in” the repetition of an earlier event in a later event—an early event for which one was not prepared to feel anxiety and a later event that somehow recalls the earlier one and triggers a traumatic response.

(LaCapra 2014, 82)

Psychoanalysts Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin support this definition, suggesting that the traumatic event is only one part of the narrative, the other being how we derive meaning from the event (Radstone and Hodgkin quoted in Walker 2005, 9).

In such places as courtrooms and policy-writing chambers, facts not fantasy, and

objectivity not subjectivity, are the currency. I shall demonstrate in the “Cultural Trauma” section of the next chapter how, ultimately, the psychoanalytical approach cannot adequately respond to a cultural phenomenon.

Jelin and Kauffman cite the importance of the court system in getting justice for victims of the regime in Argentina. Two decades after the dictatorship in Argentina was toppled, certain groups gained enough liberty and traction to broach the topic of the “Disappeared”. Court-martialing members of the military who were involved in disappearing fellow citizens was deemed unsatisfactory by human rights activists. Instead, an independent, fact-finding commission was created to gather testimony and investigate reported locations of torture: “[The commission] was a way to discover what had happened, to find out and acknowledge the *truth*” (Jelin and Kauffman 2000, 92). Its goal, the authors write, “was for some sort of legitimate and legal conviction that would serve to reaffirm the basic ethical values of democracy” (ibid.). The authors provide moving testimonies of people across generations to demonstrate how the regime personally affected them. These reports show how the regime’s presence impacted even incidental mannerisms and daily activities of individuals. Yet no matter how many survivors were interviewed or stories corroborated, psychoanalysis would remain a preferable treatment for individuals and not the community, despite an entire nation being affected. The reason for this comes from LaCapra, who explains the psychoanalytic reason for rejecting “the other”: “A commonly desired ultimate foundation or ground is full unity, community, or consensus, which is often, if not typically, figured as lost or perhaps lacking” (LaCapra 2014, 60). If this is key to understanding psychoanalysis it is difficult to generalise this to a community despite having been the prevalent theme until recently.

The advantage of the social constructivist approach to cultural trauma over that of psychoanalysis becomes apparent. The beckoning of individual fantasy must be denied when addressing perpetrators before the international community. Social constructivism does not require actual facts – the occasion of an actual trauma – but recognises the impact of traumatic events that could disturb an otherwise cohesive group. This is distinct from the fusion of memory and imagination after trauma in the minds of individuals. Lastly, if individuals already feel as though they lack community in the first instance, then any discussion about community impact from a psychoanalytic stance is already in breach. Social constructivism presupposes the existence of a community in possession of its own collective memories; concerning the treatment of trauma, it takes as its starting point the moment of disruption of that community, and the possibility of recovering, albeit, in an altered form, the community cohesiveness present immediately prior to the trauma.

1.3.2. Constructivism

There are four aspects critical to understanding the claims of constructivism in cultural trauma: 1) how it uses mythology 2) the location of the trauma 3) the process of declaring cultural trauma 4) the expression of trauma. Mythology is utilised by social constructivists to address the pain and needs of a community. As mentioned above, every society is governed by the myths in their respective cultural storehouse. It is these myths and their enactments that shape a society's framework and initiates or strengthens societal bonds. Constructivists, such as Jeffrey Alexander, view collective identity to be as the signifier of this framework. Mythology provides the group's

expectations, and expression articulates how these expectations were transgressed in a cultural trauma. Alexander explains:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. (Alexander, 2004, 1)

The concept of a collectivity originates in Maurice Halbwachs's *Les cadres sociaux de la memoire* (1952), translated as *On Collective Memory* (1992). Halbwachs expands upon the concept of framework initially proposed by Emile Durkheim. Ron Eyerman provides a synopsis of how collectivity is founded upon collective memory:

Here collective memory is defined as recollections of a shared past 'that are retained and passed on either as part of an ongoing process of what might be called public commemoration, in which officially sanctioned rituals are engaged to establish a shared past or through discourses more specific to a particular group or collective. This socially constructed, historically rooted collective memory functions to create a social solidarity in the present. (Eyerman 2004, 65)

Rachel López also endorses this perspective from a legal perspective when she writes, "As a result of sharing and collective identification, the group engaging in memory work forms important social bonds amongst its members" (López 2015, 800).

The myths that reinforce social bonds are vulnerable to undermining by manipulation and traumatic transgression, ultimately resulting in their revision or the invention of new myths. Those stories that society relies upon to establish its heritage and manifest its uniqueness are most susceptible to infringement. Let us consider two such types of myths: nationalist and character. Starting with nationalism, in the

introduction of the anthology *The Collective Memory Reader*, Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy point out that "...the key site in the story of thinking about social and cultural forms of memory is the rise of nationalism, and the understandings of history it depended on" (2011, 13). The authors highlight the popular practice of trawling through a region's history in search of myths and traditions that can be twisted into a sense of superiority, and recognise the contribution by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger on the topic of "invention of tradition" (1983). Anthony Smith also acknowledges this artifice in the construction of nationalism:

But in most cases, the mythologies elaborated by nationalists have not been fabrications but recombinations of traditional, perhaps unanalysed, motifs and myths taken from epics, chronicles, documents of the period, and material artefacts... Such novel recombinations are pre-eminently the work of intellectuals in search of their "roots". (Smith 2011, 234)

An illustration of the selective deployment of myth is Kosovo in Serbian national narratives. Slobodan Milošević first captured the international community's attention on 24 April 1987 with a speech he gave in Kosovo. He declared to the Serb community, "No one should dare to beat you!" (Silber and Little 1997, 37) referring to the oppression the Serbs felt they were experiencing at the hands of the local, ethnic Albanian majority. Kosovo had been one of two autonomous provinces of Serbia in Yugoslavia. Still, Serbia's power over the area diminished and in 1981 ethnic Albanians started demanding independence from Serbia with public demonstrations. In the face of a potentially traumatic shift of Kosovo going from being Serbian to independent, Milošević proclaimed, "This is your land. . . You should stay here for the sake of your ancestors and descendants" (Silber and Little 1997, 38) alluding to the 1389 Battle of Kosovo. By playing the tradition and myth card, Milošević renewed the sense of

martyrdom from the defeat in 1389 and catalysed nationalist sentiments into mass violence. Ivana Spacić elevates Kosovo from a geographic location to a ‘Serbian symbolic referent’. She justifies this by citing its mythological origins in “folk epic poetry, religious writings, and early secular works up to how it is handled in university students’ written compositions in 2000” (Spacić 2013, 83). She indicates that Serbian nationalist politicians saw from afar how meaningful Kosovo was as a rallying cry: “...The sorrowful but proud feeling of tragedy, death, and loss engendered by the remembrance of the Kosovo catastrophe 600 years ago is ...part of the very essence of being a Serb” (Spacić 2013, 81). The enslavement of Kosovo—the mythological symbol—to political motives led to it being labelled a trauma by cultural commentators.

So, finally, is there a Kosovo trauma for Serbs? The answer may be “yes” provided that we understand its proper location: it does not dwell in Serbs, but in the discursive space between them. And the trauma itself involves a whole knowledge of entangled traumas, not necessarily those that bards of trauma strove to inculcate. The deceptive simplicity of the noun, Kosovo, might also hide traumas of the Yugoslav wars, including the “trauma of perpetrators” (Giesen 2004); ...also, perhaps, the trauma of being forced into a traumatic identity and lacking the language in which to express one’s dissent without being called a traitor. (Spacić 2013, 99)

Smith looks beyond the controversial status of nationalism to argue that such “recombinations”, to borrow his word, are drawn from the cultural storehouse of myths that have shaped societies into their present incarnations. As noted above, myths are more than just epics—and function as the base for societal institutions which may change over time but are always socially constructed.

Creating nations is a recurrent activity, which has to be renewed periodically. It is one that involves ceaseless re-interpretations, rediscoveries and reconstructions; each generation must re-fashion national institutions and stratification systems in the light of the myths, memories, values and symbols of the “past”, which can best minister to the needs and aspirations of its dominant social groups and institutions. . . At the same time, this “nation-building” activity operates within a definite tradition; it is not made over entirely anew by each generation, but inherits the mythologies and the symbolisms of previous generations. (Smith 2011, 234)

Smith delineates both the popular and the deeper meanings of nationalism and, in doing so, offers insight into how artefacts of heritage can be distilled into signifiers and at risk of being watered down into propagandistic symbols. The repercussions of nationalist symbols span from wars with neighbours based on maps of ancient borders to the growing popularity of ultra-right parties and their minions, transforming communities into places unrecognisable to long-term residents. However, we cannot lose sight of the many other tiers that Smith brings to the fore and how nationalism, in the holistic sense, shapes the community.

Typically, myths set out the character of the community its members seek to emulate. When emulation of this character causes the downfall of the collective, this is problematic. Bernhard Giesen (a constructivist with an appreciation for psychoanalysis) exemplifies the impact of such cultural trauma. In the years leading up to the Second World War, there was a dire need for a restorative myth in Germany to cast off the mantle of shame resulting from the economic ruin and political humiliation the country had suffered after the Great War. Giesen reminds us of the more ensconced myths, such

as Germans as producers of cultural artefacts, yet argues that Germans paid an even higher price to rid themselves of the pain of the First World War.

As horrible as defeat and death in war may be, their atrocity would have been alleviated by the moral triumph of a collective project that could have persisted even after a defeat and could even have earned the tacit respect of the victors—a heroic war of liberation and independence, for example. But moral justification of the war was entirely and radically denied for the Germans. The trauma of 1945 did not only result from ruin and rape, death and defeat, but also from the sudden loss of self-respect and moral integrity. The utmost barbarism had happened in the nation that had previously grounded its identity on Kultur (culture) and that, at the beginning of the century, could claim to have furthered and supported Jewish emancipation more than its European neighbours. . .

(Giesen 2004, 115)

During the war, the minister for propaganda, Joseph Goebbels demonstrated at every juncture the myth of the supposedly superior German character over other races. For example, he facilitated the making of two films: Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *Olympia* (1938), both now celebrated as cinematic landmarks (Uí Nualláin 2013). Indeed, any nation deemed criminal and barbarous despite believing its acts heroic and liberating risks being thrust into a state of dissonance. Put differently, when a collectivity believes it has acted righteously only to be condemned by the international community or its own collectivity, it may lead to a confusing sense of betrayal and uncertainty. Indeed, Giesen reports, "All those who had devoted years of their lives to a movement whose members had to consider themselves as collaborators in a mass murder could not repair their ruined moral identity even if they had been ready to confess their guilt," (Giesen 2004, 116). With regard to social constructivism,

Alexander meticulously distinguishes between cultural trauma theory and trauma in medical or lay theory: it is not the blow that causes the pain, but the subsequent perception or *construction* of the impact of the blow that is traumatic. To indicate this constructivist distinction, let us consider the lay trauma theory.

According to lay theory, traumas are naturally occurring events that shatter an individual or collective actor's sense of well-being. In other words, the power to shatter—the 'trauma'—is thought to emerge from the events themselves. The reaction to such shattering events—"being traumatized"—is felt and thought to be an immediate and unreflexive response. (Alexander 2004a, 2)

Such a stance implies that there is no psychological or social assessment necessary to declare the blow a trauma: the blunt force to the body and the damage it causes suffice. Conversely, the constructivist theory proposes that objectivity plays no role in the determination of cultural trauma. "Sometimes, in fact, events that are deeply traumatizing may not actually have occurred at all; such imagined events, however, can be as traumatizing as events that have actually occurred" (Alexander 2004a, 8).

Alexander claims that the blow itself is not essential; the *blow's potential damage* is enough to render trauma. He furthers his argument on the collective, subjective perception of trauma by declaring, "Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of an acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity" (Alexander 2004a, 10).

Once a conscious decision has been reached by members of the collective, the next step is to communicate this decision into the public arena. Ron Eyerman suggests that trauma narratives elevate suffering from the individual to the cultural level (Eyerman 2017). Trauma narration is not a natural process, yet it readily avails of existing social constructs that articulate and reinforce mythology and memory which

comprise identity. To make this “acute discomfort” public, trauma narrators are necessary. Alexander terms these storytellers “collective actors” (Alexander 2004a, 10) and Eyerman calls them “intellectuals” (Eyerman 2004, 63): both terms refer to narrators within the culture who construct the event as a “fundamental threat to who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go” (Alexander 2004a, 10). Eyerman’s notion of the intellectual is more Gramscian than Marxist, because of how it accords power to mediate between the societal spheres, relating and elaborating on the ideas of others rather than proprietary innovations (Eyerman 2004, 63). Eyerman explains, “what defines an intellectual is ‘what they do’ rather than ‘who they are’” (Eyerman 2004, 63). Quoting Grace Hale, he continues, “A traumatic tear evokes the need to ‘narrate new foundations’” and it is intellectuals—“film directors, singers of song, as well as college professors”—who narrate these new foundations and repopulate the cultural repository of myth (Eyerman 2004, 63).⁷ The intellectuals to whom he refers are using media to communicate within and with other spheres, rather than merely adding to the echo chamber and peddling the consumption of dominant ideology.⁸ The members of “intellectual” professions mentioned above create the trauma narrative by constructing an artefact of expression (i.e. a film) to describe the “tear in the social fabric”, to use Eyerman’s term. Let us remember that movies are a space in which directors, as carriers/intellectuals, can assert cultural trauma, and this will be illustrated in general below and in the following chapters. This circles back to the use (and exploitation⁹) of individual and social charters which encourage

7 The process of interrogating core cultural myths by previously unheard groups, as recounted by Doty the cultural theorist, can also be conceived of as ‘narrating new foundations’.

8 John Fiske and John Hartley discuss the difference between consumption and communication and the semiotics used to achieve this in the chapter “The Functions of Television” from *Reading Television* (2003).

9 See ‘Revolutionary Trauma and Representation of the War: The Case of China in Mao’s Era’ by Rui Gao in *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective Suffering* (2013).

community members to iterate their experience to interpellatively reinforce the communal bond; even the simple act of pointing to a perpetrator solidifies group membership and identity by uttering, “*They hurt us.*”

The initial entry of such a statement of cultural trauma, such as a film, may be met with resistance from other members of the community, or other societies. This sounds straightforward but, in fact, convincing the perpetrator, be it a foreign power or the domestic government, of wrongdoing and officially acknowledging its actions, is a process in itself. Dominick LaCapra explains:

Perpetrators are often inclined self-defensively to deny the need for empathy and mourning with respect to victims, and whatever affective response they express may be confused with self-pity and nostalgia about an earlier state of affairs which was conjoined with acts of oppression. (LaCapra 2014, 214)

There are numerous reasons why perpetrators react in the way LaCapra describes. For one, in the same way, that the self-identifying injured party asserts that certain values (derived from mythology) have been transgressed by the perpetrators, so, too, ideologically speaking, does the perpetrating party have values that guided its actions. Another motive could be exculpation as a symptom of the trauma of betraying the aggressors’ own collective values, discussed above concerning post-war Germany and post-Yugoslav Kosovo.

Often there is a struggle for official recognition for the trauma etched into the group memory at large, regardless of whether the perpetrator is native or foreign. A central theme in the contributions to Ashplant et al. is the chasm between official and popular memory. The anthology editors concur with the point raised by Hobsbawm in *The Invention of Tradition* that “the history which became a part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of the nation, state or movement is not what has actually

been preserved in popular memory. . .” (Hobsbawm quoted in Ashplant et al. 2000, 11). They draw from Eric Hobsbawm’s text *The Invention of Tradition* to support their stance:

Official ideologies of states and movements are not guides to what is in the minds of even the most loyal citizens or supporters... for most people national identification [is not necessarily]... superior to, the remainder of the state of identifications which constitute the social being. (Hobsbawm quoted in Ashplant et al. 2000, 11)

Where there is an official rejection of traumatic narratives, Ashplant, Dawson and Roper argue that collective memory retains the knowledge of events, “acknowledged and shared in private, never acquiring public valency” (Ashplant et al. 2000, 20). This is highly relevant to the cultural trauma of the Katyn Massacre where the public discussion was censored, and of the Civil War where such censorship still prevails. Bartmanski and Eyerman write, “The story of responsibility for this mass murder of Poles is one of dispute, suppression... and protracted marginalisation” (Bartmanski and Eyerman 2013, 238). The Katyn Massacre, which occurred in 1940, gained traction as a cultural trauma when the “tear in the fabric” was recognised after the fall of the communist government in 1989.¹⁰ Andrzej Wajda was only able to direct and release *Katyn* in 2007, almost seventy years after the murders. Similarly, the contemporary film director Stavroula Toska was not taught about the Greek Civil War despite being born and educated in Thessaloniki. The actress Olympia Dukakis gave Toska a little-known anthology of journals kept by Greek women imprisoned for refusing to sign

¹⁰ Bartmanski and Eyerman also point to the roles played by the American and British governments in the suppression of information. “...concerted attempts made by the wartime governments in the United States and Great Britain to silence any public discussion in the fear of alienating their Soviet ally, as well as the systemic attempts by the latter to cover up the facts” (238). The two Western powers were also responsible for the Greek Civil War in their rejection of communism. See the documentary series *The Untold History of the United States* directed by Oliver Stone (2012).

declarations of repentance. The anthology forms the foundation of Toska's film, *Beneath the Olive Tree* narrated by Dukakis (Toska 2015). Toska found her own mother and maternal grandmother reticent about sharing their personal experiences of the war, wishing to forget the abuse they suffered at the hands of the Greek government. Currently, "only stray monuments commemorate the Greek Civil War of 1944-1949. The issue of how to honour its Civil War dead has roiled Greece almost to the present," writes the historian Russell Jacoby (Jacoby 2011, 46). In other words, this is an instance in which unofficial memory has yet to 'achieve centrality' to use the words of the Popular Memory Group (Ashplant et al. 2000, 13). To gain official recognition and reconstitute collective identity, traumatised communities must interact with the arbiters of the official narrative.

Once intellectuals or members of the carrier group succeed in narrating trauma in the public arena, the public can react to it. To achieve recognition and rectification, the community declares its collective identity despoiled or sacred value violated. To be clear, there is no means by which a culture can return to its identity before the disruptive event; even if that were possible, it would negate the possibility of cultural trauma, which Neil J. Smelser defines as "laden with negative affect", represented as indelible and regarded as threatening a society's existence (Smelser 2004, 44). One could draw the analogy of a fractured bone that can be set, but never unbroken. Instead, the cultural trauma, the pain it caused and how it is overcome or corrected, is entered into the culture's mythology.

1.3.3. Summary

Considering mythology's function in cultural trauma, it should be apparent that a sociological approach is "purpose-built", making it more beneficial and less prone to the operational shortcomings of the psychoanalytic approach to collectivities. The term 'cultural trauma' refers to affected communities, rather than individuals in mind. Because psychoanalysis is based on the treatment of the individual, one is forced to operate on the logic that there is negligible difference between an individual alone and a group of individuals. However, research in the fields of resilience, and triage psychoanalysis indicate that this is not the case. Only some of the victims of a mass trauma require assistance in psychologically locating the event. This underscores the helpfulness of treating *some individuals* who experience symptoms, and not treating the entire group as one patient. Furthermore, the psychoanalytic approach is especially ill-suited to ongoing trauma where the trauma has not concluded allowing for the period of latency to begin. Writing on the ongoing traumatic experience of the migration of Africans to France, Frantz Fanon bluntly points out, "Since the racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to 'make it unconscious'" (Fanon 2004, 466). Eyerman's study of African-American identity also suggests that there is no opportunity for latency only continuous trauma (Eyerman 2004, *passim*).

1.4. Conclusion

In the journey to find the purpose of mythology in aftermath cinema, we are now equipped with an operational definition and a theoretical approach to trauma. Contributions from ancient Greece to the present day have informed our understanding of what myth is and how it relates to collective memory. The operational usage of myth indicates that it evolves with each generation to continue to meet the needs of the

population it serves. As we have seen, cultural trauma shapes a community's mythology by drawing on preceding cultural traumas converted into myths and initiating the new myths to provide future generations with precedents. In the next chapter, we shall analyse the films through the lens constructed in this chapter.

In the discussion of the constructivist approach to cultural trauma, the creation of expressive artefacts, such as film, was considered integral both to the declaration of, and recovery from a disruptive event. But let us take a moment to consider *why film?* Arguably, film is the most collective medium in terms of production and audience. On a practical level, it takes a community to make the film—from the writers to the directors and actors, to the post-production editors—to the requisite number of viewers, the cinema audience to make the film financially viable. In other words, a film requires more people than any of the other expressive arts. Practically speaking, for a film to be made, financial backers must be confident that there will be a return on investment. For that to happen, they must believe that the film will resonate with enough of the population to generate sufficient ticket sales. Additionally, in contrast to live performances, a film can be watched—its story repeated—again and again. This is significant in two ways with regard to myth. First, as with literature, cinema lends itself structurally to the formation of a narrative. As mentioned above, a myth as a narration of a trauma can be assimilated into a culture either as a new precedent, supporting an existing precedent. Similarly, textual and filmic narratives demand sequences of events which explain to audiences “what happened”. As with myths, artistic narratives order events to grasp what happened and why: the causal relationship—no matter how incorrect—is key in gaining a sense of navigating a path out of the disorder.

Second, cinema as a cultural phenomenon typically involves the wide distribution of a narrative. It facilitates a dialogue in which viewers can discuss the

same film from their unique positions. In essence, everyone has heard the same story that, unlike recited epic poetry or ancient myths, cannot be subtly modified (outside of cutting certain scenes) to reflect ever-changing public opinion. In this regard, films should qualify as cultural artefacts: snapshots of values and perceptions. The tangible presence of the film-as-artefact can be essential to the declaration of cultural trauma. A film narrative-artefact of a perceived injustice can inform those unaware, or heretofore silent, about their own harrowing experience. Fellow survivors may align their own impressions with the collective one, which also projects or examines cultural values. Like a myth, mentioned above, the filmic declaration of trauma, once in the public arena cannot be removed from it (aside from cases where a film is banned) unless it does not resonate with audiences. The various collective aspects of aftermath cinema offer several viable paths for more research. Before exploring those, let us evaluate the case studies from Serbia and Greece.

Chapter 2: Aftermath Cinema: Serbia

2.1. Introduction

The Yugoslav Wars of Succession (1991-2001) continue to shape the nation's continually evolving identity (Gorup 2013; Jelača 2016; Čolović 2002; Mazaj 2012; Gagnon Jr 2004; Crnoković 2014; Levi 2007; Russell-Omaljiev 2016). Eric Gordy writes, "...years after the process of accounting for the record of that [Milošević's] regime has begun, there is very little that is settled or unchallenged in public memory in Serbia," (2013 ix). On a practical level, the lack of agreement has hindered the country's advancement and impaired foreign relations. As a result, the nation has become the "problem child of the international community" (Stahl 2013, 447); an assessment that reflects the palpable discord regarding its recent past and near future. In light of this disagreement, Radmila Gorup observes a steep increase in creative expression seeking to reconcile individual experiences with the war and its aftermath. She states, "The major motivation for this activity was the need to remember, to bear witness, and to give meaning to the often incomprehensible experiences" (2013, 276). Consistent with this trend, there are many films from Serbia that broach the topic of war to narrate or engage with the events of the 1990s (Eror 2019).¹¹

I will turn to two film narratives about Serbia's role in the Wars of Secession and the aftermath, through the function of cultural mythology. *On the Milky Road* (Kusturica 2016) deploys cultural mythology to assert an "exceptionalist" perspective of Serbia as the land of a "heavenly people". According to this film and the stance it

¹¹ For perspective, the most watched post-war Serbian movie was the period drama *Zona Zamfirova* by Zdravko Sotra, released in 2002, with a plot comparable to *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg.

articulates, people belong to their national identity and, it is what gives their lives value. And their lives are destined to be affected by war and sacrifice, like martyrs. *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević 2010) seeks to dismantle the “exceptionalism” by deconstructing cultural myths through the narration of an individual’s ordeal using the metaphor of sexual subjugation. Through the degradation of a person, the film calls “foul” on the belief that national identity takes priority over humanity.

If a movie has been distributed for public consumption, it warrants analysis. Additionally, these two films occupy the opposite ends of the spectrum of aftermath cinema in style, engagement with the war and, more broadly, Serbia going forward. They reflect the two predominant “discursive camps” to use Bernhard Stahl’s term, often referred to as “First” and “Other” Serbia (455). Ana Russell-Omaljev highlights the features of the two stances:

First Serbia... wishes Serbia to be a particular type of entity... defeated in the last two wars but still dignified and proud; tolerant but only toward those we see as “ours”. It wishes Serbia to be rather isolationist... It sees Serbia as part of Old Europe, and implores Serbs not to let themselves lose their identity... Other Serbia understands Serbia to be a defeated country: still too hesitant and apprehensive to repent for its recent sins... For Other Serbia, the answers to Serbia’s woes lie in winning over allies outside Serbia, for fear that by itself Serbia might not succeed in fully democratizing itself. . . (Russell-Omaljev 2016, 4-5).

The charges of abuse against Serbia by the international community were dismissed by those who believed that the country acted in the 1990s just as it had acted in previous conflicts throughout the centuries without condemnation or embargos. To the disciples of this narrative, consonant with “First Serbia”, the nation is again the victim and not

the perpetrator, and that invasion and migration are the destiny of an exceptional “heavenly Serbia” (Judah 1997, 47). According to this narrative, individual identity is subordinate to national identity; it is the national identity that gives life value (Čolović 2002, 64). This is the viewpoint of *On the Milky Road*. Conversely, others within Serbia aligned with the anti-exceptionalist “Other Serbia” believe that Serbia’s actions were beyond the pale of global society and inhibit stability in the region (Stahl 2013, 449). Additionally, this stance takes a more postmodern perspective when it comes to valuing individual identity. This more transnational approach is manifested in *A Serbian Film*. *On the Milky Road* vivifies myths regarding war, the Balkan Warrior, and migration, intending to reinforce national identity. At the same time, *A Serbian Film* depicts attempts at a peaceful, postwar life, where individuals have value outside of national identity while dismantling the myths of the Balkan Male and the sacred homeland.

Both films were self-financed with comparatively minimal distribution outside the festival circuit but attracted attention for different reasons. Kusturica, the director of *On the Milky Road*, is best known as the director of *Underground* (1995). He is a two-time winner of the *Palme d’Or* for that film and for *While Father was Away on Business* (1985), a social critique of Yugoslavia. He was baptised in the Orthodox Church in 2005 and was present at Russian president Vladimir Putin’s third inauguration. More recently he was a guest at the Nobel Prize ceremony for his dear friend Peter Handke, who spoke at Slobodan Milošević’s funeral. *On the Milky Road* was his first film in eight years. *A Serbian Film* was Srđan Spasojević’s first feature production, previously having only directed directed music videos. *A Serbian Film* was so prominent on the horror circuit that the director released a statement to inform audiences that the film was intended to critique Serbia. The visceral horror is an allegory for the pain the country’s leaders inflicted on the people through “political,

cultural and essential” exploitation (Gordy 2013, 176). Through metaphor and symbolism, the films both reflect and deconstruct Serbian society’s two main narratives about the 1990s.

The films’ relevance to current Serbian affairs demonstrates an important role that film plays in society, providing a space in which ideas may be explored. The analysis here connects the symbolic narratives, to the “real” outside the cinema. *On the Milky Road* and *A Serbian Film* invite audiences to evaluate the arguments for national and individual identity, loosely aligned with First and Other Serbia’s stances. The aim here is to go beyond what viewers may observe to identify indicators of trauma to examine how the films’ use of mythology articulates a position, and what this stance means for Serbia in a broader context. These films contribute to a national cinema through their interpretations of the collectively experienced Yugoslav Wars. The medium of film is a conduit for the human need to articulate – a process as valuable for the collective as for the individual, and critical for cultural myths and the broader identity to which they belong.

2.2. *On the Milky Road*

On the Milky Road is set in the imaginary mountainous hamlet of Klobuk, where tradition is revered and considered destiny, and progress is associated with fallibility and treated with suspicion. The villagers live outside time and the reality of Serbia’s tenuous, present circumstances¹². The film begins with the epigraph, “Based on three true stories, and many fantasies”, i.e. a singularly Serbian take on the three parts of the classic template of “boy meets girl, boy flees with girl, boy loses girl”. Kosta is the

¹² For more information on Serbia’s precarious political and economic situation, see ““Another Strategic Accession’? The EU and Serbia (2000-2010)” by Bernhard Stahl. *Nationalities Papers*. 2013.

milkman of Klobuk. He falls in love with a Bride (Monica Bellucci whose character's name is not disclosed until the closing credits. Hence Bride is treated here as a proper noun intended for his future brother-in-law, Zaga (Miki Manojlović). Together, Kosta and the Bride must flee illegally deployed special forces who burn the village. While being pursued, the Bride is killed in a minefield. The milkman spends the rest of his days as an Orthodox monk, laying stones over where she died to make the land safe for future generations while commemorating her death.

This section evaluates how exceptionalism is conveyed through mythology to reinforce the legacy of national identity. The strategy of *On the Milky Road* is a well-documented one (Čolović 2002, Barthes 1993). in which metonyms of Serbian identity are invoked to defeat uncertainty. *On the Milky Road* is remarkable in that very few aspects are *not* metaphorical or apparent to those acquainted with the Serbian cultural storehouse. Current issues are symbolically represented alongside Serbian mythological tropes within the mise-en-scène of timelessness, recalling the adage, “the more things change, the more they stay the same”. Focusing on the portrayal of themes of war, the masculinity of the Balkan Warrior, and homeland, it will be demonstrated how the film fashions itself after other epics, such as *The Mountain Wreath* (Petar II Petrović-Njegoš, 1847), to be an uncritical ode to Serbia. Of course, Kusturica's auteurship, such as the anthropomorphisation of both animals and objects, cannot go unacknowledged. After all, there are not many films in which a town clock plays a supporting role.

2.2.1 War

While the narrative of *On the Milky Road* may be unilateral, the presence of war is multivalent. The war portrayed here serves as a mythologizing agent with several

objectives. It reiterates the legacy of a constant presence in Serbia and the assertion of the country's destiny to be at war. This perpetual conflict brings more recent events into the fold of more historical struggles, thereby constructing a call for a renewal of all those supposedly distinct Serb qualities such as those belonging to the Balkan Warrior to be displayed to survive another incursion, despite the many changes that have occurred since 1389. Indeed, one of mythology's functions is to provide a precedent to impose order on chaos. In other words, war operates as a stage upon which the international community acts out its ignorance (at best) and the abuse (at worst).

The ongoing battle depicted in *On the Milky Road* is synthesised from all the conflicts Serbia has fought to consolidate the eternity of Serbia's oppression. Kusturica achieves this by blending symbols from all the struggles into one to convey the omnipresence of warfare, consistent with the process outlined by Čolović. The Serbian ethnologist and anthropologist begins his text *The Politics of the Symbol in Serbia* by discussing "story":

Stories are indeed a suitable medium for this kind of renewal and reconstruction. Thanks to the procedures of emplotment, it is possible to establish apparently logical connections between what are otherwise unconnected, contradictory and ambivalent political events, ideas and figures. Transformed into sequences of narrative time, national history can develop without deviation or discontinuity. Thanks also to specific steps in the development of narrative time, it is possible to set up a direct, living connection with the past. The use of the historic present gives the impression that past events are unfolding before our eyes. Similarly, through the use of the traditional epic style (the epic perfect, for example), to tell the story of contemporary events, those events acquire the patina of a distant and glorious past... (2002, 5)

The stories Kusturica tells are unique, but that the strategy behind them is anything but. The Yugoslav Wars are depicted as part of the Serbian legacy of an omnipresent war, showing that the recent conflict and subsequent international reactions are not distinct from previous struggles. Within the film, war is a part of the landscape. At the battlefield kitchen military paraphernalia is absorbed into the makeshift domicile (see Figure 2.1). From left to right, chilli peppers are laid on the tank mudguard and serves as a countertop. There is firewood stacked in front of the vehicle, suggesting that the tank is a part of the landscape. Neither the rugged stone walls, nor Kosta, nor his grey falcon, are affected by the explosion in the background.¹³ Kosta sits at a table with his devoted grey falcon, holding a simple umbrella for protection from enemy fire. Though his comrade scurries, he is unafraid of bullets or grenades because he is accustomed to them, suggesting that he is not frightened of artillery. The prominent amalgamation of military and civilian artefacts from the past and the present consolidate the narrative that villagers are impervious to trends and have adapted to the rewards and hardship of rural life and the omnipresent threat of war. Kosta has accepted that battle comes with being Serbian and it is made clear that his father was acquainted with struggle as well. In addition to one character telling another the fate of Kosta's father, Kosta himself bears witness to his father's death every morning when he looks in the mirror. There are photos tucked into the mirror frame in Kosta's rustic hut. In one picture, we see a bearded man wearing a keffiyeh, holding an assault rifle and the decapitated head of Kosta's father (see Figure 2.2). Each morning before Kosta goes outside to shower, and he looks at his own face next to his father's.

¹³ Grey falcons are symbolic of young warriors, as noted in Vasa D. Mihailovic's translation of Petar II Petrovic-Njegos's *The Mountain Wreath* and other Serbian epic poems (West 1997; Crouch 2007)..

In sharing the mirror with his father, Kosta shares his father's burden, which is supposed to be shared by all Serbs. Čolović explains this rationale:

A Serb exists only as a branch of his tribe, and that means that he exists before his birth and even dies before his birth. This determining ethnic substance... of which he is constructed, binds him at every moment to the whole tribe, to dead and as yet unborn Serbs, and he himself is insignificant, completely unimportant in his individual mortal existence. (2002, 81).

We will return to the role the individual plays – or lack thereof – in this particular concept of national identity with the “Balkan Warrior”. Kusturica substantiates his perspective that Serbian destiny on earth and in heaven is not bound by time. Klobuk's anthropomorphic village clock is a relic from the Austro-Hungarian presence in Serbia which marks yet another period in which Serbia was not “free”.¹⁴ The clock communicates through outbursts that it will not yield to reason. It does not need to be standardised to contribute to Klobuk's sense of community, which echoes Benedict Anderson's point about time in *Imagined Communities* (2006). The town clock throws tantrums at any advances towards modernity. It rejects any attempts to set the correct time and seeks revenge on those who try. The gargantuan clock tower is scaffolded by the house of Kosta's fiancée, Milena (Sloboda Mićalović), her brother Zaga who is away at war, and her shotgun-wielding grandmother (Milojka Andrić, mother of the “turbo-folk” singer Lela Andrić). As the camera draws closer to the clock face, the minute hand hurtles clockwise while the hour hand spins anti-clockwise. The grandmother attempts to control time, as it were, by shooting at it. The bullet liberates a clock hand, which glides through the air like an arrow before striking a target in a

¹⁴ The Austro-Hungarian presence, along with the Ottoman presence, in Serbia is a permanent feature of the Belgrade landscape as the occupations may be observed, among other places, in the walls of the Kalemegdan.

nearby apple tree, evocative of the legend of William Tell. The grandmother approaches the clock from inside the house. The temperamental clock uses its weight chains like tentacles to sweep the grandmother into its centre, where she cuts her hand on a cog. Milena tries to rescue her grandmother by jumping on one of the chains and punching the clock (see Figure 2.3). The clock summarily cuts her hand. The local matchmaker (Bajram Severdzan) enters the house and grasps the clock's chains.¹⁵ In retaliation, the clock hoists him up to the centre and pinches his nose between two cogs. Later, when Milena's hand becomes infected, she seeks treatment at the army's medical tent. The doctor, a man of science, wishes to send her for a psychological evaluation because she claims that the clock injured her. Kosta affirms that it was the clock, as it is an imperial Habsburg model, making trouble for everyone. Without a trace of subtlety, the clock's behaviour conveys the idea that measuring the passage of time in Klobuk is pointless. Just as the clock suspends time, viewers are similarly invited to suspend disbelief and embrace Serbian exceptionalism. Kusturica demonstrates that reason is an unworthy opponent for a "heavenly people."

The constant presence of war strengthens the commitment to creating this "heavenly Serbia", which is achieved by perpetuating the narrative of suffering. One of the primary ties that bind a Serb with his tribe is the legacy of self-described victimhood. In another articulation of the permanence of war in *On the Milky Road*, a village party is furnished with quaint details such as a soldier playing plumbing pipes and wiggling his ears to the rhythm, and the bartender drying glasses with a hairdryer.¹⁶ Milena and the partygoers sing about how there will be no peace on the planet until Big

¹⁵ This role is a reprisal for Severdzan, who played a matchmaker of sorts in Kusturica's *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998).

¹⁶ Žižek might argue this display is more than Serbs "just wanna have fun" but is a manifestation of the "national thing" (Featherstone and Johnson 2012).

Brother dies of an overdose from snorting countries and atomic bombs (see Figure 2.4). The song, written by the director's son, does not explicitly connect the Yugoslav Wars to historical events, but it does perpetuate the narrative of suffering. The lyrics tell of "Big Brother" who was corrupted by the "Bad Boys" to become the King of the Underground and the Slave of Opiates:

He got so addicted to war,
 He snorted countries like white powder,
 And whenever he got himself into a crisis,
 He drugged himself with atomic bombs.

("Velika Brat" Kusturica, 2016)

The song concludes by saying that there will be no peace on earth until Big Brother overdoses. Big Brother's identity here is open to interpretation. It is not tied to one nationality, leaving room for the figure to be construed as a cosmic force such as Ares, the ancient Greek god of war, wreaking havoc and leaving carnage in his wake. In other words, Ares can take the form of the Ottomans, and the Albanians¹⁷ from the East or the Austro-Hungarians or the UN and NATO from the West. The song is sung from the perspective of casualties of Big Brother who are striving for peace. According to *On the Milky Road's* stance, the Serbs do not embody Ares; rather, they are the innocents¹⁸ but have internalised the conviction that their struggle is not in vain. Judah explains that while this mindset is unique to the Serbs, it offers a precedent and an explanation for their suffering. He writes:

¹⁷ Opium generates 2.8% of the Albanian GDP, the highest percentage among the Balkan countries according to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime.

¹⁸ While the stance adopted in *On the Milky Road* is one of martyrdom, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) found differently: Serbs comprised the majority in both indictments and convictions, and this was yet another reason for the tribunal's impartiality to be challenged ("Judgement List").

The idea that it is better to fight honourably and die than to live as slaves was not a Serbian invention and had existed in epic poetry since the times of classical antiquity. But it provided for the Serbs an explanation for their oppression by the Ottomans... An earthly kingdom was rejected in favour of nobler ideals – victimhood and sacrifice – and this choice is to be compared with the temptations of Christ. (Judah 1997, 36-37)

Historically and currently, Big Brother has been Islam, the biggest perceived threat to the nationalist interpretation of Serb identity. The presence of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the symbolically valuable Kosovo could not coexist with Serbian liberty according to the so-called poet-warrior Radovan Karadžić who did not wish for the Serbs “to live as slaves,” to use Judah’s words.

The destiny of Serbia is at stake. . . The Muslims are trying to dominate Bosnia. They want to create an Islamic state here, but we Serbs are not going to let them. You cannot force Christians to live in a Muslim state. . . The Bosnian Muslims are really Serbs who were forced to convert to Islam when the Turks were here. They have a very high birthrate. They are waiting until they make up fifty per cent of the population, and then they will proclaim their Islamic state. I don’t understand why America is supporting this anti-Serb coalition.” (Karadžić quoted in Dobbs, 450-451)

In the 1990s, “Big Brother” was embodied by Bosniaks, Kosovars, and especially by NATO, all of whom were infringing on “Earthly Serbia”. This was a more recent iteration of the same struggle against Islam described in *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Petrovic II Njegoš in 1847. At one point, the Kolo sings:

Rash and greedy converted to Islam
may their Serb milk make them all sick with plague!

Those who escaped before the Turkish sword,
 those who did not blaspheme at the True Faith,
 those who refused to be thrown into chains,
 took refuge here in these lofty mountains
 to shed their blood together and to die,
 heroically to keep the sacred
 oath, their lovely name, and their holy freedom.¹⁹ (Njegoš 1997)

The Mountain Wreath is mentioned here as evidence of a thematic precedent on which *On the Milky Road* draws heavily to reinforce the perception advanced by songs like “Big Brother” that Serbia was and always will be under attack. In “the lofty mountains” of Klobuk, the “True Faith” is represented by an Orthodox priest who is subsequently killed by the illegally deployed Special Forces – another incarnation of Big Brother – and later by Kosta, who becomes a monk after the Bride is killed. *On the Milky Road* echoes a parallel theme from *Mountain Wreath*: though Serbs supposedly accept their fate of having to wait for their exceptional, celestial nation, the promised land does cause anguish. What is written on Kosta’s face as he rebuilds his country one stone at a time is uttered by Sirdar Vukota:

O accursed land, may you perish in doom!
 Your name is most horrible and dreaded.
 No sooner does a young hero appear
 Than you take him away in early youth.
 Or if there is a brave man of honour,
 You snatch him, too, long before his time comes.

¹⁹ Ildiko Erdei writes of *The Mountain Wreath*, “In Serbia and Montenegro Njegoš’s epic is still read uncritically, disregarding the complexities of the historical formation of the image of the Islamized population... this perception has induced many recent observers to depict Njegoš as the catalyst of Serbian hatred of Muslims and his epic as a blueprint for genocide,” (Erdei 2007, 432).

Or if there is a garland of flowers
 To decorate the heads of lovely Brides,
 You harvest it at the peak of flowering.
 My land, you have turned to blood for me now!
 In very truth you are now nothing more
 Than piles of bones and graveyard monuments,
 on which our youth, resolved and without fear,
 Holds a solemn festival of horror. (Njegoš 1997)

The song, “Big Brother”, and by extension *On the Milky Road*, is a spirited, catchy tool and a justification for the vow each Serb takes to build an exceptional “heavenly Serbia”. (Similarly, the lively musical score of *Underground* by Goran Bregović catches the attention of many viewers more easily than the film’s more nuanced political stance.) Considering the amount of time Serbs have considered themselves to be under attack, it may be argued that rather than constructing the Yugoslav Wars as traumatic, as Spasojević proposes in *A Serbian Film*, *On the Milky Road* suggests that to be a Serb in and of itself is cultural trauma. Why Kusturica depicts the attackers as bumbling and others as killing machines is a matter of personal interpretation but demands acknowledgement.

On the Milky Road starts by throwing down the gauntlet to the international community. The first sequence shows a grey falcon soaring in the sky over rugged terrain before landing in an enclave where there is a flock of white geese. The camera follows the clucking geese waddling over to where two men are preparing to engage in the beloved Serbian tradition of slaughtering a pig.²⁰ The geese remain outside while

²⁰ One need only observe the landscape of Serbia to appreciate the staple status of the pig. Adjacent to most dwellings in the countryside one will find a meat-smoking house. Pig farming has long been a part of Serbian culture, despite the centuries-long occupation by the typically non-pork-consuming Ottomans. Judah describes how the farming practice was an active significant part of the Serbian economy before

the men kill the squealing pig. One man emerges with a basin of blood and pours it into a bathtub. One by one, each member of the gaggle bathes in the pig's blood then they stand around while a swarm of flies lands on them (see Figure 2.5) In Kusturica's commentary, being at war, like slaughtering pigs, is a constant 'natural' part of the Serb identity. The geese, the metaphorical international chorus, make a lot of noise, but do nothing and are equally covered in blood. The ineffectiveness to the point of dim-wittedness of the international community is again articulated in the scene when Milena (Sloboda Mićalović), Kosta's original fiancée, travels with a matchmaker (Bajram Severdzan) and a businessman (Aleksandar Sarić) to a UN refugee camp to "liberate" the Bride (see Figure 2.6). The trio encounters little resistance from the UN troops and is directed to their prize: the Bride, a metaphorical damsel in distress. The romanticised refugee camp is simple but clean, with activities for residents of all ages, distinct from the ones in reality (Hasanović, 2016). Amidst the more serious threat of the invading Special Forces squad, the director depicts moments of infantility and ineptitude before the soldiers cause the Bride's demise.

This shot is from the perspective of Kosta and the Bride hiding in the oak tree, avoiding capture by the Special Forces camping at the foot of a tree (see Figure 2.7). They are enjoying a DVD of a *Tom and Jerry* cartoon. The juxtaposition of their unsophisticated humour and the inappropriateness of unwinding after the burning of Klobuk generates contempt for the English presence. The fighters were sent by a British general who has a personal grudge against the Bride, whom he dated before she

the 1800s because of commerce with Austria and, as a result, it stimulated the merchant class. During the Pig War (1906-1909) Austro-Hungary boycotted livestock from Serbia in a punitive move for arranging trade with Bulgaria (1997 54, 83). Though Serbia is not yet in the European Union, as of 2016 its pig farmers are already feeling the financial impact of EU expansion via the circulation of cheaper goods including pork. When interviewed about what this spells for his own business, pig farmer Goran Matić replied, "I'm not afraid for our people. . . We always survive," (Delauney 2016).

testified that he killed his wife, leading to his conviction and imprisonment. Again, in Kusturica's narrative, the British troops are simply the latest incarnation of Big Brother's cronies, causing chaos and strife wherever they go.

The British general's threat is taken seriously by the matchmaker and the businessman, who assist Milena in smuggling the Bride out of the camp. They seek out Milena at a village party, where she sings "Big Brother". They warn her that defying the general would be catastrophic, pointing out that they would have to fight SFOR, the UN, and the British general. The businessman laments, "Here they can do what they want. They do not give explanations to anybody, girl. These foreigners are going to eat us alive!" In response, Milena shoots the businessman in the knees, shouting "You sell women and children, and trap organs. Now you want to ruin this party?" Indeed, the businessman's predictions come true. But Milena does not tolerate his cowardice in the face of the enemy and explains it by attributing it to his weak, greedy character. The foreign warmongers' cruelty is cemented when the soldiers pursue the Bride and a flock of sheep into a minefield, like lambs led to the slaughter. When Kosta witnesses the Bride's death (see Figure 2.8), he attempts to follow her and die. The shepherd whose flock was grazing in the minefield (see Figure 2.9) wrestles Kosta to his senses, once again becoming the modest but angelic Balkan Warrior.

2.2.2 The Balkan Warrior

But what is a Balkan Warrior? And what role does this mythical character play in Kusturica's epic, and more broadly, the narrative of identity that he embraces from his Serbian cultural legacy? Is a Balkan Warrior embodied by Milena's war-hero brother,

Zaga, who returns home on a chopper-style motorcycle detailed with four Cs?²¹ His life at the front could be interpreted as patriotic; risking his life for his country and coming home and wrapping himself in the Serbian flag. Zaga is animated, confident and ready for battle. Yet from what Čolović describes, it is Kosta who is the Balkan Warrior:

Warriors also live and behave in harmony with nature. They are characterised by moral and physical health, for they have retained and reinforced their natural, instinctive capacity to hate and fight the enemy. The ideal of the natural man is best achieved by uniting the qualities of peasants and warriors in the figure of the peasant-warrior. (2002, 24)

Throughout the film, when Kosta is shot at by the enemy from the battled front and pursued by the British general's troops, he either does not respond, or he escapes (in the latter case by flying, a gesture consistent with Kusturica's penchant for magical realism). The only time he intercedes is when he encounters a soldier from his village on a walkie-talkie: "Insect fumigation is in the final stages. Mosquitoes neutralized in both positions. Greenlight, not even a butterfly flies anymore."²² Kosta neutralizes the traitor (one of a longstanding scourge upon the Serbs) with his trusty umbrella. The otherwise pacifist milkman uses it to strangle the conspirator and pushes his army truck off the mountain ledge (see Figure 2.10). The inclusion of the mythical theme of betrayal further supports the suggestion that mythological themes govern both *Klobuk* and *On the Milky Road*. Betrayal is a significant theme throughout Serbian history, from the story of Vuk Branković's betrayal of his father-in-law, Lazar at the Battle of

²¹ In *The Serbs: History, Myth, and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, Tim Judah writes: "The modern coat of arms, which has been in use ever since the days of the principality, is also in [Hristofor] Žefarović's book [*Stemmatographia* (1741)]. It is a square cross flanked by four letters 'C', that is four Cyrillic 'S' characters. Originally they were meant to be not letters but representations of fire-lighting flints. Now, however, most Serbs believe that the four-'C' symbol stands for the motto 'Only Unity Saves the Serbs'" (1997 54).

²² But this is not true. As Kosta and the Bride emerge from the well the British general's troops are distracted with ineptly trying to catch the last butterfly, to a musical score reminiscent of that composed by Yann Tiersen for *Amélie*.

Kosovo,²³ to Milošević's betrayal of Serbia, according to Radovan Karadžić on the occasion of Serbia losing Krajina (Spolar 1995). Betrayal is mentioned ten times in *The Mountain Wreath*. That Kosta does not use violence or technologically advanced weapons suggests that he is closer to the earth and the animals. As already mentioned, Kosta enjoys a bond with a grey falcon that dances when he plays the dulcimer. The falcon accompanies Kosta and his beloved donkey to deliver milk to the village. Reminiscent of Asclepius' relationship with snakes, Kosta feeds milk to a snake that later keeps him safe while the village is being pillaged. He enjoys this privileged status of being "at one" with the animals because he eschews the technology that distances people from nature. As Ila observes in *Noah* (Aronofsky 2014) the animals are innocent "because they still live as they did in the Garden of Eden", unlike humans whose hearts have been corrupted. In continuing to live the life of a peasant, as such, he lives a prelapsarian existence.

It is not only through his relationship with God's other creatures that Kosta exhibits the qualities extolled of Balkan warriors. His is a different kind Balkan masculinity to the stereotype that frequently captures the Western gaze, exemplified by the English-language performances of Rade Serbedzija,²⁴ or as will be explored in the next section, that of Miloš, the retired porn star in *A Serbian Film*. Instead, Kosta exhibits the "soul of a girl, the behaviour of a priest, and the heart of Obilić" (Vuk Drašković quoted in Čolović, 2000, 51). There are few moments of direct eye contact

²³ The claim that Vuk Branković committed treason is unsubstantiated. The bards, including Vuk Karadžić (1787-1864), took artistic liberties with the fact that in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. Lazar died and Vuk survived. For more information, see 30-36 of Tim Judah's *The Serbs* (1997).

²⁴ In "Playing the Western Eye: Balkan Masculinity and Post-Yugoslav War Cinema" Tomislav Longinović writes about the main character of *Before the Rain* (Manchevski, 1994): "The role is played by Rade Serbedzija, whose masculine physique requires a separate examination, since it has become a landmark in portraying Balkan and Eastern European characters for the global visual imaginary... Serbedzija's pure physicality has become emblematic of the dangerous yet attractive masculine subject at the end of the 1990s." (*Eastern European Cinemas* edited by Anikó Imre, 2005, 38)

throughout Kosta's encounters with the Bride, from when she arrives, to when they acknowledge their feelings for each other, to when they flee the invading troops. Of the mutual gazes that do occur, they are instigated by the Bride, and Kosta is the first to look away, even in private (see Figure 2.11). To some viewers, this could be construed as respect because the Bride is promised to Zaga and not to Kosta. However, Kosta treats Milena, his fiancée, with the same demure deference. Zaga, by contrast, revels in the company of women, especially in a state of undress, and pays no attention to the Bride as a person (see Figure 2.12).

Such a chaste, simple lifestyle does not stop Kosta from fighting for his land, fulfilling the warrior function of Čolović's peasant-warrior. He draws on Gezeman to elaborate: "in Gezeman's opinion, real masculinity has nothing to do with eroticism, love or attitudes to women. A man despises all that. What is considered masculine and heroic are the cult of battle, children, the ancestors and the community" (2000, 51). It has already been shown how Kosta does not flee the makeshift kitchen despite it getting shelled. He sees himself as a humble soldier in an army marching through time. As did his father, he accepts his part without question, in the earthly spectacle to earn Serbia a heavenly kingdom. When he is wounded – a bullet detaches his ear – he bashfully appears before the Bride who stitches the ear back on and wraps a scarf around his head like a grandmother, making him a disarming messenger of Serbian mythology.

The film continues following the Bride's death, the words "15 years later" appear, guiding this epic tale into its third act. A goat enters Kosta's hut (the same sparse abode as before) and rouses an aged and tired Orthodox monk with scraggly hair. Kosta milks the goat for the now-abandoned village's cats before going to Mass. On his journey, he crosses a river and shares an orange with a wild bear. The bear shows him a thorn in its paw, which Kosta removes and then scratches behind his ear. Kosta

continues, ascending uneven terrain with the two rucksacks of rocks to where, once again, a flock of sheep graze. He daydreams of the Bride and his beloved donkey.²⁵ The film's final scene brings to mind Knez Lazar's words on the eve of the Battle of Kosovo; "We have lived a long time for the world: in the end, we seek to accept the martyr's struggle and to live forever in heaven... Sufferings beget glory and labours lead to peace." (Judah 1997, 29-30). Then, with his grey falcon perched on his shoulder, Kosta returns to the Sisyphean task of rebuilding his country one stone at a time.

Kusturica demonstrates – literally and figuratively – through Kosta's behaviour and visual cues that a hero walks among the Serbs, as described in the legends (see Figure 2.13). For example, in *The Mountain Wreath*, Mustai-Kadi says,

When the true saint strikes with his mighty mace,
The earth begins to quiver from his blow
Like a hollow pumpkin on the water. (Njegoš, 1997)

If this is the ideal Serbian man, then surely God would choose these people for a heavenly kingdom. How could a meek, God-fearing nation be accused of aggression or inhumanity with such principles transcending generations? Writing about Mladić shortly after the Srebrenica Massacre, Judah points out,

It never seemed to occur to him that 1992 was not 1804 or even 1941 and that what was deemed acceptable practice in war had changed, if only because such behaviour did your cause more harm than good in a world of satellites and television news... (Judah 1997, 231)

²⁵ The daydream is as follows:

There is a cut from the tired, long-haired Kosta the monk to a tunnel where the Bride emerges naked. Birds drape a wedding dress over her. Kosta in a wedding suit preceded by the donkey asks the Bride, "How do you like it here? It's not exactly like in heaven. You deserve two heavens.

Bride: We're missing something.

Kosta: Do you want me to stay with you? Forever?

Bride: There is no hurry. When you arrive we will be together forever.

With national identity and thereby one's own ipseity being called into question, one might conjecture that if the Serbs were served well by such governing myths for so long, then it is not their behaviour, but the problematic opinion of the accusers. Still, the interloping technology and those who wield it are frowned upon. Judah continues,

The massacres, both inside the camps and outside, were obviously a disaster for the victims but in a more abstract sense, they were a catastrophe for the Serbs too. From the moment of their discovery, all lingering doubts in the international community about whether all sides in the war were guilty or not were driven into the background. The Serbs were branded as the aggressors and as the Balkan successors to the Nazis (1997, 232).

Neither Christiane Amanpour nor the video camera, for example, are responsible for the international view of Serbia. But the perception of global condemnation, coming from a psychological and cosmopolitan place so removed from nature, appears to have only reinforced the mindset that, when the rest of the world has gone crazy, the Serbs remain true to themselves, even when on the run.

2.2.3 Migration

As mentioned above, in 1987, Slobodan Milošević propagated the myth of Lazar for a crowd of Serbs in Kosovo:

You should stay here. This is your land. These are your houses... Your memories. You shouldn't abandon your land just because it's difficult to live, because you are pressured by injustice and degradation. It was never part of the Serbian and Montenegrin character to give up in the face of obstacles, to demobilise when it's time to fight... You should stay here for the sake of your

ancestors and descendants. Otherwise, your ancestors would be defiled and descendants disappointed. (Milošević, quoted in Silber and Little 1997, 38)

In this speech, remarkable for its similarity to that given by Knez Lazar in the same region nearly six centuries earlier, Milošević calls for an end to Serb exoduses which had happened on various occasions since the prince's time, and that would continue until 1999. These highly mythologized events provide Kusturica with an entry point of migration to usher in mythology to the present to construct a space and time outside reality, or as the village's name, Klobuk, suggests, a bubble. After Kosta and the Bride (aided by the snake and even the village well) escape the invading forces, they speak of their experiences of migration, creating what Čolović identifies as a "supra-temporal experience" (2000).

Kosta: What else can we do, if not run away?

Bride: You don't know what it means to run away continuously.

Kosta: Ah, yes, I know. And even too well.

They then consummate the union of their memories of migration – hers personal, his cultural – with a kiss. We are already aware of the Bride's own experiences with being on the run. Earlier in the film, at the refugee camp, we learn that her mother is Italian and her father is a Serb. She arrived in Krajina from Rome to be close to her father, but then the war broke out. Conversely, Kosta was born and raised in Klobuk, but as a Serb, his life is entwined with those of his ancestors, who fled their homeland on several occasions. The conjoining of the two characters' experiences in this scene brings them together in their distinct but shared experiences of migration. This reinforces the Serbian myth of an exceptional nation that does not exist through individuals but as a tribe outside of conventional space and time. The two significant migrations were led by Arsenije III in the Austro-Turkish War (1683-1699) when he led the Serbs to safety,

and later with Arsenije IV Jovanović in the Habsburg-Ottoman War (1737-1739). Continuing into the recent past, between 1990 and 1995, less than ten years after Milošević's speech, it is estimated that one million Serbs left their homes (Judah 1997, 309).

After so much upheaval and migration, a fair question to ask is "What draws 'Arsenije's children' back to this land despite being forced from it over and over?". Without a doubt, the weaponization of the past by present-day elites contributes to an alluring but synthetic sense of identity-based autochthony. The answer lies in Kusturica's final act of the film, laying stones over the Bride's final resting place, endowing the grave with a symbolic duality of "tomb and root" (Čolović, 2000). When a person self-sacrifices for the group's benefit, their blood, ethnicity and genes are spilt on the ground, allowing for resurrection. Kusturica iterates this as well, right before the Bride's death. As she and Kosta approach the minefield, they happen upon a flock of sheep. At the periphery is the shepherd aiding a ewe in lambing. The shepherd is still holding the lamb when his flock and the Bride are killed by the landmines. Throughout the analysis of this film, it has been stated that what sustains the Serbs throughout wars is the myth that they are an exceptional chosen people who will suffer on earth to create their kingdom in heaven. Again, the identity construct of being a chosen people is not unique to the Serbs, but arguably universal to the human experience.

This is a sample of the myths brought from the past to assuage Serbs in the present. We already know that a corpus exists analysing how the past gets trawled for myths; in this case, the Wars of Secession (Silber and Little 1997; Živković 1997). Thus, we focus on evidence of the Serbs' *ongoing* strong connection to their cultural heritage of collective memory (Judah 1997; West 1994). This limits the artistic licence with which the myths can be appropriated. Still, it offers a structure by which new

myths could be constructed, which is how Radovan Karadžić, gained a heroic status as both combatant and *gusle* player. The pervasiveness of the threat of invasion that contributes to a Serbian identity condemned to suffering is perhaps what also keeps the contents of the cultural storehouse fresh in the minds of the collective. It is important to recall that myths act as a shorthand notation for “‘implicit social knowledge’, the ‘non-discursive knowing’ about what moves people, which is essentially ‘inarticulable and imageric’” (Maurice Taussig quoted in Crouch, 1997, 36). When taken in context, the recited myth functions similarly to film as a cultural artefact, conveying the sentiments of the individual or the group.

On 28th June 1989, St Vitus’ Day, Milošević gave what is now referred to as the Gazimestan speech at a commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. The future head of state drew from the canon of Serbian mythology, recalling for the audience of the collective memory of legends.

The Kosovo heroism has been inspiring our creativity for six centuries, and has been feeding our pride and does not allow us to forget that at one time we were an army great, brave, and proud, one of the few that remained undefeated when losing. Six centuries later, now, we are being again engaged in battles and are facing battles. (Milošević, 1989)

One may infer from the commemoration of a 600th anniversary alone that this was not the first time audiences heard about Kosovo. Over the centuries the fluidity with which Serbs engaged in their cultural heritage has often been noted. Responding to observations by Rebecca West, Sir Arthur Evans, and Leopold von Ranke, Judah states:

Every generation of foreigners which has written about the Serbs has been surprised by the importance of the epic poem in Serbian cultural life and later on by the coincidence of the epic and history. (Judah 1997, 40)

The performance of the cultural expressions which impressed visitors to Serbia was the result of the “institutionalization of ‘national culture’; and [poems] had to be recited, fostering thereby patriotic feelings and sense of national continuity,” (Erdei 2007, 83). These recitations were expressions of the successful endeavour to historicize the nation, to construct or reinforce the existing cultural narratives that inform the Serbian collective identity (Trencsényi and Kopaček 2007, 6). This is reminiscent of Richard Buxton’s description of the indoctrination of mythology of Ancient Greek society. Boys had their first rite of passage shortly after birth when registering for the phratry. At *Apatouria* Festival, older children could compete at reciting the myths like the professional *rhapsodes*. When they were old enough to attend school, myths were used to teach reading skills before children graduated to adolescent choirs, whose repertoires again comprised myths. Young residents of the polis were aurally saturated with myths by the time they reached adulthood. Memorisation and recitation were cornerstones of the living tradition of this period. The next step was identification with these well-known gods and heroes. Then there is the incredible account of Radovan Karadžić—a man elevated to hero status and an officer who was graced with ballads of his wartime service. Judah recounts,

As Karadžić prepared to depart for the Geneva for peace talks, one *gusle* singer compared him to Karadjordje, who had led the first uprising against the Turks in 1804:

Hey Radovan, you man of steel!

The greatest leader since Karadjordje!

Defend our freedom and our faith,

On the shores of Lake Geneva. (Judah 1997, 43)

While there was a warrant outstanding from The Hague for Karadžić's arrest, he sat beneath a picture of himself. At the same time, he entertained locals by playing ballads, accompanying himself on the *gusle* or “the instrument of freedom” as it was called by Vladimir Jovanović (Erdei 2007, 83). The combination of Radovan Karadžić's disguise and cover story, and his elevated status as an epic hero and poet, allowed him to evade western Special Forces for thirteen years in plain sight (Borger 2016).

But to what extent are myths and epic poetry responsible for the atrocities of the 1990s? Slavoj Žižek condemns how Serbs indoctrinated generations with national myths, laying blame not on the politicians, but on the poets for starting the Wars of Secession. Žižek concedes, “True, Milošević ‘manipulated’ nationalist passions – but it was the poets who delivered him the stuff which lent itself to manipulation” (2009, 505). He proposes that Serbia may be suffering from what he calls a “poetic-military complex” and Radovan Karadžić as a symptom of this disease (*ibid.*). Žižek observes that most people act ethically and find the notion of killing another person traumatic. Still, when the act of killing is done in service to a cause bigger than oneself (e.g. religious wars), it is less traumatic. According to the Slovenian philosopher, “Serbian mythology in the 1980s led to the superego suspension of the symbolic rules which [opened] up the way to violence” (2009, 504).

In the first chapter, we read how Buxton argued that the stage served as a safe space to act out ideas contrary to the collectively decided social doctrine – the symbolic rules – without consequence. Until the 1980s, performances of myths and poems occurred in that sacred, symbolic playhouse. The epic's hallowed symbols were released into the real, unsymbolic world when Radovan Karadžić and others became mythical and human at the same time. What need was there for God's laws when Radovan Karadžić was God? It was no longer the case that people strived to uphold

values or endure suffering, consistent with the myths of their ancestors—rather those who walked among them were now mythical. Karadžić’s inclusion in the pantheon of heroes made two-way, the previously one-way performance of myths, and caused the contents of the timeless, symbolic cultural storehouse to be deployed in profane ways. Thus, the myths that had sustained the country for centuries became inflated, devalued, and commonised, just like the Serbian dinar.

2.3. *A Serbian Film*

Many within Serbia have decried the label of “aggressor” affixed to the nation by neighbouring countries and the wider international community for the nation’s behaviour during the Yugoslav Wars and in the subsequent ICTY trials.²⁶ As demonstrated in *On the Milky Road*, a view exists in Serbia that the country has been made the scapegoat for the conflict (Russell-Omaljiev 2016). This section will analyse how *A Serbian Film* narrates the stance that Serbia is a victim of its own aggression by deconstructing the cultural mythology.

Rather than depicting the Wars of Secession as the latest validation of Serb exceptionalism and victimhood, *A Serbian Film* reckons introspectively with Serbia’s defeat and humiliation. This stance is consistent with the trend already identified in postwar Yugoslav literary fiction (Gorup 2013). As Gorup explained at the start of this chapter, the wars prompted much “creative activity” to comprehend the ordeal. Furthermore, Gordy highlights the gap between the official narrative and experiences in the public sphere. “The consistent and diverse cultural production in the void left by politics speaks to the existence of a considerable public desire for engagement with the

²⁶ See ICTY “Judgement List” (2019). “Judgement List.” *Judgement List / International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia*, ICTY.

open questions of the recent past,”(Gordy 2013, xx). Director Srđan Spasojević offers a counter-narrative to the legacy of victimhood advanced officially by “First Serbia” and unofficially by films such as *On the Milky Road*.

When Miloš (Srđan Todorović), the former adult film actor and current family man, is approached by a former co-star, Lejla (Katarina Zutić) to make one last film, he is led to believe that the obscenity would be limited to the set of this one last production. Vukmir (Sergej Trifunović), a psychologist-turned-director promises Miloš he is making an arthouse film to meet the West’s demand for such movies. However, he drives the onscreen action into Miloš’s personal life where the despair goes from simulated immorality to real suffering with mortal consequences reminiscent of the Weimar Republic’s film *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* by Robert Wiene in 1920.

In *A Serbian Film*, there are no references to the most recent, or any war. Instead, there are direct attempts at peace and tranquillity, to move past the war rather than continue it. This indicates a rupture with the legacy that led Serbia to war. Part of that legacy is the figure of the Balkan Male, the stereotype of a swarthy, rugged, virile man who cannot be vanquished. In the film, this example of masculinity par excellence is forced to confront defeat on multiple levels. He is robbed of his essence by a character who serves the elites who, previously participated in constructing this notion of masculinity. Ultimately, Miloš’s exploitation at the hands of the Vukmir culminates in committing murder-suicide with his wife and son. This tragedy undermines the mythical notion of sacrifice for the great Serb homeland by cancelling membership to the collective. Miloš and his family’s deaths suggest that the events of the Yugoslav Wars are irreconcilable for him with the fabric that comprises the concept of Serbian identity (Eyerman 2004). This contrasts with Kusturica’s argument that the Wars of Secession are no different from previous wars. These three entry points of peace,

masculinity and destabilisation articulate a shift away from the legacy of an ethnic identity towards a place where nationality is a political construct, and individuality is prioritised rather than subsumed in the name of a heavenly kingdom. The following section is dedicated to showing how the film depicts the war as a cultural trauma of auto-perpetration; Serbian society abuses itself.

The ordeal of abuse is conveyed in two ways: one through the themes enumerated above, and the other--for which it has gained notoriety--is via the genre of transgression cinema. In a similar vein to science fiction, where the otherworldly is an allegory for real-world concerns, through “transgression cinema” *A Serbian Film* attempts to confront the suffering caused by the events of the 1990s through the metaphor of sexual degradation. The production (rated NC-17) is widely classified as a horror film and won awards and nominations at those horror film festivals from which it was not banned.²⁷ However, Spasojević does not consider it a horror film, but a family drama gone to hell (Ogjanović 2010). He explains in an *Indie Wire* interview²⁸ (Smith 2011) that it is intended to depict the exploitation of post-Yugoslav Serbian society at the hands of its masters (Kapka, 2014; Gordy 2013). In light of the controversy surrounding of the most heavily censored films worldwide (ibid.), it is worth recounting Spasojević’s declared intentions for the film - that audiences would bear witness to the exploitation of Serbian citizens at the hands of those in power. In the director’s statement that accompanies the DVD, Spasojević says:

The major metaphorical take concerning this film was to treat real life as pornography. In our region for the last few decades we have brought ourselves

²⁷ For a broader discussion of censorship and banning see Kapka (2014).

²⁸ The *Indie Wire* interview is entitled, “We interview the director of a *A Serbian Film* now on DVD and yes the movie deserves its rep” indicating Western media’ fixation on the film notorious aspects, rather than the larger political statement in which these aspects are encapsulated. This iterates the shock appeal to which Western viewers respond that causes the commentary to be overshadowed.

to the point where we experience our lives as pure exploitation through which we are emotionally, psychologically, and creatively raped by the incomprehensible, chaotic, unbelievably stupid and brutal forces of corrupt authority. (Gordy 2013, 176)

The director argues that the threat to Serbia does not come from outside the country, in contrast to *On the Milky Road*, but from inside the country. Further analysis will show how, according to the film, the elites are robbing the Serbs of their dignity, and thus, their identity, and not those who seek life after the war. Spasojević portrays how those in “power” (a multivalent term to be explored throughout this section) sabotage Miloš’s attempts at a “normal” life in the aftermath of war. There is little mention of foreign powers meddling here.

2.3.1 Peace

In representations of Balkan culture, the city has long been diminished as a symbol of industrialisation and decadence.²⁹ The disdainful attitude of the countryside toward the metropolis life could be attributed, in part, to a symbolic and real distance from

²⁹ In *Mountain Wreath* Voivode Drasko recounts his unpleasant trip to Venice:

There were, brother, many handsome people,
but ugly folk outnumbered them ten times,
much too ugly for you to look at them.
There were many, many rich people, too.
Their riches seem to have gone to their heads.
They carried on like some silly babies.
I saw poor folks on every street corner,
toiling until their eyes were popping out
to earn a crust of meager, dried-out bread.
I used to watch them as in groups of two
on their shoulders they would hoist a woman
a huge body, lifeless and bone-lazy,
(She must've weighted close to three hundred pounds!)
and would carry her hither and thither,
through busy streets at noon, in broad daylight.
They're not afraid to lose face and honour,
thinking only of food and survival. (Njegoš, 1997)

³⁰ See *Civilisation and Its Discontents* by Sigmund Freud (1999).

tradition. Urban living connotes more modern conveniences and fewer chores that could be described as “character-building” (e.g. chopping wood or milking cows). The city is where people have learned to sublimate their desires to co-exist³⁰. There, residents are not necessarily self-sufficient; rather, they are employees who receive cash to pay for services they cannot provide for themselves. City dwellers live together yet apart, often supporting themselves or their immediate family rather than contributing to a more traditional collective. Denizens living far from their clan (*pleme*) tend to forget themselves and their cultural identity. Instead, they yield to self-isolation and anonymity thereby forsaking the mantle of cultural heritage still celebrated by those in the countryside. Bougarel confirms, “Forty years of accelerated modernisation and urbanisation have shifted the traditional antagonisms into the towns themselves, endangered the balance of the urban social system and broke the structures of the rural one” (Bougarel 1999, 7). Yet, it is precisely the symbolic distance that makes peace possible for Miloš. He tries to live in a *zadruga* (household organised as an indivisible family unit) in a *zadruzna kultura* (cooperative culture), in contrast to the *plemenska kultura* (tribal culture) at the heart of which is an ethnic *pleme* (Dinko Tomasić quoted in Bougarel 1999, 7). Miloš is more concerned about his family’s needs than the burden of ethnic nationality. This liberates him to reconcile with his own, rather than the nation’s past. In other words, city dwellers find themselves exchanging legacy for individuality.

The departure from the rural structure and its deeply ensconced values is apparent in that which Jurica Pavičić calls the “Cinema of Normalisation” (Pavičić 2010). *A Serbian Film* is set in an “anti-exotic” city, devoid of “local colour” with an atmosphere of the “almost eschatological goal... of joining the European Union” (47).

³⁰ See *Civilisation and Its Discontents* by Sigmund Freud (1999).

A Serbian Film opens in present-day Belgrade. Miloš and his family reside in a tranquil, leafy suburb far from the mountainous, frontline village of Kusturica's Klobuk. The Serbian capital we encounter does not resemble the smouldering one the pages of newspapers during the 78-day bombing campaign by NATO in 1999.³¹ The mise-en-scène creates a postnational, cosmopolitan atmosphere unburdened by ethnic conflict. The family's contemporary home has bookcases holding a mixture of encyclopaedias and DVDs starring Miloš (i.e. porn films) made before he became a family man. The only hint of geographic belonging is the Red Star jersey hanging in Miloš's son's room.³² There are no icons, no objects synonymous with Serbia or its traditions; quite the opposite, every item in the house connotes membership to a continental European middle-class. It appears that Miloš is less defined by what happened to his country, than by his past. Again, this aligns with the proposal that characters of the cinema of normalisation who

...live in a realistic, everyday, usually urban surrounding. They have to surpass traumas and obstacles inherited by the past... Characters in these films take an active attitude to problems, engage themselves in problem-solving, trying to sort out a better future for themselves. (ibid.).

The burden of national guilt does not appear to rest upon Miloš's shoulders. Rather than waiting for peace in heavenly Serbia, Miloš seeks out peace on earth by going for a jog and meditating. He is pragmatic in his approach and acts with agency to seeking balance.

It is worth noting at this juncture that to equate Miloš's efforts towards inner peace as distancing himself from his origin would itself be "colonialist" thinking. Writing about

³¹ See "18 Years Since Start Of NATO Bombing". *B92.Net*, 2017,

³² The only hint of geographic belonging is the Red Star jersey hanging in Miloš's son's room. See "The Role of Red Star Football Club in The Construction of Serbian National Identity." by Ivan Đorđević, *Traditiones*, vol. 45, no. 01, 2017.

Grbavica (Žbanić, 2006), Pavičić cautions that “the notion that the people of the Balkans can be ‘themselves’ only if they submit to the West, and self-represent themselves through static misery,” is self-aggrandising.

The peace Miloš strives for is hard-earned and by no means exclusively western. Nonetheless, it is proves elusive due to the family’s financial situation. The adult entertainment business was lucrative, as may be surmised by the stash of money inside one of the DVD cases. Yet the aroused man on the screen no longer resembles the father who tucks his son into bed. The steps Miloš takes towards a more peaceful existence are consolidated when he encounters his past self through his movies. Initially, the scenes from his old films nearly function like flashbacks to another lifetime. What appears at first as a stable, delightfully dull existence, proves to be a failed *détente* in post-Milošević Serbia. To be free from the current pressures and move forward a better life, Miloš must revivify his less evolved self and engage with the powers-that-be who still celebrate and profit from a more primal, stereotypically Balkan man. In this case, it is Vukmir³³ who benefits from Miloš’s re-entry to this less civilised, more aggressive world consonant with “Balkanisation”.

2.3.2. *The Balkan Male*

The Balkans have long been the object of the West’s cinematic “gaze” (Mulvey 1989). Within the well-documented, political and historical concepts of “Balkanisation” exists the construct of the “Balkan Male”. According to Tomislav Longinović, the Balkan Male is a response to what he terms the “Western Eye,” or the “dominant view” inferring that the prevalent audience’s gaze is structured by the occidental world

³³ Vukmir appears to be in power but, in fact, proves to be just another warm body to be exploited.

(Longinović 2005, 38). Originally, Westerners sought to capture “the violence and ‘untamed’, ‘savage’ nature of the Balkans” (Pavičić 2010, 48). The concept of Balkanisation is worthy of its own thesis about which there is already much literature so we shall address it in brief. The West is tantalised by the seemingly unbridled nature of white, yet exotic neighbours, the stars of the European fantasy. Another way to imagine it is the restrained superego West perceives itself to have moved beyond the stage of meeting primal needs as they do in the Balkans. In turn, some people from the Balkans responded to this Western gaze by self-Balkanising.³⁴ This western concept of the Balkan spectacle was appropriated and performed by such actors as Miki Manojlović. He reprises this type of character in *On the Milky Road* as indicated by his fondness for alcohol, nudity, war, and indifference to his new Bride. *A Serbian Film* rejects the legacy of “self-Balkanisation” to interrogate and condemn the Balkan Male myth, showing how it strips the dignity of private citizens and the nation alike, culminating in the cultural trauma of auto-perpetration.

Given the multivalent nature of masculinity in *A Serbian Film* this film, I will evaluate how the myth of Balkan masculinity is deconstructed to demonstrate how the production is a means of declaring--rather than denying-- trauma as the outcome of the Wars of Secession, led by Slobodan Milošević. On an individual level, Miloš attempts to construct a life by rejecting both local and Western superficial expectations of a Balkan Male informed by Longinović’s insightful interpretation, now considered the field standard. On a national level, Miloš serves as the poster boy of one type of what Raya Morag profoundly terms “defeated masculinity” (Morag 2006) a means by which the country addresses being vanquished in the conflicts and the courtroom. Though each facet warrants further research in Serbian gender studies, the scope of this thesis

³⁴ A practice for which Kusturica’s film *Underground* (1995) is well-known. (Homer, 2009)

only permits three tenets, in brief, to contribute to the broader exploration of the role mythology plays in aftermath cinema. While *A Serbian Film* has been criticised for pandering to the West through gratuitous self-Balkanisation (Ognjanović 2010), it is a trauma narrative that attempts to speak for the nation (hence the title) through one character's experiences with brutality.

We may surmise from the stashing of money in a DVD case that household finances factor into Miloš's decision to accept Vukmir's offer. Working from the premise that becoming an adult film star once again was for a pragmatic reason, rather than validation of symbolic virility, Miloš transforms into a puppet without agency to exert agency to support his family. In other words, he is stepping into a role he did not create, but he is supplying for a demand. From where did this demand come? He is fulfilling the role that the West asks him to play. Whether this has been internalised or is more Goffmanian survivalism exemplified by Jewish concentration camp kapos is uncertain. Here I will focus exclusively on Miloš's engagement with this social construct of masculinity.

At the start of the film, Miloš's concept of what it is to be a Balkan Male is distinct from the "Balkan Warrior" that Kosta portrays. There are shots of the covers of the DVDs from Miloš's previous life as a porn star. Previously, he performed for Western audiences as "Milosh the Filthy Stud" enacting what Frederic Jameson calls "Balkan Wild Man" (Jameson 2004). The Althusserian appellation exoticises him and transcribes his name into something the Westerners can pronounce. At the risk of generalising, in most adult films, the sex depicted serves to meet the demand for physical desires and fantasies.³⁵ When the DVD concludes, it is apparent that Miloš's

³⁵ Pornographic films are often considered problematic because of their unrealistic elements, such as a flawless female body, or how long it takes a plumber to arrive after the kitchen sink starts leaking.

relationship with his wife does not resemble that which he has with his co-stars; it is more intimate, emotional and secure rather than anonymous, physical and transient. Miloš watches his past, unbridled self in his films but does not replicate that with his wife.

When they are at home in bed, after they have tucked in their son (who himself was asking about the reasons for the films making him feel like there are wheels in his belly) his wife asks him why they do not have sex like how he did in the films with “all those poor girls thrown away like used condoms”. He replies that he “fucked them” but, he loves her. She slaps him across the face to engage his animalistic desire. He attempts to penetrate her from behind in a disembodied way, but they only climax when facing each other, when their faces are visible as their bodies are stimulated. He is no longer the stereotypical Balkan male. It is unknown if Miloš had internalised what Longinović calls “local patriotic simplifications of gender relations” (Longinović 2005, 37) or if Miloš was effectively having sex in front of a camera for money. This is significant in terms of character development as the former would indicate that Miloš had moved on with his life and actively chose a different path for himself. The latter would suggest that he is in a static state of surviving (accepting employment opportunities) rather than thriving (choosing employment opportunities), as the expression goes. When discussing Lejla’s job offer with his wife, Miloš wonders why he would get offered such a hefty paycheck after such a long time in Serbia. Marija replies, “Maybe they need the only porn star with a university diploma.” This connotes that Miloš had aspired to other careers but entered the porn industry to pay the bills. She asks him if he misses it: “I miss the money so we could escape from here.” The behaviour of Miloš’s brother Marko would suggest otherwise. Marko is a police officer who has not succeeded as well as Miloš at sublimating his libido and indiscreetly covets his brother’s wife. In one

scene, while Miloš is out jogging and meditating, his brother is in his house desiring unlawful carnal knowledge of Marija. She takes a bite of an apple and then, in a manner reminiscent of Eve, offers it to him. He finds this arousing and excuses himself to yield to temptation in the bathroom by himself. Conversely, while we are not privy to Miloš's initial motivation for his career choice, the specific interactions convey that he prioritises his family and dignity over his libido.

The first interaction of note is when Miloš encounters his young son, Petar, watching one of his DVDs. The shot sequence of the DVD in his son's hand, then in his own hand (near a bottle of Jack Daniels whisky) communicates that he is struggling with what kind of legacy he wishes to pass on to his son; the feral, id-driven Balkan male or the involved father who tucks his son into bed, who is so uncommon but so necessary in the Balkans (Milekić, 2018). When his wife turns off the film the son was watching, Miloš says, "I saw my first porno when I was his age," indicating that he was raised in an environment where such behaviour was normal. However, Miloš deviates from typical gendered behaviour to be present for his son and by doing so, Miloš takes steps away from national expectations portrayed in *On the Milky Road* where one asks "how can my life honour my country?" and towards individual values where he considers, "what values do I want to teach my son?". This shift could be attributed to being in the metropolis where tradition has less of a stronghold or the time of postwar postmodernism. There is a trend towards individualism (which, granted, only makes the nationalists more ardent). Through this contemplation, Miloš not only ruminates on how he wants his son to see him—as a man who roughly fornicates with women other than his son's mother—but how he wants to see himself: as a man who performs for the West or a man who acts for himself? When looking at his DVD collection, his facial expression suggests he does not yet have an answer to this question.

The second interaction which underscores Miloš's commitment to being someone and *something* other than a Balkan Male is with Lejla, his former co-star. He rejects her advances (physical desire), showing self-discipline and prioritising his relationship with Marija (intimate emotional bond). Lejla, a far more active woman, asserts her sexual power through overtures. When she meets with Miloš at a cafe, he wears a t-shirt and khakis while she dons PVC and fishnets. She says, "Easy on the whisky! Rye kills the sexual appetite". He replies, "That's why I drink it," indicating his desire for sublimation rather than copulation. He greets her by kissing her on the cheek; she then grabs his buttocks in what might be called a grab for power (see Figure 2.14). In their conversation, she pretends not to remember his wife's name. Later, when Lejla is at Miloš's house, she uncrosses her legs while wearing a mini-skirt reminiscent of Sharon Stone in *Basic Instinct*, tempting him to yield to his more primal desires. Miloš does not break eye contact with her, much to her consternation (see Figure 2.15). Ultimately, Lejla is punished for her ambition by being killed in a moment of sexual passivity; she is suffocated while performing fellatio. Her efforts to recruit Miloš counted for nothing and she was discarded.

The third interaction reinforces the resoluteness of Miloš's principles and his disgust for the perversity of Vukmir, and the State. This sequence is an act in Vukmir's film. It is set in a traditional house where Miloš is supposed to take the virginity of a young girl Jeca (see Figure 2.16). The grandmother encourages Miloš, explaining to him:

God himself brought you, son. God sent you to deliver us from that whore may she rest in peace. She was a shame to our house Raiko was a great warrior but had poor taste in women. Since he was killed, this house rots with no male to

govern it. That's why God sent you as our saviour from all worry. (*A Serbian Film* 2011)

At this point, Miloš looks at Vukmir who is staring intently with his hands on his knees between two camera operators. Miloš's expression is one of horrified disbelief.

There's not only the house but a daughter to take care of, too. Our poor Jeca became an orphan. My Alice in Wonderland. Raiko was killed just when he was supposed to prove that he's not only a father, but a man, too. You came instead of him. You'll have the honour of giving her a virgin's communion. To make her a woman.

Like my late father did with me. (*A Serbian Film* 2011)

The grandmother nods at Miloš encouragingly, as does Vukmir, and Jeca smiles consensually (as much as a child could be perceived to consent) and touches Miloš's knee. Miloš jumps up and grabs a knife from the kitchen and starts to slice off his penis. The practice is treated as sacrosanct as a religious rite. Assuming that a father resumes his amorous relationship with the mother following the act and does not initiate a romantic relationship with the daughter (i.e. incest), the daughter is only introduced to penetration, not intimacy, indoctrinating them into being receptacles instead of people with feelings and value. Miloš recognises that the so-called tradition is warped. Despite the pressure from Vukmir, the grandmother, and Jeca, Miloš would rather mutilate himself than participate in this custom. A parent copulating with a child is unnatural, and the biological and social side effects of inbreeding have been common knowledge since before *Oedipus* was performed. By abstaining from this act, Miloš upholds not only his values but preserves sacred taboos. When Miloš returns to his senses he maintains his civility. But Vukmir, as a functionary of the state, cannot allow an individual to undermine his power structure.

After the Wars of Secession, the cultural myth of what it meant/means to be a Balkan male was/is questioned. In other words, what cultural values led to defeat? Miloš's attempts to be a different kind of Balkan male than the traditional one, as explored above, are rejected by Vukmir because if Miloš evolves to a Balkan *person* from a Balkan *male* then Vukmir, as the Balkanized Serb whose identity becomes irrelevant and creeps towards obsolescence. To maintain relevance, Vukmir draws Miloš back into the lifestyle he seeks to escape by trapping him through behaviour articulated in Morag's theory of "defeated masculinity". In other words, by preserving Miloš's status as a Balkan male by directing a film that glorifies the Balkan Male, Vukmir reinforces the culture which put him in power. Through the (unfortunately) normalised practice of subjugating women, Vukmir subjugates Miloš, demonstrating that human life has little value. This characteristic of devaluing individuals is manifested in Serbian epic poetry as falcon warriors ready to die for the Serbian heavenly kingdom. Spasojević argues that these deaths are not heroic, but tragic, avoidable and in vain, and the only way Serbia is exceptional is in its cruelty. Miloš's desire to be a different kind of man threatens Vukmir because, according to Morag, it stems from defeat. Writing on post-Vietnam American cinema, Morag notes:

In these films, defeat is repressed but the defeated male is present. Central to the texts is a profound loss of self, incoherence at the gendered core of masculine identity... loss of traditional affiliations (representability of the social order, fatherhood, brotherhood), tortured body, and shattering of sexuality. . . [p]ost-traumatic masculinity subverts the identification between masculinity, patriarchy, and nationalism. (Morag 2009, 189)

For Vukmir, Miloš's masculinity is packaged as Serbian for the Western audience who, as Vukmir explains, has lost this power and "is now paying to watch it from the comfort of an armchair". Spasojević explains,

Rather than being a piece of auto-racism, however, it seems to be playing upon the expectations (and prejudices) associated with how this locale is perceived among both the Serbs and in the West, and can be understood as a certain grotesque parody of Serbia's current image as a "monster" in the eyes of foreigners. (Spasojević quoted in Ognanović, 2010)

Should Miloš experience defeat and disconnect from his masculinity, then he disengages from the trifecta Morag highlights. His Balkan masculinity has dissipated as Serbian strength has been defeated. Vukmir cannot let this happen because he sees Serbian identity only when it is in an interpellative dialogue with the cultures that identify it as different. For Vukmir, to be a Serb is to be pornographic, hence making such a film. Thus, Vukmir has to entrap Miloš as a porn star, so that Serbia can maintain its role as the world's "bad boy". If Vukmir can capture Miloš on film acting like his former, pre-defeat self, then Serbian society could continue as if the wars were inconsequential to the Serbian cultural identity – the same stance held by Kusturica in *On the Milky Road*. Miloš's virility is vital to Vukmir because it is a metaphor for Serbian potency and vital to Vukmir as both a real and symbolic director.

Vukmir is a fascinating character. Marija says his name sounds like "one of our guys at the Hague tribunals. Are you sure he's not an arms dealer?". Miloš replies that Vukmir is some kind of "artist-philosopher with a grand plan." Indeed, Vukmir never offers any real answers, just propaganda and coercion. Miloš, operating on a "real" level, asks Vukmir if he had directed films before this one, and could he see the script. Vukmir, operating on a "symbolic" level tells Miloš not to worry about the script,

though he reassured him a complete script existed. When Miloš asks him what he is supposed to do, he instructs the actor,

Vukmir: The same as always. Stand in front of the camera, whip out your cock and fuck until it's raw.

Miloš: I dunno. I'm a little tired of cameras and fucking.

Vukmir: You're also tired of humping scum any time your family needs dough.

Kissing some wretched cunts with the same lips you kiss your kid. (*A Serbian Film, 2011*)

Miloš signs the contract, agreeing to “rent his dick out to him” but, still sceptical and unsatisfied, Miloš asks his brother Marko, a police officer to do a background check on the evasive director. Marko reports, that Vukmir, full name Vukmir Vukmir, worked as a pediatric psychologist at a home for orphaned and abandoned children until 1992 then became the director of children's programming for the state television, in addition to working for the national security agency in an undisclosed capacity. In all of his roles, Vukmir guides people from behind the scenes. For example, he directs Miloš into the children's home where he used to work via a disembodied voice, a discreet earpiece, as a voice in Miloš's head. There, Miloš encounters an angry mother cursing her pre-pubescent daughter, Jeca, for letting the villains snatch her away as she leads her away. One of the children's home employees is saddened that the anticipated interaction between Miloš and the girl would not happen. She expresses her grief by leading Miloš to a television room where there are two televisions. She begins fellating Miloš while the clips of Jeca eating a popsicle fill the screens, thereby classically conditioning Miloš to find the girl attractive.

The next day at the children's home, Miloš encounters the mother kneeling in front of the camera operator who is dressed as a police officer. The “officer” calls her a

whore and slaps her. Through micro-decisions, Miloš yields to Vukmir, contributing to his own literal and figurative captivity. What he does to Miloš by telling him what to do is exactly why he chose Miloš for the film in the first place. “Do you know what proves there is art in pornography? You, Miloš... Your sense of handling a woman... exhausting her, your talent to humiliate her. And then, when she is reduced to dog shit, to win her back. And your love for it? That’s art.”

It is because Miloš is a hunter that Vukmir seeks to capture him. He ensnares Miloš through his attempt to move away from the Balkan masculinity that Vukmir sells. At the start of another day of shooting, Miloš, who battles to retain his evolved Balkan identity, drives himself, rather than be driven by the chauffeur to Vukmir’s mansion. He informs Vukmir that he is quitting the film. During this meeting, Miloš sips at the whisky Vukmir pours him, because rye enervates the male reproductive organs, to give himself “whisky dick” as it is referred to in the vernacular. However, Vukmir laces the beverage with a cattle aphrodisiac, causing Miloš to commit the heinous acts that earn *A Serbian Film* its infamy. Vukmir robs Miloš of his masculinity-as-subjectivity to Vukmir—comparable to Samson, consort of Delilah—leaving Miloš in Vukmir’s throes (Longinović 2005).

Defeat means falling into “captivity”—not only by one’s captors but also by the basic situation of being “captivated in an enemy trap, whether real or metaphorical. This scenario of entering a death trap typifies the way in which the Vietnam War is presented, and... establishes masculinity as a pendulum that swings between two possible forms of realization: either being the “Hunter,” i.e., the victor, someone whose subjectivity is “actualized” according to the codes of masculine domination and control, or the “Captive” i.e., the

vanquished, someone whose subjectivity suffers disintegration while eternalizing helplessness (Morag 2009, 192).

This demotion to captivity leaves Miloš unable to relate to or embody the mythical Balkan male. He is now traumatised because he realises how the cultural legacy to which he is supposed to belong has moved from machismo to what Longinović calls volatile masculinity gone mad (2005, 38). It is this degradation and relegation to the status of a victim that the director communicates through Miloš's entrapment and forced participation in these crimes against humanity. Vukmir, as a metaphor for the Serbian state, penetrates Miloš to attain gratification (see Figure 2.17).³⁶ Vukmir and the Serbian state prey upon Miloš as an individual and as an evolved Balkan male, and it is this exploitation and destabilisation that is the cultural trauma Spasojević seeks to articulate.

2.3.4. Homeland Destabilisation

In *On the Milky Road* myths dance to upbeat Balkan music to reassure viewers that there was a precedent for the hardships Serbs endure at the hands of infidels and invaders. Each battle was a test of the loyalty of the Serbs to their heavenly kingdom; the concept of a homeland was unwavering and unimpacted by any tribulation. It is this blind faith in the cultural legacy that Spasojević disrobes; not just falsity of the invariably exceptional homeland but just how destabilising the Yugoslav Wars was for Serbs individually and collectively. Miloš and his family find themselves unable to

³⁶ The practice of Serbian sexual power play was recently explored in the award-winning Spanish television series, "Money Heist" through the character "Helsinki" played by Spanish-speaking Serb Darko Perić. Helsinki is a Yugoslav War veteran who, due to the paucity of females in the trenches and later in prison, became gay to continue to engage in intercourse. This is a comment on the perpetuation and exportation of the myth of the Balkan Male who adapts to continue fornicating.

return to normality following their ordeal, so they commit suicide to cease participating in the insanity and obscenity that Vukmir perpetuates as a figurehead for the state. The shadowy figure causes this reaction by blending the line between the fantasy of the film set and the reality of Miloš's private life as a metaphor for blurring the lines between the symbolic and real. When Miloš withdraws from the real world (i.e. dies) to stop contributing to the symbolic world, his body and his family's corpses are recycled for a snuff film, suggesting that the levee between the two spheres has broken and there is no escape from the symbolic-ruled real world. In other words, Kusturica whitewashes anything that would stain the concept of eternal Serbia while Spasojević points to the cracks in the walls of the Serbian cultural storehouse. *A Serbian Film* does not claim that life was better under communism, or that life will be better when the nation gains accession to the European Union. For some, what is scariest of all is that *A Serbian Film* offers no closure or even a prognosis as to how Serbia can heal itself. All that was stable has been condemned, leaving Serbs without any dangerous myths, but no consoling myths either, only a deadly, symbolic space that leaves a wake of real bodies.

Vukmir, whose name means wolf, emerges at the start of the film, appearing suave and continental, with his eyes set on the Western and German market. Vukmir stages scenes in a warped version of a traditional house as well as state institutions such as an orphanage, before moving to an industrial basement, representative of locations in other films used for torture and other human rights violations. Flirting with the taboo, again, under normal circumstances is what would give such a situation titillating appeal. In *A Serbian Film*, the taboo reiterates the destabilisation taking place. Vukmir repurposes the few "real" remaining places of expectations and coerces and eventually drugs Miloš into breaking the rules, not only without consequences but for a reward. Miloš agrees to earn money by committing these symbolic acts to earn "real" freedom.

In “real” Serbia, Miloš’s only qualification is acting in a fantasy for the satisfaction of the id. Vukmir holds the advantage over Miloš because Vukmir wields “symbolic” Serbian masculinity to manipulate “real” Serbian lives through the economy and other, less tangible aspects of society. Vukmir tries to convince Miloš of the veracity of his production by telling him, “I’m doing stuff that no one else is... Art! Naked art! Truth! Real, people, real situations, real sex! Minimal editing.” This would give one the impression that they would know what to expect, given the expectations of “real people” in “real situations”, but this is an illusion. Vukmir refuses to show him the script because he wants Miloš’s acting to be genuine. But this is not acting; they are recording his reactions. That Vukmir already has the script and completed pre-production and arranged all the sets with the other actor/characters demonstrates that the metaphorical acting manual is being rewritten, creating uncertainty for Miloš and jeopardizing his family when the fourth wall gets broken. Miloš’s old films counter the unpredictability of Vukmir’s production. Miloš remarks to Lejla, “I miss the certainty of that crap. At least I knew what I was filming.” Vukmir has cast Miloš (literally and figuratively) into uncertainty, and that which is familiar Vukmir corrupts with the symbolic.

The symbolic gained leverage, to the point of nihilism, starting when Marshall Tito built a nation based on an idea. The symbolic was present and, in fact, a necessity of the concept of Yugoslavia as the republic’s existence of Yugoslavia hinged on the realization of the idealist “Brotherhood and Unity”. When Tito died from gangrene in 1980, the figures of Serbian statehood, namely Slobodan Milošević, awakened Žižek’s “poetic-military complex” in which, Žižek writes, “barely concealed “YOU MAY!” (Žižek, 2009, 504). Žižek proposes that it is poetry, the myths and the legends that drive the usually sublimated violence in the real world. Vukmir embodies this complex by

demanding that Miloš and his family operate symbolically “for the sake of art” despite the parameters of what he identifies as the “modern, secular, global society” (ibid.)

Writing about the man behind the curtain that was Milošević, Žižek quotes the journalist, Aleksander Tijanić:

Milošević generally suits the Serbs. In the time of his rule, Serbs abolished working hours. No one did anything... He gave us the right to solve all our problems with weapons. He gave us also the right to drive stolen cars...

Milošević changed the daily life of Serbs into one great holiday and enabled us all to feel like high-school pupils on a graduation trip – which means that nothing, but real nothing, of what you do can be punishable (Tijanić quoted in Žižek, 2009, 504).

Though he was by no means the first to do this, Milošević gained notoriety by conjuring up the heroes of the past to serve his poetic-military complex, metaphorically represented in *A Serbian Film* by Vukmir. This permission, which can be heard as early as 1987, violated the values celebrated in Yugoslavia. Milošević corrupted the familiar real through the symbolic. In the same vein as Miloš, the citizen tries to navigate aftermath society, Vukmir devalues him and makes him desecrate the real with the symbolic. Miloš has a second layer of symbolic value, though. He is “no longer simply a cock for hire, but rather a symbolic representation of the phallic power of the state” (Featherstone and Johnson 2012, 72).³⁷ The real public is already conditioned to this behaviour through the objectification of women as glamorous orifices or wives and mothers. Vukmir undermines the stable concept of “woman-as-dispensable” by generalising that to “man-as-dispensable” when Miloš watches the video of himself

³⁷ For information regarding how the symbolic flooded the mass media absorbed by the real during the 1990s, see Volčič 2007, Živković 1997.

getting sodomised by the camera operator-police officer while he is unconscious. At the end of the film, when Vukmir is already dead, and Miloš and his family have just killed themselves, a fresh crew move in to capitalise on their corpses, indicating that no person has value and everyone and everything is for sale. *On the Milky Road* communicates that individuals exist in service to the greater cause that is Serbia. But *A Serbian Film* demonstrates that in fact, Serbs are used, killed, and then the state fucks them some more, dismantling the belief that their sacrifices contribute to a higher purpose. Vukmir tries to convince Miloš that art is that higher purpose, but Miloš knows there cannot be a symbolic higher purpose if literal survival is not prioritised first.

Vukmir: Love, art, blood, flesh and blood of a victim. We're a victim. You, me, this whole nation is a victim.

Miloš: We're just too retarded. And I won't be a victim because of that.

Vukmir: But Miloš, you're the only one in the film who's not a victim!

Vukmir operationalises the symbolic of flooding Miloš's concept of what is real and right, referred to colloquially as "gaslighting". Vukmir attempts to persuade his star that he acted with free will in signing the contract for the film, thereby relinquishing any claim to victimhood in the real and, more metaphorically, in the eyes of the state. But in Miloš's eyes, the whole figurative spectacle that is Serbia cannot take place on a stage which rests on a weak foundation riddled with transgressions. In other words, the real base of Serbia will collapse under the weight of the state's symbolic performance, thus destabilising the whole production of statehood, and he does not want to be a victim of that avoidable tragedy. Throughout Vukmir's production, Miloš has been hesitant to follow Vukmir's symbolic yet immoral orders because they compromise his real integrity. Miloš tells Vukmir he is quitting the film. "The kids bother me. I can't do

such stuff in the kindergarten.” Vukmir uses a metaphor to flood the real with symbolic (à la Barthes), replying, “This whole country is one big shitty kindergarten. A bunch of kids discarded by their parents... We are the backbone of this nation’s economy. Only we can prove that this nation is alive and useful for anything.” Bringing this back to the actual, Miloš knows that children are not to be compromised. It is implicitly and explicitly understood that to interfere with children condemn them to a lifetime of mental incarceration to the abuse. Through Miloš, Spasojević seeks to dismantle the transgenerational curse that affects so many youths in post-Yugoslav cinema (Pavičić, 52). For Miloš, and other ordinary Serbs who are at the mercy of the state, what makes living such a challenge is, as the expression goes, “keeping the wolves at bay.”

2.4. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, I wish to show how *On the Milky Road* and *A Serbian Film* are “screen memories”. Building on Freud’s original definition of the term, Jelača utilises the phrase in two ways:

- 1) A stand-in for something else that is inaccessible, forgotten, or omitted in direct recollection typically associated with seemingly benign childhood memories acting as screens for unwanted, more troubling, or complicated recollections. (12).
- 2) An inorganic, technological currency note issued by the cultural memory bank through which viewers can entrust their memories and pool them together (2).

On the Milky Road draws more from the former definition and emphasises the *screen* memory, and operating in a more escapist than exploratory fashion. *A Serbian Film*

serves as a placeholder by functioning as a screen *memory* of an experience that must be integrated to terminate the repetition compulsion, another of Freud's terms applied to behaviours that derive from unassimilated trauma (Freud 2003).

One may argue that the allegory through which Spasojević narrates the pain could preclude it from reaching the audiences for whom it was intended. However, collective experience is distinct from individual one, and the trauma need not be experienced by all members of the collective in order for it to be a trauma. What is critical is that the Serbs, for whom the 1990s and 2000s were a cultural trauma, are acknowledged, and the perpetrators are brought to justice. In Serbia, there was little justice to be had after the war, given that many of those in control during the conflict remained in power afterwards; just because the shooting stopped did not mean that the fight for survival was over (Eyerman, 2004). Testing Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma, Spasojević aims to traumatise international viewers for aiding and abetting the state of Serbia in these crimes of auto-perpetration.

The myths woven into *On the Milky Road* scaffold the film to function as a dislocated screen memory. In an interview on Serbian television before the Belgrade premiere of the film, Monica Bellucci preempts critics' questions by saying, "I have to say that I approached this movie from an artistic and human point of view. Never a political one" (Ivanović, 2017). The show's host, Ivan Ivanović, echoed, "Everybody says it is a love story during the war without politics" (ibid.). The ubiquity of mythical symbolism and themes in the film narrative contradicts Bellucci's position. The attempt to define the film by what it is *not* operates like the film, as if to say, "this is *not* a cultural trauma narrative." Thus, *On the Milky Road* articulates the presence of cultural trauma in Serbia in various ways. The film does not address Serbian actions in the recent Wars of Secession directly. Instead, it diverts the spectatorial gaze away from the

causes of perpetrator trauma which it seeks – consciously or unconsciously – to suppress. The suppression of trauma by non-state and state actors hinders the process of entering the perceived injury into the public arena of collective dialogue. If narration does not occur then, the trauma continues to wound.

Only when the trauma is narrated can society accept responsibility on the international stage, a problematic act in itself. *On the Milky Road* elides discussion of the Wars of Secession; rather it is populated with tropes of Serbian victimhood. The lack of reference to recent events in the film suggests that Serbia has not yet found a way to narrate occurrences into the collective story and by extension, its identity. We saw how Kusturica puts forth symbols from World War II when the Croatian Ustaše terrorised Serbs, from the era of Austro-Hungarian imperialism, and the Ottoman conquests, tabulating events where Serbia acted in “self-defence.” The film repeats the well-known stories of glory and betrayal from the cultural memory bank in an original way and utilises anachronisms to beckon nostalgic emotions. But it does not create new memories for mass consumption. In other words, the film does not offer a means by which the trauma may be approached as such: it does not tell the stories that are waiting to be told to help Serbia continue to articulate its identity. Rather, it decries that new experiences are not new at all, but a reiteration of Serbian mythology.

A Serbian Film challenges the mythical exceptionality of the homeland celebrated by *On the Milky Road* by portraying the “obscene real” underbelly of this so-called sacred nation. The violence and immorality by one person against another, fellow Serbs, undermines the concept that the Serbs are a chosen people. Even the most basic tenets of stability and trust are broken. For example, Miloš’s brother desiring his wife. Or state institutions that are edifices of the government in which the elite rule, are nothing more than chessboards upon which people are the pawns. The nature of the

exploitation, its pervasiveness and its literal and figural penetration leave Miloš and his family unable to understand, much less cope with what is real and what is symbolic. Horror films can only be a genre of entertainment when viewers can conclude the viewing experience and return to their own lives. Miloš tries to return to his own life after the war and is punished for his efforts and sucked back into the vortex of unbearable strife. To call it transgression cinema is to align it with dark tourism, a topic that requires its own thesis. Hence, it is an example of aftermath cinema.

The film poses existential questions about Serbia's future. As members of Serbian society break free from the shackles of legacy exploitation seen in other cultures what will the consequences be? Or did this opportunity for exploitation only arise because of the Wars of Secession? And were the Serbs drugged like Miloš or is this a foreclosure of responsibility? Is Miloš in some respect a dead soldier who died for his homeland? Čolović argues:

Dead soldiers and other victims of war, who have—as it is often said—laid down their innocent lives on the altar of the Homeland, represent the greater part of the active national collective, as it is portrayed in the national-warrior myth. The living Serbs are, as Matija Bečković formulated it, just the “remnants of a slaughtered people. (2002, 55)

Above is but one interpretation of a cultural product film that belongs to the continuum of confronting the past to move forward. The film is called *A Serbian Film*, but it was entirely self-financed, despite having a title that claims to speak for the nation (Kapka 2014). Its taboo-ness and political incorrectness preclude it from mainstream distribution, meaning that the story of trauma is not disseminated among the audience for whom it was arguably produced.

A Serbian Film is not a record of the wrongdoings by the Serbian state. It does not point to specific, indemnifying incidences. Rather, it adheres to what Morag says about trauma narratives lacking concrete historical traces. It is about narrating the trauma of the real and part of that trauma is the experience of the fabric of the Serb identity being torn. Morag reinforces this point: “A film which lacks any concrete historical traces of the historical event that originated the trauma will adhere to a more fully and reliably traumatic representation, and vice versa,” (2009, 25). It is not the film’s aim to identify how to repair the tear but to articulate the devastating experience that challenges the mythological dignity of the Serb identity aestheticized politically in *On the Milky Road*.

Both films discussed here connect to a wider movement. For Kusturica, the roots of the 2016 production lie in *Life is a Miracle* (2004) which maintains relics of his days as a Sarajevo New Primitivist (Slugan 2001; Homer 2009). If *On the Milky Road* is a point that continues Kusturica’s trajectory then retrospective research is warranted to plot out his progression toward the uncritical celebration of a mythologised identity. Spasojević chose Todorović, who starred in *Absolute 100* (Golubović, 2001) about a man who is chewed up and spit out by the country he represented in an international shooting competition (see Pavičić, 2010). If films are the makers and keepers of mythological narratives, it is up to Serbian society to decide which myths are still relevant and why they still resonate.

Chapter 3: Aftermath Cinema: Greece

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will analyse the function of cultural mythology in two Greek films released within a decade after the fall of the Colonels' Junta in 1974, *Voyage to Cythera* (Angelopoulos 1984) and *The Stone Years* (Voulgaris 1985). A context for the issues raised in the movies will be sketched by an overview of the ongoing conversation about Greek identity, and the official narrative's enforced transition after World War II from heterogeneous and inclusive to homogeneous and exclusive. The official removal of communists and sympathisers through the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and the Colonels' Junta (1967-1974) affected real and symbolic society for generations. I will analyse how the stories, beliefs, and practices surrounding war, masculinity and homeland operate within the two films to understand how these two productions articulate trauma through their relationship with mythology.

Greece has been exploring what it means to be "Greek" for centuries (Tziovas 2001; Lambropoulos 2001; Steiris, Mitralaxis and Arabitzis 2016; Livianos 2006). With each turn in Greece's road from ancient to Byzantine, Asia Minor to the present at the current borders of Greece, the nation crafted a diverse identity and reflective mythology to engage with its population. From 1946 to 1974, the official narrative did not reflect a complete picture of Greek society because it labelled its communist citizens a national threat, and the repercussions remain palpable today (Vassilopoulos 2020). The post-war government and later, the Colonels' Junta imposed on the Greek population an ideology of *ethnikofrosini* (national-mindedness) crafted from their own priorities, as well as from American and British expectations, creating a Greek blend in which, "anti-

communism was articulated with Greek nationalism,” (Lialiouti quoted in Katsambekis and Stavrakakis 2017, 397). The state manipulated existing myths and created new ones to overwrite certain aspects of history, culture and society that were deemed undesirable. The propaganda, legislation and collective behaviour reflecting the persecutory official mythology offered no solace to the vanquished Left, especially the communists after the Civil War (1946-1949) (Koumandaraki 2002). Katsambekis and Stavrakakis write, “Leftists were considered second-order citizens, largely excluded from the national community, portrayed as... ‘*enemies within*,’ ... in what was presented by the state as a campaign defending the nation” (Katsambekis and Stavrakakis 2017, 397). Communist and left-sympathising Greeks were excluded from the national and public dialogue, leaving them with only the stories of their own heroes and martyrs borne in the resistance against the German and subsequently the Greek fascists. This treatment contributed to the Communist Party’s narrative of victimhood which needed to be confronted once the leftist party PASOK were in government in the 1980s.

When the Colonels’ Junta fell in 1974, the imposed silence cloaking the abuse and alienation by the state lifted revealing corpus of untold experiences of trauma. During the period known as the *Metapolitefsi* (1974-1990) authors, artists and directors shared stories that had been previously hidden in the shadows as sources of shame. The surge of memories meant that the post-war era and ensuing Junta were no longer part of what Dina Iordanova terms a “hushed history” (Iordanova 2008, 5). The proliferation of recorded experiences allowed intellectuals (à la Eyerman) to advocate for the events of the period 1946-1974 to be considered as a “cultural trauma”. Such a stance turned the tables on the state and the conforming public, from which they were heretofore excluded (Demertzis 2013). To be sure, the violence was not one-sided, and accounts of

dishonourable communists arose as well. However, the defeated communists did not continue to punish the right after the Civil War ended, as the right and the State did for generations.

The two films were chosen from the body of works addressing the life under the post-war government and Junta for their distinct approaches to time, events, and declaration of trauma. The first, *Voyage to Cythera* portrays the obstacles a family faces when Spyros, a communist, is allowed in 1984 to return to Greece after thirty-two years in exile. The second, *The Stone Years*, is a true story based on the lives of two communists from 1954 until 1974. *Voyage to Cythera* is a contemplative yet detached Greek tragedy (in its most original sense) that illustrates the damage caused by editing part of the population out of the national mythology, which ultimately leaves Spyros the protagonist (and scapegoat) literally and figuratively adrift. Even when he and the other exiles are allowed to return home, he cannot be “at home” in a place that has all but erased him. *The Stone Years* is a more resilient, proactive rejection of the State’s superimposed rhetoric, the Church’s collaboration, and specific aspects of the traditional, anthropological mythology that contribute to Eleni and Babis’s oppression. Like Spyros’s fate, the film concludes with Eleni, having struggled for decades and now legal, unable to find a place for herself in the post-fascist society. Spyros and Eleni demonstrate the negative impact upon the left of being excluded from the national narrative. Generally speaking, the rest of the Greek people who either identified with or succumbed to the official ideology, did not experience the Left’s cultural trauma. They had stories or examples that resonated with them and benefited from the stability that comes with an agreeable social charter as discussed in the first chapter.

Extratextually, the films function as myths because they have a communist audience in mind, and they represent communists in a different light. They depict

characters who are communists and deserve empathy instead of social exclusion.

Furthermore, the significance of watching someone with whom a viewer can identify is not to be underestimated (Lawtoo 2017). The films show the characters being locally vilified and nationally written out of the official ideology-as-mythology. In addition to speaking to the previously ignored communists who experienced the state's wrath firsthand, the films contribute to the cultural storehouse by including experiences of the entire population as it is (or was at the time), and not only the perspective prescribed by the political elite. This repopulation of the spectrum of mythology is achieved by the narratives serving as what Alison Landsberg calls, "prosthetic memories" (2004).

Writing on the topic of diminishing memory transmission both in the family and the community, she considers the example of immigration to the United States. Her theory's tenets relate to Greek internal and external migration, and of particular interest here, the curtailment of memories for the sake of self-preservation. She proposes that prosthetic memory,

emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past... the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history... The person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape the person's subjectivity and politics. (Landsberg 2004, 3)

As Landsberg notes, films can engage viewers with plots, characters, and outcomes, thereby creating an empathic bond that provides audience members with perspective (2004). Drawing on texts by Lacoue Labarthes and Nancy, as well as Nietzsche and Plato, Nidesh Lawtoo proposes that, in addition to the dynamic Landsberg offers, audiences inscribe characters on screen with the mythic power they bring in seeking out

figures to articulate their own identity (Lawtoo 2017). Particularly in Greece, one cannot overestimate the contribution of cinema to public understanding and the narration of events and power dynamics in the second half of the twentieth century (Vamvakidou 2013; Kosmidou 2018). However, the renowned Greek film scholar Lydia Papadimitriou draws attention to films' ontological significance, reminding us that they are products of circumstance and have ideological functions. She writes,

Greek cinema is undoubtedly the result of multiple formal and cultural influences; it has been used to express multiple ideologies and, at times, to serve particular interests. Its national identity, therefore, should not be seen as unified, but as the product of a multiplicity of factors coming together at a particular time and in particular forms. (Papadimitriou 2009, 74)

In other words, the existence of a given film with a particular plot at a specific time speaks volumes about institutions within society, demonstrating films' metafunction as cultural artefacts. Ultimately, cinema is but one means by which the public engages with cultural mythology and comes to terms with the past. For example, second-hand information regarding the torture of civilians, such as documents about the torture by people other than victims, has transformed the period's historiography. Kostis Kornetis' observation is worth quoting at length;

The pieces of public history... form an unofficial corpus that can be weighed against the official history of a highly problematic and contested chapter of the Junta years. This new tendency entailed talking about the past by people who did not experience it directly and who often adopt alternative forms of narration by selecting disparate material, narrativizing it in often very intricate ways. The deposition of memories by people who underwent torture themselves came as an interesting complement to the public history aspect of the above works. All this

not only informed, but also altered the way in which we tend to look at the dictatorship years and the narratives constructed about them, switching our gaze from grand narratives to private tragedies inflicted on people, either real or fictional. Here, public history not only does not trivialise the historical events in question but, on the contrary, complicates our view of them and poses a series of questions on memory, trauma and representation. (Kornetis 2014b, 100)

Specifically citing private tragedies, both real and fictional, Kornetis confirms the integral place of films *qua* myths in the cultural storehouse. Furthermore, he welcomes the dialogue surrounding the problematising questions that various perspectives raise. Kornetis's stance which supports heterogeneity should be considered a critical part of achieving a balanced mythology that offers its people stories to relate to, learn from, and perhaps most importantly, question.

Voyage to Cythera and *The Stone Years* question existing values that have informed both historic Greek society and the more recent State mandates imposed to support the official narrative. Similar to ancient Greek myths such as *Antigone* where one must choose between honouring the state and the gods the two films represent the act of questioning by challenging the narrative surrounding the Civil War and the decades after, despite the anticipated rejection. *Voyage to Cythera* is a testament to both the challenge and the rejection. Spyros, his wife Katarina, and comrade Panagiotis maintain their principles, while Voula and the villagers prioritise survival in the present over memories of the past. Comparable to *Lysistratra* in its celebration of female agency, *The Stone Years* challenges the mythology surrounding the trope of the male-as-infallible-patriarch through Eleni and her female comrades. They find it unsustainable, even though it is reinforced by the Orthodox Church (Hadjikyriacou 2015, 217; Makrides 2009). Both films are accounts of the fate that befalls an individual

who does not adhere to the government-imposed social charter. By contesting widely held (or imposed) values, in the name of more organic, less superficial beliefs, the protagonists are victimised by State ideology-as-mythology.

Trauma narratives as myths comprise a significant part of cultural mythology because they may celebrate a community's strength in the face of adversity and a precedent of survival for future generations. Again, the films were not the first to address the silence imposed by the State or what happened behind prison walls; other accounts in different mediums, both real and fictionalised had already been circulated in the public arena. What is remarkable is that a substantial endogenous body of films existed within a decade of the end of the Junta. The volume communicates a desire to narrate the events as traumatic for the public and integrate them into the national mythology.

Many psychoanalytic Holocaust scholars argue that a period of latency must occur before the public can have a dialogue about a traumatic event. Writing about Argentina's public memory of the "Dirty War" (1976-1983), Antonius C.G.M. Robben cites Dominic LaCapra: "The traumatic event is repressed or denied and registers only belatedly (*nachträglich*), after the passage of a period of latency. This effect of belatedness has, of course, been a manifest aspect of the Holocaust" (LaCapra in Robbens 2005, 123). However, the cultural production in Greece at the same time suggests that the concept of the period of latency is not universal. Thomas Elsaesser supports LaCapra's theory in this respect, especially when it comes to cinematic narratives of trauma:

...accepting the latency hypothesis as significant for filmmaking almost necessitates a theory of trauma, in order to understand the nature of the delays

(the displacements of an event and its representation) and to be able to pose the question: why this or that film *now*? (Elsaesser 2001, 195)

Elsaesser argues on behalf of the latency period when it comes to films beginning to address the Holocaust (1989, 2001). However, the theory is less easily applicable when it comes to Greek conflict and post-conflict cinema. In Greece, the latency period is abbreviated, if it was present at all, with accounts of suffering surfacing more expediently than the usual generation-long gap observed by Elsaesser in Holocaust films and other advocates of psychoanalytic trauma theory (Jelin and Kaufman 2000). Furthermore, Greek cinema did not wait until the 1980s to explore the anxiety induced by the Junta's political situation. Picking up where pre-Junta cinematic themes left off, a trend surfaced in 1970 despite state censorship. The "New Greek Cinema" movement started engaging with the palpably uncertain atmosphere, gaining momentum and freedom until it peaked in the mid-1980s (Karalis 2012a). During the fifteen-year period of the New Greek Cinema, the focus moved from covert critiques of the State, and an interest in the effects of the rapid urbanisation that the country was experiencing, to overt declarations of the state's culpability – what Papadimitriou refers to as "pessimistic existentialism" (2009, 67). The timing coincides with the Junta's fall, and from 1981, the progressive governments' measures to give the Left a voice again. A further example of Greece's eagerness to address the trauma caused by the Junta comes in the form of "Greece's Nuremberg Trials". The *Metapolitefsi* government (1974-1981), led initially by Konstantin Karamanlis, charged the Junta colonels with crimes committed on the 20th and 21st April 1967 and a trial ensued. Granted, the reasons for which the officers were tried (i.e. the coup d'état event and not their subsequent rule), the array of their sentences including acquittal, and the conversion of death sentences to life imprisonment, imply that fascism would not disappear from

Greek society along with the defendants. This makes the the rapid materialisation of films, rituals and other cultural artefacts that opposed the previous government's narrative all the more remarkable. Intellectuals, survivors, friends and relatives delivered personal stories to the public forum where "the potential symbolic power associated with private suffering can... be fully actualised" (Bartmanski and Eyerman 2013, 240). The process of cultural trauma was catalysed by "project[ing] their personal tragedies onto the larger moral screen of the nation" (ibid.). The two case studies analysed in this chapter are pivotal for national cinema, historiography, and the evolution of the country's trauma narration and cultural mythology. To appreciate the extent of the State's departure from the pre-existing rather inclusive hegemony here follows a brief account of the political transformations under scrutiny in the films by Angelopoulos and Voulgaris.

3.1.1. Background

In the preceding chapter, Serbia's national identity was shown to be, until recently, relatively homogenous, with well-defined roots and symbols, as noted by Ivan Čolović. By comparison, Greece has had a markedly heterogeneous past due to shifting borders and the peoples within those borders, leading to a more fluid and comprehensive concept of collective identity. In an incisive and unexpectedly entertaining article Dimitris Livanios outlines the situation regarding Greek nationhood, which was still unresolved in the nineteenth century:

In 1829 "Greece" as a state was being formed, but the definition of a "Greek" was still a matter of intense debate among the Greeks themselves: is it "religion" only that determines admission to the Greek nation? Where are exactly the

“geographical boundaries” of Greece? Are the Greeks a “people” and what does this mean? (Livianos 2006, 34)

In very general terms, the implication of such porous identity parameters meant that if there was no definitive Greek “us,” there could be no specific non-Greek “them.” Without a clear idea of who the outsiders were, how could a modern nation like Greece be expected to define itself, given the diversity of the peoples living on its lands? In reality, until the Enlightenment, few countries were at pains to define themselves (Livianos 2006). Nonetheless, an organic definition of “Greece” has proved challenging, in light of the shifting boundaries, criteria and perceptions. Triandafyllidou and Paraskevopoulou circumnavigate these clashes by suggesting, “Rather than trying to locate a point in time when the nation *comes into being*, one should study the nation as a process,” (2002, 78). A glance at the history of Greece indicates that few figures were able to be as circumspect as the authors, opting instead for more concrete answers. Yet, until the second half of the twentieth century, the heterogeneity of the “Greek” population was at least acknowledged in those firm interpretations of nationality and nationhood. For example, after independence, the “Greek kingdom accepted *eterochthones*, i.e., ethnic Greeks who were born outside of its territory, on an equal footing as *autochthones*, namely born within the national territory,” (Triandafyllidou and Paraskevopoulou 2002, 79). This illustrates an awareness and desire to engage with a multivalent population. It also demonstrates how contrary the State ideology-as-mythology was to the longer-term, endogenous trajectory in the second half of the twentieth century. The following summary is necessarily selective only to provide context for the cultural mythology addressed within the films.

This glimpse of the past shows how since the rise of nation-building Greeks celebrated their diverse, heterogeneous web of cultures, rather than settling for the

Western concept of revived antiquity. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into the myriad ancient Greek wars to establish that the peoples of that era did not consider themselves a homogeneous, unified nation. Suffice to say, each community and region adhered to their own practices that may or may not have overlapped with neighbours. Later, in Byzantium, Christian Greek-speakers often self-identified as *Romioi* or loyal to Rome. Furthermore, neither language nor ethnicity was a requirement to be considered “Greek” (Livanios 2006, 50). Determining one’s nationality did not become an issue until modern ideas of nationhood took shape when Western intellectuals – such as the ill-fated Lord Byron – and Greeks returning from Western Europe brought the Enlightenment version of nationhood to the land. Western Grecophiles (later embodied by Homer Thrace, the American tourist in the 1960 film *Never on Sunday* by Jules Dassin) fused the ancient and then-modern civilisations, often circumnavigating the cultural tapestry that was the Byzantine period. After all, as Livanios points out, how can the symbolic birthplace of democracy be reconciled with the Ottomans’ ruling style? (ibid.).

To many in the West, the Byzantine era was an affront to the narrative that modern Greeks were direct descendants of the ancient Greeks. The German writer Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790-1861) caused controversy in the West when he proposed that Slavs and other neighbouring groups had overtaken the ancient Greek race.

Fallmerayer proclaimed that the contemporary inhabitants of Greece had no racial relation to the ancient Greeks (1830; 1835; 1836)... Finally, Fallmerayer claimed that in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Greece’s inhabitants were mostly of Albanian origin. (Xygalatas 2011, 60)

These words were understood pejoratively outside of Greece but prompted Greek intellectuals to take pride in their multifaceted existence to date. Markos Reinieris (1815-1897) a Greek-born in Trieste, wrote an essay in 1842 entitled, “What is Greece? West or East?” in response to the foreign-born, but domestically adopted obsession with antiquity (Kechriotis 2007, 73). Later historians such as the Constantinople-born Constantine Paparrigopoulos wrote treatises in defence of the richness and variety of Greek panorama. Vangelis Kechriotis summarises the atmosphere:

For “Hellenism” as a cultural discourse corresponded to the ‘revival’ of ancient Greece, which resulted in the inevitable rejection of all the in-between periods.

The forgotten periods were treated now as “empty pages” to be filled in... There was an obvious need for a narrative to replace the one coming from abroad. It was time for a “real” Greek history to be written. (Kechriotis 2007, 73)

The Greek people joined the nation-building movement at the urging of and assisted by the West, where Romantic nationalism had more firmly taken root. With the support of France, Great Britain, and Russia, modern Greece emerged from the Ottoman Empire in 1830 after the nine-year War of Independence. In an early attempt at asserting nationhood, leaders tried to rally under a Greek banner when gathering troops locally for the armed struggle. However, using Orthodox Christianity as a criterion for Greekness achieved little, especially later when fighting fellow Orthodox Christians who today would be called Bulgarian (Lambropoulos 2001; Livianos 2006).

In the twentieth century, the criteria for sharing a language proved problematic for Greece when “imagining the community” (Anderson 2006). The exodus of Greeks from Asia Minor in 1922 pushed the question of identity to the fore once again. The arrival of the Turkish-speaking “Greek” refugees, coupled with a significant military defeat with cultural ramifications, is considered the most significant Greek cultural trauma to

date (Karalis 2012a, 2012b; Demertzis 2013). The refugees' arrival, victims of failed aspirations of reuniting all the Greek peoples and their lands, impacted class relations, the economy, and housing, culminating in a blow to Greek confidence and identity. Less than fifteen years later, Greece experienced its first totalitarian and anti-communist regime led by the German-educated General Ioannis Metaxas (1936-1941). Though far more tolerant than the Junta, in the authoritarian tradition, he constructed the "New State" by drawing upon symbols that were "the heathen values of ancient Greece, specifically those of Sparta, along with the Christian values of the Medieval Empire of Byzantium" (Clogg 1992). This was in direct contrast to the historical experience of inclusive diversity. However, his regime was distinct from other totalitarian governments. It accepted minorities within Greece such as Jews, suggesting that there were varying opinions about what homogeneity in Greece needed to look like to unite its residents under one nationality. After 1945, such lenience was not extended to politics.

During World War II, Greece aided by the British fought against Nazi occupation. At the close of the war, the Greek National Army, still supported by the British, turned against the Greek partisans affiliated with EAM the (National Liberation Front, *Ethnikó Apeleftherotikó Μέτωπο*) and KKE (Communist Party of Greece, *Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas*) who had defended the countryside against fascism. The resulting Civil War led more than 100,000 Greek communist citizens and their families to escape to more hospitable societies, such as Yugoslavia, Russia and the Eastern bloc. Those who remained were imprisoned and often tortured. The American government took over from Britain, providing aid and presence to assist the Greek government in fighting against the Red Scare, perpetuating the exclusion of domestic communists from the public and political spheres and keeping the far-left involuntary diaspora in exile.

During this time, the victorious Greek state asserted, or more accurately, mandated that Greek people were an ethnically, politically, socially and religiously uniform group. Those who did not conform found themselves to be “second-order citizens, largely excluded from the national community, suspected of undermining national institutions like family and religion, threatening social order or even the very territorial integrity of the country” (Katzambekis and Stavrakakis 2017, 397).

A gradual but palpable return to an inclusive, liberal society was curtailed by Colonels’ Dictatorship or “the Junta” (1967-1974) who ruled “the Long Sixties” (Kornetis 2014b). Only after the fall of the dictatorship was communism declared legal again. It was not until 1984 that exiled Greek communists who fought to liberate their country were invited to return home. The homogeneity so eagerly sought by the State (and enabled by some private citizens) could only be achieved by superimposing an ideology-as-mythology on the heterogeneous spectrum that comprised Greek society. Until 1974 the experiences of terror were individual and private though rampant. After 1974 by articulating the fates of so many through protagonists, films populated an unofficial, prosthetic memory bank of “New Greek Cinema” (Papadimitriou 2009). Through this movement, the narration of communist and left-sympathising experiences from 1946-1974, along with the personal struggle to survive with dignity, was projected on the nation’s above-mentioned moral screen. The New Greek Cinema posed a self-reflexive question that asked if this was enough for the evolving nation. Karalis writes,

The only heroic achievement that each citizen could aspire to every day was to hold a job, provide his or her family with the necessities of life, and have sex. The New Greek Cinema talked about these mundane and prosaic things of life—their attainment and/or their absence. The new directors based their vision on their daily experience of their lived reality of endless humiliation. And although they

invested their efforts with theoretical schemes and ideological discourses, the central truth of all of their works was the lack of freedom of expression, in political, sexual, and existential self-determination. The core theme of the New Cinema was what such absence determined in terms of personal and social identity as preconditions for living. (Karalis 2012a, 155)

Karalis highlights how New Greek Cinema depicted the shortfalls in society, with films functioning as myths for audiences. These movies constructed an imaginary space to evaluate modelled behaviour and approaches to addressing shame and disappointment and the opportunity to witness examples of what *might be*. In doing so, the directors offered respite from real consequences, a significant point in a country with a track record of torturing its outspoken citizens.

The above outline of the contiguous twentieth-century traumas of the Civil War and the Colonels' Junta hopefully provides a context for *Voyage to Cythera* and *The Stone Years* analysed here. The following section will give a synopsis of the two films and explain why they, in particular, were selected from a range of Greek trauma narratives. They will then be examined with regard to how, in aftermath society, they depict the challenge to both traditional cultural mythology and the more recently government-mandated but inauthentic homogeneity regarding masculinity, war, and homeland. More importantly, in doing so they forge new myths for a society navigating through uncharted times.

3.1.2. *Plots*

Greece's protracted, inter-generational familiarity with the complicated issues of nationality and memory contemporary voices to meditate on such matters with elegance

and empathy. The domestic productions analysed in this chapter are directed by two of the most well-known auteurs of the New Greek Cinema movement. In a text such as this where the exploration of mythology in films is primary, and we are confined to the briefest of journeys into Greece, it would be a grave oversight to exclude Theo Angelopoulos and Pantelis Voulgaris. *Voyage to Cythera* and *The Stone Years*, while not the first films on the topics, are groundbreaking seminal representations of and contemplations on the mythologies surrounding war, masculinity, and homeland. Both films argue that the twentieth century in Greece (and especially from 1950 onward) amounted to protracted cultural trauma through devastation, denial, and betrayal of an undeniably heterogeneous society. As mentioned above, the films have become myths in their own right because they create symbolic experiences and identify flaws in the social charter for public consumption. More concretely, when juxtaposed, they provide a robust view of both the immediate and intergenerational impact of state ideology-as-mythology on individuals, families, the community, and society. Voulgaris depicts twenty years (1954-1974) in the lives of two Greek communists' lives, showing that the ongoing struggle does not permit time to march on for those on the run or in captivity, but that does not mean it goes unchallenged. Stylistically, he invites viewers to identify with characters through proximal camera shots so we may appreciate the forging of emotional bonds, between Eleni and a train passenger, Eleni and Babis, or the fellow inmates, no matter how fleeting. By contrast, Angelopoulos builds on the particular moment of Spyros's return to comment on the Greek past, present and future, drawing particular attention to how society is trying to move on. Extratextually, he combines styles from ancient Greek tropes such as the return of Odysseus to approaches from theatre through Brechtian distancing (Kotsourakis 2012), and stylistic influences from Italian Neo-Realist and French New Wave cinema (Horton 1999). Neither of the two

films panders to the external or male gaze, as did so many previous productions, especially those by Omiros Efstratiadis³⁸ that were wildly popular among both international and domestic audiences.

Consistent with other films in Angelopoulos' oeuvre, *Voyage to Cythera* incorporates aspects of the ancient and recent past to show how they inform the present and engage with the larger question of what constitutes Greece. *Voyage to Cythera* is reminiscent of Homer's Odysseus upon his return from war. Spyros, a Greek communist exile, returns home thirty-two years after the Civil War. The government granted amnesty to World War II communist exiles in 1984, making the film a contemporary response. It channels the older history of contemplation, and the more recent period of denial: denial of rights, denial of inclusion, rejection of the repercussions caused by the government's actions upon the lives of individual Greeks and the wider collective. Like Odysseus, Spyros returns to a loyal wife surrounded by people telling her to forget her husband, and a son eager to follow his father wherever he goes. The few who remain faithful to both the ancient hero and his modern counterpart celebrate their patriotism. For others, it was so long ago that many have forgotten, or choose not to remember. Angelopoulos moves between the ancient and the present to show the timelessness of certain aspects of humanity, especially suffering. When Spyros returns to the unmodernised mountainside village where he fought, he recovers a sense of purpose, albeit only through nostalgia as the other residents wish to

³⁸ Vrasidas Karalis intimates, "Efstratiadis' soft porn films were made for the international market and were released in two versions. One was for local consumption, without explicit sex, but with lots of titillation, and sometimes starring important mainstream actors. Another version, with explicit sex scenes, was made for markets like Denmark, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Germany and the Greek cinemas in Astoria, New York... His famous film *Diamonds on her Naked Body* (*Diamantia sto Gymno kormi tis*, 1972) has been elevated to cult status, if not for its silly script, for the famous actors from classical Greek theatre taking part. Efstratiadis' films offered what the tourist industry had named 'the three Ss' (summer, sex, souvlaki), and were made on Greek islands with international casts from Germany, Denmark, the United States, Canada and Brazil, thereby establishing the market of sex tourism that was to flourish throughout the 1970s until the arrival of HIV/AIDS." (Karalis 2012a, 165).

move on with their own lives. The antipathy directed at him by his daughter and the villagers, coupled with the State's bureaucratic indecisiveness, deflate any hope that his sacrifice would be recognised as noble. The film concludes with the ineffective but obedient police maintaining the official stance of denial, condemning Spyros and his wife Katerina (Dora Volanaki) to the fog of international waters where no country claims responsibility for their fate – a “no man's sea”.

The ending of *The Stone Years* leaves viewers wondering whether life would be simpler aboard that raft to Cythera. Voulgaris' film follows the epic journey of a couple in a context more reminiscent of Joyce's *Ulysses* than Homer's *Odysseus*. It is a longitudinal narrative of a couple who sustain their relationship despite two decades of persecution by the Greek government. The pair came of age during the Marshal Plan era when communism posed a threat to the occupier-driven economy (Kofas 1990). They never leave Greece, scurrying in the shadows between safe houses or trapped within the confines of their homeland's prisons. The fall of the Junta in 1974 sees the reintroduction of the hidden Left into society, including Eleni (Themis Bazaka) and Babis (Dimitris Katalifos). The film concludes at this nodal point for Eleni, who has never known freedom. She gazes into the camera, asking with her eyes, “What now?” knowing she faces the daunting task of entering into a culture that dismisses her politics and her sex. The film does not reveal what lies ahead for the couple. Instead, it concludes with the broader question of integrating reminders of painful periods into contemporary society and, more symbolically, how to narrate experiences like Eleni's into the national mythology, also held captive until recently.

3.1.3 Themes

As we have established, the two films were part of an endeavour to usher the Greek people's experiences of "forced population movements... and identity curtailment," out of the state-sanctioned shadows and into the public forum (Iordanova 2008, 5). As Iordanova observes, "The narratives of displacement and assimilations that have taken shape as part of bigger historical processes are usually contested and remain suppressed in official historiography... Films that address these issues are considered highly awkward" (ibid.). This section offers an overview of how exactly the characters and situations in *Voyage to Cythera* and *The Stone Years* make these issues awkward. Specifically, we outline the three mythologised themes that each film either challenges or draws attention to the failure to challenge. The motifs of war, masculinity and homeland are symbolically charged concepts both within cultural mythology where expectations are communicated through symbols and stories, and in daily life. The post-Civil War State policy of homogenisation hijacked these three mythological areas, which were in the process of organically restructuring anyway due to changes in the Greek economy (e.g. rapid modernisation) and the global shift toward postmodernism and with that, equal rights and recognition.

The films demonstrate the widespread symbolic and real damage caused by the State's rejection of inclusive progress and the subjugation of its people. Demertzis asserts that the impact was vast: "For the defeated left, the emotional injuries were as widespread as the physical ones... in addition to the battlefield, a moral and emotional war was taking place" (Demertzis 2013, 141). By undermining the citizens who, to their minds, acted patriotically, the State was creating a state of dissonance. Concerning the war, the government voids personal and familial stories of survival and heroes defending their honour and their principles. The communists and the left had rescued the country from fascism, only to be chased back into the figurative trenches or held as

prisoners of war by the country they defended. In the context of masculinity, by forcing Resistance fighters to sign declarations of repentance under duress (a potentially emasculating process itself), it infantilised and diminished them. However, signing these recantations meant they would have a better chance of supporting their families and, in some cases, returning to society. Yet, this return to society did not mean full integration into the community. In fact, quite the opposite:

This method of demoralisation during the Civil War developed into an industry of recantation. In several thousand cases, these declarations were signed after a long and painful process of physical and psychological torture. These declarations were widely publicised in the local and national press, as well as in the village communities; those who signed were forced to prove their true repentance by informing on comrades, sending public letters repudiating communism, and by joining the military police to arrest and torture their former comrades and friends... Some could not stand such humiliation and committed suicide; a very tough emotional cross-pressure was exerted on all those who signed but did not alter their beliefs about communism or the left in general, as they were stigmatised by both the authorities and the Communist Party itself. Activating a reflex syndrome of suspicion, the party organisation treated such people not as politically defeated and physically exhausted subjects but as sinful and compromised individuals who would not defend the moral superiority of the party. (Demertzis 2013, 142)

As Demertzis notes, former non-conformists, now “rehabilitated” were often shamed either by their comrades for having yielded, or by their family and neighbours for having been a Communist, as is the case with Angelopoulos’ Spyros. The homeland

they fought to protect offers them no shelter. In a culture recognised for its prioritisation of kinship to the point of clientelism, this was utterly destabilising.

3.1.3.1. War

Historically, the wars fought in Greece were over beauty (Trojan Wars), boundaries (Xerxes), or independence (1820-1829). Never was there a case like the Civil War, to the point that there is no Greek expression for “civil war.” The closest Greek semantic expression Nicholas Demertzis points out, is *emphylios polemos* which means “war within the same race” (Demertzis 2013, 143). The Civil War itself is never mentioned directly by the characters in either *Voyage to Cythera* or *The Stone Years* despite scattering thousands of its citizens to foreign lands. The local military actions were often fuelled by interpersonal conflict rather than the ideologies promoted by the government in Athens or the Politburo in Moscow. The situation meant that there was no one person or party to blame for the havoc wrought at the local level, especially outside of the capital.

Furthermore, just as the public and government were edging toward reconciliation (or at least discussion), the *coup d'état* took place, and the Junta returned the state to pained, unacknowledged silence. Those who determined the Greeks' fates were rarely depicted in films³⁹ largely because they were not seen in reality. Instead, the elite's material absence means a group of victims are powerless against their invisible perpetrators, unable to invoke real change or gain real recognition. This feeling contributed to the left's sense of exclusion, unaddressed grievances and associated resentment. To describe the experience of the Greek left at the time, Demertzis utilises

³⁹ A notable exception is confrontational film *Z* (Costa-Gravas, 1969), in which government officials are held accountable for the assassination of a leftist activist.

Max Scheler's idea of *ressentiment*: "The injustice of the political marginalisation and through it the postwar establishment were perceived as an inescapable fate, a form of fatalism leading to an experience of impotence and inferiority" (Demertzis 2013, 140). The sense of invisible cruelty perching just out of sight is pervasive in both *Voyage to Cythera* and *Stone Years*, and across contemporary Greek cinema more generally, especially in productions by Nikos Nikolaides such as *Morning Patrol* (1987), *Sweet Bunch* (1983), and *Euridice BA 2037* (1975).

The films studied in this section came after the wars and are no action films. Still, the experience of being under siege is perpetuated by the authorities as a force of subjugation, particularly to ordinary (not elite) Greek men. In *Voyage to Cythera*, authority is known second- or third-hand through repetitions of decisions and phone calls but never seen more closely than the police, who are implementation tools. In *The Stone Years*, the police are a far more nefarious, brutal agency, acting on behalf of an again disembodied force, alluding to what Thomas Elsaesser calls "presence through absence" (Elsaesser 1989). The defeated left and the wider public were held hostage to a concealed, inert, centrifugal force

3.1.3.2. Masculinity

Both Angelopoulos' and Voulgaris' films depict a palpable yet unseen authority curtailing the identity of the men of the defeated left, again to use Iordanova's phrase. The films display symptoms leading to the same diagnosis of what Raya Morag terms "defeated masculinity" (Morag 2009). Hadjikyriacou provides a descriptive account of the bases of contemporary notions of Greek masculinity worth quoting at length:

It could be generally argued that anthropologists working in post-World War II Greece laid their research on the common basis that the traditional Greek family was decidedly patriarchal. A man had to prove himself by being first a good son and later an ideal husband, father and provider. In this way, he gained *timi* [honour], a fundamental masculine virtue for Mediterranean societies in general. Anthropologists focusing on Greece describe variant values and behaviours that men had to incorporate into their lifestyle to prove themselves honourable and thus gain and maintain the respect of each micro-society. Despite differences in the anthropologists' reports, the values of manliness shared the same orientation: to guard the virtue of women and the honour of the house in both economic and moral terms. The constant ambition of a man to keep his *timi* or augment it through the respect and admiration of the community was called *philotimo*. "Philotimo" was a way to lead a virile life and to acquire strong self-esteem, by fulfilling all the obligations toward the family and especially its female members. Thus, a man should always prove himself 'energetic,' as *energyia* [energy] was a principle of masculinity and domination. In addition to being *philotimos* [having *philotimo*] a man had to believe in his superiority as an independent male, a kind of self-respect and pride synonymous with egoism [*egoismos*] in the sense of being the head of a collective, a kin group, a village, a region or a country (Hadjikyriacou 2015, 11-12).

When he arrives in Athens, Spyros's silhouette is that of a defeated man, hunched, worn, and unsteady. He perceives himself as an outsider in the family that managed to cope without the patriarch's protection. Babis is constantly relegated to a passive role during his prison terms, obviously removed from society and the appointed decision-making role. Eleni steps into the void created by Babis's absence, and she acts with

determination. She and Babis attempt to forge some semblance of conventional stability by getting married. However, Eleni's fellow prisoners on the women's ward form a more tightly knit ersatz family without men⁴⁰ than the one she finds with her husband when they are finally free. During the final shot mentioned above, Eleni is awake and concerned, while her husband and son sleep. The disempowerment of left-wing males, who made up a sizeable subgroup of the population was destabilising in the dynamics of the workforce, home and social life expectations and of course, masculinity. The atmosphere after the Civil War tainted the male heads of the household with allegations of truancy and impotence.

3.1.3.3. Homeland

During "New Greek Cinema" the cinematic eye turned persistently and with curiosity to the new shanty neighbourhoods of Athens and started exploring ordinary people's lives as they struggled to survive day by day. In the background, the ruins of a glorious past were really "non-places" for living human beings – meeting points for tourists, pickpockets, and archaeologists. The chaotic reconstruction of the country gave rise to new issues that the movie camera was intentionally or unintentionally recording every time city life was filmed. For ordinary people, their reality was concentrated on their job, their home, and their neighbourhood—these were the spaces where life actually occurred.

But these spaces were all under police surveillance. They were being diminished by the city's constant expansion, the construction of new "comfortable" apartment

⁴⁰ This was not an uncommon occurrence in women's political internment centres – see the film *Beneath the Olive Tree* (Toska 2015).

blocks, the proliferation of cars, and the rise of a new class, the petite bourgeoisie, which began to impose its own codes and practices on the public sphere. Most films explored these shrinking communal spaces: spaces under attack by invisible and hostile authorities and the rise of the new class which destroyed everything and everyone who reminded it of its origins (Karalis 2012a, 63).

Beyond the household lies the homeland. In *Voyage to Cythera*, Spyros attempts to assemble a family life and intimacy both at home and abroad in Greece and Ukraine. He seeks a homeland where he can be whole, proud, and empowered. It is a hope which may be reminiscent of the imagined banquet scene at the end of Emir Kusturica's *Underground* or Fellini's *Amarcord* (1974). The difference is that Angelopoulos mourns the impossibility of such a banquet or imagined community while Kusturica strives for it. *Stone Years* depicts a destabilising and devaluing homeland, parallel to that depicted in *A Serbian Film*, though in much less graphic detail. The aftermath of the Civil War precludes individuals from experiencing stability in a private capacity long after the official battles. Thus, both films portray a defeated family patriarch, illustrating the inter-generational ramifications of the Civil War and the subsequent quasi-occupation and Junta. The patriarchy and clientelism carried over from ancient Greece through Byzantium to modern Greece culminated in a perfect storm that left the country in ruins for decades, a trauma from which it is still trying to recover.

3.1.3.4. Conclusion

As with the previous chapter, the areas of analytical focus are war, masculinity, and homeland. Yet the Greek films differ from the Serbian films examined in the previous chapter. The Greek films exude a contemplative ambience; even in *The Stone Years* where Eleni's actions are deliberate, there is still an element of uncertainty and

engagement with existing official and anthropological mythology that permits a hopeful dynamic between mythology and society. This grey area is not present in the more definitive Serbian films, and certainty - in favour of (i.e. *On the Milky Road*) or against (*A Serbian Film*) - comes with its own hazards. Returning to our objective, we now turn to examine the function of cultural mythology with the story of a war exile whose masculinity is challenged when he returns home and encounters a family and nation trying, with varying degrees of success, to move on.

3.2. Voyage to Cythera

3.2.1. Introduction

Angelopoulos' style draws from the post-World War II Italian trend of neo-realism, known for its unflinching observation of social issues (Horton 1999).⁴¹ Angelopoulos aims his camera unwaveringly at the mires of the Greek experience of the twentieth century and beyond. He confronts the Metaxas dictatorship (*Days of '36*, 1972), the Civil War (*The Hunters*, 1977), the life of Greece from ancient to present (*Alexander the Great*, 1980), and the life of the Balkans from the Maniaki Brothers' film to the Wars of Secession (*Ulysses' Gaze*, 1995). Angelopoulos' films offer a stage to the ordinary people to whom these life-altering events happened. What sets Angelopoulos' films apart is that the narratives are depicted with Brechtian alienation (Horton 1999; Karalis 2012a; Kotsourakis 2012), without cinematic adjectives or sentimentality, through medium and long shots as though we are reading names and dates from a stone

⁴¹ The cinematic style of neo-realism emerged in Italy after World War II to depict the hardships falling the nation. For example, the cinematography of *Roma: Città Áberta* (Rossellini, 1945) adopts a newsreel style rather than a Hollywood style to convey the reality of life in Nazi-occupied Italy.

monument to the dead. By distancing the viewer from the characters, Angelopoulos encourages the audience to reflect on what they are watching and feeling. Nietzsche would suggest that Angelopoulos films are located in the Apollonian realm in contrast to most other mainstream productions based in the Dionysian realm (Lawtoo 2017, Nietzsche 2008). This approach eventually alienated audience members to the point that they found Angelopoulos's auteurship to be too experimental and high culture, contravening their ingrained expectations of identification with characters (Karalis 2012a; Papadimitriou 2009). His unaccommodating treatment explores the criterion that myths must resonate, as Angelopoulos' films do not facilitate emotional engagement, but they acknowledge previously underacknowledged, ignored or excluded subjects of Greece.

In *Voyage to Cythera*, Spyros's actions indicate that he believes in the idea of a place called Cythera. In this place, he can be a fully realised person in a welcoming homeland. But that possibility is about as real as the legendary Cythera, further complicated because Angelopoulos did not fashion Spyros to be a facile character. Spyros constructs a model of Cythera in exile in Ukraine to pursue the intimacy he had with Katerina back in Greece. When he returns, he has no "home" and no land upon which to construct it. His daughter and neighbours shame him and attempt to sell his land from under his feet. In naming the film *Voyage to Cythera*, Angelopoulos communicates that the idolised homeland is as out of reach for Greece as it is for Spyros (Homer 2013). In Greek mythology, Cythera is the isle of dreams where one can dedicate oneself to happiness (or the pursuit thereof) (Trigon-Film, 2020). Like the Rococo painting of the same name by Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), the raft to which the Greek state banish Spyros at the conclusion of the movie could be heading *to* or *from* Cythera. However, the events of the film do not inspire hope.

3.2.2. War

Throughout Angelopoulos' oeuvre, he addresses the topic of war through unspoken words and pregnant pauses, initially to avoid censorship, though later this lack of direct address takes on a new significance. Consistent with the rest of his work, in *Voyage to Cythera*, which takes place a decade after the Junta, the Greek Civil War remains an elusive topic, a skirting signifier with many signifieds. In this section, we explore the whispered, shrouded iterations of the memory of the Civil War told after the period of silence, and we analyse the rare moments where the struggle is named.

As with much of Greek history, there is no single, definitive example of cultural mythology that addresses war, hence the indirect expressions that mirror the State's unwillingness and the left-sympathising members of the public's trepidation to discuss the three-decade-long turmoil. Furthermore, the frequency of wars and shifting alliances in the twentieth century alone discouraged any unequivocal, steadfast tropes of patriotism. Only decades earlier, the application of *ethnikofrosini* had resulted in the 1922 Asia Minor Catastrophe. Immediately following the second world war, the supposed British and American antifascist allies transformed into accomplices with, and subsequently overseers of, the Greek government through trade agreements and the installation of "advisors". Writing about the foreign control of the Greek economy, Jon Kofas reports

The Currency Committee enjoyed more comprehensive powers in Greece than any other public or private entity. The destiny of Greece's finances/economy, therefore rested in the hands of American officials. C.A. Munkman noted that between 1948 and 1952 'all expenditures of capital development, directly or indirectly, were controlled by the American Mission'... The United States government justified its inordinate powers in Greece on the grounds that

American aid kept the regime from collapse and the country from falling under communist control. (Kofas 1990, 67-68)

The outcome was that national expectations of war were complex and syncretic, and Angelopoulos conveys this by creating an atmosphere of unwavering but distanced observation and contemplation, both visually and verbally. This is not to say that all Greeks agreed with his rendering of events. In *Voyage to Cythera*, Angelopoulos casts the Civil War as the elephant in the room; no one speaks of it, but everyone knows it is there. The unseen Civil War and its repercussions for Greek society could be construed as a literal interpretation of Elsaesser's observation about, "absence as presence." Elsaesser uses the phrase to describe the palpable lack of film characters who could convincingly initiate dialogue to bring about the acceptance of responsibility, or at least acknowledge the nation's role in the Holocaust, right up to the end of New German Cinema in the early 1980s. He understands "absence through presence" to be a symptom of the latency period. He points to the cinematic depiction, or rather lack thereof, of German Jews after World War II,

It is fairly obvious that a depiction by a German filmmaker of the Holocaust from the perspective of the victims, or a credible version of the Jewish experience in Germany after the war would have been at once too much and too little. Too much, in that it would have presumed an act of empathy, as well as an understanding of the "other" that clearly was not present. Too little, in that it might easily have given the illusion of normality... (Elsaesser 2008, 108).

While nothing was stopping German directors from broaching the topic of the war, as was the case for communists in Greece, both countries were at a loss: what could be said? What should be represented and become prosthetic memory in cultural mythology? However, Angelopoulos makes such questions the focus of his film, rather

than avoiding them altogether per German cinema. This desire for discourse rather than aversion demonstrates that Greece did not experience a latency period in the same way as Germany. Furthermore, Greek films were a space in which mythology and trauma could be explored, and, in turn, used to announce trauma in the process of social signification. Again, not everyone agreed with Angelopoulos's stance. In the 1980s PASOK attempted to reconcile the nation with the Civil War by "remembering to forget" and rebranding the 1940s as a period of "National Resistance." After all, Dimitris Antoniou reminds us, "Αντίσταση (resistance)... connotes heroic struggle against the occupation forces and their collaborators" (Antoniou 2017, 6). But he cautions that resistance, like trauma, comes at a price. "While both of these concepts have been employed to describe historical actualities, they also manage to create blank spots in public memory" (ibid.) The Junta permitted films about the Greeks defeating the Nazis, so there was already a precedent for the artistic representation of national resistance starting in the 1950s. Angelopoulos' articulation of the war on the periphery of conversation and society and his shadowy representation of it offer an extratextual value. To impose conversations on his characters to provide a backstory for his viewers would work against Angelopoulos's interests in examining domestic issues. Those who witnessed or learned about the historical events depicted in the film were already aware. Angelopoulos takes a certain level of familiarity for granted, thereby creating a community out of his audiences through this shared knowledge and experience, comparable to the communities that arise out of trauma documented by Kai Erikson (Erikson 1991). Angelopoulos mobilises his characters to contemplate their Civil War experiences without committing to a side of history.

Voyage to Cythera opens with a dream of a little boy, presumably Spyros's now-grown son Alexandros (Giulio Brogi), sneaking up behind a German soldier and

throwing a pebble at him in an age-appropriate but no less brave act of resistance (see Figure 3.1). The clarity of the “Nazis bad/Greeks good” ideology that forms the foundation of the National Resistance motif is underlined in the next sequence when the adult Alexandros is strolling through film studios. He walks past a banner for the French-British-American co-production *Night of the Generals* (Litvak 1967). Omar Sharif and Peter O’Toole starred in this feature about Nazis plotting to kill Hitler. In the same sequence, Alexandros enters the canteen where actors wearing uniforms of the Nazis and the Greek military are sitting together. In the background, crew members carry a heavy piece of the past – an ancient Greek statue, a reference to the antiquity the West was eager to revive in Greece’s nation-building (Tziovas 2001). For those unacquainted with Angelopoulos’ work, this scene conveys his definitively Greek fluid treatment of time and history best explained by Heinz Richter writing in 1990.

For Greeks the Fall of Constantinople is recent history, the Ottoman Occupation was the day before yesterday, the War of Independence yesterday whilst the Greek expansionist initiative of 1921-3 which ended in the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the expulsion of the Greeks of Asia Minor is still the living present. (Richter 1990, 317)

Angelopoulos animates this expression by creating a *mise-en-scène* with artefacts from the ancient and recent past and the present.

The controversial phantom of Spyros arrives from Ukraine carrying the same sentiment of the past inhabiting the present and the future. Alexandros, accompanied by his sister Voula (Mairi Chronopoulou, who also plays Alexandros’ mistress, consistent with Angelopoulos’ penchant for repetition) goes to the dock to meet their father. Alexandros says, “I went to the Committee for the Repatriation of the Civil War Exiles. I wanted to make sure he was coming.” It is the only time the words “civil war” and

“exile” are said aloud in the entire film. Spyros alights from the ship and gazes at his reflection in a puddle, a visualisation of his fluid existence, something shadowy that people do not like to step in, and only possible through a combination of the elements (see Figure 3.2). He gazes up at his children and shouts, “It’s me!” just like the dozens of men who audition for the role of Alexandros’ “father” back at the studio (see Figure 3.3). They are emissaries of Spyros and all those like him who cannot be in Greece. As mentioned above, although the Colonels’ regime ended in 1974, it took an additional ten years for the Greek state to grant exiles leave to return home, an issue to be explored more thoroughly below in Section 3.2.4. The government had previously allocated land belonging to communists to more politically obedient citizens. The return of the rightful owners, such as Spyros, posed a threat to survival in already economically and socially bleak times. Such tensions were not depicted in films such as *Zorba the Greek* (Cacoyannis 1964) or others that exported the myth of “sun, sex, and souvlaki” (Karalis 2012a). This self-othering rhetoric, comparable to the self-Balkanisation associated with former Yugoslavia, so often exported to the international community.

Initially, the silence surrounding the Civil War is deafening for Spyros when he attempts to celebrate his return. Like Odysseus and many other veterans,⁴² it is implied that Spyros has seen too much to be at ease. After an awkward attempt to recall the names of those present to welcome him home, he retreats to the bedroom with his wife. Moments later, he abruptly departs without a word. Alexandros follows this shadow of a man through a simultaneously developed and derelict Athens to a bedsit. Alexandros asks his long-absent father, “Will you be alright here?” Angelopoulos lets us decide whether Alexandros is referring to the shabby quarters or the city disfigured by the

⁴² See two of Shay’s books, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1995) and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (2003) both by Jonathan Shay

Marshall Plan and its Greek collaborators, or to the here-and-now after so many years in the figurative cold. Spyros replies, "I'll manage. Don't wait." Alexandros leaves and only after does Spyros bid him goodnight in a fine demonstration of what Elsaesser calls "presence as parapraxis" (Elsaesser 2008). Elsaesser, again referring to German Jews after World War Two writes of parapraxis, not as the colloquial "Freudian slips" but instances of right place but wrong time, indications of dissonance between a subject and where he/she/it finds itself. Here, Spyros is a cypher for the unintegrated experience of war, hoping he could finally rejoin society now that he is old and defenceless, and vanquished in ways to be explored below in Section 3.2.3.

It is in the remote, mountain village – a locality that has not yet "modernised" where Spyros finds himself no longer out of step with time. This visit to his past and to a place that time has half-forgotten marks a different phase of the story. The figurative ghost of a man returned from exile becomes more material, and his struggle for recognition and integration are addressed more directly. Except for his old comrade, Panagiotis, the villagers do not receive Spyros warmly, because he is a memory of war they wish to forget. Alexandros drives his family to this home in rugged northern Greece (where significant fighting between the National Army and the communists took place). Spyros gets out of the car when he hears whistling and whistles back. Somewhere off camera, the whistle repeats. Spyros walks toward the familiar chirps. Standing beside the vehicle, Katerina remarks, "It is the old outlaw code." Alexander asks, "Do you understand it?" She replies, "How could I forget?" Spyros walks towards his comrade, greeting a dog on the way with the same enthusiasm Odysseus greets his dog Argos after twenty years away. Panagiotis (Giorgos Nezos) embraces him, for he is a welcome friend who fought beside him against the state. The rest of the village treats him as a

symbol of defeat, nonconformity, or worst of all in that financially depressing time, as an obstacle to economic development.

Spyros blocks the deal for the community to sell the land to a winter resort developer. Panagiotis and Spyros watch as members of the rural community gather ahead of their meeting with the developer. Panagiotis exclaims, “Who is coming, Spyros? They haven’t set foot in the village for 15 years. They were attracted by the easy life of the valley. And now they’re coming back to sell off what’s left” (see Figure 3.4). In addition to the villagers who left fifteen years ago, some moved beyond the valley to be a part of the international economic diaspora. Others return to the area from various painful periods in history. Spyros, along with refugees from Asia Minor and the Civil War, arrive at this battleground where he once fought to contest the memories of those who consider remembering as a hindrance to modernity and material success.

Voula defends the decision to build resorts, arguing, “It will bring in money and liven this place up a bit.” At the meeting, the developer says the landowners have let their land go untended so they might as well sell it to him, but they must do so unanimously. One interpretation is that untended land is a metaphor for the fertile but neglected memory of the Civil War. The developer effectively asks people to continue to forget so that he may repurpose the land as something more immediately gratifying (a ski lodge) than the current, demanding, unfashionable but ultimately nourishing farmland. The winter resort has a universal appeal and would draw international crowds. This logic is parallel to subsuming the Communist Civil War resistance into a “National Resistance” to make it more palatable. In a typical effort at reconciliatory myth-making, the state renamed streets. In a ceremonial burning ritual, records of “non-nationally minded” citizens were destroyed on the 40th anniversary of the Civil War. This erased history to make space for a “people *in resistance*, a people symbolised

without intermediaries, such as political parties, movements or clandestine leaders” (Demertzis 2013, 148. See also Giesen 2004). The depiction of Spyros’s unyielding defence of his wartime experience (which Angelopoulos deftly widened from the private and individual to a collectively endured narrative through the audition scene) allows it to function as a prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004). The validation, by at least Spyros and Panagiotis of their past, encourages communists outside of the diegesis to do the same. Viewers may well be able to relate better to the harassment of Spyros than to his stubbornness. At the meeting with the developer, Spyros walks past the crowd who wish to pave over the land for wealthy *divertissement* and begins to plough his neglected but not forgotten land. Meanwhile, the developer asks that all signatories have their ID cards ready for inspection, likely excluding Spyros as many political exiles were stripped of citizenship. The next day, the dilapidated shed containing his tools which he could not access for thirty-two years is set on fire, preventing Spyros’s efforts to attempt to cultivate the past. This faceless act is matched by the *kafenio* owner’s very personal attack on Spyros, “Murderer! I won’t let you have it your way!” Undoubtedly, community members and communists killed members of the National Army. Still, the communists also fought poverty and ignorance just as hard by setting up soup kitchens, schools and even courts to resolve local disputes (Howard and Gabriel 1986). Nonetheless, to the *kafenio* owner, Spyros was part of a “rebellion of communist bandits who betrayed their country by pursuing a path of partial annexation to the Soviet bloc or the Slavs” (Demertzis 2013, 144).

Spyros is a symbol not only of the defeated communists but of the Civil War itself. Panagiotis brings Spyros to meet their other friends, as the Greek left was revolutionary in more than one way (see Figure 3.5). He greets his fellow fighters with warmth, a conviviality that was absent when greeting his children. When Spyros first

greeted Alexandros and Voula, he asks, “Aren’t we going to kiss?” (see Figure 3.6). To Panagiotis and their deceased friends, Spyros is a celebrated martyr resurrected from exile. The two men celebrate their reunion in song and dance, with music played by ghosts of the Resistance (see Figure 3.7). The microcosm of the village and the residents’ treatment of Spyros is consonant with the atmosphere in the macrocosm that was Greece. When the village kafenio owner first “spies” the returned Communist, his mien goes from expressing astonishment to anger. He abruptly brings in the table and chairs from outside and slams the kafenio door shut (see Figure 3.8).

The kafenio owner’s anger arises from the conflict of values. The neighbours who appear later that evening speak out of a desire to survive. Despite Spyros’s wishes, they cajole Katerina to sell the land to prevent the community’s demise “Katerina, if you don’t sign then the deal will be off. We’ll be ruined. All these years you’ve been the boss of the family. And now he comes along pretending to care. But he already made himself a new life abroad. We know that.” It may be the pressure exerted on Katerina to betray her communist husband is reminiscent of the declarations of repentance which permitted the purportedly former communists to rejoin society (e.g. be eligible to attend university or get a job) after recanting their “antisocial” beliefs. It must be acknowledged that the villagers and many Greeks were not acting out of greed, but insecurity. Demertzis explains, “Even today, the common expression ‘occupation syndrome’ refers to precautions and proactive consumption based on the assumption that there may be no food in the future” (Demertzis 2013, 136).⁴³ To Greeks in the 1980s who witnessed the famine during World War II which was exacerbated by the

⁴³ When experts offer solutions to Greek financial troubles, it is worth appreciating that budgets do not take into account the inherited behaviour of feasting in anticipation of famine that is unfortunately reinforced nearly every generation. For a concise but expert description of the causes of “Occupation Syndrome” see “The Greek Economy” by Jon Kofas in *Background to Contemporary Greece* Vol 1, (1990, 53-94). To gain a better understanding of human behaviour in times of scarce resources, see the recently updated literature on the so-called “Marshmallow Test.”

lack of an adequate workforce, the need to secure money would have been acute. Katerina responds to the pressure to sell out the memory of war and the values that led to it, along with the hope of “modernising” and moving beyond a life lived merely in survival mode, “You must excuse us. We’re having supper.” She diplomatically rejects their prioritisation of the present and future over the past. Katerina’s deflection of the neighbours’ calls to sign over the land is one of many gestures that indicate her role as a model Greek woman, according to tradition. Her unwillingness to accede to the community’s wishes may not be motivated by her own wartime experience. We know that she learned the “outlaw’s whistling language” and served time in prison for her involvement. Instead, it may be surmised that her actions were motivated by her desire to be loyal to her husband even after three decades apart, despite his defeated masculinity.

The day after the meeting, the villagers resign themselves to the fact that there will be no winter resort, on account of Spyros. He embodies the war without mentioning it. His return to Greece chaperones the dialogue through a progression mirroring the discussion (and the initial lack thereof) through the valleys between acceptance and denial. The returned exile does not “go gentle into that good night” in Dylan Thomas’s words. His presence is the embodiment of a pervasive, traumatic memory yet to be integrated into the national narrative. To continue with Dylan Thomas’s words, Spyros rages “against the dying of the light” forcing the kafenio owner to confront his own buried, bitter war memories. As he makes his way out of town with his belongings loaded on his donkey, he stops at Spyros’s house. He takes out a cigarette and is about to light it, but pauses then offers it to Spyros. He confesses to his longtime enemy, “They made us fight. We poked each other’s eyes out. You on one side, me on the other. We both came out losers.” He begins to walk away and turns

back: “Man against man, wolf against wolf. All gone. All laid to waste” (see Figure 3.9). He then takes his donkey and leaves the village singing, “Artillery, artillery. My heart is with the artillery. And if I have to die, let it be in my own cannon.” Indeed, fighters from both sides blinded themselves to their enemies’ experiences, complicated because the enemies were fellow countrymen and women. As a result, the kafenio owner finds himself repeating the journey made by 700,000 of his fellow citizens who were homeless refugees in 1949. In the second half of his soliloquy, he takes a philosophical stance, generalising the village’s violence to the animal kingdom. He does not defend war as a part of life. Instead, he emphasises the pointlessness and mutual harmfulness of an *emphylios polemikos*.

The evolution of the kafenio owner’s arc from adamant hatred to reflection mirrors the extratextual experience of society coming to terms with itself. This microcosmic acknowledgement of wrongdoing by both sides challenged the emerging official narrative and how it arrived at its conclusions, forcing the Greeks to contemplate what they experienced and what they thought they knew. Communist fighters such as Spyros and Panagiotis, and subsequently Eleni and Babis from the other case study, *The Stone Years*, endured abuse, torture, shame, and exclusion. This narrative of persecution of the left, in the making since before World War II, solidified after the fall of the Junta when individuals could share their experiences. Narratives from this period inform the communist myth of deprivation, isolation and courage under fire for those who did not yield to the temptation of recantation. The ordeal of hardship, exclusion and violence that evolved into an identity with its own cultural memory bank within the larger national memory was destabilised when PASOK welcomed the communists back into the fold. It became evident the communists and socialists wanted to tip the scales back in their favour to correct the wrongs of the past,

rather than towards a more balanced future. As the kafenio owner said, the fighters from both sides were just “man against man, wolf against wolf.” In many cases, private citizens of the right were people just trying to survive, as depicted by the prison guards in *The Stone Years*.

In some cases, individuals simply availed themselves of the opportunities that arose at their neighbours’ expense without political motivation. After all, the importance of providing for one’s household is heavily emphasised in Greek culture (Hadjikyriacou 2015; Karalis 2015). But we can see from Spyros’s journey as a catalyst for dialogue about the war (as evidenced by the interaction between Panagiotis and Voula in the village) that it is not sufficient to let the oppressed party rule unchecked to atone for the past. Like previous governments, PASOK engaged in the familiar practice of clientelism and looking after one’s own, rather than thinking of the country. Empathy is required in Greece and elsewhere so that individuals and groups may reclaim their *philotimo*.

3.2.3. *Defeated Masculinity*

As Greek society progresses towards a state of ambiguity and uncertainty and struggling with how to remember, Katerina remains unmoved in her dedication to tradition. The unbending way she carries out her duties as a wife and mother highlight Spyros’s defeated masculinity and shortcomings as a Greek man, husband, and father. Gender roles in Greece, particularly in villages, have been studied (Cowans 1991; Hart 1990) with some scholars focussing in particular on gender in the context of the Civil War (Collard 1990). The exploration of gender roles, whether challenged (i.e. Spyros and Voula), or reinforced (i.e. Katerina) is substantiated by the recent contributions of

Hadjikyriacou (2015) and Karalis (2015). In simple terms, Loizos and Papataxiarchis report, “Womanhood means nurturing, cooking, cleaning: activities reflecting women’s unique psychology, their ability to love as mothers. Manhood means providing for the household, representing or defending kinship loyalties in line with men’s psychological capacity for rational calculation and overarching responsibility” (1991, 8). This section will analyse the Civil War’s impact on Spyros’s ability to live up to cultural mythological models of masculinity, and in turn reinforced in daily behaviours and expectations. The effect on his family demonstrates how “marital kinships”, to use Loizos and Papataxiarchis’ words, shape the domestic sphere and also inform us of how a man acquires *philotimo*.

Katerina performs her socially indoctrinated role, consistent with how the generations of women before her acted, based on traditions that can be traced as far back as Byzantium. In Loizos and Papataxiarchis’ edited volume, gender dynamic theories propose these roles were integrated into Greek society with the Bible’s arrival (1991). As time passed, expectations and conventions gained traction, particularly in communities where Orthodox Christianity signified more than just religious preferences, especially in areas where Orthodox believers were a minority. When Spyros first returns to Greece, Katerina is waiting for him at the house’s threshold; she does not enter or leave the house on her own as Spyros and their children do, consistent with practices observed in Greek villages (Cowan 1991). She only travels when accompanied by another member of the household. One may argue that her geographic localities alone do not sufficiently confirm her role as the mythological trope of a traditional housewife. But other indications assert her uncomplicated commitment to being a dutiful wife. He finds himself unable to penetrate the figurative wall between himself and the domestic normalcy, so he leaves, and again, Katerina stays at the house.

Alexander follows him across Athens in a melancholic sequence that underlines how Spyros is out of synch, disconnected from the rest of society. At the village abode, she recites a beautiful though deeply patriarchal blessing of the bread. “This is for the father...” Everyone gets a piece and then she takes her slice in what is more likely an iteration of the prioritisation of all the figures over Katerina, rather than an exercise in saving the best for last.

Throughout the film, Katerina tries to remain by her husband’s side. When the rest of the villagers depart after the winter resort deal falls through, she stays behind with Spyros at the gate of the house. The shot evokes a Greek version of “American Gothic” by Grant Wood (see Figure 3.10). And, of course, when the authorities are about to ship Spyros, the embodiment of painful, unintegrated memories off to international waters, she insists on joining him. The uncertainty about whether they are headed towards a brighter imaginary is akin to the final feast sequence in *Underground* (Kusturica 1995) after the characters have lost themselves and all that they love. Ideally, Spyros and Katerina would be on their own “Voyage to Cythera” where Aphrodite was born. Again, Watteau’s painting and the film share the ambiguity of whether the journey is ending or beginning. According to conventional Greek expectations reinforced through myths, Katerina’s character makes her a good woman, which highlights just how thoroughly Spyros is defeated.

Spyros’s ordeal is not limited to being a vanquished soldier; as a defeated fighter, he has failed on all fronts expected of Greek men of his generation and those who came before him. He most closely aligns with the “Impotent Model” proposed by Raya Morag, whose “Asexual Hyper-Masculine Model” so aptly articulated the dynamic between Miloš and Vuk in *A Serbian Film* in the previous chapter (Morag 2009, 225). Though Spyros is not physically incapacitated like the characters Morag uses to

illustrate this particular type of postwar identity conflict, he is still enfeebled by his ordeal and subsequently by how others such as Voula and the villagers treat him. Drawing from the same foundation as other models, Morag proposes that “Trauma causes demythicisation and results in masculinity split in terms of its identity... demasculinisation, failure of paternal and fraternal order, inability to represent the symbolic order... extreme in the case of impotent masculinity” (Morag 2009, 225-226). While this causality is challenged by *On the Milky Road*, it is substantiated by findings on the relationship between mythology and trauma. While mythology can mitigate the impact of trauma, this thesis operates from the starting point that a significant adverse event can prompt cultural mythology’s re-evaluation. It should also be taken into account that various scholars, including Du Boulay, Hadjikyricou, Cowan, Collard, Dubisch, Loizos and Papataxiarchis, suggest that Greece is what Morag may label a phallogocentric culture. Thus, in a decidedly patriarchal society, the emasculating ordeal of losing a war and being exiled poses a tremendous threat to both collective and individual identity. Put another way, it challenges one’s ability to adhere to the social and individual charter of mythology outlined in the first chapter.

Continuing with Morag, she argues that the impotent/damaged body is stricken from the ranks of social order enforcers and can only reclaim masculinity through sexual relations with a woman or brotherhood. Spyros declines intimacy with Katerina by leaving the bedroom. His overpowered and subdued body is excluded from practices in which he may rehabilitate his masculinity, or in Greek terms, acquire *philotimo*, such as making decisions for the household, protecting his daughter’s virtue, or joining the men down at the *kafenio*. The villagers speak to Katerina about business, Voula revels in male attention, and Spyros is prohibited from the *kafenio*. And he chooses to sleep alone at a bedsit than with his wife in the marital bed. Therefore, he has no avenue

through which he can reclaim his masculinity leaving him trapped in an impotent state. In 1984, when the exiles are finally allowed to return to Greece, and the communists are in power, Spyros represents powerlessness, a symbol unpalatable to a phallogentric society. Even though a new government leads Greece, it continues to grapple with its history of impotence. Recalling Elsaesser's "absence through presence" as a means of avoiding pain, the new government removes Spyros as a painful reminder. The war sends Spyros into exile from Greece. He is forced to surrender his role as a husband and a father, foreclosing on his opportunity to preserve or earn *philotimo* to sit on his domestic throne. In Greek culture, a man is supposed to be the head of a household where he protects his wife and children and provides for them, and in return, they respect and honour him. In contrast, when Spyros is exiled, he leaves his family unprotected and outside the established patriarchal order. While Spyros was in Ukraine, he attempted to forge a makeshift family with a new wife and another three children, an imitation of his original family.

Such a predicament is why some men, regardless of their beliefs refrain from dedicating themselves to an ideology like Spyros. Instead, they focus on the more tangible reality of providing for their family. In doing so, they avoid the pain of rejection that Spyros experiences at each turn. Voula articulates her experience of lacking a father when she needed one, and one was expected of her to shield her honour. The impact of her father's absence on Voula's own psyche will be discussed below, but here we consider Spyros's compromised masculinity through his interactions with his family. At the pier, Voula asks Alexandros, "Do you remember what he [their father] looks like?" upon seeing him, she says to her brother, "I expected him to be taller. Do you know something? He may not be our father." She suggests that he has little bearing on their lives beyond his role as an interchangeable character played by

the old men auditioning to be “Spyros” in Alexandros’s film (see Figure 3.3). The disembarkation shot reinforces this stance, showing Voula and Alexandros as spectators in an amphitheatre, gazing down at the spectre/spectacle that is supposedly their father (see Figure 3.11). Again, when they meet, their father asks, “Aren’t we going to kiss?” (see Figure 3.6). The dynamic of familial kinship driven by a father providing for his children and in return, their respect for him, is absent. When he is in the bedroom with Katerina, there is the possibility of masculine rehabilitation through sexual relations as described by Morag. This does not come to fruition. Spyros’s liminal position is maintained, even though, as Alexandros says, “She [Katerina] has been living, dreaming of your return.” The emotional burden of defeat is made visible by the suitcase, “the baggage”, he carries from country to country, city to village, and room to room. Revisiting the scene in the village when the neighbours attempt to circumvent Spyros, they treat Katerina as the head of the household and the decision-maker. To them, Spyros is a walking ghost. Katerina knows that Spyros is a shadow and has been since he was forced from Greece all those years ago. The kafenio owner shouts at the shadow of a man “Spyros, you’re dead! You don’t exist! The years that you roamed the mountains with your gun are over, Spyros!” The kafenio owner comments that Spyros’s time as potent, virile, and capable of effecting change ended once the government castrated him by removing him from masculine roles. The kafenio owner continues, “You’re dead. Sentenced to death five times. By the Martial Court in Larissa, Spyros. The newspaper’s been in my pocket all these years.” The exile and denouncement of Spyros as a communist eliminated him symbolically. Most significant, Spyros’s non-existence as a man is reinforced by the kafenio owner excluding Spyros from brotherhood/fraternisation by denying him entry to a definitively male space. Janet Cowan describes the kafenio

The quintessential institution of male social life in Greece... It is here that manhood is performed, reputations are negotiated, and social relationships are enlivened through endless card playing, political debate, competitive talk and reciprocal hospitality (Cowan 1991, 184).

Returning to his relationship, or lack thereof with Voula, Spyros's rejection by Greek social conventions is cemented by his daughter's behaviour. Angelopoulos deploys her in two ways: to portray the discrediting of Spyros and to offer a personal narrative of the shifting landscape of sexual identity, resulting from the absence of men and the impact of the war. While Greece, true to its diverse heritage, had different inheritance structures in different regions,⁴⁴ it is still safe to say that Voula is a new kind of Greek woman. The absence of a support network for Katerina beyond her children and the accompanied wives celebrating Spyros's homecoming suggests that a patrilocal system is in place. This suggests which confirms Voula's behaviour as unusual according to the community's "moral order." Voula is childless, she welcomes male attention, she has sexual relations outside of marriage, speaks back to her father on her mother's behalf, is not housebound, and perhaps most scandalous of all sits unchaperoned in the recently emerged kafeteria (Cowan 1991) (see Figure 3.12). Such comportment verifies the beliefs of Stelios, one of the men Cowan interviewed for her research, who claims "the only reason a woman would go to the cafeteria [was] to pursue sex" (Cowan 1991, 193). Unlike her mother, Voula has no husband to whom she must be faithful. Instead,

⁴⁴ "Marriage in Greece is not... structurally universal. There are three distinct types of marriage, characterised by postmarital residence—virilocal, uxorilocal, and neolocal. Each of these is accompanied by different sorts of emphasis (skewing, or bias) in the organisation of kinship and in the contribution of gender to notions of relatedness. This is particularly the case in the creation of matrilineal and patrilineal biases, and in the construction of relations of relative equality, or inequality, between wife and husband." (Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991, 8) Virilocal communities see married sons live with or next to their parents and engage in the family trade passed down from father to son. Women contribute solely through maintaining the house and giving birth to male heirs, with little to say about it. By contrast, in uxorilocalities, the bride offers her husband a house near her mother's as a dowry. Here the woman is the mistress of the household. Third is the neolocal arrangement, which acts as a midpoint between the above systems.

she is loyal to her desires alone. Here fearlessness of “‘being watched,’ ‘wolves,’ ‘the dark,’ ‘everything,’ may be perceived as a ‘lack of virtue’ because ‘linking vulnerability with virtue, the sentiment of fear articulates a girl’s dependence and calls forth a protective response” (Cowan 1991, 192). Voula is unafraid; therefore, she does not require rescuing.

Voula catalyses the male gaze to act upon her wishes, thereby asserting independence from Spyros, her brother, and their masculine protection, and by extension, the patriarchy. Voula expresses her scepticism towards Spyros from the start. She suggests that the man who will alight from the ship may not be their father, but questions whether it matters after all these years of chasing ghosts. Recalling Alexandros’s audition for a father, anyone could play the part in the absence of their own father. Having spent her life asserting herself, she steps up to fulfil the role of her mother’s protector. Back in the village, after Spyros refuses to yield to the developer, Voula asks Spyros as her father, though more as a disgraced representative of Greek masculinity.

Why don’t you let Mother sign? What right have you got to refuse? Ever since I can remember, I’ve never seen her smile. She went to prison for you. Then she found us again and raised us. A wasted life. Her body dried up, waiting for you. You and your generation never cared about anyone else. You revolted, took to the mountains and then went away. Why are you back now? What’d you come here for? And what do you want those damn fields for? What use can they be to you now? (*Voyage to Cythera*, 1984)

The day after, Spyros encounters his shed with his tools afire, a further castration, another iteration that he is no use to his family. Voula and the villagers will not let him fulfil his patriarchal role. Voula speaks for herself and Greek women and on behalf of

contemporary Greek society trying to shut the door on Spyros. This sentiment is crystallised by representations of state authority shipping him and his problematically loyal wife away from their homeland and toward international waters.

3.2.4. *Homeland*

The concept of homeland is one that Greece has been exploring since the concept of nationhood took hold. Greece has been dedicated to constructing its national identity and evaluating its mythology, especially in light of challenges to concepts of Greekness coming from the West (Tziovas 2001). The period from Greek independence in 1829 to the fall of the Junta in 1974 saw many political and social shifts, culminating in the Colonels' ill-fated attempt to homogenise society. Mythology offers consistency and familiarity in the face of upheaval and shifting demands both within Greece and from abroad. A major proponent of cultural traditions was the highly patriarchal Greek Orthodox Church, which served as a beacon of Greek identity (Livanos 2006). Livanos reports one of many instances where faith in the Orthodox Church was sufficient to establish Greek nationality. From 1870 onwards the Bulgarians claimed that every follower of the Exarch was a "Bulgarian", while Athens responded by arguing that those who remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate were true "Greeks", if not by language, then certainly because of their "national sentiment." The Church's embeddedness in the Greek state makes enemies out of the communist atheists who listened to the Soviet Union, an unauthorised foreign power unlike those who turned to the United States for guidance like the postwar conservative government (Kofas 1990).

In *Voyage to Cythera* Angelopoulos navigates the hazardous Scylla of national identity in the aftermath of the Junta. Officially, the state allowed Greek communist

exiles to return, provided they were not Slavs, who are still not warmly welcomed at the time of writing this thesis. Many men, women, and children took refuge from the national army who cleared villages of communists, sympathisers, and civilians alike. Those who remained within the homeland's boundaries survived on the periphery as depicted in *The Stone Years*. Unofficially, as we saw in the preceding sections, Spyros was considered a *persona non grata* because he was a reminder of a painful past.

In the two previous sections, we evaluated Spyros as a communist and a (defeated) man across the axes of war and masculinity. In this part, we consider him as an “un-Greek” Greek who wished to return to Greek society from the periphery of a usually nostalgic diaspora – a topic beyond the scope of this thesis but worthy of consideration⁴⁵ (Phillis 2020). But Greek officials and the unofficial public foreclose on this evolving narrative of the returned exile. One example of denying Spyros his homeland occurs when Alexandros returns to the village to help local police look for his father. During the search, he spies the family house and realises that his father is not missing, only hidden from sight at home. Spyros whistles and a neighbour translates, “I am not moving from here. I am not leaving. I am staying here. This is my land.” But time has moved the land from under Spyros. The only unmoving key to this house in the past is Panagiotis, an old man himself. A policeman tells Alexandro, “Normally, we’d remove him from the village. He’s making trouble.”; a reminder of the official exile of communists decades before. The police try to enforce the recently enacted more hospitable official policies in the harsh clime of unintegrated experience, but they are unprepared and reverting to old methods. Alexandros, perhaps believing that Greece has become more tolerant says, “That’s up to him to decide.” After all, the state did permit Spyros back, and he mattered enough legally to invalidate plans for winter resort

⁴⁵ See Philip E. Phillis’s comprehensive text, *Greek Cinema and Migration* (2020).

development. But it is not that simple: he has no nationality, no ethnicity, and no citizenship. When Spyros is discovered to be hiding at home, the police officer tells Alexandros of his suspicions. “We don’t know who he is. And you, are you sure he’s your father?... And don’t forget that his residency permit can be withdrawn at any moment.” Spyros’s homeland and nationality are simultaneously conferred and denied at this moment. The residency permit which the police officer refers to was granted to Spyros because he was a Civil War exile. At the same time, his communist ideology makes him un-Greek. This paradox is handed down to the next generation when Alexandros returns to Athens. Back in the present at Alexandros’ home in the fragmented capital, he finds himself once again out of step. In his office, he listens to the messages on his answering machine. There is a message left from his location scout for the film about his father: the best place to *re-present* “Cythera” is “Anti-Cythera.” Far from the imaginary lovers’ paradise lies the “real Greece” occupying a liminal space. Anticythera,⁴⁶ the opposite of Aphrodite’s birthplace at the edge of Attica, serves as the most accurate location for this story.

The motif of the police mediating between the official “symbolic” and the unofficial “real” is reiterated when they try to erase Spyros from the public memory and the national mythology so that the victors may easily define their homeland. The police escort him to an awaiting Finnish vessel. The disembodied voices of the Finnish captain and the port police decide that Spyros’s fate may not be so easily settled. There is no authority to whom Spyros can tell his story; they are invisible, but they deny him his homeland. The only solution the police can arrive at is to sweep Spyros, accompanied by his loyal wife, under the rug and out to sea, on their voyage to their own Cythera.

⁴⁶ Anticythera lends its name to the “Anticythera Mechanism” which is known as the first analogue computer – an ancient Greek manually operated orrery.

But we know, in all likelihood, they are headed to the anti-Cythera, to a time *when* Spyros's homeland existed.

3.2.5. *Summary*

This section's objective was to outline the conditions and myths that contributed to the revenant's varied reactions. Spyros, and by extension the memory of the war, encounters a mixed reception upon return from exile. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Greece was starting to narrate the experiences of World War II. The Civil War remained taboo because of the anti-communist American and British allies' ongoing involvement in the Greek government. The communist Civil War counternarratives of collective injury were concealed from public consciousness until the 1970s. *Voyage to Cythera* revisits these wounds and asks how Greece, officially and unofficially, intends to rehabilitate itself, demonstrating that the cultural myths surrounding war, masculinity, and homeland no longer assist. The PASOK government of the 1980s wanted to close the gap between State and public through gestures such as letting the exiles return to Greece, and inter-generational memories mingle. However, the film indicates that even a government of the people had not yet figured out how to do that. Navigating the transition period without the certainty afforded by an authentic, reflective cultural mythology, now problematic and out of synch, is heroic in itself. As Spyros languishes as a martyr in the purgatory of public memory, in *The Stone Years* Eleni defends the emanating mythology founded on the legends from the Civil War which both reinforce and challenge long-held beliefs.

3.3. The Stone Years

3.3.1. Introduction

Moving from Angelopoulos' contemplative work traversing generations and locations, we turn to *The Stone Years* by Pantelis Voulgaris. Though similar to Angelopoulos in terms of his prolific output, Voulgaris is less known to international audiences, with a distinct style from Angelopoulos' high culture auteurship. Where Angelopoulos maintains a Brechtian distance between his characters, and between the characters and their viewers, Voulgaris engages audiences' to empathise with his characters. A motif that runs through Voulgaris' oeuvre is how women are oppressed by Greek society, and his films often call for change, in contrast to Angelopoulos' more contemplative stance. Voulgaris' approach tends to concentrate on one story or one family cultivating identification rather than the other director's more diffuse method with an ensemble cast. *The Stone Years* tells the true story of Eleni and Babis, a partisan couple under attack from the end of the Civil War through the 1950s to the fall of the Junta in 1974. The director treats their relationship and its obstacles sympathetically, some have argued excessively so (Georgakas 2002-2003). But in the context of the silence the Junta imposed and maintained by fearful or survivalist private citizens, this film broadens the perimeters of Greek cultural artefacts, expanding the boundaries of aftermath cinema. An alternative to expressionist New Greek Cinema, *The Stone Years* moves away from the resolute arthouse aesthetic associated with New Greek Cinema towards a mainstream *sjuzhet* that more closely resembles Hollywood editing as well as the less staged daily life, or as Dan Georgakas offers, "a film based on real people [that] offers homage to the cadre of the Greek Communist Party... far more conventional than most work of the somewhat eccentric New Greek Cinema" (Georgakas 1986, 45).

In *The Stone Years*, Voulgaris incorporates a personal story into the narrative of collective history, and (only just) avoids pathos, even though Stamatis Kranounakis's

music sentimentalises even the most political moments. Voulgaris successfully produced an enduring story of dedication and commitment in a style that marks the shift from high art New Greek. The story portrays the lives of political exiles starting after the Civil War and ending with their re-integration in 1974. At the same time, it depicts the dedication and love of Babis's wife, Eleni (Themis Bazaka). The film is a political melodrama, with a linear narrative exploring the tenacious spirit of left-wing fighters. Stylistically, it seems to deny everything that the understated, ambiguous openness for which New Greek Cinema stands. Voulgaris achieved a precarious balance between emotional restraint and nostalgia. Cleo Cacoulidis describes Voulgaris' work:

Voulgaris' films are informed by strong emotions, and a heartfelt rendering of his characters and their deceptively simple stories. Deliberate and understated, Voulgaris' cinematic style is at once intimate and distant. His acute observations of small gestures in everyday life—a lover's glance, a solitary figure in an empty street—are intensely humanistic... His work echoes with themes of loneliness, a longing for untasted freedoms, and the recognition of time lost. (Cacoulidis and Voulgaris 1996, 34)

The focus on humanity and proximity, rather than introspection is what makes Voulgaris's oeuvre distinct from Angelopoulos' philosophical and Brechtian style. *The Stone Years* is uncritical as to how Eleni and Babis, and other left sympathisers became enemies of the ultra-conservative government, save for Eleni's courtroom testimony to be discussed below. There is no introspection like in *Voyage to Cythera*, only determination to survive in the face of ongoing persecution by the government. As Dan Georgakas explains, the film "wanted to bring the old conflicts to some kind of closure" (Georgakas quoted in Karalis 2012a, 210-211). Instead of arranging and exploring lingering symptoms of past ordeals like Angelopoulos, Voulgaris strives to "portray the

echoes of politics in everyday life” (Cacoulidis and Voulgaris 1996). We will evaluate how Voulgaris portrays the mythology in everyday life, starting with the axis of war.

In the war section, I will argue that in *The Stone Years* the war is not yet a memory as in *Voyage to Cythera*, because it has not yet ended for Eleni, Babis, and other Greeks deemed undesirable by the State. In addressing gender, I consider how the State defeated communist men by excluding them from society and denying them their opportunity to achieve *philotimo*. It is also proposed that women were integral to communist ideology and the struggle against fascism and that this afforded them freedoms otherwise unavailable to women in a patriarchal society. However, their liberation was only made possible through the defeat of their male counterpart, and by challenging the status quo. In several respects, *The Stone Years* is subversive. It throws down the gauntlet to Greek society, challenging it to seize the opportunity to do better by its citizens, especially women, in light of the defeated male. In the Homeland discussion, the relationship between the Greek elite and private citizens means that Eleni and Babis find themselves at the mercy of a decapitated homeland, run by a “head” that is disembodied, rendering the architects of adversity enemy invisible. And as recent history such as the financial crisis starting in 2007 suggests, this remains the case.

3.3.2. *The War Continues*

From early on in the film, we see how the Civil War and the State’s aim to rid the country of communists continue to impact its citizens. In *Voyage to Cythera*, Spyros arrived in Greece after much of the dust had settled in 1984. *The Stone Years* depicts the time it took until Spyros could return. The film opens with the words,

After the end of World War II, Greece suffers the tragedy of a harrowing civil war. The postwar conservative government aided by the USA systematised the liquidation of the Left movement. Incarcerations, deportations, and executions. In 1954, the Special Police Force would believe that the “game” with the underground communists had been won once and for all.

The word “game” in conjunction with “systematised ... liquidation” indicates Voulgaris’ political stance and implies that the government treated its people (a less loaded term than “citizens”) as expendable. Pantelis Volgis argues that this degradation of human life was enabled by the years of sanctioned violence from Metaxas, to the German Occupation and, of course, the *emphylios polemikos* as Demertzis reports (Volgis 2002 and Demertzis 2013). The social removal and expulsion, coupled with persecution, sent the communists underground and into the shadows. When the Junta staged its coup on 21 April 1967, the communists fought another army once again.

Voulgaris utilises certain techniques to convey the continuity of war from 1949 to 1974. There are snapshots of the effects of the Civil War, such as familial separation, the urgency to seek refuge and political imprisonment. The guerrilla fighting style that achieved notable success at times endured through volunteers who were enemies of the state. The government dedicated resources to defeating this unwanted demographic who stood in the way of a homogeneous national mythology agreeable to American allies. In the abovementioned opening credits, there is an intertitle which states that the conservative government was aided by the US in the systematic erasure of communists. Jon Kofas demonstrates how embedded American representatives were in the Greek government (Kofas 1990). During the Cold War, in which the US sought to remove communists from its own landscape, but its methods were tame in comparison to Greek reports of physical torture. There were show trials that resulted in the tarnishing of the

reputations of the Hollywood Ten. In the American Communist Control Act of 1954, the Communist Party was outlawed because it was an “agency of a hostile foreign power.” If the American communists did not register with the Attorney General, they would be fined up to \$10,000, imprisoned for up to five years, or both. Just 144 defendants were indicted, but fewer than half were incarcerated, and criminal proceedings had primarily ceased by 1960. In other words, the United States demanded that the Greek government extirpate communism (whose followers saved the nation from the Nazis) and used it as justification for its presence in the Mediterranean country while doing comparatively less to remove the communists from its own society. The Greek postwar government and the subsequent Junta destroyed Eleni’s dreams of becoming a doctor, prioritising the official narrative over assisting Eleni in providing medical care to the public. The war on communists also meant that, by Eleni’s count, she and Babis spent a total of 70 hours together in 14 years.

This life interrupted meant that Eleni and Babis were forced to adapt conventions to their situation. When Babis is released from prison, Eleni conceives his baby, even though they have not yet married, and gives birth to a son out of wedlock, a highly unorthodox occurrence in Greek society well into the 1990s (Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991). When she and Babis sought to wed, the prison did not allow a best man to attend. A compromise was reached when the priest (played by Voulgaris himself) permitted their child born outside of holy matrimony to serve as a proxy for the absent best man.

Voulgaris presents the continuity of the war through Eleni’s speech at the courthouse, after years on the run. She offers her story to the judges and the private citizens present to stimulate empathy. (This monologue also demands that her story be included as “official” evidence, to be further explored in section 3.3.4. She recounts not

just her own experience of being an enemy, but that of her family too, connecting different battles and injustices to the same war.

I am the daughter of a village schoolteacher. Metaxas sent him to Akhopflia. During the war, they handed him to Germany (prioritising the persecution of a competing ideology over German occupiers). My uncle told me they killed him at Thessaloniki. My mother spent years in prison and exile. When she came back to the village, she found her house burned down. They killed my grandfather before my eyes when I was 12. When they took him away, he had just one shoe. My two sisters left with ELAS when they were 15 years old to go fight the Germans. All these years you've had Law 375 on my back. You've labelled me a spy. Spying what? (*The Stone Years*, 1985) (See Figures 3.13-15).

When Eleni is sentenced to prison, she is forced to celebrate her milestones out of order (i.e., having a child first, then getting married) and under guard (see Figures 3.20-22). In these respects, the prison is a microcosm of Greek society. The population is allowed to mark milestones and celebrations under the state's watchful eye and its enablers. Eleni arrives at the prison and is escorted to the chapel by a correctional officer who had guarded Eleni's mother when she was an inmate. "When I heard 'Yfanti' was coming here, I thought it was your mother. You visited her in 1949. I lifted you up to see her." That Eleni is there and raises her son behind bars decades later shows how the siege remained active for generations. The uniforms of the kind guard and her co-worker on duty when Eleni gives birth suggest that while symbolically they may uphold the laws of the State, they privately treat the inmates as humans and attempt to lessen their burdens.

The same can be said of Eleni's cousin, who works for State Security. Before Eleni is captured and imprisoned, she was a fugitive on the run. Her cousin boards the

tram she is riding to a safehouse. He recognises her but says nothing to the other State Security officers aboard who are busy checking men's ID cards. Years later, he encounters her again when chasing after a crowd distributing communist pamphlets. At first, she pretends not to know him, but he is not easily dissuaded. He asserts, "You're afraid. You're afraid of your own cousin. You're afraid I'll squeal on you." She replies, "I am not afraid," refusing to appear intimidated. He replies, "I know you're not afraid. And tell your mother, Giorgios has the ability to remember." We are not given his name. It could be the cousin's name, but it is unlikely that he speaks of himself in the third person. It is more likely that he is warning Eleni about Giorgios Papadopoulos, the prime minister of Greece from 1967-1973 (until he was overthrown by another member of the Junta). Nonetheless, the cousin insinuates that security could reach Eleni's mother demonstrating the power wielded by security forces at the time. This fear helped the authorities maintain control over the population, enabling them to push the anti-communist agenda.

Voulgaris's film depicts acts of covert camaraderie, such as Eleni's cousin not arresting her and other touches of empathy from private citizens who do not support the state. There are also scenes where regular Greeks were powerless to act against the authorities due to the ongoing campaign of fear. At the start of the film, State Security officers torture Babis above his uncle's shop until Babis reveals the name of a "co-conspirator." The camera focuses on the uncle, frozen in place, and can only look to the room from which his nephew's groans can be heard. Similarly, when Eleni is captured at a safehouse with her mother, she is taken by State Security to another room. The camera stays on her mother, terrified, as her daughter pleads, "Not my belly! I'm pregnant!" amidst the sounds of fists landing. This immobility, freezing at the moment,

and being spared or surviving has been well documented in trauma studies as a source of guilt and shame (see Leys 2007; Bettelheim 1979).

When this inability to act is elevated to the group level, such as with the courthouse audience of individual civilians, it takes on a degree of collaboration. The individuals become part of a group that claims they were unaware of what was happening. For example, Babis and other political prisoners are transported from Crete to another jail via a ferry carrying regular passengers (see Figure 3.16). The convicts, supervised by guards brandishing machine guns, embark before a waiting line of civilians including Eleni. As the ordinary passengers board the ship, the formless voice of the State advises them over the loudspeaker that, "It is strictly forbidden for passengers to be on the upper deck," where the "non-nationally minded" prisoners are seated. When Eleni boards, she finds the captain and the head guard arguing about the prisoners' safety being transported. The captain shouts that he does not care about the guard's rules and refuses to depart with thirty men in handcuffs citing safety regulations "Who can untie thirty men so quickly? I have regulations!" When the guards are distracted by an actress who happens to be on board, Eleni sneaks onto the upper deck. She beholds ordinary men, not monsters or ne'er-do-wells playing cards chatting, and smoking cigarettes. A factor contributing to these so-called enemies of the state's unremarkable appearance is that they wear plain clothes, like the other passengers on the lower deck. As political prisoners, distinct from common criminals, which the MP makes Babis and his comrades out to be, they get to wear their civilian clothes. Babis is among the ordinary citizens aboard the ferry. He, too, was powerless to move towards Eleni, forced to be content with a meaningful look. This sustained reign of terror aimed to cleave Greek citizens away from the body social and the body politic, and turn them towards a symbolic, homogeneous Greek state.

3.3.3. *Defeated Masculinity: Victorious Feminism?*

As we know from the emerging corpus of examples of Greek masculinity in film (Karalis 2012b; Hadjikyricou 2013) the mythology surrounding Greek men was changing. In this section, we focus on representing a subgroup of communist men and what might be described as a kind of role reversal that is effected with their female comrades. Part of what made communism such a threat was the more egalitarian treatment of women than the traditional patriarchal Greek society. Research by Boulay, Hadjikyricou, Cowan, Collard, Dubisch, Loizos and Papataxiarchis suggests that feminism gained a foothold in Greece far later than in other countries in the established and oft-reinforced phallogentric hegemony. The war against the communists, which began under Metaxas and continued until 1974, negatively impacted the adult male population and through exile, migration or internment (Trichopoulos and Papaevangelou 1974). However, the defeat of communist men and the associated notion of masculinity made room for women to continue the fight, effecting change in the broader society. In *Voyage to Cythera* Voula was portrayed as a fearless, sexually liberated woman. In *The Stone Years*, women are depicted as equally unafraid, and Eleni, her mother, Cleo (Eirini Inglesi), and the other female inmates do not act like Spyros's Katerina. Instead, they assert agency, encouraged by the examples set by their older relatives during the Civil War. This contrast deepens when juxtaposed with the incarcerated communist men such as Babis, who were rendered passive. First, we shall identify examples where the State emasculated men by cancelling their participation in society. As a result, the only men seen publicly were either passive or active conformists. Then we will analyse how being treated equally under the auspices of

communism enabled Eleni, her mother and Cleo to take on previously male-designated roles as freedom fighters. Eleni applied this to her own life when communism was illegal. However, she was ultimately left fettered to traditional society's expectations once the Communist Party was legalised.

The conservative government and the ensuing Colonels' Regime pursued many avenues to subdue communists after the Civil War. We have already seen how the lack of men hindered primary activities such as farming, causing events such as the winter famine in 1941 to 1942. Demertzis expands:

According to [Lincoln] MacVeagh, the American ambassador in Athens, in early 1946, two-thirds of Greeks were subsisting on only 1,700 calories per day (in comparison to the 2,850 calories of the British); almost 30 per cent of the population suffered from malaria, while the incidence of tuberculosis was fifteen times higher than that in Britain. Just after the end of the Civil War in 1949, almost 10 per cent of the population (i.e., 700,000 people) were homeless refugees waiting to reinhabit their wrecked villages. (Demertzis 2013, 138).

Additionally, many men (and a contingent of women, to be discussed below) fought in the mountains, removing them from public life. Following the war, they were either incarcerated or exiled to countries sympathetic to communism. For those who remained, the State waged a campaign of humiliation by undermining the decisions made by Greek men. A significant example is the declaration of repentance, which meant a signatory could rejoin society, provided they repudiate their principles and likely endangered other underground network members. This certainly diminished *philotimo*, which casts doubt upon a man's masculinity (Hadjikyricou 2013). The recantation was published in newspapers, informing the community of the "rehabilitated" communist in their midst who had betrayed his neighbours and country

by adhering to the Marxist ideology and then backing out. The government's efforts depicted the men who signed as incapable of making good decisions that benefitted their families. There was presumably less disappointment when women signed because their expectations were lower when it came to logical thinking, though their abandonment of home and children was regarded as sinful.

In attempting to remove what it saw as the communist threat, the State apparatus, also rendered male communists powerless. At the beginning of *The Stone Years*, we encounter Babis who works at his uncle's general store, as he courts Eleni, who aspires to attend medical school. At the general store is Manolis, a well-dressed man with connections. He warns Babis's uncle Argyros that Babis was spotted with "weird" men (communists) around the village. Argyros defends his nephew, telling Manolis that Babis is involved in no such activity, but Manolis knows that Babis has been heard "complaining too much." It could be contextualised by an explanation offered to the anthropologist Anna Collard; "If you open your mouth, you are Left, if you keep it shut, you are Right," (Collard 1990, 241). Manolis persists, arranging for State Security to torture Babis above his uncle's store, leading to his arrest, and prompting Eleni to escape to Athens. As mentioned above, Babis's uncle stands powerless, listening to his nephew's cries. Babis spends the next fourteen years in and out of jail, deprived of agency. Other men are similarly excluded from society by state policies, long after they are released from prison. Collard interviewed a self-proclaimed communist in the village of Agios Vissaros. Thanasis fought against the Germans in World War II and against the National Army in the Civil War before being imprisoned. After his release, the State delayed paying him his agricultural pension because of his political beliefs, until a neighbour vouched for his good character (Collard 1990, 243). When an earthquake struck in 1966, all villagers received grants to rebuild their homes

except for Thanasis. In the interviews conducted by Collard in 1977 with several villagers, it was privately acknowledged that he had upheld the community's standards of being hardworking and a man of honour. Still, publicly they would not be seen associating with him, lest his reputation might taint their own (ibid.). Long after the war and their imprisonment, men continued to be ostracised and were considered a threat to public order and decency.

The State treated many men this way, branding them as not just threats to the public order, but as criminals, an insult to the widely held masculine ambition and expectation to be honourable and protect the honour of female family members. The disembodied voice of the State (mentioned above, and to be discussed in greater detail in section 3.3.4. is heard as Babis and other communists enter the prison, describing them as part of an undesirable criminal network who are, “1) Circulating illegal materials 2) Propagandising Marxist Materialist Theory 3) Proselyting new members to overthrow the established order.” This statement, written by a government official, was read out at a press conference held to celebrate the victory over the communists (see Figure 3.17). The speaker then reads out a list of the names of the arrested, including Eleni's female cousin. It is unknown whether the prisoners had already stood trial, only that they would be “accommodated” at the Athens Security building.

The presence of women alongside men denotes something more abhorrent to the US-backed Greek government; that they adopted an equal standing to their male counterparts. When we first meet Eleni and Babis, they chat about their plans for the future (all unrealised). He asks, “So you want to be a doctor?” It is ambitious for anyone, especially a woman, given that until the 1950s, women were “deprived of ‘unnecessary knowledge,’” though “for a man to acquire higher education he gained the respect of the community” (Hadjikyricou 2013, 12). For Eleni to achieve her goal, she

would need to act, “closer to God, intelligent, strong-minded, cool-headed, brave, reliable, and strong” – all qualities anthropologist Juliet du Boulay identified with men – and not succumb to conventional gender traits such as weakness (Hadjikyricou 2013, 14). Writing about the depiction of masculinity in Greek cinema from 1949-1967, Hadjikyricou draws upon the foundational work by du Bouley to provide readers with a sense of gender conventions at the time. The government prevented Eleni from attending medical school, but she was not destined to be a mistress of the house like Katerina in *Voyage to Cythera*. Nor does Voulgaris portray her as a sex symbol, as was popular in postwar Greek cinema (Hadjikyricou 2013, 75-85). She does not conform to then-contemporary societal expectations of her gender. After Babis is arrested, Eleni boards a train bound for Athens. She leans out the window to say goodbye to her mother and sister, and reminds them, “Don’t forget, burn the pamphlets!” Eleni is an integral member of the underground Communist Party, and the organisation values her enough to put the network of safehouses at her disposal. As a consequence, she is highly sought after by State Security. At the prison press conference, a reporter phones his editor to say, “Eleni Yfantis is a fugitive with a bounty of $\text{Dp}30,000$ on her head.” It forces her to retreat to society’s shadows, and when she is captured and imprisoned, she is excluded from public and private life altogether.

Eleni’s role as a communist political activist, rather than a model of domesticity is illustrated during her brief reunion with her mother at a *kafeteria*, distinct from the exclusively male space that is the *kafenio* (from which Angelopoulos’s Spyros is barred). Nevertheless, the location is a brave choice for them. The image of the male waiter serving two women in public, surrounded by men, is striking for the reasons outlined above by Stelios (see Figure 3.18). However, Eleni cannot entertain her mother at home because she is home-less. While eating their sweet pastries, Eftihia (Maria

Martika) tells her daughter of a dream she had that illustrates Eleni's contribution, and by extension, the efforts of Greek communist women to carry the baton passed to them by their male predecessors.

I saw you in my dream last night. Do you remember those boots I bought from Lamia and I was searching for Vangelis [her husband] up in the mountain to put them on. I saw you last night wearing these boots standing with a plaintive look and saying to me, 'Why, Mother, don't you sign [the recantation] to get out of prison? Why, Mother?'

More complicated than "Rosie the Riveter," who worked in the factories "Eleni the Elleniká" fills the empty shoes of her partisan father in the fight against the Greek government. Furthermore, in the dream, Eleni encourages her mother to sign the recantation so that her mother will not suffer in prison. While this may be puzzling in light of the mother's dream (and the reality) of Eleni traversing the mountain like her father, one interpretation that reconciles this dissonance is to view it as her attempt to protect her mother from incarceration and to keep her safe at home where gender conventions dictate Eleni should be as well. It would traditionally be the husband's role to protect his wife and the mother of his children. In his absence, Eleni steps up in more ways than one to fulfil his duties. Eventually, Eleni is captured at a communist safehouse by State Security. The officers were tipped off by the self-preserving Manolis who reported her whereabouts to the Church choir director. When Eleni, Babis, and their young son are finally released from prison after the fall of the Junta, she and her family are in their own "accommodation." There she faces imprisonment, chained by domestic responsibilities.

Back at the prison, she has a voice and used it to complain about the warden's policy of frisking toddlers. It pains Eleni greatly that her child is growing up in jail, but

Cleo cheered her up, calling him the “youngest political prisoner.” There, he was raised by twenty-four other like-minded inmates, or as Georgakas calls them in his review, “a score of red ‘grandmothers’ (Georgakas 1986, 45). Voulgaris shows how all of the women assist with childcare; from singing lullabies to practising walking, Eleni forms a sisterhood distinct from that which awaits her outside. Even before her incarceration, Eleni practices female kinship conventions⁴⁷ apart from, rather than in complement to, a male counterpart. In other words, she observes certain traditional gender conventions laid out in mythology. For example, it is expected that women only consume sweet things, while men consume savoury items. At the *kafeteria*, Eleni and Eftihia enjoy *kafaidi* (see Figure 3.18). On the train to Athens, the other female passenger, Sofie, shares chocolate with her and bemoans the sexual liberties men take with her. Like Eleni, her comrade Cleo also avoids the captivity of the traditional household (see Figure 3.19). Unmarried and successfully self-employed, she and Eleni achieve what women bound by marriage and the expectation of unquestioning dedication cannot.

It is essential to clarify that while the main characters in the film fought for the communists, not all the partisans welcomed the KKE as an equal-opportunity army. Collard explains, “This sense of ‘inappropriateness’... contravened a moral code which went against... how women should behave in the village” (Collard 1990, 234). Collard quotes one village woman who, although her husband had fought for the Left and her family supported the Democratic Army, had no intention of letting her daughters join them.

Some girls went [with the Democratic Army], some even wanted to, whoever heard of such a thing! Not mine, I told them, you want to make whores of them? I

⁴⁷ For more information on female kinship practices, see Janet Cowan’s “Going Out for Coffee? Contesting the Grounds of Gendered Pleasures in Everyday Sociability” in *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece* (eds. Peter Loizios and Evthymios Papataxiarchis) 1990.

told them straight. And tell me how will they sleep, cold under the trees at night when the wolves might come and who knows what other mischief? And them so far from their home and mother. What do they know of such things? I asked them, and they not married yet... But they got others from the village... they put pants on the women, the shame of it! Like men they made them and gave them guns to hold and they not knowing how to write their names even, and anyone could deceive them for their lack of cunning. (ibid.)

The portrait Voulgaris paints of Eleni is one of a forward-thinking Greek *person* who fights to make her country equal at a time when it subverted her gender and her political beliefs. When she is finally free to participate in society, we can see she does not wish to be placed under house arrest by living a life like Angelopoulos's Katerina.

To summarise, the male population had been curtailed between Metaxas's measures against communism, World War II, the Civil War, and the Junta. This provided Greek women, who had already been a part of the fight against fascism, with an opportunity. This chance was about more than women working in typically male jobs in factories. Eleni inherits the legacy of her male predecessors, and thus could no longer abide by the practicalities of a society so bound by gender roles. As Janet Hart writes, of the women in the Resistance,

Indeed, in the period prior to the resistance, Greek women were afforded very little personal freedom in the public sphere... It was never formally christened the "The Greek Women's Emancipation Movement." Its membership did not primarily consist of activists, and it did not employ protest tactics to agitate for women's rights. But in a more oblique manner, it denoted a series of acts aimed at another sort of resistance: resistance to a set of cultural and political rules of conduct that effectively barred women. (Hart 1990, 98)

Though the male members of the Resistance were emasculated if captured, the movement proved to be liberating for the women. Otherwise, the gender divisions were sanctioned by the Church, which collaborated in a multi-pronged attack on Greek citizens who did not conform to their perception of social ideals in the homeland.

3.3.4. *Homeland*

In the previous section, we saw how Eleni challenged the established mythology surrounding masculinity. Here we consider how Voulgaris represents the conflict between the government who trades in highly political, externally motivated mythology and those who utilise mythology as a social charter, a precedent, and foster a sense of belonging as defined in the first chapter. The final part of this case study is to evaluate the function of cultural mythology of *The Stone Years* on the axis of *patrída* (homeland). From the end of the Civil War to the fall of the Junta spanning 1950 to 1974, the Greek elites attempted to appropriate and streamline the diverse, yet collective experiences, memories and stories that belonged to the Greek people. The government manipulated the existing mythology to create a capitalist ideology that ignored existing iterations of homeland internalised by the population. The government's efforts to exclude Eleni and other "non-nationally minded" Greeks from the national narrative and society were an attack on her cultural identity, which can be traumatising. To exclude a person, or a group of people from their home community is to diminish their sense of self. And homeland is where that sense of self is born. Eleni resiliently turns to the cultural mythology of the Greek communists to sustain her identity and help her make room for individual rights in the cultural identity of her evolving nation.

The government officials try to remove Eleni and those like her from Greece using a unidirectional, “top-down” approach with rhetoric and legislation. Voulgaris portrays the officials as disembodied radio voices or silent, immovable figures such as courtroom judges. In response, Eleni works from the “bottom-up”. She draws from the nascent but powerful mythology of the Greek partisans to maintain her claim to Greek identity and continue the fight for her principles. Wherever Eleni goes, she encounters a network of hospitable, like-minded people she can trust, reinforcing her sense of belonging to a community.

Many Greeks at the time the film was set were afflicted by the destabilisation of community, impacting local, regional and national identity. Greek censuses show there was a significant population shift out of the villages to the cities, and beyond Greece (Trichopoulos and Papaevangelou 1974) as well as into exile, incarceration, and hiding. The transplanted individuals are away from their hometowns where they “practice their identity”. The rituals, and values, as well as the more informal memories that contribute to cultural memory and identity from which cultural mythology draws require investment by people in the present to keep the traditions alive. W. Lloyd Warner expands, “The conscious and unconscious symbols we retain are present expressions of past experiences, related and adapted to the ongoing life of the species, the society, and each individual” (Warner 2011, 166 in Olick et al.). Removing someone from their home or community, like Eleni when she is a fugitive, hinders the chance to keep alive the location’s past and the identity handed down through it which in turn strengthens one’s sense of identity. Writing about symbolic life to connect the present to the past, Warner offers the example of a photograph of long-deceased relatives looked at by someone in the present. It is not about knowing the image’s subjects, but the sense of connection to the past. Warner offers, “They do indicate that part of the non-rational

symbolic life of the ‘far away and long ago’ world of past generations—forever refreshed in the same kind of mould from which it came—continues and lives in the present” (ibid.) Similarly, the residents of a town who partake in rituals are rewarded for their participation with a feeling of being bonded to their roots. This connection enjoyed in a specific geographic location creates community, which gives rise to mythology and memory. As the sociologists Bellah et al. assert

Communities... have a history—in an important sense they are constituted by their past—and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a ‘community of memory,’ one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative, and in so doing, it offers examples of the men and the women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of the community. These stories of collective history and exemplary individuals are an important part of the tradition that is so central to a community of memory. (Bellah et al. 2011, 229 in Olick et al.)

With that in mind, when a person or people cannot gather as a community and recreate moments from their shared past, it can weaken identity and makes vague expectations of the social charter manifested in a group’s mythology. Yet, we see how Eleni forges community wherever she goes despite the government trying to stop, thereby making her one of the “exemplary individuals” referred to above. She adapts the concepts of what a homeland should be to her transient situation, encountering a community of far-reaching individuals whose bond extends beyond physical proximity. They do not need to be connected by blood or marriage to want what is best for each other, thereby laying the foundation for an unprecedented symbolic public space where individual rights are respected.

The Stone Years calls for the creation of a symbolic space where citizens could be protected outside of their kinship bonds or community, which had been broken by the government. Such a space would foster a sense of belonging, albeit more abstract for those torn from their familiar community spaces (i.e., villages and towns). The need for a symbolic public space arose out of the displacement or relocation of thousands of residents. It is the outcome of a confluence of specific economic and political as well as historical influences. In exchange for financial assistance, the Greek government promised the American government it would remove communists from the country. The Greek officials were endeavouring to raise Greece's status to stand alongside other European nations. However, as Jon Kofas demonstrates, the conditions and requirements of the Marshall Plan hindered Greek economic independence.

The German government offered Greece a steel mill as part of reparations payment in 1949. Paul Porter used his veto privilege to prevent Greece from engaging in steel production. Consequently, the country was compelled to purchase steel as well as other metals from the developed countries. That case exemplified the manner by which the American officials in Athens obstructed the progress of Greece. (Kofas 1990, 83)

The delicate society comprising many dissolved communities and uprooted families was further fractured by the pervasive American agenda in this already significant transition period. Kofas identifies how the American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG), created under the Truman Doctrine, gave Greece money but forced the country to ignore rather than avail of its numerous resources. These conditions for financial aid set to benefit the American rather than the Greek economy and further marginalised those beneath the capitalist and elite classes who had found support and community in the *Aristeros* (left-leaning) organisations which were not necessarily

communist. As the post-Civil War government moved increasingly to the right to accommodate American wishes, it also moved away from its own people's needs.

However, the Greek government was never structured around the population's welfare or concern for their community. The concept of a private citizen as understood in Western European countries, was, at the time, a foreign concept for Greece in light of its longheld understanding (or lack thereof) of individual rights, inherited from Byzantine and the Ottoman political structures (Charalambis and Demertzis 1993). In very concrete conceptual terms, the symbolic public space where citizens of West European nations gather, (especially those responsible for the export of the Enlightenment), for example, to challenge or celebrate changes did not exist, as such, in Greece. Charalambis and Demertzis explain, "... the grammar of social relationships is not structured by systemic rationality and normativity. Consequently, legitimation is worked out in social spaces that lie outside of the typical institutional context" (Charalambis and Demertzis 1993, 219). Ironically, the expectation of those in power to prioritise their agenda over their people is historically based and continued to shape society until the postmodern shift emerged in Greece. It is again worth quoting Charalambis and Demertzis at length to appreciate the impact of this structure on the individual and local level of homeland and to grasp the significance of creating a symbolic public space of legitimation as the authors refer to it.

Although the Byzantines created a remarkable legal code derived from Roman law, their conception of law was restricted by the imperatives of the empire's centralised administration. The state bureaucracy impeded the emergence of a rationalised and impersonal system of law and organisation. Like all great Oriental bureaucracies, the Byzantine one was tied directly to the emperor through personal loyalty (Weber 1978; 2.964-965). This minimised the possibility

of the legal system evolving into a separate entity within specific jurisdictional areas. The relationship between officials, landowners, the central authority, and the immediate producers, had never been settled through a mutual recognition of rights and duties since an arrangement was entirely alien to patrimonial logic... Caught in this way between arbitrary patrimonial authority and otherworldly religion, ordinary individuals in Greece developed an ambivalent attitude towards social reality. On the one hand, people under Byzantine and Ottoman rule became fatalistic. It was the individual alone, without clearly defined rights, who was thrown into a multinational, traditionalist empire. Imaginary identification with a Christian brotherhood was the most efficient “way out” from social weakness. Naturally, his fatalism could not lead to ideas of public responsibility or free citizenship. On the other hand, individuals developed instrumental attitudes toward political authority that suited the requirement of daily living. The practical rationalist of survival was the chief element fostering these attitudes, one of which was mistrust of any sort of secular power... Another was intimate attachment to the family as the primary social unity where trust and security were feasible. This in turn promoted nepotism and particularism. (Charalambis and Demertzis 1993, 222-223)

Those in power from 1950 to 1974 enjoyed the last gasps of this arrangement. By contrast, Eleni and others in the Resistance network modelled trust and security through the shared belief in communism. As the government edged away from their people's needs, it moved towards the wishes of its sponsor, the United States that was facing its own identity crisis at the time (and continues to) because of racism, poverty, and capitalism. In the Greek governments' efforts to quash the threat of communism, it removed Eleni from her home. The presumably unintended side effects were that it

galvanised Eleni's determination and saw her utilise communist mythology, and grouped her with like-minded women in prison. The biggest unintended effect of the government's efforts to extirpate communists was that it created a community out of trauma per Kai Erikson (1995) and laid the foundations for a public space based on stability and caring, previously only available through kinship or clientelism. Eleni forms pockets of home, or what it should stand for, amidst an inhospitable landscape thereby updating the mythology of homeland towards something more democratic.

Averoff Prison, where Eleni is an inmate, acts as a democratically advanced microcosm for Greek society. The prisoners come from all backgrounds and do not necessarily know each other, but forge a community through their belief in communism. Life is lived, milestones such as having a baby and getting married are still achieved, despite the traumatic separation of husbands and wives (see Figures 3.20-3.22). The situation in the prisons imitates the constricted atmosphere on the outside. Kinship is forged but can be dismantled at the whim of those wielding power.

In contrast to the more passive role of the police in *Voyage to Cythera* who seem to be somewhat adrift in this post-Junta society, the authorities in *The Stone Years*, specifically the Averoff prison warden and the police inspector, adopt an arbitrary and cruel stance as the buffer between the state and the people. While it may have been the institution's policy to turn children of a certain age over to family members outside of the prison, the warden's approach – distinctly dismissive compared to that of the more compassionate prison guards – is to use his power to overpower and control Eleni. In doing so, he complicates her role as a mother. If he relocates her son, then she is rendered worthless as a mother, hindering her attempt at a family. Furthermore, he denies her request to marry Babis, forcing her to continue as an unwed mother. Fortunately, the Corrections Committee approves Babis's identical request,

allowing the couple to follow this social convention. As a government representative, the warden may have been threatened by Eleni's strength and resilience. There was no place in the ruling agenda for any kind of democratic representation, no matter how growing in prevalence. The police inspector who interrogates Babis acknowledges the growing power of the people. He does not treat him with condescension, but with stifled admiration: "We the juniors treat you veterans with respect. Things have changed. What you know from the old is gone."⁴⁸ The captor and the captive figuratively dance a familiar dance, but there is not the same oppression that Eleni experienced. Nonetheless, Babis remains a *persona non grata* in the eyes of the rulers of his homeland.

To demonstrate the disconnect between the (literal and figurative) head of state and the body social, Voulgaris depicts the highest authority as either disembodied or silent. As a previously cited example, the MP's statement was read aloud – he was not present. It is as though there is no one in power who is personally responsible. Years into her sentence, Eleni hears the voice of Giorgios Papadopoulos, the prime minister (later toppled by his men):

...with the awareness that we defend the priceless heritage of those who sacrificed themselves in the name of Liberty. One revolution [the junta] did not merely 'create law' according to what has been internationally accepted. It creates History the course and content of which no one is capable any more to desecrate and alter. All those who concern themselves in every possible way with Greece should always keep this in mind. It will be to their benefit in numerous ways because it will provide them with a secure perspective and it will free them from

⁴⁸ Scenes from the documentary film *The Rehearsal* (1974) suggest that not everyone shared the inspector's perception that times had changed. It is worth noting that the film was directed by Jules Dassin, the American communist director who had settled in Greece, the homeland of his wife Melina Mercouri, after being blacklisted in Hollywood.

illusions... The main characteristic feature of new reality... We have improvised the present situation which we took over and which all of you will remember how disagreeable and peculiar it was, and we have been building simultaneously a future worthy of Greece. (*The Stone Years*)

Papadopoulos speaks in highly rhetorical speech, offering signifiers with no relatable real signified. Contrary to the words the officials utter, they cannot deliver Greece to greatness without Greeks. But you cannot argue with the radio. It cannot hear you.

While the speech is playing, Eleni and Babis communicate via mirrors across the prison yard, forging their own reality outside of their inherited mythology. The film concludes on a similar note. “You are listening to the radio programme ‘A Woman and her Problems’” telling listeners such as the newly released Eleni what her female struggles are as she looks through memories of a female kinship forged outside of the influence of Church and State and their imposed traditions and exploitations. The only exception to the dictatorial radio is the prison loudspeaker announcing that Yfanti is to be discharged. Eleni shouts back, “I’ll leave when I’m ready!” Though she was probably ready to leave the prison, the one place where she could live unfettered by gender conventions, she resists interruption, tired of being dictated to by invisible and arbitrary forces.

Eleni and Babis’s homeland does not welcome them because it superimposes an unreal homogeneity that did not include them. In the anniversary celebration of the Junta, a banner is displaying the words, “Greece for the Christian Greeks” with people walking around dressed as ancient soldiers, celebratory attire from the year of national independence, and a contemporary military marching band (see Figure 3.23). But the Greek head of state has manipulated the definition of Greekness, leaving itself with an amputated body. At Eleni’s trial, the high-ranking judges in military uniforms remain

silent throughout the trial (see Figure 3.14). They are a silent wall against which Eleni's story goes unheard, and their decision is read out off-camera. It is as though they are not fully present, detached from the life-changing sentence they hand down to one of their citizens.

The government and the Junta colonels attempted to tear down the existing concept of homeland practised by Greek non-elite communists and drew others into the chaos of transplantation through rapid modernisation at the behest of the Americans. However, they were only able to act with such power due to the singular Greek legacy of patrimonial power sustained through the Byzantine and Ottoman periods and by the Greek Orthodox Church. Choosing to resist rather than conform, Eleni finds comfort and strength in Greek partisans' past deeds. She must rely on the resistance network through necessity, which provides her with stability and a sense of belonging, previously only available through kinship and clientelism. The sense of membership and shared stories between the communist safehouse owners and the people in prison with Eleni and Babis foster a concept of homeland distinct from the one into which they were born. Thus, in the face of trauma, Eleni and Babis, and by extension, *The Stone Years*, adapt cultural mythology to meet the needs of the population it serves and in doing so, creates a symbolic space of legitimation they can call home.

3.3.5. *Summary*

The dynamic between cultural mythology and trauma present *The Stone Years* is distinct from the other three films. Across the three axes of war, masculinity, and homeland, the film reflected the necessity for change. Regarding war, Voulgaris does

not relegate Civil War to history. Instead, he depicts how citizens still suffer in the aftermath of war for the sake of satisfying a neo-conservative government that is, itself, beholden to the larger, more demanding government of the United States. The film is the story of a real couple who spend their adult lives avoiding persecution informing those who did not know or pretended not to know of their fellow citizens' plight, next door, out of sight or in prison from 1950 to 1974. The story is one interpretation of the impact of the aftermath that was not necessarily warmly received by everyone at the time. In the 1980s PASOK sought to reconcile the narratives about the Civil War, and Voulgaris's production certainly paints a sympathetic portrait of the Left. Georgakas admits, "Voulgaris's Manichean good-and-evil forces approach means that left-oriented viewers will be moved by a sympathetic portrait of their own kind, while the right-oriented will consider it a whitewash of the real issues contested in Greece from the late 1930s to the late 1970s" (Georgakas 1986, 46).

In examining the film across the axis of masculinity, *The Stone Years* captures the transition from a definitively and historically patrimonial society toward something more democratic as Eleni exhibits self-reliance and determination unexpected in a woman of the time. The film focuses on Eleni as an emerging woman who asserts her rights as a person. She is not a static, supporting character to Babis like Katerina to Spyros in *Voyage to Cythera*. Instead, Babis's gentleness highlights Eleni's strength. Voulgaris does not depict Babis as pitiful like Angelopoulos' Spyros, but Eleni is larger-than-life. She challenges the chauvinist attitudes sanctioned by mythology, which is unheard of, as is her assertion of a homeland. Eleni counterattacks the government's efforts to rescind her claim to a homeland, the birthplace of her individual and cultural identity. Rather than adhere to the survivalist approach adopted by many of those around her, Eleni improves the mythology surrounding homeland by creating a network

of trust with the other communists. This deviates from the legacy initiated in Byzantium and consolidated in the Ottoman Empire in which private citizens did not have a symbolic space to democratically explore what it meant to be Greek. Eleni adapts mythology to meet the needs of the population, especially as dialogue opened up in the 1970s and 1980s about “the Long Sixties” and other periods of turmoil. In sum, in the face of trauma and persecution, Eleni is empowered by and challenges mythology to reflect the hardships and changes the Greek people endured in the aftermath of both the Civil War and the Junta.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, we considered two films produced in the aftermath of significant and prolonged turmoil at the national level. Again, referring to the films as part of “aftermath cinema” encompasses Spyros’s hardship depicted in *Voyage to Cythera* when exiles were permitted to return to Greece as well as Eleni’s experience of persecution long after the Civil War ended. By now, it is apparent that the wounds inflicted by the Civil War are contiguous but distinct from the damage inflicted by the Junta. The films were produced in the aftermath of the war against communists when many were still struggling with the question “What happened?” which the integral first step in the process of social signification to declare cultural trauma. The two case studies underwent analysis on three axes (war, masculinity and homeland) to identify the relationship between the characters and the social expectations manifested in their culture’s mythology. This close reading enables us to answer the original question of this thesis: What is the relationship between cultural mythology and trauma in this example of aftermath cinema?

In *Voyage to Cythera*, the topic of war is treated like the elephant in the room – everyone knows it is there, but nobody wants to address it. Furthermore, Greek society has operated for hundreds of years by private survivalism identified by Charalambis and Demertzis (1993). Spyros returned to a culture of people trying to provide for themselves and their families. The war from the communist perspective was a crippling experience on many fronts, so to mention it only brings back old wounds and questions about social priorities which Spyros embodies. He is allowed to return home to Greece because PASOK wishes to redress the damage wrought by the previous decades' governments. In addition, Spyros, a defeated and enfeebled old man appears to no longer be a threat to the still very patriarchal social order. But his presence in the homeland proves too unsettling for those who stayed, especially the villagers wishing to sell their land. They see a man who sacrificed a family bond for his principles, while they try to make a little extra money from a Western tourist-centric ski resort. Angelopoulos conveys through the audition scene that many Greek men could be Spyros: men who challenged the official mythology handed down from the Greek elites in debt to the vehemently anti-communist Americans.

Voyage to Cythera forensically surveys cultural mythology, trauma and their dynamic. Angelopoulos points out for audiences through a disintegrated mythology's fragments, unsure yet what is salvageable and can, or should be rebuilt. Angelopoulos does not identify one cause of trauma and how mythology addresses it. Instead, he points to several contributing factors to Greece's situation including the difficulty with coming to terms with the past, the personal guilt and public shame surrounding both rebellious communism and complicit conformity, which Angelopoulos suggests current cultural mythology does not appear to treat. He presents specific mythological symbols such as the ancient Greek statue being carried past the film studio canteen referencing

the nation's illustrious past, or Spyros greeting his dog just as Odysseus did upon his return. But we are given the impression that these are not what defines a culture, nor will they help it recover from trauma. Instead, Angelopoulos shows us that Greece is adrift in the open sea, with no assistance from the increasingly outdated mythology. The film is not optimistic or pessimistic, dependent on or independent of cultural mythology. Spyros's exile could be considered traumatic, but the reception when he returns to Greece appears to be more troubling without a clear solution, hence his involuntary return to international waters. What *Voyage to Cythera* demonstrates through Spyros's interactions with his family and the community, is that while some were ready to speak, not all were prepared to listen. To the question, "What just happened?" *Voyage to Cythera* replies, "We do not know yet, but we are figuring it out". This contemplative yet detached stance towards trauma and mythology places the film in its typology location (see Figure 0.1).

Across the three axes of analysis, *The Stone Years* confronts both the existing cultural mythology and the government's version to promote its anti-communist ideology. Though the Civil War is over, Eleni is still hunted and captured for being a communist, so she must continue to fight for her place in society. Much of the rhetoric handed down from the government depicts communists as "vile subversives" (Georgakas 1986, 46) and Voulgaris spends the film showing that Eleni is not. Instead, she is a progressive member of society who demands not to be treated as a second-class citizen of society for being a woman and a communist. Eleni finds her reality in which she is persecuted to be traumatic, and the existing mythology condones her persecution as a communist and her restrictions as a woman. She turns to the partisan mythology for a precedent in which she can see her beliefs reflected back to her. Galvanised by the

stories of those who came before her, she fights hegemonic oppression of capitalism, chauvinism, and opportunism present in war, masculinity, and homeland.

Eleni used mythology to address trauma and in doing so, adapted it to benefit Greek society. In response to the question, “What just happened?” Eleni understands what happened because she is informed by partisan mythology. She is determined to repair damage to several levels of the culture, including injury by outdated myths that reinforce the patrimonial power structure and preclude the public from having shared space to explore what it means to be Greek. Eleni is an agent of social change, and her outspoken nature raises the critical questions of legacy and identity. This heightened level of engagement with both trauma and mythology assigns the film’s location on the typology (see Figure 0.1).

Today the echoes of unresolved questions of identity and narrative influence ongoing debates. The impact of these issues underlines the importance of evaluating official and unofficial narratives, myths and rituals that shape a collective as they emerge. Again, films as a medium of popular entertainment can explore or reinforce these stories and practices, and in turn, can become embedded as cultural reference points themselves. *Voyage to Cythera* and *The Stone Years* use themes to identify aspects and events critical of what Žižek calls the “nation-thing” (Žižek 1993), thereby contributing to the perennial question, “What does it mean to be Greek?” to which of course, there is no one right answer. Lydia Papadimitriou’s recommendation about national cinema could be applied to national identity. “Its national identity, therefore, should not be seen as unified, but as the product of a multiplicity of factors coming together at a particular time and in particular form,” (Papadimitriou 2009, 74).

The decision in the 1980s to officially reimagine the partisan resistance as “National Resistance” (Demertzis, 2013, 148) which includes everyone in the struggle

for national freedom, and other efforts to circumnavigate a more candid conversation have had long-term consequences. For example, there is measurable distrust in the government and a related high incidence of belief in conspiracy theories (Charalambis and Demertzis 1993; Muro and Vidal 2016; Papazoglou 2017). Unsurprisingly, Greeks trust social media more than official news (Kalogeropoulos 2018).

Such outcomes indicate that neglecting to heal a wound – whether by addressing the trauma and declaring it a cultural trauma or using mythology to lessen the impact – leaves the wound vulnerable to infection. The Greek Left had hoped that was what would occur when PASOK came to power in 1981, but to little avail and there is still work to be done that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

I have analysed the dynamic between cultural mythology and trauma to understand how aftermath cinema contributes to the process of social signification necessary to declare cultural trauma. This chapter evaluated two films across the same three axes to gauge the perception of traumatic impact and whether and how cultural mythology, manifested through social conventions, stories, precedents and relatability was deployed to heal it. Angelopoulos offers a distanced perspective of the aftermath in Greek society by not citing one cause or one solution. Voulgaris's approach sees cultural mythology reinvented for a society emerging from the aftermath of decades of maltreatment of communists and centuries of oppression of women. In the next and final chapter, the aims and findings will be restated then we shall propose a role for aftermath cinema in the process of social signification, and, perhaps, if not reconciliation, then gaining an empathic understanding of what happened to someone else as a "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg 2004).

Conclusion

4.1. Introduction

This thesis aimed to answer the question, “What is the role of cultural mythology in aftermath films from the societies of Serbia and Greece?” First, a definition of cultural mythology was proposed that surveyed of scholarship in cultural studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and memory studies to make tangible an elusive, deeply subjective concept that can unite people despite the postmodern shift towards fragmentation. Like the society it serves, cultural mythology is porous, fluid and continuously under construction. Then the concept of cultural trauma was then addressed to identify the role films play in the process of social signification. To reiterate, a film produced after a period of unrest that meditates on “what just happened?” contributes to the social signification process necessary to declare cultural trauma. In evaluating the role of mythology in aftermath films it became apparent that the more a character turned to mythology as a source of precedents, a social charter, or a connection to the past, the less traumatic the destabilisation appeared. This dynamic was documented in the typology (see Figure 0.1 and Figure 0.2). These findings reinforced the importance of aftermath cinema as a resource for communities and cultures to engage with recent turmoil and to help repair “the tear in the social fabric” following a period of societal rupture. In films where characters did not identify with myths or where the myths were oppressive, it signalled that there was “identity work” to be done.

Part of this identity work is looking to the past to understand the present. The “memory boom” combined with the proliferation of smaller narratives in the

postmodern shift has led some scholars to question the merit of official commemoration to consolidate, heal, or reconcile identities, especially when standardised by international organisations such as the United Nations. Aftermath cinema avoids the pitfalls identified by Patricia Naftali and Lea David because it is endogenous and comprises many impressions.

As such, aftermath cinema enjoys a privileged position outside of official commemoration and “remembering to forget”. To appreciate the role cinema can play in cultural identity work, we will summarise the findings of the analysis and the typology. We will also discuss the advantages of looking further into the past (i.e. Greece in the 1990s) and the present (i.e. Contemporary Serbian Cinema). Furthermore, while screenings can be public events, the experience of apprehending a movie is an individual one that engages with personal subjective constructs about one’s own identity and the beliefs shared by a group or a society.

Films that belong to aftermath cinema can be a part of that progress towards recognition because they are interpretations or impressions. The ongoing dialogue surrounding truth and representation that emerged after the Holocaust⁴⁹ has taught us about the intrinsic value of subjective impressions of trauma. The films were chosen for this investigation because they belong to the genre of aftermath cinema. They meditate on the impact of the recent turmoil on a society. Therefore, This thesis has tried to go beyond textual analysis to connect the productions to society, making this project a multidimensional endeavour.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Walker 2005.

4.2. An Emerging Typology of the Findings

In confronting the turmoil from which Serbia and Greece emerged, an inverse correlation arose between mythology and trauma from the films: the larger the presence of mythology, the smaller the impact of trauma. This pattern was plotted on the two axes of “mythology” and “trauma” to form the typology (see Figures 0.1 and 0.2). In one corner of the typology, *On the Milky Road* utilises mythology to characterise the Yugoslav Wars as minimally traumatic because they are merely another chapter in Serbia’s eternal story of being under siege. Kusturica portrays past real or fictional hardships as a precedent to bring familiarity to uncertain times in a way that is similar to what Malinowski observed with the Trobrianders (see Section 1.2.2). The rhetoric is substantiated with symbols and tropes classified according to Ivan Čolović’s inventory of politicised characters and signs. The way Kusturica makes his film a platform for these illustrates the political myth-making process identified by Barthes in his discussion of the Black soldier on the *Paris Match* cover (Barthes 1993). Of course, it also confirms Barthes’s hypothesis that myths are fashioned out of pop culture, but this is true for many films. Films both preserve and explore a culture’s mythology and, by doing so, they assume a mythical status in and of themselves by replenishing the cultural storehouse. In Kusturica’s attempt to downplay Serbia’s latest period of violence, the following question arises: If it is like past wars, then why does it need to be stated, other than to downplay anxiety? Kusturica is known for his magical realism, but his uncritical engagement with mythology rejects a realism that addresses Serbia’s issues and projects a homeland trapped in an escapist fantasy in more than one way.

In the opposite corner of the typology, *A Serbian Film* depicts a traumatising and ultimately fatal experience caused by harmful, exploitative myths created for profit in what Spasojević sees as the absence of a redeemable national character. Spasojević

expresses that mythology leads to misfortune because it no longer resonates, but it inflicts harm upon its followers. To avoid further suffering by futilely searching myths for reassurance and finding none, it may be best to start anew (by Miloš committing suicide). However, the director shows how ensconced the myth of the Balkan Male is; through Vuk *Balkanised* Male trope is perpetuated, and the illusion strangles the real. Spasojević illustrates this by going “behind the camera” on the Balkan Male and the myths portrayed in *On the Milky Road*, such as the notion that a man should live and die for his country. In the case of *A Serbian Film*, the security provided by the element of “home” in “homeland” is undermined. Miloš becomes a slave to a master who deals in simulacra, losing his identity and his family in the process. It is ultimately revealed to be part of a destabilising illusion within an illusion.

Miloš’s humiliation is made visceral through appropriating the conventions of the horror genre. Spasojević assigns guilt of the accomplice to viewers-as-voyeurs because they see the real price of an illusion constructed for their benefit. It might be proposed that the *fetishisation* of the grotesque denies the viewer this gratification typically associated with the horror genre. However, this is questionable given the political context the director made explicit through multiple press interviews and statements.⁵⁰ Miloš agrees to participate in Vuk’s film as the “Balkan Male” because he needs the money. If there is no audience for a type of film, there is no profit. However, as has been noted already, the director’s statement released after the initial shocked reaction to the film defends the genre decision as a way of conveying despair and making visceral the trauma for witnesses-as-audiences. Arguably, the nature of the genre may discourage some potential viewers – domestic and foreign - from watching the film because it traverses the boundary between horror and torture. But this returns to

⁵⁰ See “Special Introduction by Director Srdjan Spasojević” in *A Serbian Film* (2010)

the point about films being interpretations. Spasojević's production is a metaphoric articulation of a traumatic, nightmarish experience that raises many questions about narrating trauma that warrant further discussion. The extremity of the two Serbian films addresses thematic questions of nationalism in radically different – indeed opposed – ways. It reinforces the point that any film that claims to represent the nation should be treated with scepticism. As I have shown, the imposition of a unilateral official narrative in Greece caused fragmentation and heartbreak by denying its heterogeneous, syncretic heritage.

After World War II, the Greek government imposed an official narrative that homogenised the population's heterogeneous heritage. This whitewashing of the people was achieved by the mass exile and incarceration of communist and left-wing sympathisers. It caused turmoil by undermining the existing cultural mythology and concepts of identity. Spyros, Eleni and Babis represent the victims of such government policies. In both *Voyage to Cythera* and *The Stone Years*, the government is portrayed as if not untouchable then silent, like a disembodied phantom descending to disrupt lives in the name of irredentism. The elite constructed a narrative of singular greatness and anyone who contested it was deemed a traitor. *Voyage to Cythera* and *The Stone Years* portray residents Eleni and Spyros's experiences in an inhospitable homeland.

The Greek films reflect on the notion of a homeland that actively discourages its communist citizens from calling it home. In *Voyage to Cythera*, Spyros arguably loves his country more than do his neighbours who had the privilege of remaining in the country after the Civil War, who are willing to let the contested land be developed into a ski resort. In *The Stone Years*, the couple must hide in the shadows of their homeland. It creates dissonance between the public experience and the official narrative. The government obstructs the characters representing the counternarrative from

participating in the ongoing construction of a larger cultural identity. It forces these characters to reconsider their personal identities. For Spyros, this means continuing to live statelessly – again, tragically embodied at the conclusion of the film by being shipped out to sea on a raft. For Eleni, it means feeling great trepidation about the society she finally becomes free to join. Voulgaris concludes his film by implying that Greek society will not know how to integrate Eleni and other formerly incarcerated women. Prior to and during their imprisonment, they learn how to live independently – a trait not common, and often discouraged in women of the time for the sake of preserving myths of patriarchy.

The Greek elite deployed narratives to naturalise the kind of politically motivated monolithic myths that Barthes discusses (Barthes 1993). While the official rhetoric did retain traditional and widely recognised symbols, it appropriated the existing mythology for its own gain. Furthermore, a national mythology does not fulfil its function when it divides and excludes the audience it should be uniting. The myths the Greek government attempted to establish did not provide listeners with a comforting precedent. And the social charter reinforced through these myths had less to do with fostering civility and more to do with obedience and collaboration, especially during the Junta. The two films demonstrate the leadership's hypocrisy that advocates for traditional values and makes Greece "great again" while simultaneously splitting families apart through hiding, prison, and exile.

While the male as head of the household was an image that authorities ostensibly supported, in practice it was dismantled (and the males in question emasculated) by the fathers being removed from the family unit. Spyros is accorded no respect when he returns to Greece because he has not been present for the last thirty-two years to earn it, despite participating in hazardous and typically masculine

activities. Angelopoulos treats both ancient and contemporary myths with detachment, as though they were antiques and popular items alike for sale in a shop. He lays them out for his viewers and asks, “Where have these led us?”. Posing this question in the context of the unfolding narrative of Spyros’ odyssey communicates a scepticism towards both mythology and trauma, thus positing the film as a less extreme, more balanced point on the typological continuum.

Rather than considering myths from an emotional distance, *The Stone Years* proactively dismantles myths circulated by tradition and officialdom, thus situating it alongside *Voyage to Cythera* on the typological spectrum (see Figure 0.1). Eleni symbolises the arrival of a new, more egalitarian mythology that critiques illegitimate authority and other unjustified aspects of the hegemony. As a cultural artefact, the film reflects the trends concurrent with the postmodern shift and sees protests worldwide against unjust governments. The storyline and dialogue communicate to viewers that change is afoot, and it is for the better.

4.3. The Past Living in the Present

From our contemporary perspective, analysing these films made ten years after the end of an event allows us to see how much or how little of this change has taken hold in society – and cinema as its reflection – in the decades since. The previous chapter was dedicated to analysing the relationship between mythology and trauma in aftermath cinema. Angelopoulos’s production is observant and withholds judgement about the socio-political trajectory Greece has been pursuing, while Voulgaris’s is a more direct call to action. The films, clearly eager for change, contribute to the dialogue about a turbulent period in recent history and the mythology that informed it. However,

new mythologies, like cultural trauma, do not appear overnight. We will address the cinematic trends that have emerged in Greece since 1985 to appreciate how this dialogue has continued. But first, to contextualise the inroads cultural mythology has made since the fall of the Junta, we turn to a contemporary and comparable aspect that reminds us that any process occurring at the national level takes time. Parallel to cultural mythology's entrenchment in the national psyche – though also connected to it – is Greece's tradition of clientelist politics dating back to Byzantium. Charalambis and Demertzis consider how Greece's historical power structures continue to influence the nation's political structure and economy and the related culture. They write,

Apart from the classical past, the traditions that have influenced the political culture of Modern Greece the most are the Byzantine and the Ottoman. A political tradition cannot endure unless it has been selectively interwoven into a nation's living political culture and structure. It is not by chance that the patrimonial nature of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires has affected contemporary Greek politics... It is true that the distant and also the recent past influence the present. Yet this influence occurs only because certain traditional elements are relevant to present-day events. They retain their force because they have adapted themselves to current social and political antagonisms and to contemporary modes of domination. (Charalambis and Dermertzis 1993, 219)

Thus, as with cultural mythology, political traditions that lasted for centuries are not easy to dismantle within a couple of decades, despite significant events like reinstating democracy after a junta. Furthermore, as Charalambis and Demertzis point out, a tradition must be "selectively interwoven" into a culture, meaning that the Greek elite chose to continue this practice for economic, political and diplomatic reasons that are

beyond the parameters of this project. Their insight also highlights the fact that, like mythology, structures must adapt and reflect their society to maintain relevance.

There was much optimism in 1981 when the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) came to power as Greece's first centre-left government. Its leader, Andreas Papandreou, sought to meet the needs of the people and renegotiate the memory and position of Greek communism. He attempted to break with the model outlined by Charalambis and Demertzis above, in which legislators were only minimally interested in protecting or fostering individual rights, and the needs of the population were not of primary concern due to their long-standing conceptualisation. However, Charalambis and Dermertzis remind us that, "[i]n Greece, consequently, the public sphere is not recognised in and for itself, according to the mainstream perception. Instead, there is a utilitarian approach that subjugates the public sphere to the exigencies of the private" (1993, 223). Though such an attitude would be expected during a junta, this observation offers insight into the mentality of the previous governments that punished their citizens for divergent political views. Another concrete indication of this stance is the lack of welfare provisions for people living in Greece.

Nonetheless, PASOK instigated meaningful change for private citizens by permitting exiles to return to Greece, giving resistance fighters a previously withheld pension, and recognising civil marriages as equal to religious unions. Nonetheless, the party and subsequent governments could not escape the legacy of politico-economic practices, culminating in the recent Greek financial crisis (Sainz et al. 2020). For some, the causes were similar to the economic decisions made after World War II by the Greek government with "oversight" by the British, followed by the Americans through the Marshall Plan. In the years following the Second World War, the economy was structured to reflect the ambitions of a select number of Greeks and their foreign

advisors. This neo-patrimonial arrangement rapidly modernised some aspects of Greece, such as airplane landing strips, while again ignoring others that would benefit Greece and its people long-term (Kofas 1990). The enduring clientelist framework facilitated and intensified the impact through the accrual of loans from foreign countries to maintain existing arrangements and legitimise new practices, leading to a financial crisis.

The austerity measures and censorious legislation that emerged to restabilise the economy appeared as a familiar and even emotionally triggering event. In an illuminating survey of works that address the topic of torture during the Junta, Kostis Kornetis reviews the 2011 documentary *The Girls of the Rain* by Alinda Dimitriou (Kornetis 2014b). Dimitriou uses contemporary footage of economic crisis protesters in Athens with words by women who partook in demonstrations against the Junta decades before. The choice of images and words propose that Greek authoritarianism is alive and well. This counters the trope of the “Sweet Sixties” (upheld by judges at torturers’ trials in the 1970s in which they curtailed witness testimony for being too graphic (Kornetis 2014b). A psychoanalytic interpretation might suggest that this indicates the still unresolved status of the trauma of the Junta upon the public psyche. Dimitriou’s comparison of the dictatorship and the financial crisis brings to mind a psychoanalytic repetition compulsion. The latter event becomes a repetition of the former event rather than an event in itself. Closer to the social constructivist perspective of this thesis, the film contributes to the pronouncement of trauma necessary for the process of social significance to achieve recognition as a cultural trauma. In this context, it uses the now-mythologised 1973 Athens student uprising as a precedent to narrate the current upheaval by subsuming the “rain girls” into the larger tradition of resistance. In doing this, it invites viewers to empathise with the previous generation’s struggles, thereby

concretising a continuous identity building on Landsberg's theory of "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg 2004). This further supports the hypothesis about cinema's role in declaring cultural trauma and illustrates the concept of films-as-myths to reinforce or challenge identity.

The innate needs for identity and belonging have been scrutinised in the postmodern shift, palpably so in Greek cinema since the fall of the Junta. In coming to terms with the tear in the fabric of social identity, it is logical that filmmakers would palpate Greekness through their productions. Papadimitriou proposes that "[t]he search for a national identity has also haunted some filmmakers of the New Greek Cinema and led to the production of a group of films focusing on explorations of Greekness" (Papadimitriou 2009, 73). Again, the advantage of a focal point in the 1980s permits us to witness the journey since then, both of Greek cinema and more broadly of the shift towards postmodernism. Papadimitriou demarcates the late 1980s and the early 1990s as the end of New Greek Cinema, and the beginning of Contemporary Greek Cinema. Audiences and directors alike grew tired of ruminations on national identity leading to a change in the direction in which the cinematic winds blew. Contemporary Greek Cinema aims the camera at interpersonal dynamics and away from larger political events: "[t]he terms of the debate have been reversed, with the emphasis being placed on unpacking the ideological processes behind seeing a fixed 'national identity'" writes Papadimitriou (Papadimitriou 2009, 74). Yorgos Lanthimos, director of *Dogtooth* (*Kynodontas* 2009), is associated with this cinematic era. In some regards, this could be seen as coming full circle in the history of Greek mythology. Once again, the stories of individual figures teach us about the beliefs of the society as a whole. New Greek Cinema set out to explore a society in the aftermath of a profound and violent identity crisis. Despite having moved on to individuality from nationality, political and

international issues, such as the arrival of refugees' arrival on Greek shores, films continue to ask the question, "What is Greece's role in Europe?"

Serbia, too, grapples with this topic, asking of itself, "What now?" As Serbia seeks dialogue with the international community, its cinema continues to reflect its diverse society. Though with Serbian aftermath cinema, we lack the benefit of temporal distance enjoyed with Greece, a cursory survey of recent Serbian productions can inform us of the atmosphere. *The Parade* (*Parada* 2011) by Srdjan Dragojević, who also directed *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (*Lepa Sela Lepa Gore* 1996) and wrote *Wounds* (*Rane* 1998), manifests the presence of progressive liberals and a connection to the international LGBTQ+ community. It challenges traditions and their taboos and instead, appeals to empathy and personal fulfilment to overcome differences, especially those that have proved to be obstacles to European Union accession. Conversely, the Russian-Serbian co-production *The Balkan Line* (2019) by Andrej Volgin reiterates the mythological bond between the two Slavic countries by depicting the reclaiming of Slatina Airport from an Albanian warlord. The film also tells the story of a Russian peacekeeper who rescues a Serb, forsaken by the international community, who was about to have her organs harvested by Albanian terrorists. Coincidentally, Emir Kusturica has a cameo appearance as a taxi driver. Like Kusturica's production, *The Balkan Line* deploys the politicisation of symbols to construct events in Kosovo, in a manner that is reminiscent of those decribed by Barthes (1957/1993).

Somewhere between these two poles lies a thoughtful collection of productions which address themes of distrust, uncertainty, and guilt from the individual to the national level, exploring the same questions as this thesis; "What just happened?" and "What are we now?" *Circles* (*Krugovi* 2013) by Srđan Golubović ruminates on intergenerational responsibility through the true story of a Bosnian Serb soldier killed

by fellow soldiers for protecting a Bosniak friend. Though the catalysing actions occurred during a national conflict, the reactions of the dead soldier's father, his friend, and the killer's son are personal decisions that reflect what these individuals want for their country. Another film in a similar vein is *A Good Wife* (2016) by Mirjana Karanović, which sees a wife ascertain her husband's level of involvement during the war. It is a thoughtful reminder of how the past is not yet *in the past* of the aftermath society. These films and others indicate that the people have not finished narrating events and the aftermath of the 1990s, and they warrant further analysis in the context of the relationship between myth and trauma.

From 2010 to the present, Serbian coming-of-age films demonstrate that not only have the stories not yet all been told, but the intergenerational impact cannot yet be gauged entirely. If these films belonged to another country's national cinema, one not so recently affected, perhaps the undercurrent of lack could be attributed to postmodern fragmentation. However, the growing pains visited upon the heirs of the 1990s are fraught with tensions that do not belong to the heirs in contrast to films that do not originate in aftermath societies.

In this case, it would be naïve to overlook the cultural devastation of the previous generation. Dijana Jelača dedicated her study of post-Yugoslav cinema to "lost childhoods, across borders, and to families, across oceans," (Jelača 2016) and concludes the text by focusing on the "cinematic Child" (2016, 222). She refers to films such as Aida Begić's *Snow* (*Snijeg* 2008) as "quiet war films" because "they call attention to and often undermine the standard expectations placed on the cinematic representations of war" (ibid.).

Yet this does not precisely describe the theme of a particular growing body of narratives in Serbia. There is an emerging trend that could be labelled "post-aftermath

cinema” to articulate the specific subject of these films, children who inherited the impact of the Yugoslav Wars. These films portray teenagers coping in the nihilist society they were born into but did not necessarily experience firsthand, leading to behaviours and reactions for which they likely cannot know the cause. A parallel could be drawn to the children born to parents active in The Troubles in the North of Ireland and further research and comparison between the two regions, and their aftermath cinemas is not only warranted but potentially beneficial for their respective societies. Potential films to include in such a survey include Nikola Ležaić’s *Tilva Roš* (2010) about two friends who finish secondary school in a former industrial town, Stevan Filipović’s *Skinning* (2010) about an academically gifted teenager who finds acceptance among skinheads, Dejan Zečević’s *Offenders (Izgrednici)* (2018) depicting students who are led by their professor to conduct “social experiments” on human behaviour around their city, or Maja Miloš’s internationally acclaimed *Clip (Klip)* (2012) which shows a girl’s relationship with promiscuity and social media. All of the films depict Serbian youths attempting to fill a personal void. This cultural dearth or emotional disconnect in which the young people live was constructed by their parents’ generation, whose healing from the long shadow of the 1990s is an ongoing process. Though unintentional, “the sins of the fathers are visited upon their children” as Demertzis experienced with his own father, a once persecuted communist (Demertzis 2013, 133). To the adolescent protagonists born after the guns stopped shooting, whatever it is that is larger than themselves is closed for renovation. Yet this does not mean they stop telling stories.

The young characters of Serbia and their directors continue to express and narrate, and the films are products of an evolving industry within an evolving society. Perhaps, while not entirely in charge of the society in which these protagonists were

born (what generation ever is?), they tell their own stories, not repeating those of their parents. In doing so, the films create prosthetic memories, and the viewers populate the cultural memory with their own, generationally singular experiences. Comparable to aftermath Greece of the 1980s, the rising generation of Serbia is adapting its cultural mythology to make it relevant again so it can perform its function to support and guide the members of the society it serves. This is a cinematic movement that demands further research, particularly in terms of the insights it can elicit insights for the study of other national cinemas, cultural mythology, adolescent psychology, and intergenerational trauma and postmemory.

Naturally, the aftermath cinemas of Serbia and Greece naturally follow distinct trajectories. In the second half of the twentieth century, Serbia was socialist, and Greece was officially anti-Left. The former recognised the heterogeneity united under the Yugoslav flag, the latter attempting to homogenise its diverse population. Voices in Serbia questioned the ICTY's motives, while Greece tried the guilty Colonels and commuted their sentences. However, examining the case studies across three common axes of war, masculinity, and homeland, similarities emerge. This lays the foundations for a typology that demonstrates an inverse correlation between mythology and trauma. Furthermore, it draws attention to the ability of even the impression of a precedent to bring order to a perceived chaos which can feel traumatic.

The intention behind choosing four samples has been to maintain a focus on the relationship between cultural mythology, cultural trauma, and the representation of both in aftermath cinema. Here I make no claim to a universal method but rather we propose that certain narrative universalities emerge when confronting uncertainty through what could be considered the most widely understood medium of art. Indeed, one of the major obstacles encountered has been that of language, and the present study relies

extensively on subtitles and translations. However, the outsider perspective may be less constrained by culture-specific biases which can exert an impact on research.

This project has concentrated on four films from two countries with a view to assessing how looking to the past contributes to how characters look at the present. But there is a desire to narrate through the aftermath to understand what happened. Films about the Serbian experience of the conflict will continue to appear for the foreseeable future because, as Serbian producer and editor Nataša Damnjanović points out, “that moment of coming to terms with the past never actually happened” (Eror 2019).

Going forward, my goal is to add to the sample size in the future to continue to test the hypothesis that the bigger the presence of uncritical mythology, the smaller the impact of trauma on film. However, no matter how many films are plotted on the typology, it will remain true that each text contributes a singular image to the spectrum that is national cinema. A production depicting that single interpretation becomes an impression if not internalised, then at least witnessed by many.

4.4. The Role of Aftermath Cinema in Narrating the Past

The genre of aftermath cinema, as it has been termed here, to answer or at least acknowledge questions about recent upheaval, conflict or oppression – anything that can exert an impact on collective identity. This thesis started out by enquiring into the relationship between mythology and trauma in aftermath cinematic narratives and highlighting their part in the process of social signification toward declaring cultural trauma. Announcing a negative event as a cultural trauma is subjective and is determined by its announcers. Recently the United Nations, along with smaller non-governmental organisations, have sought to standardise confronting the past at the

national level (David 2017; Naftali 2017). This thesis concludes by advocating for film as an alternative to the standardisation of cultural trauma and memory politics. Firstly, concerns about memory standardisation will be outlined, and we will then identify why cinema should be considered as a more precise tool to work through the past.

What are the possibilities for films in an aftermath society? We propose that aftermath cinema be considered as a ‘third way’, or a middle ground between individual and official silence and forgetting – what Lea David describes as “policy-oriented ‘memorialisation standards’” (David 2017, 296). Films will not replace official commemoration but should be elevated as a public, unofficial means of remembering the past. Around the world, official endeavours to memorialise, commemorate, or even acknowledge significant events in national history have been shaped by domestic and international politics. Moreover, rather than being endogenous, many of these efforts were aimed at placating international audiences (Trouillot 2011). For David, the current methodology is based on an approach that is not necessarily exportable to all cultures:

The rationale for placing the notion of “facing the past” at the heart of the post-conflict processes and massive human rights abuses has been generated by three primary assumptions. The first, borrowed from individual psychology, is that working through the past is necessary for healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The second, a political position, argues that accountability fosters democracy, promotes peace and human rights, while the third posits processes of dealing with the past as a moral duty, to remember the victims and acknowledge their trauma. (David 2017, 308)

Many people, including Nikola Ljuca and Nataša Damnjanović from the Serbian film industry, have expressed a desire to work through the past. In order to do so, an individual must be prepared for what they may find. Future research into audience

reception theory may help us understand the process more clearly. However, when preparing someone for an emotionally charged topic that touches upon aspects of individual and collective identity that may confront issues that were once taken for granted, it may be wise to start in an indirect, non-partisan, “truth-seeking” way. When we watch films, we understand that they are not necessarily factual, nor are they our own stories, but they are *someone’s* stories. As we watch the characters, the actions and the reactions, our minds consider how much we can identify with a character or the extent to which we may judge a decision, all the while knowing that the film is about *someone else* and our individual and collective identities are not under investigation for the duration of the screening.

Writing from a legal standpoint, Naftali shares David’s concerns, especially about the local implementation of reportedly universal “toolkits”. Naftali offers the following criticism of such interventions:

The lack of accountability of the United Nations for the Srebrenica massacres has thus been paired with an Alzheimer’s-like official politics, which points to the asymmetry of politics of remembrance and mourning. In addition, the *régimes* of truth and reconciliation fuel an entire memory industry composed of “truth experts” that has become global and highly lucrative. The advent of the “right to truth” arguably plays into a memory lobby dominated by a few western international human rights NGOs who tend to replicate “toolkits” and standardised models of truth-seeking, from Kosovo to Colombia, with the support of the United Nations human rights bodies and domestic NGOs which have internalised the global transitional justice agenda. Despite formal emphasis on the importance of local context, the quasi-system intervention of these new global experts in the aftermath of atrocities tends to depoliticise the issue of how

sovereign people wish to address a violent past by resorting to hegemonic models of truth inquiry most often ill-adapted to local realities. (Naftali 2017, 87)

Films can engage with the past in an introspective and endogenous rather than universal way. Though aspects of filmmaking are universal, the stories and the way they are told can very much belong to a particular society, as indicated by the mythology that engages with a culture, to say nothing of the financial drivers, power structures and other influences. But this does not limit viewers to their national cinema to understand national negative events. For example, Jelača reports how watching *The Deer Hunter* helped her make sense of her own experiences of war.

When the film came on my television set again during the Bosnian war years, my teenage self watched it in awe, shocked *both* by the accuracies of her childhood memories of the film and by the ways in which the film seemed to help me make sense of my own world and the violence that surrounded it. *The Deer Hunter* thus helped me identify early on this dialectic dynamic: that film *both* constitutes traumatic memory and is constituted by it. Hence, *The Deer Hunter* acted, for my teenage self, as a repository of difficult memories, both of its own protagonists as well as of the memories I brought to it as I was making sense of my own experience of war. (Jelača 2016, 2).

Like Naftali, David expresses concerns at the current universal implementation of what she considers “Western memorial models as a template for the representation of past tragedies or mass crimes” (David 2017, 308). But we see from Jelača’s experience that themes engage us differently. Films do not commit memorialisation – each film preserves a narrative in the collective memory. Collective memory plays a key role in constructing both collective and personal identities. A collective memory competes and negotiates in an arena wherein collective spheres engage in discursive tension. The

number of film narratives creates a multivalence that counters a singular, official, “standardised” memory. In the appreciation or contestation of a film, a dialogue is generated and individuals are allowed to engage in roles of both spectator and respondent without decreasing individual agency. In contrast, state-sponsored avenues of narratives and interpretation of events attempt to speak for the entire society. The diffuse presence and diversity of films defy grand narratives. Film, a popular and democratically attended activity, does not make any claim to centrality. And it will only become more democratised as platforms and productions disperse outside the studios. With that, the messages pass through more numerous routes of distribution. These films are not necessarily a part of the “duty to remember” Film pre-dates concepts which emerge in the “memory boom”. Films should be considered as cultural products that both react to and interpret events and ask the same of their viewer.

Films occupy a space outside the official narrative and offer interpretations different from the ones put forward by state organisations. Eror asserts “For Serbia’s arthouse directors, cinema offers an opportunity to try to influence a national media conversation that is dominated by chauvinists on TV and in the tabloid press” (Eror 2019). Indeed, *A Serbian Film*, the privately funded “arthouse” film about making a film, undermines the state-sponsored perspective by revealing the underbelly of the lucrative business of stereotypes and illusions. The censorship that prevailed during the conflicts of the 1990s in Serbia and until the 1970s in Greece means that filmmakers can often only begin to sort through war-related testimonies in the aftermath. Serbian director Nikola Ljuca explains the importance of aftermath cinema to understand the conflict: “I think that we’re now trying to come to terms with those images, trying to make sense of them – which is really important for our collective understanding of those events and our ability to reconfigure everything that’s hiding in our subconscious”

(Eror 2019). Aftermath cinema provides a population with an endogenous vocabulary and narratives that originate, not in dichotomy, but in uncertainty that reflects daily life within social norms. It does not necessarily inherently seek to heal, forgive, or reconcile, but rather to narrate in the same vein as journaling, painting, and drama. While memorialisation is new, art is not. Film-viewing, like theatre-going, creates an imaginary space where viewers can play without consequence.

Treating films as cultural artefacts created by members of a society at a particular point in time may facilitate understanding of what just happened, and identifying areas of social vulnerability. Both Greece and Serbia actively contribute to their respective aftermath cinemas to understand trauma on a national level and evaluate actions and decisions on an individual level through a protagonist.⁵¹ By their very nature, films force filmmakers to construct a narrative sequence. For domestic audiences or those audiences otherwise specifically addressed by the diegesis to relate to the narrative, directors and screenwriters utilise a language of visual and verbal symbols drawn from collective history and mythology. David argues that “[s]tandardisation always depersonalises and ignores all other aspects of identity in order to achieve a specific purpose” (David 2017, 317). Films offer personalities that may engender and typify feelings through faces that we, the audience watch. They do not advocate standardisation, but exploration. To strengthen the connection between cinema and aftermath society, further research should be undertaken to identify how domestic audiences engage with a film in a therapeutic sense. An additional avenue of investigation would be to compare findings with the international recognition of a film’s therapeutic function. On the one hand, the symbiotic relationship between

51 The 1969 documentary, *The Sorrow and the Pity* (dir. Max Ophuls) is a French example of an examination of individual actions and decisions against the backdrop of national uncertainty. Citizens of Nazi-occupied Vichy are interviewed about their roles in collaboration or resistance.

cultural mythology and a film's society suggests that screening a film for domestic audiences for reparative or reconciliatory purposes would not be replicable for a foreign audience. On the other hand, in documentaries such as *Chuck Norris vs Communism* (Calugareanu 2015) about the circulation of pirated Western films in Ceausescu's Romania, interviewees report identifying with characters such as Rambo. These types of investigations speak to the multidimensional significance of film and cultural studies.

We conclude with a summary of the status of Greek identity that may apply to many national identities. Kostas Koutsourelis imagines a dialogue with Georgios Theotokas, the Istanbul-born director of the Greek National Theatre. Koutsourelis muses,

As Georgios Thetakas believed, the "Modern Greek character" is multiform and contradictory and rich. And if it is rich, he would add, it is exactly because it is multiform and contradictory. Any attempt to tie it down to a "rigid definition, is not Greek purity but pure didacticism." (Koutsourelis 2016, 4)

The relationship between cultural mythology, cinema and trauma – in the context of Greek or any other national identity – is not meant to be rigid, ossified or standardised, but rather "multiform and contradictory".

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APPENDIX A - KIRK'S COMMONEST THEMES IN (MAINLY HEROIC) MYTHS

1. Tricks, riddles, ingenious solutions to dilemmas (used by gods and heroes for all purposes: to disguise or unmask, catch a thief or an adulterer, win a contest, delay pursuit, etc.)
2. Transformations (of men and women into birds, trees, animals, snakes, stars, as a punishment, or avoidance of an impasse; of deities into humans, temporarily; of women to evade amorous attention, and of Zeus to further it; of water-deities into all shapes)
3. Accidental killing of a relative, lover or friend, often followed by flight to avoid vengeance or obtain purification (of Laius by Oedipus, Actaeon by his dogs, Cyzicus by the Argonauts, Electryon by Amphitryon, Hycyinthus by Apollo, Procris by Cephalus, etc.)
4. Giants, monsters, and snakes, (as opponents of gods, guardians of treasure, ravagers to be destroyed by a hero; occasionally friendly (e.g. Hundred-handed giants, some Cyclops, some Centaurs), sometimes of mixed animal and human shape (e.g. Sphinx, Minotaur, Centaurs, Satyrs)
5. Attempts to get rid of a rival by setting impossible and dangerous tasks
6. Fulfilling a task or quest, sometimes with help of a god or girl (killing a monster, gaining an inaccessible object, freeing (sometimes marrying) a princess)
7. Contests (for a bride, kingship, for honour)
8. Punishment for impiety (of various graphic kinds; for attempting a goddess, boasting that one surpasses a deity; special kinds of death for opposing Dionysus)
9. Displacement of parents or elders (actual or feared displacement, often in accordance with an oracle)
10. Killing, or attempting to kill, one's own child (by exposure, to avoid displacement, or by accident, or to appease a deity; often in accordance with an oracle or prophecy)
11. Revenge by killing or seducing a man's wife or murdering his children
12. Sons avenge mother or protect her against an oppressor
13. Disputes within the family: sons fight each other, children oppressed by stepmother
14. Deceitful wife, vainly in love with young man, accuses him of rape
15. Deceitful daughter, in love with father's enemy, betrays father, is punished for it

16. Incestuous relationships
17. Founding a city (in accordance with an oracle, by following a certain animal or by other tokens)
18. Special weapons (needed to overthrow a particular enemy, cure a wound, etc.)
19. Prophets and seers (understand language of animals, propound riddles, cure childlessness, reveal way out of an impasse)
20. Mortal lovers of goddesses and mistresses of gods
21. Perils of immortality as a gift to men (danger of infinite old age if youth is not specified)
22. External soul or life-token (the life of a hero depends on a hair, a firebrand, etc.)
23. Unusual births (from the head or the thigh of Zeus, from mother at point of death, by castrating father, etc.)
24. Enclosure in a chest, jar, or tomb.

(Kirk 186-189)

Appendix B – Figures

Figure 0.1

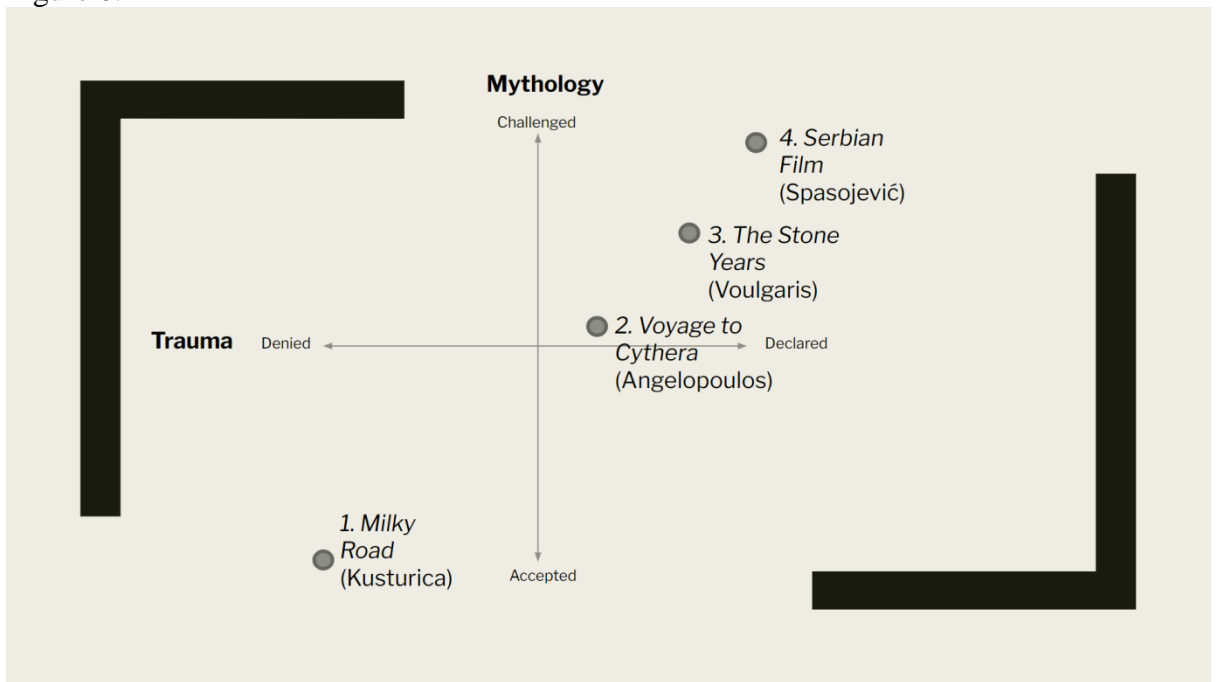


Figure 0.2

Film	Mythology	Trauma	Notes
1. Milky Road	Fascist Celebrates existing mythology (exceptionalist stories)	No trauma because being a Serb is trauma (according to the film)	Faith in mythology protects against trauma (especially when in denial)
2. Voyage to Cythera	Eclectic (draws from literary/anthro sources) Observes mythology as it evolves	Trauma caused by recalling/rejecting memories	Brechtian distancing and tensions pull it to the center, but documents the experience
3. The Stone Years	Challenges official/anthropological norms Reinvents mythology to forge a better society	Trauma caused by oppression, but working through it	Discomfort = growth
4. A Serbian Film	Dismantles myth, dismantles, hope Rejects existing mythology totally and utterly	Trauma caused by belief in exploited, exceptionalist stories, now left with nothing.	Major trauma without any mythology to guide Serbian society

Figure 2.1 Kosta undisturbed by enemy fire in the makeshift kitchen.



Figure 2.2 Photographs of Kosta's father.



Figure 2.3 The lively village clock.



Figure 2.4 Milena dancing at a village party.



Figure 2.5 Bloody geese as a metaphor for the international community.



Figure 2.6 The “liberators” arrive at the UN refugee camp.



Figure 2.7 The insensitive and incompetent British soldiers watching a Tom and Jerry cartoon.



Figure 2.8 The Bride is blown to heaven by landmines.



Figure 2.9 Lambs led to the slaughter.



Figure 2.10 The Serbian traitor drives Kosta to violence.



Figure 2.11 Kosta averts the Bride's gaze.



Figure 2.12 Zaga enjoying the company of women.



Figure 2.13 Floating with a pumpkin, Kosta meets the Bride's gaze.



Figure 2.14 Lejla makes a grab for power.



Figure 2.15 Miloš looks Lejla in the eye.



Figure 2.16 Miloš with Jeca and her grandmother.



Figure 2.17 Unconscious Miloš about to be abused by the state.



Figure 3.1 Young Alexandros helping the Resistance.



Figure 3.2. Spyros's reflection in the dock puddle.



Figure 3.3. The men auditioning to be Alexandros's "father".



Figure 3.4. Villagers return from all time periods.



Figure 3.5. Spyros and Panagiotis at the graveyard paying respects to their comrades.



Figure 3.6. “Aren’t we going to kiss?”



Figure 3.7 Spyros and Panagiotis dancing among fallen friends.



Figure 3.8 The kafenio owner closing for Spyros.



Figure 3.9 The kafenio owner making peace with the past.



Figure 3.10 Spyros and Katerina in front of the village house.



Figure 3.11 Voula and Alexandros are spectators to their father's performance.



Figure 3.12 Voula at the *kafeteria*.



Figure 3.13 Eleni Yfanti tells the court about herself – the civilians. (1 / 3)



Figure 3.14 Eleni Yfanti tells the court about herself – the silent military judges. (2 / 3)



Figure 3.15 Eleni Yfanti tells the court about herself – pregnant on the witness stand. (3 / 3)



Figure 3.16 Male political prisoners of “Hellas”.



Figure 3.17 Babis and others entering the Athens Security “accommodation.”



Figure 3.18 A waiter serving the Yfanti women.



Figure 3.19 The kinship of Eleni and Cleo.



Figure 3.20 Eleni Yfantis enters the prison for the first time.



Figure 3.21 Eleni Yfantis re-entering the prison with her baby.



Figure 3.22 Eleni Yfanti enters the prison as a bride.



Figure 3.23 Greeks from all ages celebrate the anniversary of the coup.

