Being Greek: using photographs as a means of exploring cultural identity

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the relations between social memory, family photographs and the contemporary construction of Greekness.

The empirical focus of the thesis is how Greek participants remember and experience particular social and cultural practices such as national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and lifecycle events through the photographs contained in their family albums. I use the approach that photographs can stand as a means of exploring the merging of the personal and the familial with the public, in order to describe the ways in which people create and construct their sense of Greekness. My research further explores the ways in which memory works in relation to the prompts elicited by a photographic image, and illustrates how memory contributes to a cultural identity that is grounded in the habits, details and performances that emerge in mundane social interaction. Furthermore, I investigate how such experiences are reproduced at the very moment that my informants remember and recreate their sense of Greekness. The argument I develop suggests that the notion of experience does not necessarily have an 'anchor'; rather, it is reproduced through spontaneous, momentary flashes that appear in participants' embodied memories.

The concept of 'cultural nationalism' is developed in my research in terms of a historical message that can emerge from the traditions, rituals, folksongs and cultural practices. Symbols, myths, geographies and histories act as inseparable pieces of what Greek participants themselves termed the cultural dimensions of their national identity. The way people perform, celebrate and use such dimensions – and generally their culture – forms and helps to create and sustain the nation itself. I chose to investigate how this kind of national iconography – especially that which forms a part of national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and lifecycle events – forms a sense of belonging and Greekness, produced not only through the normative cultural conventions that construct part of the nation, but also through a complex mixture of cultural ingredients that involve the experiential, the mundane and the everyday. This is what I call the 'mythistorical' narration of cultural identity: where myths, symbols and signs of social and cultural practices come to embody particular styles of national belonging in Greek participants' memories.

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Chapter One

Introduction

It was a very cold day in December 1999 and I was flicking through a family album in my parents' country house outside Athens. After looking fondly at photographs taken during Easter, national parades, my baptism and on family visits to ancient monuments, I turned to my father to ask who took each photograph, where and why. He bombarded me with answers so quickly that I couldn't catch all of them. That was the moment at which I decided to create my own album alongside which I could write about my family photographs and the memories behind them. I undertook a process of memory work (Kuhn 1995:7), particularly in relation to the photos of ancient monuments, national parades and Easter Sunday. I have to confess it was not an easy task: confronting those long-since-passed memories and putting myself into the picture (Spence 1986) brought the past very much into the present. It compelled me to answer and try to make sense of questions that had remained a mystery during my childhood years. The exploration was interesting in terms of the discoveries I made, particularly in relation to cultural elements that constitute part of my identity and, to an extent, my country as a whole. It took six months for ideas about my album to take shape, but what came out of the experience was that I started to clarify my ideas about this research project, and how I wanted to put those ideas into practice.

In the process of unfolding the memories behind my own family album and narrating my own stories, I was struck by the power of images as a way of telling a life story, not to

mention their ability to be implicated in the reconstruction, reliving and re-evaluation of the present. As a result I decided to ask participants to use their own family photographs in my research project, in the hope that they would help me to examine the merging of the personal and the familial with the public, and investigate the ways in which people create and construct their sense of Greekness (Kuhn 1995). I anticipated that photographs would allow me to explore the ways in which identities are produced through first-person narratives of lived experiences; that they would highlight how the cultural fragments of Greek national identity are formed through the stories we tell about our home nation; how national identity is grounded in the everyday, in habits, details and performances that emerge through social interaction and the ways in which people experience and actualise social and cultural practices. People are in a constant negotiation, interaction and dialogue with the significations that emerge from a variety of social and cultural contexts and practices; as Kirtsoglou comments: 'the embodied subject is in a constant dialogue with a possible array of socio-cultural, material and symbolic spatio-temporal contexts (Kirtsoglou 2004:32). People's ways of remembering – and, indeed, forgetting – normative forms of cultural representations, such as funerals, weddings or commemorative days may, I will suggest, reproduce and encourage a form of knowledge, producing new cultural elements that signify the nation in multiple and contested ways (Edensor 2002). In this process of narrating and trying to produce and reproduce what we refer to as cultural-national identity, photographs serve as a medium that generates a multiple network of meanings, connecting the personal with the public and demonstrating the various ways in which those personal yet cultural issues come to form a Greek national identity. Examining the ways in which commemorative events, ritual ceremonies, ancient monuments and lifecycle events are

presented within a personal album, for example, will allow me to discuss how the construction and organisation of family photographs can be understood as a social activity. It will enable me to be attentive to the importance placed by individuals on the groups that he/she establishes and towards forms of cultural membership, as well as the ways in which people consciously display their knowledge of a culture's value system, and express beliefs around what is 'good', 'right' and counts as 'valuable' (Chalfen 2001:228).

In this context, the main focus of my research is how people experience and conceptualise Greek social and cultural practices as derived from their family albums, focusing on common events such as national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and lifecycle events. I am interested in investigating participants' experience of typically Greek events and rituals via the stories that are prompted by photographs of such social and cultural practices. In particular, I would like to investigate how such experiences are reproduced at the very moment that my informants remember and recreate their sense of Greekness. The notion of experience does not necessarily have an 'anchor'; rather, it is reproduced through spontaneous, momentary flashes that appear within participants' embodied memories; memories that are able to produce aspects that might constitute what we refer to as the cultural dimensions of Greek national identity. I argue that experience stands in between the real and the representational in my informants' stories. Their personal experiences are based on a series of social and cultural practices, leaving them in a position to reproduce and recreate new ways of constructing and representing their own identities.

My key point here, is how contemporary Greek national-cultural identity is formed and produced in embodied and material ways, in particular through official cultural representations such as national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and rites of passage.

Anderson's (1991) conception of the nation as composed of an imagined community highlights the process of imagining; of perceiving one's subjectivity as belonging to a community of people – one which does not necessarily involve face-to-face interactions. Imagined communities are the spheres in which the so-called 'the truths of the nation' may be actualised into something real, and natural, beyond any doubt. The concept suggests that nationalisation occurs through a process of authenticating 'the truths of the nation' (Hamilakis 2007: 16). As Hamilakis argues, the significance of this ongoing process is that every generation becomes nationalised in distinctive ways (Hamilakis 2007). Nationalism is not something static or self-explanatory – rather, it is produced and reproduced on a daily basis, implying a process of becoming rather than being. Nationalism can be seen as a form of religion; a secular religion in which particular icons, such as the flag, are worshipped, rituals and ceremonies are engaged in, and in which liturgical texts and hymns – such as the national anthem and the national narratives – are a key feature (Hamilakis 2007: 16). The liturgies of the nation are embodied rituals that constitute mnemonic practices of remembering that generate and enact national memories (Hamilakis 2007:16).

Considering national identity in this way, I examine throughout this thesis the ways in which a sense of Greekness is produced from the ordinary embodied rituals of daily life, and how these rituals produce – and reproduce – sensory national memories. These mundane manifestations allow us to observe how the official representation of a national commemoration or a ritual ceremony in turn produce a sense of Greekness through the embodiment of everyday routines or activities such as drinking, eating, hearing or smelling. It is the material, experiential and sensory properties of these commemoration days, ritual ceremonies and lifecycle events that make them sources of the cultural identity of Greece.

This thesis builds on the work of relevant Greek scholars such as Seremetakis (1994), Kirtsoglou (2004), Loizos & Papataxsiarchis (1999), Doumanis (1997), and Papailias (2005)– writers who have, collectively, examined a range of key issues relating to Greek political, social and cultural life. I also include Sutton (2001) even though is not a Greek scholar, he has conducted research for the past 18 years in the Greek island of Kalymnos in the eastern Augean sea. His work raises issues about memory, history, food and the relevance of the past in people's everyday lives. Through methods such as the gathering of experiential accounts, these scholars have studied the ways in which people discuss, understand and digest their culture. As I will later go onto investigate in this thesis, these understandings often came to light through the mundane and trivial practices of people's everyday lives; such seemingly trivial practices as the process of eating, drinking and cooking. Through these things, people elicit national-specific narratives that inform us about issues of gender, race or identity. For example, in an ethnographic study conducted in a small village in Greece, Kirtsoglou (2004) explores how specific gender ideas and relations are produced through a small parea (parea in Greek means a small group of people, which in English could be translated as 'company') of lesbian women. Her focus is on how, through culturally informed practices such as dance and drinking, these women 'negotiate their identity vis-à-vis the notions of gender prevalent in the society and culture that surround them' (Kirtsoglou 2004: 20). It is through specific routines of social drinking and dancing that women are able to express themselves in relation to norms of sexuality and gender in the Greek society.

Loizos & Papataxiarchis (1999) also examine the role of the parea, but in their case it is in relation to interactivity in groups of men as they gambled, shared a drink and discussed

personal and social news. The interaction took place in small coffee bars in Greece named kafenia, which are a core institution of Greek social life (Photiades 1965, Herzfeld 1985a, Papataxiarchis 1988). What revealed itself in the study was that the ways in which men interact with each other comes to create a 'code of commensality' which indicates a very emotional style of friendship. (Loizos & Patataxiarchis 1999: 17). It is through these practices and interactions, they argue, that a sense of Greekness emerges, in which the coffee bars are a site for the representation of 'a personal ethos and a worldview' (Papataxiarchis 1991:17).

Doumanis (1997), explores how popular memory stands as a 'rich historical source' that demonstrates how and indeed what ordinary people in difficult periods such as war experienced and remembered. His study is based on how the Italian Occupation of the Dodecanese was lived, experienced and remembered though people's narratives (Doumanis 1997). He analyses what kind of conditions were experienced and the type of choices people made under foreign rule. His book unfolds a long and profound journey focusing on the 'attitudes and life strategies of ordinary people during these decades of political oppression' (Doumanis 1997: 1). He suggests that how people remember and interpret the various social policies relating to the occupation in their testimonies shows 'the significant extent to which memory is socially informed' (Doumanis 1997: 8), in particular how more acceptable memories are understood and reestablished through people's counter-memories when representing their past.

Papailias (2005) focused on personal archives, investigating how they demonstrate the 'politics of historical representation in Greek society' (Papailias 2005:1); and how they 'do not exist outside the orbit of official taxonomies: often enough they simply reproduce the

categories of dominant historical narratives and domesticate them as it were' (Papailias 2005: 3). Finally, Sutton (2001), in his ethnographic study of the Greek island of Kalymnos, shows how food and memory connect to each other in order to produce cultural and social elements that in turn construct identity and belonging (Sutton 2001). He emphasizes that 'food is about identity, creation and maintenance, whether that identity be national, ethnic, class or gender-based' (Sutton 2001: 5). They enjoyment of food can be seen as an embodied experience that allows us to build an understanding of our culture and of the ritual and social practices that constitute part of any given nation's identity. Although the uses and meanings of food can be trivial, they can at the same time reveal powerful interpretations for the history and tradition of a culture.

In my thesis I share interests with the above scholars, in that I have chosen to examine how people remember national commemorations and ritual ceremonies as practices that constitute part of their Greek national identity through everyday activities. Through people's narratives, I bring together themes of tradition, of historical consciousness, of habit memory, of socialisation, of embodiment, and finally of senses and memory around the cooking – and eating – of food. A key point of difference, however, is my methodology: alongside interviews, I employed people's family photographs as a means of examining such practices. As I discuss in greater detail in chapter five, photographs are a prompt known to activate memory, thus their use in my study allows my participants to create an image of what Greekness and national belonging mean to them. The fragments and small details that participants identify in their photographs throughout their process of remembering reveal that the embodiment of Greekness is hidden in sensory and familial practices that underline what Greek cultural identity means.

In the course of my research, I specifically asked my participants to examine family photographs that portrayed places with deep emotional connections for them, as well as important figures that had played a profound role in their lives, and the photographs that they would take with them if they were traveling abroad. Through the use of these photographs as a visual medium, I became particularly interested in describing how a very personal memoir can link to a broader series of social interconnections, shedding light on how a cultural history is conceptualised and experienced. I want to discover the different means and paths of remembering and belonging that might offer a way of revealing and understanding the cultural dimensions of Greek national identity.

Taking into account personal experiences of my family album alongside a theoretical framework to be outlined in what follows, the main research questions that I wanted to explore were as follows: How do people 'imagine' their sense of Greekness? How do they constitute a sense of belonging? How do the senses assist in the formation of memories? How does official history connect with habitual performances and the small, mundane details of everyday life? How does the history of social and cultural practices, as mediated by family photographs, produce knowledge of the self and cultural understanding of a nation? In the chapters that follow, I try to answer and unfold the themes behind the above questions, raising discussions around the key theoretical issues that emerged in relation to my participants' lived experiences. I examine how these experiences produce different modes of knowledge that constitute different aspects of Greek cultural identity.

In the second chapter, the literature review, I discuss the work of Annette Kuhn and her exploration of the possible meanings that personal family photographs can offer. She considers how her memory works in relation to photographs by bringing together the

familial, the historical and the social (Kuhn 1985). One photograph that is a special focus of discussion, taken during the Coronation, represents more than just a record of a special occasion. Her memories of that day – as prompted by the photograph - reveal various layers and hints with reference to personal insights, meanings of community and people's interactions around that time. Following this example, I decided to adopt Kuhn's perspective in my thesis in order to examine how people remember and experience a particular event, such as a national parade or Easter Sunday, from the prompts elicited by a personal photograph of that event.

In my literature review I discuss how memory is tied to senses. Nadia Seremetakis develops the idea that, when remembering through smells and aromas, one is able to produce stories that encapsulate not only personal observations but also cultural and historical meanings (Seremetakis 1984). I also examine the concept of 'cultural nationalism', which suggests that a historical message can emerge from the traditions, rituals, folksongs and cultural practices which become part of the foundation of nation. Cultural nationalists consider historical tradition as a 'living tradition which is continually recreated to meet the needs and perspectives of each generation' (Hutchinson 1999:399). Cultural nationalism can be considered a concept that breaks through the sharp division between national and cultural identity; it stands as a nodal point that brings together, rather than leaving separate, the political and cultural definitions of a nation. As later chapters will demonstrate, symbols, myths, geographies and histories act as inseparable pieces of what Greek participants themselves termed the cultural dimensions of their national identity. The way people perform, celebrate and use their symbols, histories and generally their culture, becomes and helps to create the nation itself. In this chapter though I go on to discuss what I call the

mythistorical narration of cultural identity; where myths, symbols and signs of social and cultural practices come to embody particular styles of national belonging in Greek participants' memories. I explain how, in order to explore the idea of cultural nationalism and mythistorical narration, I chose to investigate how myths, symbols, and histories – especially those of national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and lifecycle events – form a sense of belonging and Greekness, produced not only through the normative cultural conventions that construct part of the nation, but also through a complex mixture of cultural ingredients that involve the experiential, the mundane and the everyday.

In the third chapter, the methodology and methods, I discuss the status of the visual in social research, specifically how visual sociology sits in relation to qualitative research, the technique of photo-elicitation and its benefits and challenges. In doing so, I discuss the role of the image alongside the interview; what the use of images adds to semi-structured interviews and the differences they can make to the results. I suggest the development of a method that deals with what I anticipated would be the 'invisible fragments' that my participants could explore through their family photographs in the arena of a semi-structured interview. I outline the view that participants, through their family albums, may be able to produce stories that bring to the surface fragments that constitute a way of seeing the cultural dimensions of Greek national identity. 'Photographs are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, space and truth' (Pink 2001: 17). This chapter also outlines the different steps that I undertook in developing my methodology and methods; my focus groups, the use of semi-structured interviews with images, the themes that I discussed with my participants, who I decided to recruit, and what the outcomes were.

The fourth chapter, based on the analysis of the focus groups, outlines the multiple views that participants produced in their effort to conceptualise their sense of Greekness and how they define their national identity. Participants' conversations about their understanding of Greekness focused on themes as follows: the historical context of national commemorations; the notion of family and tradition; the historical, social and geographical relationship between east and west in relation to identity; the religious affiliation and the archaeological site of Macedonia as national references; the relation between ancient and modern Greece in terms of continuity and discontinuity; the significance of ancient Greece and its origin, history and ancestry, as a touchstone for their identity; and the contemporary discourse of migration as an aversive factor in the preservation of Greek identity. Within participants' own experiential accounts relating to these themes, a national identity and a sense of Greekness is revealed that, I discover, is full of diverse and sometimes contradictory characteristics – 'magical', 'constructed' and 'ambivalent' are some of the words that arose in the interviews, each assisting in the composition of the mythistorical narration of participants' Greekness.

The analysis of the face-to-face interviews follows in chapter five, along with the ways in which participants' images invoked a sense of belonging and Greekness, as expressed through the evocation of senses. Participants' narratives, focusing on particular fragments in their photographs, come to produce a sense of belonging and Greekness that has particular reference points in their sensory experiences. Participants conceptualise photographs of ancient monuments and archeological sites as a 'lived experience'; embodied memories of everyday lives informed by the senses. Historical and cultural elements of their Greekness are experienced and digested through sounds, tastes and aromas.

Chapter six deals with the second part of the interview analysis, in which Greekness is identified through familial forms of association and disassociation. Photographs of national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and lifecycle events demonstrate how the family plays an active role in the significance – or otherwise – of these events. The family acts as a prompt, assisting participants in their identification of both positive and negative feelings about their experience and actualisation of these practices.

In the final chapter, I discuss all the different ways of remembering that my participants employ in order to construct their sense of Greekness and belonging. And how in this process of remembering images play an active role for not only personal but also cultural understandings of the nation. The everyday practices, small details and mundane manifestations that emerged from family photographs assisted in the re-evaluation and reproduction of the cultural forms of national representations. Anderson underlined that 'imagined communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson 1983: 6). It is this sense of 'style' that I explore in my thesis, particularly how the different meanings and interpretations that Greek participants produce through their interviews present belonging and Greekness from a multi-dimensional perspective.

My thesis does not search for 'authenticity' or an 'objective', 'real' account of what ancient Greece or national commemorations signify for my participants. Rather, I aim to examine the particular style of belonging contained within these cultural practices that account for the particularities of Greek cultural-national identity as experienced by my participants. Such styles of belonging emerge from the ways in which my participants remember national events and rituals, and in turn construct their sense of Greekness; in other words the

different forms of memory (Sutton 2001) that contribute towards an alternate way of seeing the ritual ceremonies or the national commemorations of Greek society. In this chapter, I am interested in examining not so much *what* people remember about a funeral or about Easter Sunday, but *how* they remember these ceremonies and with what effects for their sense of who they are; what are the elements that keep these events alive in people's memories and thus become part of their cultural identity. This approach links back to my own process of remembering, helping me to realise how my own structures of feelings and memories are inextricably linked to my culture as a whole.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Presenting and experiencing the construction of a nation through the realm of everyday life is a difficult task. The literature on the subject of national identity and nationalism is usually embedded 'within notions of nation-state, citizenship and national society' (Urry 2000: 6). The same sort of approach has been applied in the case of Greece, too; its literature on the subject of national identity mainly approaches the issue from socio-political and economic perspectives. Scholars' main focus has tended to be on the 'struggle for national independence and nationhood' (Kourvetaris et al 1987), on political and social developments, especially after the restoration of democracy in 1974[1] (Danopoulos 1985a, Petras 1977), and on the economic 'underdevelopment in a pre-capitalistic context' of a period from 1830 to 1880 (Mouzelis 1978). Greece's painful experience of civil wars and invasions, as well as its location – at the crossroads of three continents, influenced by the civilisations of classical antiquity, Christianized Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire – have hence frequently created a need to express Greece's long and complex journey in terms of its national identity and independence. It was in 1820 that Greece gained its official independence as a nation-state after a 400-year period of Ottoman domination (Meritzis 1996) and, since then, a continuous struggle to bring together various cultural and national identities has been taking place (Clogg 1993). Thus, Greece's geographic location and topography, between East and West, stands also as an important factor in the intermingling of traditional values, linguistic tradition and religion in the ongoing effort to sustain the nation's cultural development and continuity (Campbell 1983).

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[1] Having started in 1967, dictatorship ended in Greece in 1974.

These and other ambiguities in Greece's cultural influences point to the value of examining

how social and cultural practices that form part of Greece's cultural identity are used,

consumed and circulated on an individual level in ways that may challenge conventional,

simplistic understandings of Greekness; how weddings, funerals and commemoration days

are experienced by Greek participants in the realm of everyday life, creating what Herzfeld

calls 'cultural intimacy' (Herzfeld 2005). Routine habits, unpredictable reactions and

habitual performances are also part of what constitutes one's identity and belonging. So,

instead of taking these habitual practices for granted, it is worth exploring their traces;

where they come from and how they are reproduced in order to become part of national

identity. 'A whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices

must also be reproduced' (Billig 1985: 6) in order to sustain a nation's 'imagined

communities' (Anderson 1983). It is in this context that I build up my hypothesis, which

argues that although social and cultural practices such as commemoration days, ritual

ceremonies and the historical content of ancient Greece represent particular meanings in

Greek society, it is through the mundane and everyday details of Greek participants' stories

that knowledge of what constitutes the cultural dimensions of Greek national identity is

produced. National commemorations, ritual ceremonies, weddings and funerals are

involved in creating specific myths, histories and signs which overlap with Greek

participants' ways of remembering them. This approach raises a number of theoretical

discourses, including discussions around cultural nationalism, the relationship between the

real, symbolic and imaginary, how memory works in relation to participants' narratives, the

relationship between processes of remembering and forgetting through artefacts, the role of

the senses, and how the use of family photographs inspires stories of belonging and Greekness.

I will examine theories about nation, in particular through the work of John Hutchinson, Benedict Anderson and Antony D Smith. Hutchinson's work is based on an ethno-historical approach to the study of nations. His perspective is known as cultural nationalism, seeking to rediscover nation from a historically-rooted way of life (Hutchinson 1999: 393). The primary aim of Hutchinson is to 'revive what they regard as a distinctive and primordial collective personality which has a name, unique origins, history, culture, homeland, and social and political practices' (Hutchinson 1999, Smith 1991). In order to achieve such an aim, these theorists primarily conceptualise a nation through its history, examining – or rather identifying – a historical-nation, a nation embodied in myths, symbols and culture. Cultural nationalists look for a historical message emerging from traditions, rituals, folksongs and cultural practices which thus becomes part of the foundation of a nation. In this context, cultural nationalists carefully examine the relationships between ethnic myths, religious symbolism and national identities (Guibernau et al 2001); they examine the intersecting relationship between state and culture, where symbols, folksongs and histories are also part of a nation's political and social reformations. Hutchinson examines the construction of a nation from an ethno-historical perspective, where people are seen as active members in this construction, and are part of how such symbols, myths and histories are produced and actualised. This perspective helps us to appreciate and understand the significance of social and cultural practices in Greek society, but also prompted me to question how the 'significance' of these practices is constituted and legitimised through

Greek participants' ways of remembering, experiencing and imagining national commemorations and ritual ceremonies.

Benedict Anderson explores the idea that 'imagined communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson 1983: 6). Each member in society differs in the way he/she experiences and conceptualises ways of being, though together these things create a strong sense of community, incorporating a feeling of belonging and identity. As Anderson puts it: '[The community] is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion...' (Anderson 1991: 6). In this thesis, Greek participants also produced certain 'meanings' about their sense of belonging and Greekness, which will be examined in relation to the ways they experience and imagine their nation. Narrating ritual ceremonies or national commemorations from an individual standpoint raises a number of complex issues in terms of the relationship between history and myth; in other words, the ways in which the historical context of social and cultural practices interweaves with Greek participants' imagination. Symbols, myths and histories of social and cultural practices are translated and transformed through Greek participants' ways of experiencing them. As Cornelius Castoriadis says, the 'social imaginary ... is more 'real' than the 'real'... From a strictly symbolic, or 'linguistic', point of view, it appears as a shift of meaning, as a combination of metaphor and metonymy' (Castoriadis 1997: 140).

This idea and the term 'social imaginary' will be explored in relation to what I call the mythistorical narration of cultural identity; where myths, symbols and signs of social and cultural practices and of ancient Greece adopt particular styles of national belonging in

Greek participants' memory. For example, a mythical constructed content, as delineated by Greek participants, belongs to both Ancient Greece and to social and cultural practices. Moreover, an allegory of fragments emerges as another style of belonging and Greekness. With the term 'allegory of fragments' I refer to numerous fragments that participants extracted from their family albums, through which they create an 'allegorical' narration revealing literal and symbolic meanings. Greek participants' allegorical narrations were also revealed through an embodied memory of senses: sounds, aromas and impressions of participants' everyday lives stimulate a sense of belonging and Greekness.

In this context, what needs to be examined is how memory works, its form, how participants create their memories of the past and how their experiences draw an image of what might account for a sense of belonging and Greekness through ways in which they perform and actualise social and cultural practices. Michael Lambek considers memory a moral practice: he argues that, rather than something 'natural', memory is a cultural practice, one that needs to be understood as moral, not technical or instrumental (Lambek 1996). As I will develop further below, seeing memory as a cultural-moral practice allows us to conceptualise 'a sort of dialectical relationship', which produces a sense of fluidity in the relationship between an original experience and one that is 'imagined' (Lambek 1996). Therefore, rather than seeing the relationship between 'imagined' and original experience as different strands, working separately and independently from each other, it is important to instead consider how they inform each other and how they exist as an inter-subjective relationship, as well as how, through this process, a particular sense of belonging and Greekness emerges from my participants.

Paul Connerton makes a similar argument, albeit approaching the issue from a different

angle. He argues that ritual performances are 'inscribed' in the body, and there are certain 'bodily automatisms' that make people remember and recollect their past. 'Both commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices contain a measure of insurance...every group, then, will entrust to bodily automatisms the values and categories which they are more anxious to conserve. They will know how well the past can be kept in mind by a habitual memory sedimented in the body' (Connerton 1989:102). Images and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by ritual performances, and performative memory is bodily. Bodily social memory is seen as an essential aspect of social memory, and hence provides a way of understanding the cultural tradition and history of a society which incorporates the role of embodied memory. Memory is therefore revealed as a continuous dialogical narrative and cultural operation that draws upon embodied and practical forms of remembering. The inscribed bodily automatisms overlap with Greek participants' contextualisation of experiences; the private memory of the participants' experiences becomes part of a collective process in which ritual ceremonies and cultural practices are inscribed in memory.

In this process of combining official history with personal experience (Kuhn 1985), objects such as family photographs serve as a useful tool for the researcher, in that they have the potential to reveal the connections between the mundane and the everyday and the historical, and offer important insights into the complexity of Greekness and national belonging. As Serematakis argues, knowledge of the past can be produced in everyday practice and experiences, and embedded into items such as photographs, smells and sounds (Seremetakis 2000). As I will proceed to argue, Greek participants recollect their past and connect it to the present with everyday experiences that are revealed through smells and

textures, and also emotions and feelings. In this process, families, for example, play an important role in the ways in which participants experience national commemorations and ritual ceremonies, as well as the ethical values that they transfer to them. These values create different levels of emotional engagement, ambivalence and attachment in participants and, in turn, these attitudes and behaviour constitute part of their belonging and Greekness.

Remembering the Present

Nadia Seremetakis explores some of the connections between past and present, specifically the ways in which we contextualise and conceive our past in the present. She brings together official history with personal experience, public and private memory, to reveal, in a similar way to Annette Kuhn, the series of interconnections that are placed between personal and public memory (Kuhn 1985:2). Seremetakis examines, for example, how historical monuments, museums, and artefacts constitute part of the collective memory of a country. She explores how easy it is to become almost overwhelmed by the statues, ancient temples and baroque buildings of historical European cities; each with a story, each with a history, running from ancient times to the present day. It is as if a country's history is monumentally written, inviting our eyes to perceive, understand and remember the past of a country, as if 'public history seemed to be featured as a permanent display of an outward-looking past, a collective memory made for the eye' (Seremetakis 2000:301). From this perspective, the way people look at things, their vision, plays an important role; almost as though the displaying of monuments is an attempt to control the viewer's vision, outlining where the public act of remembering should be allocated. In this context, they imply a line

of demarcation around 'when and where public remembering should occur, they index what

is culturally central and what is not' (Seremetakis 2000:304). Public memory can therefore

be seen as a potentially 'enforceable' memory, giving an impression that there is a

particular path that has to be followed when remembering a country's history. This

enforceable memory, that, as I will argue, my informants repeatedly challenge, forms part of

the means of seeing and remembering ancient Greece and social and cultural practices. It

tallies with my informants' experiences of such practices and together creates a very special

knowledge; a knowledge which is dependent on the social and political conditions of their

country. Thus historical perspectives, ancient Greece, commemoration days or ritual

ceremonies are shaped by Greek participants' experiences and vice versa.

However, as Seremetakis also proceeds to argue, there are other counter-memories that go

beyond the solidity and permanence of public memory: 'cultural parenthesis' events and

stories that people are actually told to remember. In an attempt to bring closer the cultural

history of a country with the personal stories of people, she raises the prospect of how an

image of a historical monument can be deconstructed through an unpredictable event such

as an earthquake. Through this example, she explores ways in which the solidity and the

permanence of a country can be transformed into something temporary; how people react to

such a phenomenon and choose to rebuild and reproduce their past; how a personal memory

is able to deconstruct and reshape not just *our* memories but also *the* memory of a country.

In this regard, the social production of the past can be perceived in two ways. Firstly, a

sense of the past is produced through public, official representations. We may speak of a

kind of 'dominant memory' (Seremetakis 2000: 308), where public institutions can impose

and create forgetfulness and inattention, and public sites of memory may become the very

places that dictate what is to be remembered and what is be to forgotten. Another way of looking at the production of the past is through private memory, which may be both shared and collective. Knowledge of the past can be produced in everyday practice, in everyday experiences; it can be actually embedded into everyday items such as photographs, smells and sounds. A way of remembering, as Seremetakis comes to propose, is through the senses: the reproduction of the past is often created within everyday senses, aromas and tastes. As will be revealed in the empirical chapters, the Greek participants extracted specific fragments within their photographs which triggered deep emotions and narratives; for my informants, memory is very much embedded in and linked to sounds, aromas and sights.

Exemplifying the role of the senses in relation to memory, Seremetakis refers to how she remembers Greece. Having lived abroad for many years, she lists fruit as one of the things she missed most, in particular, a type of peach known as the 'breast of Aphrodite'. When she returned to Greece, she visited food markets looking desperately for this peach but soon came to realise that it did not exist any more. In its place were new types of peach which, while similar, did not have the same taste, flavour and aroma as the one she craved. At that moment, her peach became a site of memory for her: 'It brought back observations, commentaries, stories which encapsulated whole epochs marked by their own sensibilities: Ah... that peach, what an aroma!'(Seremetakis1984: 2) The peach forms a fragment in Seremetakis' life from which numerous remembered stories, experiences and habits suddenly emerge; such stories that, I will argue, bring back moments of her everyday life, while also offering cultural understandings of a particular society.

In exploring the role of memory, Seremetakis looks into the relationship between sensory

memory and the history and the culture of a country. Using the example of a peach as

outlined above, her emphasis is on the degree to which the history of a culture can be

experienced at the level of everyday life, and the extent to which the experience of narrating

the history of a country is tied to the senses. The narration of the peach uncovers various

practices, habits, and traditions, offering cultural meanings of her home country. In this

process, personal and public histories are brought together. Seremetakis examines the

degree to which 'the senses can tie the narration of the history and the culture of a society,

to what extent memory is stored in specific everyday items that construct the history of a

culture, items that create and sustain our relationship to the historical as a sensory

dimension' (Seremetakis 1984:3). Indeed, in quite the same way in which Seremetakis'

peach became a site of memory for her, I found that artefacts and smells came to construct

part of my participants' sense of belonging and Greekness.

Such sensory elements are part of the practice of remembering and producing memories,

becoming woven into the construction of an image, while the image itself acts as a prompt

for the other senses. In this context, memory is able to work through the visual; it helps us

to fill gaps and fragments of our past, while also reconstructing a new past connecting all

experiences and formations of the present. Family photographs, for example, bring to the

surface emotions, feelings and experiences that have their reference not only in the senses

but also in many other 'invisible' fragments that construct a sense of one's identity and

belonging.

If memory is sensory and embedded in matter, it emerges in pieces as though bring

unearthed in an archaeological process (Seremetakis 2000). Memory therefore involves

numerous layers that need to be identified and explored. Cities host various sites of public

and private memory with sensory capacities and powers to recall, revoke, animate, mobilise, impress and rationalise. Thus, as Serematakis suggests, '[a] city-destroying disaster, like an earthquake, results in the loss of such sensory organs. The urban space dismembered by disaster becomes a body without organs' (Seremetakis 2000:310). After the earthquake of 1986 in Kalamata, its people decided to commemorate this catastrophe by organising a cultural event in a deliberate effort to reproduce a social memory of their city. Citizens chose various domestic objects found in the ruins of their houses – all of them bearing different memories, emotions, experiences and stories – and collected them in one place, forming a collective knowledge of what people wanted to remember. This site, in turn, transformed into a poignant 'time capsule', with the social reproduction of the past being constituted through personal participation. Rather than a museum that passively offers up partially forgotten past stories, what visitors take from the experience is a sense of how the rebuilding of a culture is an ongoing process in which its inhabitants have an active role, thus inviting the public to re-evaluate their present. Indeed, it encourages confrontation of a present-day image that has the power to change the way people in Kalamata saw their past. Even if new buildings were rebuilt in the same place, to the same design, they would never be the same; there would always a difference. What remains are the remnants of 'buildings in pain', appearing as 'wounded bodies of our collective life, painful memories of the past and of the present interrupted by the earthquake' (Seremetakis 2000:312). Seremetakis continues:

> Ruins give a snapshot of a present as past and force [us] to take a different stance on time. They freeze the present and confront with a petrified world; a city full of hieroglyphs that present our past lives in a new language we have yet to decipher. We read the cracks in the walls as the earthquake is re-writing our one-present lives;

we stare at the hollowed-out spaces for traces of the activities and relations that once made them intimate parts of our existence. (Seremetakis 2000:314)

The earthquake is an event that provoked people into not only attempting to heal the wounded buildings of their city, but also themselves, encouraging them to conduct an introspective analysis of what they really remembered and what they wanted to forget, giving them a stimulus to 'appreciate' their present. In this process of remembering and forgetting, objects of memory such as photographs and diaries play an important role in the production of social memory. The ways these objects are recollected and exhibited imply an archaeological process: one observes, keeps notes, records and rewrites one's memories with the critical eye of the present. Thus, in this exhibition, memory is a site of excavation. In a similar way to the people in Kalamata reforming memories of their city through fragments left by the earthquake, my informants are equally prompted by old photographs in recalling family stories which underline their sense of belonging and Greekness. The bringing together of personal emotions and attachments forms a collective knowledge; a popular memory. 'This exhibition of collective personal objects of memory proposed that the city of Kalamata was not rebuilt as an act of forgetting, but was rebuilt with multiple memories of all that existed before the earthquake and with the memories of the earthquake itself' (Seremetakis 2000:322). The chronicle of everyday life formed by the people of Kalamata demonstrates how such objects of memory have the capacity to constitute the culture and the history of a country.

When history is written through such a devastating event, the official history of a country obtains another character; perhaps offering a different perspective on how social experiences are constituted, while creating another dimension in terms of social relations within cultures.

History can no longer be written with structures of permanence alone. It has become more apparent than ever that history emerges out of precariousness, contingency and

self-organising randomness; there is no hidden rationality or directional spirit of history. (Seremetakis 2000: 328)

In this understanding, historical events can be so significant that they have the ability to erase old ones; an act of memory-recycling that has the capacity to reshape what is valuable to remember and what is not, by bringing together personal and private events. People's experiences are transformed into public knowledge, and one way in which this can happen is through everyday experiences and practices, as demonstrated by my participants. What must be taken into account in this thesis, therefore, is the potentiality and significance of experience, and its role in the production and creation of the cultural identity of Greece.

Personal and Cultural Memory through Family Photographs

In an attempt to talk about cultural memory and the possible meanings it may offer in terms of self and cultural understandings, Annette Kuhn explores how memory operates within a photographic image, more specifically a family photograph. She uses her photographic album to investigate how memories may be recalled and reshaped, and attempts to understand how this process begins and ends. Her primary wishes are to solve mysteries and uncover fragments in her past. She tries to contextualise her memories by looking back at photographs in order to understand the causes and effects that created the way she perceives herself and, to an extent, her social *milieu*. She then embarks on what she calls 'memory work': the unveiling of personal and cultural meanings within the various contexts that photography provides.

The way that she 'uses' her family photographs to approach the relationship between

memories and photographs, allows me to think that photographs are a visual medium with

the capacity to trigger memory and contextualise it by providing prompts and pre-texts that

make us remember. Photographs may challenge and stimulate memory, shaping the ways in

which people tell stories in the present about their past, as they enable them to elicit

narratives and realise significant personal and cultural meanings of their country.

Photographs can become a form of evidence to an event, lending memory a point of

reference, a starting point from which to begin searching and investigating the past.

Memory operates as archaeologists do: it works backwards, looking for clues and signs,

trying to create 'reconstructions out of fragments of evidence' (Kuhn 1985: 4).

Although images can be both 'private' (as with family photographs) and 'public', as far as

memory is concerned, these prove in practice to be less separable: there is not one moment

or meeting point where the private relates to the public and vice versa. As Kuhn states,

'images or memories are at the heart of a radiating web of associations, reflections and

interpretations' (Kuhn 1985:4). Although memories are individual, their links extend far

beyond the personal, spreading through a network of meanings that bring together the

personal with the familiar, the cultural, the historical and the social. When memory is put to

work, it has the ability to explore all the possible connections between 'public' historical

events, structures of feelings, relations of class, gender, national identity and 'personal'

memory, demonstrating how the inner 'personal' and the outer 'public' histories coexist,

and form the 'web of interconnections that binds them together and made them visible'

(Kuhn 1986:4). In this context, memory appears capable of shaping and presenting not only

our inner, personal world but also the outer world of 'public expression and the circulation

of memories and stories of a society' (Kuhn 1985:5).

Through memory-work, Kuhn proposes that working with family albums helps memory to separate out photographs from their various contexts and, in so doing, elicit a wide range of associations that help to create an understanding of cultural and historical meanings in society. The assimilation of photography into social and political memory therefore suggests an approach to reading photographs and how to interpret them. 'A radical system has to be constructed around the photograph, so it may be seen in terms which are simultaneously personal, political, economic, dramatic, everyday and historic' (Berger 1972: 63).

In this context, in examining the potentiality of the photograph, Kuhn opens up a space for exploring issues around identity and belonging. In her book *Family Secrets*, she works with her own photographs to try and make connections between them and events that have a public cultural, social or political significance. In her process of remembering, her memories are not only introspective, but also reveal the shape of social and cultural meanings at a particular historical moment. In one example, Kuhn discusses a photograph of herself as a seven-year-old girl posing in a garden, wearing a dress that her mother made specially, to mark the Queen's Coronation. The image was taken by her father in order to be consumed not only as a family photograph but as a record of a special occasion. The photograph was taken in the 1950's 'where the home sharpshooter's box camera had become a commonplace and its function was to record and immortalise something important by and for the family concerned' (Kuhn 1985: 61). This kind of event could be a graduation ceremony, wedding or an occasion of special social significance. As opposed to everyday snapshots, these events have a sense of gravity because of the occasions they commemorate, emphasised by conventional settings and poses (Kuhn 1985: 61).

The image also reminds her of other formal photographs, such as school portraits, which convey an element of ritualism that goes far beyond the family snapshot and which are related more to the celebration of occasions and activities of social significance. Her dress in the photograph signifies a 'ceremonial event' (Kuhn, 1985:62), which goes beyond the personal, and can be more fully appreciated as a ceremonial image of a larger community. It is a photograph depicting a collective practice that lends a sense of belonging to a society's ritual commemorations. Therefore, taking this photograph of a little girl in her coronation dress can thus be seen as a form of testimony. A testimony that represents not just one meaning but many other contexts waiting to be recognised and revealed.

As Kuhn argues, it is at the moment that you put yourself into a picture that your memory starts reshaping emotional and sentimental moments. At that moment, there are several other layers that can be discovered, and elicited narratives can open up previously uncovered feelings, relationship conflict and unpleasant personal insights. The process can therefore be potentially hurtful and dramatic. This is the other side of the photograph, the one that one cannot be seen, the personal attachment to the picture.

In relation to the 'public' elements of the photograph, it uncovers cultural and historical viewpoints of society at the time at which it was taken; offering the opportunity to observe, understand and digest the habits and idioms that characterised the culture. Hence, the memory of the Queen's Coronation is more collective than individual. Kuhn argues that her own recollections of the event have more of a kind of 'communitarian mood' (Kuhn 1985:72). She experiences the Coronation by watching what other people do, how they celebrate and commemorate this day; in a way she is more interested in her surrounding environment rather than the event itself, and how the latter is covered by the mass media.

Therefore, popular memory is a shared story, comprised of stories that people tell about

their past; a story that is created by how people talk about and how people construct the

Coronation at the time of the event (Kuhn 1985). More particularly, she argues:

> Popular memory accounts are marked by the ways in which they bring together the
> lives of 'ordinary' people who are its subjects and its producers with events on a
> grander, more public, scale. Popular memory typically involves the remembered, the
> subject, placing herself - what she did or where she was at the time of the big events
> - at the centre of the scene; as it were grounded the remembered event in her
> everyday world, domesticating it. (Kuhn, 1985:68)

This type of example allows us to understand the possible relations and interconnections

between personal and public memory, starting with a little girl in a dress made specifically

for the Coronation, and moving to a larger image of popular memory and its social and

cultural significance. It seems that the photograph involves almost an endless series of

layers that are full of potential meanings and interpretations, in relation to both personal

dramas and historical and cultural connotations. Apart from that, a photograph of a special

event such as this represents certain cultural elements that can also be seen in a family

album. Consequently, what people want to remember is not only portrayed in public

photographs but also in formal family pictures.

> Memories evoked by a photo do not simply spread out of the image itself, but are
> generated in a network, an inter-text, of discourses that shift between past and
> present, spectator and image, and between all these and cultural contexts, and
> historical moments. (Kuhn, 1985:12)

Kuhn's photograph revealed clues and hints that spread to different social dimensions,

involving personal and public testimonies; it underlined a sense of belonging which has a

broader meaning: belonging to a family, belonging to a community, belonging to a nation. Just as Kuhn found with her photographs, Greek participants' memories, as elicited from their photographs, connected not only to personal but also to cultural and social understandings. As in relation to the Queen's Coronation, Greek national commemorations and ritual ceremonies, as they emerge from my participants' photographs, come to signify a complex sense of belonging and Greekness.

About Memory

Memory is a complex system full of ambiguities and rapidly emerging complexities (Antze & Lambek 1986). It is virtually impossible to imagine memory: what it is, how it works, where it lies. This, therefore, raises the question: how can we grasp memory? Memory has a relation to the past, to a series of material and non-material elements that construct a sense of who we are and of how we know what we know. As Nussbaum argues, 'a really successful dissociation of the self from memory would be a total loss of the self – and thus all the activities to which a sense of one's identity is important' (Nussbaum 2001:177). 'Memory functions in every act of perception, in every act of intellection, in every act of language' (Terdiman 1993: 9). Memory is like a filter through which many kinds of information is revealed through a form of translation/interpretation based on peoples' perceptions.

> Memory tends to mythologize the past, to look for similarities and to appeal to emotions and is thus considered arbitrary, selective, lacking the legitimacy of history and ultimately subjective, while history calls for critical distance, and documented explanation, and opposes memory's non-linear temporality and its indivisibility from imagination. (Misztal 2003:99)

In this definition, memory is not something tangible and concrete; on the contrary, it is formed from different pieces, constantly trying to correlate together to create a 'story', a 'narrative' from often randomly scattered fragments. In this process, feelings and emotions overlap with experiences, meaning that identifying a clear, coherent story becomes difficult. Thus, Lambek comes to question: 'what are the relations among memory, consciousness and the symbolic vehicles, of which the most important is narrative'? Benedict Anderson argues that the presence of a narrative is an index of having forgotten the original experience, causing the story to replace the memory. For Anderson, narrative is separate from the original experience; as a consequence, the way that my participants narrate their experiences of national commemorations and ritual ceremonies can therefore be considered their own unique understanding of a particular event.

Taking this into account, Lambek suggests that it is worth focusing on the movement between the two: how do private experience and public narrative mutually inform each other? How do my participants' experiences and the ways they imagine them, shape the normative cultural representations of funerals, national commemorations and ritual ceremonies? How do they work together to produce and constitute a national belonging and Greekness?

In order to pursue this relation between private and public memory, it is useful to draw on Lambek's way of understanding memory 'as a form of moral practice' (Lambek 1996:235). Seeing and understanding memory as a moral practice allows us to think that it is produced through social relationships and interactions. Lambek perceives this function of memory as

follows:

> Let's try to imagine memory in another way, one which resists the extremes of both excessive subjectivity and excessive objectivity; one which situates memory in time and sees it as a function of social relationships, in part a mutual affirmation of past interaction, in part the traces of our introjection of one another (Lambek 1996: 238-39).

In this way memory becomes an ongoing practice through which people try to create social relationships by committing to memory what is important and valuable while tending to block things that cause them pain and suffering. 'Memory is more inter-subjective and dialogical than exclusively individual, more act (remembering) than object, more ongoing engagement than passive absorption and playback' (Lambek 1996:239). From this perspective, the various meanings and interpretations that participants' attribute to national commemorations, ritual ceremonies, and to what Greekness and belonging means, can be seen as being derived from cultural as well as private practices. The way that participants perceive, live, feel, and experience their sense of belonging and Greekness is produced through continuous interaction and the social relations they create in their everyday lives. Part of their identity is defined from these commitments and identifications through which they construct their arguments, standpoints and generally their surrounding world. As I will develop in chapter six, for example, families have a significant impact, not only on the ways social and cultural practices are celebrated, but also on the shape of the various 'ethical' values that are transferred between generations; my participants interact with these values at different levels, with varying degrees of emotional engagement, ambivalence and attachment.

This sort of approach allow us to see memory as 'always and inevitably culturally and

socially mediated' which leaves a space open for questioning certain meanings that have

been given in a social world. Lambek emphasizes:

> ...we understand memory as a culturally mediated expression of the temporal
> dimension of experience, in particular of social commitments and identifications.
> Remembering comprises contextually situated assertions of continuity on the part of
> subjects and claims about the significance of past experience. Such tacit assertions and
> claims, based as much on cumulative wisdom and moral visions [as] on individual
> interest, form a kind of moral practice (Lambek 1996: 248).

The stories that my participants produce in that instant moment of narration are neither

objective nor subjective, but fuse with previous narratives, showing how stories stand as the

'vehicles of memory'. Their narrations are therefore inevitably distinct, leaving a space for

creating and reformulating new understandings of what belonging and Greekness mean.

Memory therefore appears to be subjective and its meanings are dependent on the way

people contextualise their lived experiences, and of perceiving their surrounding worlds.

If I admit memory to be arbitrary and selective, and that it is a cultural practice that is

produced through social relationships, I am forced to pose the following questions: how can

Greek participants understand their historical past and construct their sense of Greekness?

How does the relationship between history and memory work in their minds? How can we

legitimise participants' stories in order that they become part of Greek history? In this thesis

I will suggest that it is through shared experiences like national commemorations, ritual

ceremonies, weddings and funerals that Greek participants try to make sense of their

recollected knowledge of the past and their sense of belonging. Commemoration days and

ritual ceremonies stand as social and cultural practices that belong to a shared knowledge of

a national history. Looking at how social and cultural practices are performed in a given

society helps us to understand its cultural/historical past as well as the ways these practices are recreated and actualised in the present. Connerton suggests that 'commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms' (Connerton 1989: 5). The ways certain habits are repeated through embodied practices of performing them are prompted by images and representations. As I will explore in greater depth in chapter six, when Greek participants talk about the preparation for a funeral or a wedding, this practice involves not things such as food or decoration, but also certain ways of behaving and acting. The body thus becomes a site for the formation of memory, acting almost automatically in a range of occasions. 'Our bodies, which in commemorations stylistically re-enact an image of the past, keep the past also in an entirely effective form in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions' (Connerton 1989: 72). These sorts of habitual forms of remembering stand as a medium of preserving and sustaining social and cultural practices in Greek society and, to an extent, a sense of belonging and Greekness. The non-inscribed habits of commemorative days or ritual ceremonies are so deeply ingrained in Greek participants' bodies that they become a part of 'social habit memory' (Connerton 1989). In this sense, 'when recollection has been treated as a cultural rather than an individual activity, it has tended to be seen as the recollection of a cultural tradition; and such a tradition, in turn, has tended to be thought of as something that is inscribed' (Connerton 1989: 4). So the historicity of tradition is constituted by seeing together, rather than separately, the ways people remember, live and experience their history; commemoration days and ritual ceremonies in Greek society are recognised through Greek participants' ways of narrating them. Thus, participants'

narratives take place in a particular point in space-time as Bakhtin argues, with the chronotope of a narrative, as he describes it: 'the chronotope, that is the particular space-time continuum in which the action of any narrative (whether inscribed in writing, embodied in ceremonies, or voiced and under continuous reconstruction) is construed' (Lambek 1996:246).

Instead of approaching memory and history as two separate fields, it is worth trying to see them both as fluid and reflexive (Zelizer 1995). A sense of fluidity, which is constituted not only though inscribed bodily 'automatisms', but also through features that found their references in Greek participants' everyday lives. Habitually inscribed performances of how we dress, eat and act at a funeral thus overlap with everyday attitudes or characteristics that participants produce in the process of remembering and producing their stories; so the performance of a funeral or a wedding is recreated and conceptualised differently.among participants. Experience is grounded in mundane-everyday manifestations, and everyday may be calculated, inscribed into the body where 'from the embodiment of habit a consistency is given to the self which allows for the end of doubt' (Harrison 2000: 503). Therefore, Greek participants' memory is inscribed in private and collective ways of remembering their sense of belonging and Greekness, offering the possibility of reconstructing what we refer to as Greek national identity with multiple and complex characteristics.

By remembering and narrating the past through the present, history mingles with personal experience. Greek participants produce stories around how they perceive weddings or funerals, which are based on their own personal experiences; and experiences have a great impact on the historical knowledge of what a commemoration day signifies in Greece. 'The

difficulty of extracting our past from our present is not simply because present factors tend

to influence – some might want say to distort – our recollections of the past, but also

because past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experience of the present' (Connerton

1989: 2). Greek participants' recollected knowledge of the past helps them to formulate

their present, and present experiences help them to re-evaluate their past. Memory

therefore gives shape to the knowledge of a ritual ceremony or of a commemoration day in

Greek society; it works like a nodal point that links the ways Greek participants understand

and remember ritual ceremonies and commemoration days with the historically

'constructed' knowledge. Antze and Lambek refer to this process as the 'landscape of

memory', which is shaped and constructed by the personal and social significance of

specific memories as well as from meta-memory: the models, mechanisms and practices

that influence the ways in which society remembers. Memory has the ability to change and

divert the processes of remembering; as occurs in the ways Greek participants' stories of the

past are changed through their experiences of the present.

Greek participants' ways of remembering a social event like a wedding or a

commemoration day depend on their lived experiences. There can be no single story

explaining 'the meaning' of a wedding or a funeral in Greek society; rather many complex

ones. The historical context of a wedding or funeral mingles with people's ways of living

and experiencing these events; personal moments may thus become socio-historical, thus

potentially reconstructing the already existing knowledge that is constituted through social

and cultural practices. 'Memory, seen as plural, mediated and fluid, is an instrument of both

construction and deconstruction of symbols and their meanings' (Misztal 2003:106). In

order to emphasise the significance and potentiality of the flexible and fluid character that

memory and history have, it is important to mention briefly the precursor of this dualistic

approach; seeing memory and history separately.

During the twentieth century, Maurice Halbwachs adopted the idea that collective memory

is the 'repository of tradition' and creates 'history as unitary', arguing that 'history can be

represented as the universal memory of the human species' (Halbwachs [1926] 1950: 84).

This perspective sees history as monolithic and unchangeable an 'intellectual, critical and

impersonal activity, which emerges as the primary mode of knowledge about the past when

tradition weakens and social memory is fading' (Misztal 2003: 101).

The same sort of idea is shared by Pierre Nora who, in her volume *Les Lieux de* Memoire

(an English three-volume edition is published under the title *The Realms of Memory*),

outlines what she perceives as the opposition between memory and history: 'memory

attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events' (Nora 1989: 22). She

describes this dual approach as a movement from *milieux de memoire to lieux de memoire*

(from the centre of memories to the site of memory). Nora distinguishes four realms of

memory: symbolic sites such as commemorations and anniversaries; functional sites such as

manuals and autobiographies; monumental sites such as cemeteries and buildings; and

topographic sites such as libraries and museums (Nora, 1996a). According to Nora, memory

becomes a site rather than a context; it is more an instrumental process rather than

something that involves an action and interaction; it becomes a monument, an inhabited

landscape. By recalling memories, we are actually becoming tourists, visiting our own past.

Memory is described as a site provided by our own bodies which can act as indexes of the

past. Both Halbwachs and Nora see memory and history as opposed to each other; memory

appears as a distorted version of history, filled with emotions, gestures and attitudes while

history is abstract and universal. By taking this position, they cannot approach and examine

the reflexive character of collective memory, 'as the reciprocal working of history and

commemoration' (Schwartz 2000: 11). They cannot see memory as a cultural practice

which is produced through interaction and engagement among people, so that the

relationship between collective memory and history tend to become more a process of

becoming rather than being. In contrast, as I will proceed to argue, for my participants, the

significance of a commemoration day such as Easter Sunday is produced and reproduced

again and again through their ways of performing and experiencing them, so that history

and collective memory interweave with personal experience; the creative process of

remembering and forgetting constructs and re-evaluates the historicity of a nation.

> Seeing collective memory as the creative imaging of the past in the service of the
> present and an imagined future, studying the fluidity of images, the
> commodification of memory and the acceptance of the debatability of the past have
> introduced a new dynamic to the interaction between memory and historiography in
> the representation of the past. (Misztal 2003:103)

Moreover, through this process, history becomes freer from disciplinary constraints, with

both memory and history together creating 'an organic form of knowledge' (Samuel 1994:

442-40). It is as if history becomes a form of narrative, rather than a single 'truth', which

opens a space for questioning and for exploration. As Anzte & Lambek suggest, 'as history

becomes one among many other types of narrative and memory is appreciated for its

authenticity and truthfulness, the boundary between memory and history is becoming fluid'

(Anzte & Lambek 1996b: 5). In this thesis I will examine how symbols and signs that are

usually taken for granted, come to be re-evaluated by Greek participants through their

processes of remembering and producing stories. Despite the interdependence of history

and memory, this does not undermine their validity: fact, fiction and imagination are all

significant parts in the telling of a story and in the narration of a past. The legitimacy of

history, or of 'a historical past', comes from the different ways that people imagine and

remember their nation; 'Its interest in imaginative representations of the past restores the

significance of memories for historical inquiry and legitimizes methodological pluralism'

(Misztal 2003: 107). So the 'validity' of memory for my informants, and the 'trust' they

assign to them, are built up through the ways they experience, perform and live their

national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and other social and cultural practices. If we

accept the interrelationship between history and memory, then the knowledge that is

produced within participants' stories can be seen as becoming implicated in reconstructing

the ways that Greek national identity has been perceived and understood throughout the

years.

One form of narration that brings together personal and social memory and emphasises the

significance of memory and history is what Anzte and Lambek call 'declarative' memory,

which is seen as being made up of two parts: 'semantic' memory which describes what we

know; and the 'episodic' memory which describes what is experienced. The notion of

declarative memory depends on models of consciousness as representation (Antze and

Lambek 1996:177). Experience becomes an active and conscious tool of knowledge that is

part of Greek participants' embodied way of performing national commemorations or ritual

ceremonies. As Edensor argues, consciousness is embedded in the body, not separate from

it. The body is a carrier of culture and identity, not merely as embodied representation but

through performance – what it does, how it moves, speaks, stands and sits' (Edensor 2002:

72). As my study will show, part of the production of Greek participants' stories is the very

difficulty of remembering the small details – gestures, accents, habits, images, smells or sounds – that are associated with events and happenings that are part of their lives. Forgotten events may contribute towards the formation and construction of personal and cultural memory and of what Greek participants consider important elements of their sense of belonging. Anzte explores these forms of non-declarative, implicit memory, referring to them as 'procedural' memories; those which are felt but not described. These forms of memory are flexible, creating a space in which to reconstruct, imagine and reshape experiences of the past with new versions of the present, producing different meanings of belongings and Greekness.

Symbols, Myths, Histories in a Nation's Cultural Heritage

Cultural identity refers to the shared culture of a common history and ancestry (Hall 2000). 'Cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history' (Hall 1994: 8). There are several cultural codes that emerge from myths, symbols, histories, and cultural geographies that create a strong sense of belonging to and identification with a nation (Ibid 2001). Throughout the circumstances of history, of social and political transformations, people try to find various myths and symbols that can stand as a means of preserving and keeping alive what counts as a valuable source of knowledge for their cultural identity. National commemorations, ritual ceremonies and practices such as weddings and funerals are ways of not only establishing but also transmitting this knowledge from one generation to another. This knowledge can circulate through the years,

carrying within it peoples' histories, memories and ways of experiencing and performing

these practices. In this way, the history of a nation is written not only through the strictly

political reformations and decisions of social institutions but also through the

contextualisation and embodiment of meanings that people give to the cultural practices,

symbols or myths of their nation. Historical knowledge and personal narratives intermingle

to produce part of a nation's cultural identity.

John Hutchinson proposes that, instead of simply considering national identity in relation to

political definitions that tend to create an elitist, instrumental and bureaucratic image, it is

worth ascribing more cultural characteristics to national identity: he refers to this as

'cultural nationalism'. His main aim is to rediscover what constitutes a nation by taking into

account numerous cultural elements that are also part of national identity. Instead of making

a distinction between state and culture, he considers whether symbols, myths and histories

form a nation alongside its economic and political formations. Ethno-symbolists such as

Antony D Smith pay particular attention to the relationships between ethnic myths and

national identities. They view the nation as a historically constructed entity, which is

encoded as myths, symbols and culture (Hutchinson 2001). It is through its history that

Hutchinson argues that a nation is able to sustain its culture, irrespective of social and

political transformations. He says:

> Contingency in the form of wars, economic collapse, mass migrations and
> missionary ideologies has regularly threatened the physical or cultural survival of
> populations in the modern as well pre-modern world. Through identifying with a
> historic nation embodied in myths, individuals combine in a society to overcome
> contingency and find a unique meaning and purpose. Culture, then, for ethno-
> symbolists means not just symbols, traditions or rituals, but rather the meanings and
> orientations to collective action that these evoke. (Hutchinson 2001:76)

Ethno-symbolists aim to move beyond national 'contingency' and to construct it from a complete ethno-historical perspective. For them, a nation is primarily composed and constituted by the histories and meanings that rituals and traditions carry with them, and they therefore look for a 'national' and 'homogeneous' culture that can be created by collecting the meanings that myths and symbols signify for the nation. Although ethno-symbolists are aware of the importance of 'state centralisation' of national histories, they argue that a nation comes alive through ethnic traditions such as myths and symbols which bring people together and create a collective and strong sense of belonging. 'The nation is a source of unique charisma or creative energy, expressed in its origin myths, history, culture and landscape' (Hutchinson 1999: 399). In this respect, commemoration days, weddings, funerals and ritual ceremonies in Greek society, although appearing to be practices with repetitive formats and enduring ways of performing them, constitute part of the national identity and have valuable elements to contribute towards a re-evaluation and a reconstruction of what we refer to as 'Greek national identity'. Cultural nationalists consider historical tradition as a 'living tradition, which is continually recreated to meet the needs and perspectives of each generation' (Hutchinson 1999:399). The whole perspective of cultural nationalism is therefore derived from a cultural point of view where history, symbols and myths are basic ingredients that constitute and draw an image of the nation. Myths, history and folksongs are elements of a nation's cultural heritage, each helping people to appreciate and sustain their cultural identity.

What is significant in Hutchinson's approach is that cultural nationalism is not a product of certain rules and codes that individuals have to follow in order to preserve their nation. On

the contrary, cultural nationalism is produced by the people themselves. The way people

perform, celebrate and use their symbols, histories and generally their culture, becomes and

forms the nation itself. In this way the foundation of a nation is seen as being built from

below; from the ways participants live and experience social and cultural practices along

with the stories they produce through them. Hutchinson's aim is to present myths, cultural

practices or folksongs as a foundation from which national identity can be reconstructed,

rather than simply seeing them as elements of a nation's past that need to be 'preserved'.

This allows me to further explore the following questions: How do we embed my

participants' ways of remembering and imagining their belonging and Greekness? How can

their stories become legitimised and constituted as part of Greek cultural identity?

Imagining Belonging...

Remembering the past and trying to reconstruct it in the present through photographs,

senses or objects implies an 'act of imagination' (Proust 1989). Imagination does not

belong to the terrain of fiction, to something unreal, but is part of the way memory is

shaped in order to give meaning to experiences.

> Memory and imagination are interconnected through their respective roles of
> assigning and reading meanings, as memory is crucial to our ability to sustain a
> continuity of experience, and this sense of continuity is essential for understanding
> the world, while our imaginative thinking is based in our ability to make the world
> intelligible and meaningful. (Misztal, 2003:119)

Imagination forms part of the way people remember and conceive their history and culture.

The historical context of a Greek funeral or a commemoration day becomes a testimony;

memory and imagination are part of a testimony 'because the witness says I was a part of

the story, I was there' (Ricoeur 1999: 16). My informants carry specific images in their minds about commemorations and ritual ceremonies through which they are able to construct their experiences and identify particular features that imply a sense of belonging and Greekness. It is not a matter of finding out the 'truth' about social and cultural practices in Greek society but rather of how Greek participants perceive these rituals to have been performed. The knowledge that is produced out of memory and imagination comes to supplement the historically established context of Greek funerals and ceremonies. 'When I testify to something, I am asking the others to trust what I am saying is true. To share testimony is to exchange trust. Beyond this we cannot go. Most institutions rely fundamentally on the trust they place in the world of the other' (Ricoeur 1999: 16). In relying on the shared commitment to believe in the experiences of others, concepts such as 'truth' or 'trust' appear fragile and only acquire solidity through time as one person's testament becomes the foundation for the stories of others, an ongoing process which is continually creating new styles of belonging.

Therefore, in analysing peoples' experiences, not only the major or significant occasions in their lives should be taken into consideration, but also experiences which refer to small, mundane details of everyday life. I suggest that these mundane details, as participants experience and conceptualise them through cultural practices, may form another way of seeing and constructing Greek national identity. Following Hutchinson's commitment to seeing the construction of the nation from a strictly ethno-historical point of view, I suggest an alternative to the formal ethno-historical national space, which emerges from habitual performances, routines, mundane habits and small details of people's everyday lives. As Billig highlights, most of what we call national identity finds its reference in the 'banal' and

everyday where 'thoughts, reactions and symbols turn into routine habits, and, thus, they become *inhabited*' (Billig 1995:42).

Consequently, in order to understand and contextualise the meanings that a Greek wedding or funeral signify, it is worth paying attention to numerous small details that find their reference in objects, colours, body languages and feelings, all of which may create a strong sense of identity and belonging to the nation. People's ways of performing and imagining social and cultural practices in Greek society may overlap with already existing symbols and signs that create more 'fixed' interpretations of national identity. Benedict Anderson describes how 'the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life' (Anderson 1983:35-36), in making the case for his notion of 'imagined communities'. As Castoriadis argues, the taken-for-granted symbols and historical markings of cultural and social practices become part of people's ways of imagining their nation (Castoriadis 1997). As such, Hutchinson's 'historically-rooted way of life' (Hutchinson 1999) may be transformed in a 'social imaginary'[2] (Castoriadis 1997), a term which Castoriadis was first to use (1987). Initially exploring the common sense understanding of what we mean by imaginary[3], Castoriadis proceeds to examine the complex relationships between the symbolic and the imaginary, maintaining that: 'The deep and obscure relations between the symbolic and imaginary appear as soon as one reflects on the following fact: the imaginary has to use the symbolic not only to 'express' itself but to 'exist', to pass from the virtual to anything more than this' (Castoriadis 1987: 127). In his use of these two terms, Castoriadis is drawing on

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[2] My standpoint in this research project regarding the term 'imaginary' is informed by the work of Cornelius Castoriadis *The Imaginary Institution of Society (1987)*.

[3] Castoriadis primarily uses the word imaginary in its everyday sense such as when he says: 'we speak of the 'imaginary' when we want to talk about something 'invented' – whether this refers to a 'sheer' invention (a

the work of Jacques Lacan (in particular from the 1960s). According to Lacan, language is not simply equal to a symbolic order; in addition to its symbolic dimensions, language also has both imaginary and real dimensions. The symbolic dimension of language is that of the signifier; a dimension in which elements have no positive existence but are constituted purely by virtue of their mutual differences (Evans 1996). The imaginary dimension also involves a linguistic element. Whereas the signifier is the foundation of the symbolic order, the signified and signification are part of the imaginary order. Thus, language has both symbolic and imaginary aspects. In addition, whereas the symbolic is a set of differentiated, discrete signifiers, the real is undifferentiated; it is the symbolic which introduces a cut in the real in the process of signification; it is the world of words that creates the world of things (Evans 1996). Therefore, the imaginary is structured by the symbolic. It is the symbolic order which is determinant of subjectivity, and the imaginary realm of images and appearances are merely effects of the symbolic. Moreover, for Lacan the symbolic is characterised precisely by the absence of any fixed relations between signifier and signified. As I will further develop later, signs belong to the realm of the real, while all the possible signifiers that emerge from the signs belong to the realm of the symbolic order. The signified is the concept that represents the signifiers and belongs to the imaginary order. The real, symbolic and imaginary orders are not in opposition to each other, but rather one follows the other. Symbols and signs depend on the social imaginary of a nation and vice versa; they open together a space for numerous interpretations that constitute the historicity of a nation. 'Beyond the conscious activity of institutionalisation, institutions have drawn their source from the *social imaginary*. The imaginary must be interwoven with the

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story entirely dreamed up), or a slippage, a shift of meaning in which available symbols are invested with

symbolic, otherwise society could not have "come together"' (Castoriadis 1997: 131). To

invoke the notion of social imaginary is to bring together real, symbolic, and imaginary and

try to construct a series of significations which create an open-ended space in which

elements constitute the national identity of a nation. 'Social imaginary is more "real" than

the "real". From a strictly symbolic or "linguistic" point of view it appears as a shift of

meaning, as a combination of metaphor and metonymy' (Castoriadis 1997: 140). The social

imaginary of a cultural practice such as a funeral or a wedding involves certain signs that,

through people's narratives, acquire a series of signifiers that come to represent a particular

signified concept. Building from this notion, I would suggest that the social imaginary of

the Greek nation is like a *mythistorima* – a Greek word, combining the sense of 'myth' and

'history', usually used to describe a novel which includes a degree of realism and fiction, a

novel which is mythical but in which real characters and events construct a 'story'; a

'narrative' that leaves the reader to draw his/her own interpretations and conclusions.

A 'Mythistorical' narration of cultural identity
> *I didn't find spring in the fields or even in a Botticelli, but in a small red palm-*
> *bearer. Likewise one day, gazing at the head of Zeus, I felt the sea.*
> *When we discover the secret relationships of meanings and traverse them deeply*
> *we'll emerge in another sort of clearing that is poetry. And Poetry is always single*
> *as the sky. The question is from where one sees the sky. I have seen it from midsea.*
>   Odysseas Elytis (Translated from Greek
>
>   by Olga Broumas)

Narrating a nation is like narrating an endless book; it involves infinite meanings that

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other significations than their 'normal' or canonical significations'(Castoriadis 1987: 127).

interweave between signs, myths and histories. 'Nations, like narratives, loose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind's eye' (Bhabha 1990: 1). Historical or cultural markings acquire certain significations (second-order meanings) that are produced through people's narrations: I call this 'mythistorical narration'. In mythistorima, the novel's author is inspired by real events which he/she translates into an imaginary story by mixing together symbolic, everyday and mythical figures and places, eventually producing a mythistorical creation. As, for example, with Kafka, the 'historical order embraces the legendary; this is Kafka's profound mythistorical core' (Gourgouris 1996: 11). In this regard, the way that a nation is constructed is not far removed from a mythistorical novel; the ways that myths, cultural geographies, histories, symbols and traditions are used, circulated and digested by people come to represent the culture, historicity and identity of a nation. For example, in Greek poet Georges Seferis' collection *Mythistorema*, he composes a poem of twenty-four sections in free verse in which he fuses history and mythology. The poem has resounding echoes of the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922[4], as everyday figures parade through the poem in the company of mythical and symbolic figures. Everything takes place in a Greek landscape while the mythical subject matter (which comes from Homer) appears in fragments, in 'layers' of myths from Greek mythology. A more recent example was the Athens Olympic Games opening ceremony in 2004, in which a series of 'cultural' elements, objects, colours, sounds, histories and myths were used to compose an image of Greekness. The use of symbols and signs such as a Greek flag or a tiny boat made out of paper signified particular meanings that have come out of people's ways of 'feeling', and 'living' their culture; as one media commentator put

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[4] The Greco-Turkish War or War in Asia Minor of 1919-1922.

it, 'A picture of simplicity and serenity, a paper boat carrying a young boy waving a small

Greek flag, gently sailed across the water, representing the affinity Greeks have for the sea;

the tiny boat set in such a large expanse of water representing Greece, a small country;

birthplace of big ideas'[5]. The Greek flag, the sea and the boat appear as signifiers of Greek

culture that acquire a sense of value through people's ways of presenting and recognising

them: although the Greek flag signified the country of Greece, it was the way in which it

was used that gave it a particular significance.

In this sense, a nation is a mixture of historical and imaginary traces that do not have 'fixed'

and 'rigid' meanings; on the contrary, they are temporary because their meanings can be

cultivated again and again according to different stories that people produce, depending on

social, historical and cultural conditions. In this way, the cultural dimensions which

constitute Greek national identity depend primarily on the ways that Greek participants

envisage and imagine their nation, the ways that they have been 'using' historical-cultural

signs that eventually create diverse and complex styles of belonging.

Benedict Anderson also brings up the question of the relationship between the symbolic and

the imaginary; how symbols are used in people's daily performances, how they find their

references in unreflective manners such as modes of dress, eating, drinking and a series of

other routines that are part of their social interaction, and create a collective sense of

belonging. In the case of my research, what a funeral signifies in Greek society will be

shown as being brought to life through a series of different significations that Greek

participants give to it. Anderson argues that:

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[5] http://home.iprimus.com.au/beethoven2001/thegames/athens/index.htm

> Nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy. (Anderson 1991:4)

It is the particular 'meaning' that makes the way that a funeral is performed in Greek society unique; although its meaning may change from time to time, this does not eliminate its importance – it becomes part of what we call the historicity of Greek culture. History cannot be 'frozen' but is rather reproduced and contextualised within people's narratives. 'The nation is a historical form through and through' (Gourgouris 1996: 16). It is not a matter of finding out the notion of 'authenticity' or 'origin' or any sort of 'reality' that ancient Greece and social and cultural practices have in Greek society, but rather deciphering the very special forms of perception that make unique the meaning of Greekness and belonging to the nation.

For example, throughout my thesis, emotional and mythical constructed narrations stand as forms of perception – styles of belonging to ancient Greece and of social and cultural practices of Greek society. These emotions, feelings, senses and mythical constructed memories emerge through mundane practices such as the preparation of food for Good Friday, the particular uniform of a Greek parade, the special songs for a funeral, the picnics under the temple of Apollo at Delphi and many others as will be revealed and analysed in the empirical chapters. Within these different styles of belonging, official history interweaves with personal experience, creating an arena in which to discuss, question and re-evaluate what constitutes Greek national identity. The smell of the lamb on Easter Sunday or the mythically constructed content of a national holiday describe the 'social

imaginary' of the Greek nation, where the meanings of symbols and signs of national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and cultural practices have been circulated and reproduced through participants' ways of remembering.

This brings us back to how Anderson distinguishes nations by the particular 'meanings' that people imagine. The uniforms in a Greek parade, Easter Sunday food, the Greek flag, the temple of Poseidon all are existing cultural-historical signs that signify a sense of Greekness and belonging and, through them, participants create their own ways of imagining them in their everyday lives.

What has to be emphasised is that participants' styles of belonging do not destroy or render invisible the history of pre-existing signs; rather they preserve them by transforming their meaning, as produced through the realms and manifestations of everyday live. Therefore, the mythical constructed content of ancient Greece, of a national parade, of a wedding or of a landscape, does not eliminate their cultural-historical significance; on the contrary, it describes with precision the cultural dimensions of Greek national identity from an individual point of view.

Narrating the nation from a mythological standpoint, as Greek participants do, opens up a space in which participants can be seen as recreating and, most importantly, re-evaluating the historical, cultural and social ground of Greek national identity. Instead of seeing both senses and mythical constructed stories as abstract and ambiguous, it is rather worth thinking through how they can stand as 'styles' that enable Greek participants to create a sense of belonging and Greekness.

In chapter five I will suggest that, in emotional and mythical narrations, an allegory of fragments emerges as another form of perception or style of belonging. Generally, the term

allegory refers to a story, a poem or a picture, which, through interpretation, reveals a hidden meaning. In this thesis, in using the term 'allegory of fragments', I refer to the numerous fragments that the Greek participants I interviewed extracted from their family photographs and through which they created an 'allegorical' narration, revealing literal and symbolic meanings.

Taking the above into account, it is worth examining how and from where this process of creating a mythological standpoint and form of allegorical narration comes from; in other words how the memory of my participants works, what is its role, its form, and where it stands when it comes to particular styles of belonging. Although the creation of Greekness and the particular styles of belonging are formed through participants' experiences, at the same time these same experiences pass through transformations and modifications which are rooted in the ways that participants imagine and contextualise their memories. There is therefore a need to examine the relationship between memory, experience and the 'imagined', and how these can work together in the production of stories from participants' family albums and become part of a national knowledge of what Greekness and belonging mean.

Chapter Three

Methodology and methods

Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion about the relationship between visual methods and social research. It will suggest the development of a method that deals with what I anticipated would be the 'invisible fragments' that my participants could explore through family photographs in a semi-structured interview.

My primary concern was to explore in depth how my participants make sense of themselves and experience particular commemoration days and ritual ceremonies within their own family photographs and produce stories that bring to the surface a series of fragments, which come to constitute a way of seeing cultural dimensions of Greek national identity. As Pink argues, 'Photographs are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, space and truth' (Pink 2001: 17). From a narrative of a visual image, one is able to learn more than a family drama; small details and mundane practices of everyday life emerge, which give a broader picture of history and culture. These 'invisible fragments' are what I was interested in exploring in my participants' photographs; involving feelings, emotions, experiences that would reflect part of participants' identity and belonging.

In this sense, my methodological choices aimed to explore in detail the various fragments that informants extracted from their photographs and the ways that these

fragments create stories; this takes into account the theoretical perspective of Benjamin (Benjamin 1931) who developed the concept of memories producing 'dialectic images' with an 'auratic' perception. This is something that I will explore in the fifth chapter, in the analysis of my informants' stories; how smells, sounds and aromas come to create a sense of Greekness and belonging.

Moreover, this chapter explores and develops the idea that the use of photographs and the 'snapshot stories'[1] that my informants produce act as a means of, or rather an additional space for, producing knowledge and an understanding of the self and identity. More specifically, I will explore how personal photographs act as a substantial source of knowledge for the participating Greek subjects in the social and political memory of society, in which they simultaneously become both personal and public testimony, illustrating the values and traditions of a nation (Berger 1992). In order to develop such an idea, I will discuss the status of the visual in social research, in particular how visual sociology sits in relation to qualitative research, the technique of photo-elicitation and its benefits challenges. In doing so, I will discuss the role of the image alongside the interview; what the use of images adds to semi-structured interviews and the differences they can make. In addition, I am interested in exploring how an image gives shape to and contextualises participants' memories and experiences. In so doing, I will draw on what Caygill (1998) refers to as the 'colour of experience', through which experience appears not as a single substance but is infinitely nuanced, giving a photograph an 'auratic perception' (Mc Cole 1993).

This chapter outlines the different steps that I undertook in developing my

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[1] By the term snapshot I refer to the instant and spontaneous stories that Greek participants produce during an interview, as a result of being prompted by their photographs.

methodology. Firstly, I will discuss my pilot, what my initial aims were and how my research questions changed. I will proceed to discuss my focus groups, the themes that I discussed with my participants, who I decided to recruit, and what the outcomes were. Finally, I will discuss my use of semi-structured interviews in combination with images. I will also outline my decisions around whom I chose to participate in my research project, the choice of location as well as the problems that I encountered and how I resolved them. Then I will briefly discuss issues around data processing before finally providing a detailed description of how themes were created from the analysis of the interviews. This will be situated in relation to a discussion around my desire to attend reflexively to how being Greek affected my research questions, my relationship with my participants, and my research more generally. I will also use as a guiding concept the notion of experience by feminist epistemologists in order to explain the links that experience can produce between the personal and the public, between the material life of my participants and between the symbolic and cultural meanings within social relations.

Methods

Before starting my fieldwork, I decided to do a pilot exercise in order to assess whether my desire to work with images within a semi-structured interview could bring some interesting results (or indeed would be a complete disaster!). For that reason, I asked two friends of mine if they could participate and talk about their life in relation to photographs of social and cultural practices that they selected. One of my friends was 50 years old, middle class, had a post-graduate degree, and lived in Athens; the other

was 70 years old, retired, middle class, and also had a post-graduate degree, and lived in Athens.

At this stage, I did not have a fully developed idea of what exactly I would ask them or how. I just requested that they find from their family albums photographs of weddings, funerals, ancient sites, Easter or commemoration days, and told them that we would talk about them. My initial aim was to examine whether this method would give me some interesting results and to give me some initial ideas. Although, as I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, I had worked with my responses to my own family photographs, I now wanted to see if this would work with other people on a broader level.

When the day arrived, I visited one of my friends at her house (the 50 year old), where at first, I spent quite a lot of time introducing my research project, and my initial ideas. Her response was quite positive, as she told me she never heard of anybody working with images in exploring issues around identity. After this introduction, we started the interview; she had chosen many photographs, although not only of social and cultural practices. However, she did not know how to start and what exactly to say about them. I asked her a few questions, such as who was in a particular picture, when a photograph was taken, why, and how she felt looking at the photograph now. She answered my questions, but I sensed that her stories were quite descriptive and she did not feel comfortable talking in more depth about her life. What I realised was that I had ended up asking her so many questions and when I listened to the interview I felt that I was leading her quite a lot in order to answer my questions. In relation to my other friend (the 70 year old), the interview ran quite differently. He was far more relaxed in talking

about his photographs and there were only a few occasions when I had to prompt him.
After both interviews, I took some decisions about the structure and my research
questions of my project. Firstly, I decided to develop a clear set of requirements around
exactly which types of photographs I was looking for my participants to bring from
their family albums. So I decided to give them a written outline in order to be able to
prepare prior to the interview. Secondly, I would conduct focus groups with different
age groups before proceeding with my semi-structured interviews. The reason that I
decided to conduct focus groups was that I anticipated that my participants would
become more familiar with my research project and would be able to understand what I
was looking for. I thought that by asking them to discuss and articulate with their own
words how they understand and experience their sense of Greekness and what it means
to be Greek, I would probably create a comfortable space before introducing my method
of using images in the semi-structured interview. In addition, the data that would be
produced from the focus groups could help me to clarify my research questions.

Focus Groups

When the time arrived to conduct my focus groups, I had one major restriction: time. I
had a few weeks to run my focus groups before continuing with my semi-structured
interviews. For that reason, I decided to ask a couple of friends of mine to help me to
find people to participate in the focus groups. Both of my friends were of different ages,
one was 40 years old and the other was 26; this age difference proved very helpful
because I wanted to find different age groups for the focus groups. As well as my
friends, I also contacted as many people as possible and asked them to participate in the
focus groups. By recruiting friends for the focus groups, it firstly saved me a lot of time

rather than trying to find random participants, and secondly, I anticipated this would result in a much more free-flowing conversation with them, without me having the hesitance about expressing any views that might have negative or positive connotations. And thirdly, I anticipated that knowing some of the people in the focus groups would generate interesting debates of use to my research project. My friends and I finally managed to gather sixty people in total, which I divided into six different focus groups. It took me quite a long time in order to decide on the criteria for my sample. It was one of the most difficult decisions I encountered in my fieldwork and, as I wrote in my fieldwork diary, in my research as a whole. I felt lost for a long while, and it took me a lot of time to think through what I was looking for in relation to my research topic, from whom I could get the information I wanted, and why.

Initially, I thought that, since my research topic was related to social and cultural practices and activities that constitute part of the cultural dimensions of Greek national identity, as expressed by both men and women, there was no particular reason to exclude either of the two sexes. For that reason I decided to include a variety of people in terms of class, gender and background. But I did decide to organise each focus group by age. So, for example, I decided one group would include both students from Greek universities and people who work in different public sectors, ranging in age from 20 to 28; a second would include high-school teachers, bankers, and once again people who work in different private and public sectors, aged between 35 and 45; and a third would be made up of 62 to 72 year olds, some of which were pensioners and others still working in public sectors. Although I did not use age as a variable in my research project, my intention was that including people similar ages would allow them to draw on potentially shared historical memories when remembering national commemorations and ritual ceremonies, with the aim of facilitating rich discussions within focus groups.

Eventually, I decided on six focus groups, each involving 10 men and women. My selected subjects were drawn from middle and working classes, with different educational backgrounds, all located in Athens. My subjects all identified themselves as Greek because their families had been living in Greece for many generations and they had been brought up and educated in Greece. The principal theme that I decided to discuss with them was what a sense of Greekness meant to them, and, more generally, what it meant to be Greek.

As a form of qualitative method, a 'focus group is basically a group interview/discussion on a particular topic facilitated by a researcher' (Tonkinss 1998 as cited in Seale 2005: 194). Focus groups as a method allowed me to see how the production of meanings, ideas and themes are formed not individually, but in relation to other members of a group. My aim was to identify from my participants' interaction what elements constitute a sense of Greekness and belonging. As Morgan argues, 'the hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group' (Morgan 1997). Or, as Tonkinss argues:

> Focus groups in this sense are not simply a means of interviewing several people at the same time rather they are concerned to explore the formation and negotiation of accounts within a group context, how people define, discuss and contest issues through social interaction. Underlying this approach is an assumption that opinions, attitudes, and accounts are socially produced-shaped by interaction with others - rather than being directly formed at the level of the individual. (Tonkinss as cited in Seale 2005:194)

It is this interaction among the interviewees which creates a much more relaxed atmosphere than a face-to face interview, more similar to the informality of a social gathering, that I noticed in all the focus groups: my subjects' attitude was relaxed, and the conversation soon flowed freely.

Within the focus groups I conducted, I was able to observe how my subjects rendered

visible, and articulated their ideas about Greekness in relation to others. This can be

observed in the following exchange between Penelope and Alexandra for example;

    Penelope: what I really like about the customs of my country is the sense of
    socialising.
    Alexandra: ...for me the customs mean anything.
    Penelope: ...I think we have not really preserved our customs...

In this sense, I saw focus groups as a collective rather than an individual activity, where

data is produced and formulated in relation to others. Through interaction and the

exchange of ideas, each participant's perception of Greekness influenced other members

of the group and together they created a series of different and complex meanings about

Greekness.

Furthermore, most of my focus groups took place in houses belonging to the

interviewees, with a couple of taking place in public spaces. I tried to arrange

everything to take into account the needs of my interviewees. I made sure I fully

acknowledged and showed respect towards the fact that my participants had agreed to

participate and help me generate data for my research topic. I also paid for transport

tickets or any other necessary costs, in order to ensure the best possible environment for

the discussion.

When the day arrived to go and conduct my first focus group I felt very nervous;

different thoughts crossed my mind such as whether I would get the information that I

wanted, whether my informants would communicate and manage to create something

fruitful, or whether it would be a complete disaster. I remember when I stepped into the

house and I saw all these people waiting for me feeling that I just wanted to leave. A

sense of fear made my whole body shake, perhaps the fear that I might let my

informants down. Furthermore, the fact that firstly I am Greek too and secondly, having

friends in the focus group made my role as researcher particularly difficult. This is something that I experienced in all of my focus groups. For that reason, I had to try to find a balance of how to control those two factors in order to avoid diving into the conversation in the focus groups, being argumentative and siding with my friends in the attempt to produce material on what a sense of Greekness means. In order to avoid such an outcome, from the outset, I explained to my informants what my role as both facilitator and researcher in this type of conversation was, in order to be quite clear before the focus group began. My informants were very understanding and generally, the atmosphere in the group was comfortable and relaxed. In contrast to me, my informants were laughing, chatting and were in the mood to argue about their sense of Greekness and what it means to be Greek. The tone was set by the fact in every house that I visited, there was always, in the middle of the circle alongside my mini disc, plenty of tasty Mediterranean nibbles, which immediately gave the room a sense of Greekness.

Despite the very friendly atmosphere and good relationships that I had with my informants, I thought it would be wise to address some of the ethical implications arising from this situation from the very beginning. So I made a 'contract', which I asked my participants to sign before the interview, explaining the procedures I had established relating to the confidentiality and anonymity of the data that they would produce. I made it clear to them that their names would remain anonymous, and data would only be used with their permission. In addition, at the end of the focus group, as well as asking them their occupation, age, and gender I asked them to also fill in their contact details in order to be able to send them a copy of the interview. At the end of the focus group, I also provided them with all my contact details, in case they wanted to add something on my research topic, or if they wanted to ask any questions, as well as

thanking them for their participation.

In all of the focus groups informants approached what a sense of Greekness means from many different angles often with very different points of view. In trying to support their arguments they became very passionate, which was often reflected in the way they used not only verbal but also non-verbal expressions. Whether agreeing or disagreeing with others I could see their hands flying in all sorts of directions (classic Greek reaction when trying to express yourself and convey a message to friends). All of the focus groups were thus extremely lively and vibrant. There were many moments where I had to interrupt my subjects to ensure the volume level of the group didn't get out of hand, sometimes having to politely ask them to speak more quietly. There were other moments where I felt quite tense when my informants were discussing issues irrelevant to my topic; I tried to be discreet (not always successfully), and bring them back to talking about what I was interested in.

During the focus groups, although I was the one that had established boundaries around my role as a researcher and facilitator, I found it very difficult to remain 'neutral'. There were moments when I wanted to get involved in arguments and express my opinion, to agree or disagree, to be part of my subjects' production of what Greekness means to them. Every time I felt this need, I tried to resist it as much as possible, in order to avoid leading the whole conversation. An example of one of these moments was when, in the process of discussing sensitive issues around immigration, there were comments that appeared directly or indirectly racist. However, in such instances I chose not to challenge the speakers but instead let them reveal the narratives through which they made sense of their 'reality'. Although I had not anticipated such comments and was therefore unprepared as to how to deal with them, my instinctive reaction was to let the participants unfold their insights unhindered, even when I was in complete

disagreement. I also came to recognise that my own Greekness might have affected how my informants interacted with me, which was both an advantage and a disadvantage: on one hand, they felt free to express their views, in particular in relation to sensitive topics like immigration; on the other, there were times when I felt my participants were expecting me to be complicit in their sometimes racist narratives.

Looking back I don't have any regrets about how I reacted; I think my decision to remain silent and not get involved brought issues to the fore that might have remained unspoken. I am also aware that my own Greekness might have allowed to my informants not only to make racists comments about immigration but also for every other theme that they have discussed in the focus groups. Also in retrospect, if I was to conduct my research again, I would be interested in investigating how immigrants negotiate notions of Greekness. In particular I think that interviewing immigrants from Albania would be very interesting given that not only have many of them been living in Greece for almost 20 years, but also they have only just been given the right to have a Greek identity card and national insurance number. It would also be interesting to examine how informants would narrate Greekness if the interviewer were from a different ethnic or cultural background.

When I completed my focus groups, I realised that the choice to have focus groups with people that knew each other had both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage was that, in knowing each other, my informants felt more able to freely express their view. But at the same time, knowing each other meant that being together in my focus groups caused particular power relations to be visible between individuals. There were therefore moments when I observed instances of competitive behaviour or subtle jealousness within the group. Nevertheless, in relation to my primary research objective, which was to describe how they experienced their sense of Greekness and what it means

to be Greek, my informants raised important, if sometimes contradictory themes, that allowed me a lot of space for analysis and discussion and at the same time also helped me in further shaping my research project as a whole.

Semi-structured interviews with images

When the focus groups finished, I approached each participant individually and I asked him/her if they would like to participate in the one-to-one interviews. Some were very keen to participate, but others expressed some reluctance, based on what seemed to be a 'fear', relating to the interview being a more intimate space, in which they might be expected to express and expose themselves 'verbally' and 'visually'. Eventually, sixteen people agreed to participate. There were more women than men (11 women, 5 men), a wide range of ages (18 to 70), with some working in assorted private and public sectors, and others students in higher-education.

The reason that I chose a semi-structured interview is because it is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity and it enables to the researcher to become attuned to subtle differences in people's positions and to respond accordingly (May 2001), both at the time of interviewing and in the subsequent analysis, whilst allowing the exploration of issues around some predetermined themes. One of the most important elements in a successful interview is that the person that conducts the interview explains and makes his/her interviewee understand exactly what is required from him/her. As Tim May comments: 'Interviews are social encounters and not simply passive means of gaining information' (May 2001:128). The interviewer has the responsibility and the ethical obligation to explain in depth to the interviewee every single step of the interview. It is only this way that the interviewer and the interviewee can together create a comfortable

space through which a rich dialogue can be produced. Semi-structured interviews have been referred to as 'conversation with a purpose' (Burgess cited in Mason, 1996:38). 'They are often used to encourage an interviewee to talk, perhaps at some length, about particular issue or range of topics' (Byrne cited in Seale 2005: 181). Questions within semi-structured interviews are normally formulated by the researcher in advance of the interview, but the interviewer is free to explore the answers and enter in a responsive dialogue with the interviewee. The interviewer can seek clarification and elaboration of the answers given. It is also allows people to answer more on their own terms.

Nevertheless, the structure of my interview was different to that of a 'normal' semi-structured interview in one important respect: I did not use open-ended questions to prompt my interviewees but instead, I used images. More specifically, I used participants' family photographs as prompts. Therefore, in a way, images stand as questions in my interviews. The reason that I nonetheless refer to this process as semi-structured is because these photographs are selected in advanced by the participants' from their albums. I asked my participants to do a certain amount of preparation before the interview in choosing photographs relating to specific themes including: a) national commemorations, b) ritual ceremonies that had a meaning for them, such as Easter, c) social practices, such as weddings and funerals, d) a figure that had played an important role in shaping their identity, e) places that had a deep personal significance, and f) photographs that they might take with them if they were going abroad. Moreover, from the very beginning of the interviews I explained to my participants that I had decided I would remain silent while they narrated their stories; I wanted to leave space for my informants to create their stories in whichever order they liked, to be free to 'play' with their memories in terms of selecting which images they wanted to contextualise, how,

and why. I was interested in exploring how the relationship between seeing and remembering worked, and how this relationship might enable participants (or rather give them the opportunities) to relive their past and potentially reconstruct and add a different dimension to it. I wanted to see how a personal memoir could become a social artefact which constructs aspects of a national cultural identity; so I felt any interruption or disruption from me would be like breaking into this 'creative' space and would have added a very different dimension to the whole interview process.

I undertook the decision to use visual images with an awareness of the fact that there are many debates around the use of the visual in social research, including whether the visual can be used as a tool to produce data and also debates around the legitimacy of the visual in research more generally.

In this context, it is worth of thinking about the use of the visual not as additional information alongside the text but rather as material from which text can emerge. Similarly, it is also worth considering how theoretical concepts can emerge both from the analysis of images, and from participants' own responses to visual material. As Caroline Knowles argues:

We understand visual methods to include ways of doing research that generate and employ visual material as an integral part of the research process, whether as a form of data, or a means of representing 'results'... we are interested ...in exploring the use of visual methods in social research rather than providing a sociology of visual culture, which focuses on the prominence of the image, but does not necessarily employ methods as a core component within research (Knowles 2004:5).

The technique of using images in a semi-structured interview is referred to as photo-elicitation. The use of photo-elicitation in an interview promises something different

than a conventional interview; with photo-elicitation, the interview is stimulated and guided by images. Although in a photo-elicitation interview is usually the researcher that chooses and brings photographs to the participants, in my case I asked my participants to bring photographs and produce stories out of them. In photo-elicitation 'the researcher becomes the listener and one who encourages the dialogue to continue. The individual who describes the images must be convinced that their taken for granted understanding of the images is not shared by the researcher, often a startling realization for the subject as well!' (Prosser 1998:35). In this context, in a photo-elicitation interview, new material is produced that is based not on the content of the photograph but what personal responses are 'triggered' by the photograph for the interviewee. I felt this way the production of participants' stories would be more alive and the process more potentially productive, as it would give the participant the opportunity to feel that they were the owners of their visual narrative, rather than somebody else. A photograph that comes from your own family album has more meaning than one taken by a stranger. Moreover, the fact that they had to choose their own photographs meant that they could feel more in control in representing cultural elements of their Greekness and sense of belonging. Most importantly, I didn't want the interview to be led by me, but instead by my participants.

As I said at the beginning of the chapter, I wanted to develop a method that could potentially explore the 'invisible fragments' that my participants might elicit from their photos. My main aim was to focus on how my participants contextualised their experiences through their photos, what sort of connections they made, how they move from one subject to another and tried to create their narratives. As Fay argues, 'knowledge is produced not by a 'single' experience but in grasping the sense of this experience' (Fay 1996). This sense is constituted by a series of connections to and

interrelations with other experiences and stories. It is important to understand the abrupt

and contingent character of what Caygill refers to as the 'colour' of experience (Caygill

1998). Caygill uses the metaphor to capture the infinite nuances of experience; the

various meanings that it can accumulate in an instant. As Benjamin puts it, colour has

an 'intensive infinity'; in his essay *A Child's View of Colour* (1914-15) he challenged

Kant's approach of seeing colour as a *form* of intuition (and therefore rooted in space

and time), instead arguing that colour should be seen as a *medium* of intuition (therefore

transitive and shifting). As Benjamin writes: 'The experience of chromatic phantasy

exceeds the forms of spatio-temporal intuition; it is the medium of all transformation,

not its symptom' and 'can never relate itself to form, which is a matter for law' but is

always 'nuanced, moving, and arbitrary' (Benjamin 1914b 50-1 cited in Caygill 1998:

83).

'The medium of colour' – and therefore the experience of colour – thus comes to be

implicated in the transformation of all the forms of intuition (Caygill, 1998). Benjamin

sees the concept of experience through the potentiality that colour has as a medium.

Colour as a medium is freer than form; it leaves space for imagination and space to fill

the canvas of experience with a range nuances. Caygill continues:

> Seeing the world in the medium of colour is quite different from seeing it
> through the form of spatio-temporal intuition. Chromatic intuition is intensive
> and 'contural' – its images are expressed not in terms of inscription but in terms
> of degrees of brightness and transparency. (Caygill 1998: 84)

It is this 'chromatic intuition' that I hoped would emerge from my interviews: the

colour of experience that my participants created through their photographs, whether of

a national commemoration or Easter Sunday or a funeral. I was interested in drawing

out the nuanced associations that embodied in participants' memories and produced by their experiences, experiences that might involve sounds, aromas and smells.

It is an approach that also draws on the methodological traditions of Oral History. Oral history involves the recording, preservation and interpretation of historical information, based on the personal experiences and opinions of the speaker. As with my method outlined above, oral history relies on the subjective interpretations of the individual and his/her personal evidence. But, as Alessandro Portelli argues, this is also one of its great strengths: 'oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what now they think they did... Subjectivity is as much the business of history as the more visible 'facts'' (Portelli 1981: 12). As I will examine in greater depth in chapter six, in a similar way to an oral history interview, my participants tried to recreate the content of commemoration days through different colours of experiences. Where my method differs from a conventional oral history interview is in the use of family photographs as a prompt for these kinds of experiences. In this context, photographs are more than simply descriptive and informative tools. Elizabeth Edwards agues that 'a photograph is a three dimensional thing, not only a two dimensional image. Photographs exist materially in the world, as chemical deposit on paper... as subject to additions to their surface or as drawing their meanings from presentational forms such as frames and albums' (Edwards 2004: 1). Photographs are objects that become woven into social and cultural experience both as a result of their physicality and the images they contain. They have 'volume', opacity, tactility and a physical presence in the world' (Batchen 1997: 2) and are thus meshed with subjective, embodied and sensuous interactions (Edwards 2004: 1). Photographs can be attached to multiple meanings and functions that are revealed through the ways people talk about them. From this perspective, it is less the content of a photograph that makes it as a

valuable object for the researcher, but the spontaneous responses and reactions that emerge through participants' narratives. As Sara Pink argues:

It is not simply a matter of asking how informants provide 'information' in 'response' to the content of the images. Rather, ethnographers should be interested in how informants use the content of the images as vessels in which to invest meanings and through which to represent their knowledge, self-identities, experiences and emotions (Pink 2001:68).

When working with family photographs, the depth of the meanings informants invest in them quickly becomes clear. As I realised in looking at my own family photo album, family photographs stimulate intense emotional reactions, memories and attachments; in my interviews, participants could offer a variety of interpretations of a single photograph, each one reflecting different facets of information not only about themselves but also about Greek history and culture.

Family photographs link personal biography and history; they thus entail this intersection between private and public memory. Hirsh argues that:

Family photographs offer a prism through which to study the post-modern space of cultural memory composed of leftovers, debris, single items that are left to be collected and assembled in many ways, to tell a variety of stories, from a variety of often competing perspectives (Hirsh 1997: 13).

The variety of stories that can be attached to family photographs means that interpretation is an always incomplete process; as I also discovered, each time that you go back to a family photo and start to narrate a story in relation to it, something 'new', 'unpredictable', and even 'surprising' is revealed, overlaying added information to the

old. As Hirsh continues, 'our memory is never fully 'ours,' nor are the pictures ever unmediated representations of our past. Looking at them we both construct a past and set out on a detective trail to find other versions of a 'real' one' (Hirsh 1997:14). From this perspective, when working with family photos, the knowledge of what a sense of belonging and Greekness means is produced by bringing together these stories, experiences, and emotions, constantly adding 'new' images in relation to the cultural dimensions of Greek national identity. As Martha Langford argues, a family album is another way of telling a life-story, it is a type of testimony whose secrets and stories exist behind an image challenging those of written texts. Family albums can stand as 'the mnemonic devices of a new oral history, voices must be heard for memories to be preserved', for the album to fulfill its functions (Langford 2001).

The 'actual' process of seeing and remembering

As with the focus groups, the interviews took place in informants' houses. I did, however, feel more nervous and anxious than I had before the focus groups, because of the nature of the interview that I had chosen to conduct. Although I had already undertaken a pilot, this now was my final test. When I first arrived, I sensed that some of my informants felt similarly; they were very reserved and shy; as they told me, this came from not knowing how to start or what to say, and because they were being asked to talk about very private moments in their family history. I therefore tried to relax them: first, I reminded them what my research was all about, what I was looking for from the interview, and how important the knowledge that they would produce for my research was. I tried to make sure they understood the flexible nature of my interview, which would therefore provide them with a space for exploring their own interpretations, understandings and experiences. This approach comes from 'an

ontological position which values people's knowledge, values and experiences as meaningful and worthy of exploration' (Byrne cited in Seale 2005: 182). Then, I assured them that none of their photographs would be reproduced in my research and any names used would be anonymised. As in the focus groups, I wrote up a contract in order to obtain their formal consent and to cover issues of anonymity and confidentiality.

I would often find myself spending quite a lot of time with my informants before the interview began. I thought that, as I was in a space as intimate as a family home, and was asking people (some of whom were my friends) to tell me about their personal family histories, the least I could do is to proceed at their pace and be patient, waiting until the moment that they felt ready to start. For that reason, we would often prepare Greek coffee together, sit down and start talking more about my research project, my future plans, family albums and life in general. My informants and I tried to build up intimacy and trust, in order for them to begin to feel more confident in expressing and unfolding stories from their family photographs. Usually, after this process, my informants would feel calmer and happier about starting the interview. Since my subjects brought so many photographs, from which they would produce a series of stories, interviews often lasted up to two hours. Initially, when I had asked them to choose photographs from their family albums, I told them that there should be no more than 20, because I felt that I had to set some limitations on the interview, with my main concern being the amount of time it could take. Nevertheless when my informants arrived for the interview, they would always bring many more than 20 photographs with them, and not necessarily relating to the themes that I thought relevant to my topic; they claimed these were important moments in their lives that they wanted to share with me. For me, it was impossible to prevent them from doing so, even though I realised that the

interviews would take far longer. I felt that I should both respect and trust my participants, not only in terms of the choices they made, but also because these were important parts of their lives and they were giving their time to share them with me. It was clearly hard, if not impossible, to situate a set of experiences, indeed a whole life, in just twenty images. In addition, as became clear, often their reasons for, and intentions behind, remembering and making sense of the past, were different from mine. As many of my informants made clear to me, even though they seemed to realise that particular photographs were not relevant to my topic, they told me to wait and see, as the links and the connections that they had with the areas I had asked them to focus on in their choice of images would later become clear. As a result, what usually happened during the interview was that informants would spread their photographs all over the table and start to tell stories, picking out different fragments from each photograph, irrespective of whether I thought they were relevant or irrelevant at the time. Their snapshot stories were like a collage made out of many different photographs; the fragments of this collage would come together to create the experience of what, for instance, a national parade or an Easter ritual meant for them. As I will discuss in more detail in chapter six, in these instances, temporalities and spatialities became blurred; the temporal and spatial content of the photographs referred not simply to the original image, but to what could be seen as a 'new' image, a compilation of different moments from the past coming together to form participants' ways of remembering national commemorations or their Easter Sunday or a Good Friday. The way that informants remembered and made sense of these events was not linear and were not simply narrative descriptions of what was present in the photographs.

Although there are pre-existing knowledges around what national commemorations, or Easter ceremonies, or ancient monuments, are supposed to be, informants' ways of

remembering were selective. They chose a series of fragments from their photographs and placed them together, eventually creating other forms of knowledge, different from the commonly accepted forms of narrations of Greek culture, able to produce other ways of seeing and constituting what I refer as cultural dimensions of Greek national identity. Their stories went beyond the photographic frame and recreated almost a new photographic album. I also witnessed my participants displaying strong emotions and feelings in relation to the photographs, as well as revealing the sounds and smells that they associated with particular images. It was at these moments when I felt excitement, as well as relief, as a researcher: seeing my informants excitedly talking about their photographs, I felt pleased that they were clearly demonstrating how photographs can be far more than merely descriptive tools.

The materiality of my informants' photographs was able to bring together past and present, the familial and the cultural and to create such an intense atmosphere in the room, in which even the smell of my Greek coffee and the Greek sweets on the table would become implicated. Even during the breaks that we took because of the length of the interviews, informants kept talking about their images. Both their and my recollections of the smells of the Easter Sunday lamb, songs from a commemoration day, or family gatherings on a wedding day, came together to create a picture of belonging and Greekness with multiple layers. The stories that were produced from the photographs were like narratives that try to capture the intensity of a long journey; combining a range experiences and impressions, sad and happy feelings, although with the difficulty that it is always almost impossible to wholly convey these in all their complexity to friends and family. Although none of the photographs will be reproduced in this thesis, as requested by my participants, as will be seen in the following chapters, participants' memories, and the stories they produce from their photographs,

nonetheless come alive through the power of their descriptions, revealing their own vibrancy and vitality.

My initial aim to remain silent had been a risk, as I did not know what would happen and whether I would get enough information to base my analysis on. Nevertheless the worry that this entailed slipped away fast, since my participants were mostly comfortable to talk at length about their photographs. There were a few times when the strange situation they were in made them struggle, not knowing who they were talking to, why they had to talk, or where to start or to end. In these moments, I tried to prompt them by picking up another photograph and asking them a simple question such as 'what is the story behind this?' while trying to avoid leading their answers. I wanted the photographs to prompt my participants to relive the moment captured in the photographs and to be able to construct their memories according to their understandings of what a funeral, wedding or national commemoration meant to them.

In terms of the location, all of the interviews took place in Athens. My primary rationale was that I should start in a place where I was familiar with its everyday social and cultural life. I was born and grew up in Athens and spent my childhood and adulthood years there. I was also familiar with different places in Athens, having moved houses quite a few times with my family. I also had experience of what it meant to celebrate a commemoration day in Athens or to go to an Athens church on Good Friday. I had many memories from when I was young relating to the atmosphere, interactions, performances, of a funeral, of a wedding or of a national commemoration day. I therefore wanted to explore meanings of Greekness and a sense of belonging starting from my own roots, in a place to which I felt intimately connected. More practically, I also faced time limitations and could not therefore travel other Greek locations. This is something that I would like to do as a further research project, in order to see how being

in a place other than Athens affects how people understand and perceive a sense of Greekness. Most importantly, the advantage of interviewing in Athens lies in its concentration of people from different parts of Greece. The capital is a melting pot of people, whose formative experiences originate in a range of regional cultures. This meant that I was able to follow participants' stories as they led me to the particular cultures of the places their families came from, but also, most importantly, to the possibility of some common parameters that might unite their narratives and create a shared sense of Greekness.

Issues of data analysis

All of my interviews were recorded on a mini disc, with an eventual total of six focus groups and 16 face-to-face interviews. After returning to London from my fieldwork, my aim was to transcribe the interviews, then select material I considered important and to analyse these sections. I found transcribing interviews a difficult task due to the sheer amount of time the process took. I had to listen to the recordings repeatedly, paying attention not only to the words themselves but also to my participants' exclamations and their variations in tone. This difficulty was further complicated by the challenge posed by translation, although this process did also play an important role in developing my thinking in relation to my research. I had to not only transcribe my interviews, but also to translate them, which I found a highly frustrating and problematic process. There are many Greek words and expressions for which there are no exact translations in English. In those instances, I often had to employ several different English words to describe a single Greek one, in order for an idea to make sense and to be as close as possible to what my subjects wanted to say. On occasions, I have to admit that various meanings

my informants wanted to convey were lost or slightly distorted from their primary source, and I am fully aware that some of my interpretations would have been different were I writing my research in Greek. For example, the passion and the feeling that participants expressed in relation to Good Friday is very difficult to fully convey in English.

Experience-reflexivity and Inter-subjectivity

After the exhausting process of translating and transcribing, I reached the stage where I had to select the material I thought worthy of analysis. I began with the focus groups, the transcripts of which I read again and again. In the beginning, I felt very frustrated at not knowing how or what sort of material to choose that would be suitable for analysis and interpretation. Eventually, after some helpful advice from my supervisor, I divided my material thematically, finding specific sentences, paragraphs or words, which my participants used to talk about the same issue from different angles. In contrast to the focus groups, when analysing the semi-structured interviews and attempting to divide my material into themes, I had as guidance the actual images that my participants brought with them, which I could refer to alongside the 'narrated images' that they articulated in the interviews. For example, I could compare the stories different participants told about a commemoration day or from Easter Sunday in relation to their photographs, allowing me to extract sections that showed some of the multiple layers of meanings and cultural practices that constitute a part of Greek national identity.

However, although the photograph offers a researcher rich potential in terms producing material from participants, it also presents some challenges for the researcher in

attempting to analyse the experiences, emotions and feelings that participants derive from them. My informants expressed such a range of emotional engagements that at times when attempting to analyse them, I found it difficult to contextualise them. This may result from what Walter Benjamin referred to as the 'dialectical' quality of images, and 'the aura of an object of perception' (McCole 1993: 287). In talking about their memories, informants would frequently narrate a series of fleeting images, often bringing together sudden constellations of past and present, which could both overlap and sometimes challenge conventional meanings attached to Greek social and cultural practices, but their lack of historical context made it difficult to organise them into straightforward themes. Moreover, the 'aura' that surrounds a photograph is often difficult to express straightforwardly linguistically; as McCole argues, 'the aura stands as a juncture between a broad network of social and historical processes and it also appears sometimes as the 'atmosphere' that seems to envelop an object, a scene, or a moment' (McCole 1993:3). As a result, in my analysis, I had at times to draw on my own experiences and memories of similar auratic experiences, in an attempt to capture a sense of some of the meanings and atmospheres participants associated with their images. Despite these challenges, it is through these very complexities that the use of photographs as prompts adds a unique dimension to what would otherwise be a more conventional semi-structured interview. It was one of the aims of my research project to examine the relationship between Walter Benjamin's theoretical concepts of colour of experience, dialectic images and the aura of a perception of an object, as expressed through my participants' interactions with their photographs. In particular, I wondered whether a sense of belonging, experience, and Greekness could be experienced through

this form of 'auratic' perception. This is a question I try to answer in chapters five and six, where my participants reveal a series of stories connected to the photographs they brought.

During my process of analysis, I always tried to remain reflexive, to keep in mind my position as a Greek researcher, analysing and interpreting a specific number of Greek people who express themselves in relation to what they think constitutes part of Greek national identity. For Byrne, 'Reflexivity involves self-scrutiny on the part of the researchers, who need, at all stages of the research process, to ask themselves about their role in the research. Reflexivity involves a move away from the idea of the neutral, detached observer that is implied in much classical social survey' (Byrne cited in Seale 2005: 184). In my case, detachment was impossible: on numerous occasions whilst analysing the data, I experienced confusion between using 'they' with reference to my informants, or 'we', in which I would include myself since I too am Greek. As I have outlined above, being Greek had a significant impact on how I approached my research topic, affecting for example the questions I formulated, the types of interviews I conducted, the sample of participants that I chose, and the analysis I have produced. Part of the commitment towards reflexivity on the part of the researcher involves her/him becoming 'more consciously reflexive by thinking about our own thinking, by noticing and criticizing our own epistemological pre-understandings and their effects on research, and by exploring possible alternative commitments' (Johnson and Cassell, 2001). My own practice has mirrored this: so, for example, my choice to use photographs as prompts in my interviews emerged from looking through my own photographs, and those of my family, which led me to question their connection to the

construction of my own Greek identity and that of others. This process of self reflection also shaped the interviews with, for example, the questions I asked informants around the importance of Ancient Greek monuments emerging from thinking about what these monuments meant to me, both as represented through my photographs and in my own memories. Moreover, the choice to explore what a sense of Greekness means in the focus groups, derived from a kind of nostalgia and homesickness that I have sometimes felt since living in London for the past 11 years.

My desire to conduct my research reflexively had a great impact on my relationship and interaction with my participants from the very outset, including the way that I positioned myself towards my participants, and how my participants positioned themselves towards me. As part of my analysis, I attempt to construct a space between my informants and myself that recognises a dialogical mode of thinking and an inter-subjective relationship; to try to remain aware of, and be attentive to, where my informants spoke from, informed by the experiences they possessed, as well as to my own experiences and identity. Lorraine Code argues that knowledge of and between people cannot be fixed and complete, that the positions of both, the knower as subject, and the subject as object, must change and recognise an ongoing, communicative, and interpretative process (Code 1991). So the ongoing inquiry, between knowledge and subjectivity is as much about inter-subjectivity as it is about individual selves, persons, or subjects. The relationship between researcher and researchers is an ongoing inter-subjective negotiations between two people who are inter-subjectively constituted.' (Code 1995: 25). Taking into consideration Code's perspective, there cannot be assumed to be a subjects' 'experience' that can be simply accessed; instead experience

is an ongoing dialogical process, where knowledge is produced, it is contingent on the

content the spatial and temporal location of its production. In this sense, informants'

lived experiences can bring to the surface multiple and diverse modes of knowledge

production. But also, the analysis process, happening between me as a researcher and

my informants, exists as a new experience of how Greek cultural identity is perceived,

re-perceived and understood. This allows me to ask: what does the 'auratic' perception

of informants' experiences represent in relation to the knowledge of what Greek cultural

identity means? This question will be discussed in the final chapter where I will try to

put together all the ideas and thoughts that have emerged from the participants as

alternative forms of knowledge that constitute cultural dimensions of Greek national

identity.

In my analysis, I also drew on the work of Joan Scott (1992), who explores the ways in

which we historicize experience, as another way of producing knowledge. It informed

my analysis of the ways in which informants positioned themselves, and felt positioned

by, the meanings associated with Greek cultural identity. Skeggs argues that too often

experience is represented as if unmediated: participants' words are transferred to paper

without taking into account how they were produced, where they came from, and the

power relations involved (Skeggs 1995); within every experience is a history which has

to be recognized. Thus, in order to understand how the meanings of Greekness have

been constructed in relation to my informants' lived experiences, both researcher and

the researched have to make an effort to historicize the 'sense' of these experiences, to

position them in relation to other events that happened either before and after.

Experience cannot be simply presented as evidence, particularly as 'uncontestable

evidence and as an originary point of explanation' (Scott 1992:25). This conventional

position, for Scott, stands within traditional practices of knowledge production and 'take

as self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being documented and thus

naturalise the difference' (Scott 1992:25). Taking experience as the origin of

knowledge, it becomes the evidence upon which explanation is built and leaves aside

much of the complexity of the category experience, how it is constituted, lived,

perceived, understood and interpreted. It ignores the way experience comes into being

through relations, that 'it is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are

constituted through experience' (Scott 1992:26), with subjects being constituted

discursively. As Scott insists, it is necessary to have in view a non-fixed 'historical

process that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences' (Scott

1992: 25). From this perspective, experience becomes not the origin of explanation, not

sterilized evidence that underlines what is known, but rather is used to attempt to

explain how knowledge is produced. Experience is learned and produced by 'complex

and changing discursive processes', allowing us to link social categories with personal

understandings and the language we use to interpret them.

The above theoretical frameworks about the notion of experience informed my analysis

and will be discussed in depth in all of the three analysis chapters. For example when

participants talked about a commemorative event or Good Friday, they would often

make a series of associations with other events, places, or people, which although at

first sight appeared irrelevant to the context of the photograph, but which are essential

to how these same events acquire meaning and produce knowledge of particular cultural

dimensions of Greek national identity. Some of the key themes that emerged out of

participants experiences included their different means of conceptualising their sense of Greekness and national identity (chapter four), the role of smells and sounds in relation to their sense of belonging (chapter five), and the construction of Greekness through familial forms of association and disassociation of national commemorations and lifecycle events (chapter six).

In this chapter I have attempted to describe the various steps that I took in order to ensure my fieldwork would allow me to explore my research questions in as much depth as possible. Moreover, I have explained in depth the visual methods that I used, the potential they offer and the challenges they variously pose, informed by some of Walter Benjamin's conceptual apparatus, in particular his writings on the colour of experience, dialectic images and the auratic perception of an object. As I will proceed to argue, these concepts assist in interpreting many of the invisible fragments that participants create from their photographs, in their efforts to produce and contextualise a sense of Greeknees and belonging.

Chapter Four

Differences in the experience of Greek national identity

Introduction

This chapter is an expanded analysis of the participants' perspectives from the focus groups, with the aim of exploring how they conceptualise and construct a sense of Greekness and national identity. In these discussions, the principal themes that the participants were asked to explore were both the meaning of Greekness, and what it means to be Greek. In particular, I invited them to explore how they experienced their celebration of and participation in national commemorations and religious ceremonies, both of which constitute part of Greek tradition and culture. The reason I chose to focus on national commemorations in my research is because I anticipated that my participants would think that they would have a direct relation to what is known as 'cultural dimensions' of Greek national identity. National commemorations are events that both contribute towards and are commonly seen as representing a sense of collective identity and through which I anticipated participants would experience themselves as part of the national body. I believe that it is very important to listen to how the subjects feel about these events, why they celebrate them, and, more generally, what types of images they produce which might say something about Greek national identity. In the focus groups and interviews, we mainly concentrated on two national commemorations: 25 March and 28 October. 25 March highlights Greek independence from the Turkish Ottoman Empire and 28 October independence from the Italians in World War II.

My reasons for conducting focus groups were because, firstly, I wanted to familiarize participants with my research and what I was looking for and, secondly, I hoped the focus groups would create a comfortable space, imitating a communal context of people's daily lives, in which they could begin confidently to explore issues around their sense of Greekness prior to using images in the one-to-one interviews. In addition, I hoped that the focus group material would bring additional clarity to my research questions.

Of the 60 people I gathered together for the focus groups, all had been born and had grown up in Athens, and had come from big families with numerous brothers and sisters. In addition, all had what could be described as a middle class background, had been well educated, and most had a postgraduate degree. Participants' occupations were varied, and the groups included: bankers, accountants (some of them working in private insurance companies), pensioners, students studying a range of different degrees in the Greek University in Athens, teachers at primary and secondary schools, and teachers at universities. Some also had extensive experience of life beyond Athens: it was often the case that they had grandmothers and grandfathers who grew up in and still live in the provinces, where participants would visit and spend some of their summer holidays. In all of the focus groups most of the participants knew each other; they were either working together in the same company, university, school, were studying at the same institution, or had simply been friends for many years. Most of the focus groups took place in participants' houses. Since all of the participants were very busy during the day, focus groups were organised to take place during late afternoon and evening hours.

The dynamic that the participants created in the focus groups were generally very productive, relational and contextual. They interacted very well and, with just a few exceptions, did not compete against each other but instead attempted to understand what

others wanted to say, and sometimes helped each other to express their views, usually listening with patience and understanding.

Nevertheless, participants did not give homogeneous answers. There were many disagreements between respondents, in particular between those in different age groups, expressing different views about how and in what circumstances Greekness and national identity are experienced and constructed. Seen as a whole, the dialogues that participants built in each focus group were rich and fruitful, creating a complex, contradictory and polymorphous account of their sense of Greekness and national identity. As will be demonstrated later in the chapter, this account was composed of several characteristics: in their effort to define what it means to be Greek, participants made certain distinctions between national identity, nationalism and patriotism. Nevertheless in relation to this circumscribed sense of national identity, participants expressed an ambivalence relating to its perceived constructed character – many times participants described their national identity as mythical, magical and, sometimes, as explicitly constructed. This constructed character emerged when participants repeatedly suggested that both in the ways that ancient Greek civilisation is presented in contemporary Greece, and also in the performance of ritual and social practices (such as Easter celebrations or national commemorations), a mythical constructed content is produced. Despite its preserved constructed and mythical character, participants felt they did participate in a national identity which is experienced through the significance of family and tradition. Participants explained in depth how elements of family and tradition are actualised and experienced through small details, mundane practices, and sensory experiences of their everyday lives. It is out of the engagement and the continuous interaction participants have with cultural practices, family and tradition that they draw a particular image of Greekness and national identity on an

everyday level. As Henri Lefebvre emphasises: 'the everyday represents the site where we enter into dialectical relationship with the external natural and social worlds in the most immediate and profound sense, and it is here where essential human desires, powers and potentialities are formulated, developed and realised concretely' (Lefebvre 1987:9). As will be demonstrated in this chapter, it is these personal emotions, experiences, small details and mundane practices that constitute how participants interpret what it means to be Greek, rather than simply following nationalist prescriptions. Building a sense of Greekness from an experiential, individual point of view does not negate the importance of ancient Greece or other major Greek 'myths' in relation to Greek history, but did allow the participants room to explore the different ways in which tradition and culture might emerge.

Finally, participants explored the concept of national identity by bringing up the relationship between the importance of continuity, history and origins of ancient Greece. This arena of discussion encompassed questions including: how these three elements did not collapse into each other but were explored distinctly; how these elements related to each other, whether this relationship is possible, what it makes it difficult or even impossible? When, for example, participants discussed the relationship between East and West, the geographical and political issues of Macedonia, and the exploitation of migrants, the issues of the continuity and origins of ancient Greece became problematic.

Distinctions between national identity, nationalism and patriotism.

At the beginning of each focus group, I spent quite a lot of time talking with my participants about my project, explaining what were my initial ideas in starting such a piece of research, what I wished to explore through it, and in which ways I hoped the project would contribute and bring something to Greek society. Participants responded very

positively, but at the same time had a lot of questions that allowed me to think further and clarify some of my research questions.

After our discussion and, importantly, when participants felt relaxed, I approached them by asking them what it means to be Greek. The first reaction was silence; I saw my participants begin to look at each other without saying anything. I did not know what to do at this point, and I think they felt a bit awkward; perhaps a Greek researcher coming to ask them about their sense of Greekness created this feeling of perplexity. As some of them said to me: 'nobody has asked me such a question before; I have never thought about my Greekness'. Eventually, their first response was to question whether there was indeed such a concept as Greek national identity. They couldn't really identify with the concept, or at least they couldn't identify any clear characteristics that necessarily constituted Greek national identity. When discussing stereotypes in relation to Greek national identity, there were a number of conflicting ideas between the members of one focus group in particular. This discourse brought to the fore some participants' apparent lack of 'ownership' of their national identities. As one participant named Stella reflected:

> Stella (25)[1]: For me Greek identity is not necessarily something that I have to feel committed or restricted to, or even to be proud of. It doesn't affect me in my everyday life or in the way I am thinking, at least to the degree where I can control it. But I'm sure there are times when I act according to the stereotypes of our society.

Stella does not perceive her sense of identity as something unique or as an element that makes her superior to other nationalities. She sees it not as concrete, or composed of a pre-existing set of characteristics; she does not want to be defined by her national identity. For

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[1] The age of the participants will be written on brackets in all of the following quotes.

her, national identity has an abstract meaning with no particular references and associations

that define her personal identity. Although she is aware of certain stereotypes that constitute

her culture and, to an extent, her identity, they do not seem to affect her in terms of how she

feels about her sense of national identity. She continues clarifying her position:

> Stella (44): When I say that I am Greek, I do not feel special in the sense of being
> superior. I do not feel any specific sense of pride, or that my sense of patriotism is
> particularly different in comparison to other nationalities. I can understand the cultural
> differences between Greece and other nations, but not with any real sense of patriotism.

Stella distinguishes between nationalism and patriotism and does not feel that she is any

different to individuals from other nationalities. In this context, being proud or expressing a

particular version of patriotism does not represent or constitute Greek national identity for

Stella. She is in a position to acknowledge the cultural differences of her country, but not to

put them in a patriotic framework and give them a nationalistic character. For her the

cultural differences, which are the particular habits that each culture holds, do not produce a

sense of patriotism. Other group members, on the other hand, considered the construction

of their Greek national identity in terms of their familial relationships. As Daphne

contributed:

> Daphne (55): Greek customs make me feel very emotional; I'll sometimes hear a Greek
> song on the radio that my grandmother used to sing, and burst into tears. I feel very
> proud that I am Greek. I don't know how Greek I am necessarily, but this is the way I
> feel.

Daphne spent most of her childhood with her grandmother. Her sense of Greekness and

national identity is built through this intimate connection; it is a relationship that comes

alive through the senses, as well as rekindled memories of her childhood and shared

customs. Unlike other members, a sense of ownership is present; Daphne's construction of

national identity is rooted in visceral feelings and lived experiences. Her identification with

her origins is embodied and cannot be put into a concrete and rigid framework. Her

emotional engagement is present through out the narrative and her sense of Greekness is

created through a series of owned experiences. This appeared to be much the same for

Erato, a participant from the same group. The conversation revealed her belief that her

sense of identity is also embedded in the social relations that she has experienced in her

everyday life.

> Erato (30): I guess one could argue that my identity is determined by the fact that I was
> born in Greece and I speak Greek. But for me these are not the things that I put emphasis
> on... for me there are a range of social and cultural events that I have experienced since
> I was a child that make me feel like that.

Erato's formation of identity is created through interaction with others and continuous

communication, a process that began in childhood, as she recognises. Her sense of national

identity is not composed of stereotypical characteristics, but rather simple dialogues,

experiences and interactions emerging from her everyday life. Eleni expands on this by

summarising the positions of Erato and Daphni:

> Eleni (28): So there are two different things that describe your identity: the typical
> one – what your passport says – and the most substantial one, the sentimental one –
> how it is that you *feel* Greek.

Eleni divides her sense of Greekness between nationality and national identity. The former

has a bureaucratic purpose and character, represented for her in the form of a passport, and

the latter emerges out of how somebody feels for her or his country.   Her quote

incorporates much of that expressed by previous participants: Stella's emphasis on the stereotypical and official aspects of national identity, and Daphne's and Erato's much more emotional engagement with Greekness.

For Daphne, Erato and Eleni, Greekness is built and produced through various emotional engagements that developed in small details and everyday practices. The concept of national identity is not composed of an 'essence' but is more fluid: there are no absolute, fixed and solid reference points to which they point. Therefore, meanings that compose national identity can be seen as being built through people themselves. Emotions and feelings, despite being abstract and intangible, form a crucial part of Greek national identity for my participants. Their senses of national belonging and of pride in being Greek derive mainly from their own experiences and stories. These stories are constructed through memory and imagination, and their imaginary components can involve all the political and cultural issues in Greek society.

Ambivalent relationships with national identity

Despite the apparently clear distinctions that participants made regarding the meaning of Greek national identity, it was frequently characterised with a sense of ambivalence. This occurred in particular because of its perceived constructed character, which was variously described as 'mythical' and 'magical'.

This ambivalence was highlighted through the ways participants celebrated, lived and actualised national commemorations and ritual practices. In each focus group, I asked what national commemorations meant to them. Some participants became annoyed, and expressed a great deal of hesitance in relation to how national commemorations are embedded in Greek society. When one of the focus groups debated the meanings behind the

celebration of national commemorations, for example, some became particularly irritated

with regards to the features that compose such events. Their discussions come to raise a

theme such as: the demystification and deconstruction of national commemorations. As

Elizabeth, underlines:

> Elizabeth (39): National commemorations mean nothing to me. They create a
> nationalistic environment that bothers me a lot. What I do not understand is why we
> have to celebrate them – these are events that happened ages ago, and are
> constructed to represent a beautiful myth.

Elizabeth is highly critical of national commemorations, and is particularly irritated by the

way they are celebrated. Although the purpose of national commemorations is to honour

and remember the people that fought for the sake of national freedom, Elizabeth's

experience accords a very 'nationalistic' identity to them. From Elizabeth's account it is

also possible to observe the relationship between myth-making and practice. Whether or

not she agrees with the shape of the particular national commemoration to which she refers,

and irrespective of the fact that she recognises their constructed character, in referring to

the creation of an ideologically driven 'nationalistic environment'. Margarita echoes this

position:

> Margarita (32): As I grew up, what I found very annoying was the military character
> that national holidays have. I think this is very dangerous in terms of the feelings it
> passes on to people. In my opinion, having the military parading in front of the
> public and the political and religious leaders is very dangerous. I think it cultivates
> artificial feelings, like a false sense of patriotism and national pride.

Margarita's father used to be a general in the navy, which may have impacted on the way she views national commemorations. She is completely opposed to the ideological, pseudo-military meaning that she believes national commemorations connote. Her view does not involve any empathy towards this kind of celebration; on the contrary she expresses detachment from it.

On the basis of these comments, I would argue that there is no intrinsic, fixed content to national commemorations that functions as the absolute basis of representation. Rather, it is through the ways people remember and experience these events that meaning is made. Margarita describes a very powerful relationship between military, political and religious leadership; the ceremonies hence appear as demonstrations of power, control and authority, rather than a tribute to the people who sacrificed their lives for their country. For Margarita, the parade creates a sense of national pride and patriotism that can generate negative effects, as people come to draw on its nationalistic and patriotic representations as a way of defending their national identity.

Like Elizabeth earlier, Penelope also explicitly connects a concept of 'myth' to national commemorations:

> Penelope (39): I think there is a mythical element behind national commemorations such as 28 October and 25 March that has always been the case. I suspect that the reason we use these national holidays is because we want to keep this historical continuity in order to sustain our nation. Personally I think it's time to demystify the whole thing.

Once again, although national commemorations are commonly seen as part of a collective identity, Penelope challenges this idea. For Penelope the way that national commemorations are celebrated are disconnected from their 'real', substantial content:

instead, there is a kind of hypocrisy behind them. The way they are presented to people through the media and popular culture leaves the impression that they bring together contemporary and ancient Greece. Like Margarita and Elizabeth, Penelope recognises (and is critical of) the constructed character of the myths that surround these commemorations; she suggests a process of 'demystification', by which she implies the potential for a more accurate, or 'truthful' version of Greek history and identity to be revealed; one stripped of mythic content.

This sort of attitude raises the question as to whether there are such things as objective, unified forms of knowledge around Greek national identity, and whether and how they can be represented. From what my participants say, it seems difficult, if not impossible, to present a historical event with reference to one version of historical 'truth'. Even if we attempt to demystify or uncover this 'real' content, it appears that simultaneously another content – another myth – is created, which finds its references in different ways in which people imagine and construct it.

That being said, in suggesting a process of 'demystification' in relation to national commemoration, Penelope does open up the possibility of seeing the performances of these social and cultural practices from a more open, flexible perspective. She provides the opportunity to both ask questions about the mythical, constructed content of these social and cultural practices that are usually taken for granted, as well as hinting at ways in which other interpretations and meanings can be brought to these practices. This attempted demystification may not change a dominant historical or ideological framework, but it suggests that participants possess a freedom of interpretation that allows them to construct their own elements which compose these social and cultural events. Within this process, it is worth thinking how participants' knowledge can become part of the content of these

national holidays; how participants' life experiences can be transformed 'into a source of

critical insight about how the dominant society thinks and is structured' (Harding 2004:7).

As with their feelings towards national commemorations, participants expressed a sense of

ambivalence in relation to the ways they perceived ritual ceremonies. In most of the focus

groups the celebration of Easter in particular became a central subject – one through which

participants elaborated multiple views around the construction of national identity. The

participants of one focus group came to discuss how the ritual ceremony of Easter goes

beyond religious connotations, becoming an important and memorable social activity that

brings people together. As Elizabeth states, such an occasion is, for many, so emotionally

charged that it almost appears 'magical':

> Elizabeth (39): I do like the traditions but especially Easter and particularly Good
> Friday; there is something magical in the atmosphere, probably because there are so
> many people together mourning for the same thing. It affects me very much... It's a
> collective practice that makes me cry.

The celebration of Easter has an important place in relation to Greek national identity and

is presented here from a very personal and an emotional perspective. Elizabeth's comments

do not represent any sort of concrete ideas of how Good Friday should be, but rather show

meanings expressed through emotions, which in turn make her value her tradition. She

continues: 'The psalms, the priest, the candles... everything moves me so much.' For

Elizabeth, these rituals create the essence of what Good Friday means to her. She is so

moved by them that Good Friday seems to be experienced and constructed in her mind as

something magical; it is this, more than its religious meanings per se, on which she puts her

emphasis.

Participation in national Identity through family and tradition

Participants also saw the family and its traditions as deeply connected to Greek national identity, regardless of whether this was connected to negative of positive characteristics. When talking on these themes, their discussions were often intense with plentiful disagreements. Everyday, mundane and sensory experiences produced the realisation that tradition, family and ritual performances keep individuals together, and contribute to a shared understanding of Greekness.

As I will proceed to argue, the concept of tradition in most of the focus groups rarely appears as a burden that has to be preserved; tradition is seen as being built and produced through experiences, feelings and emotions. However, some participants did demonstrate a tendency towards a more formal adherence to 'traditional' Greek cultural practices. Alexandros, who was part of a focus group in which most participants were pensioners says, for example:

> Alexandros (68): We have to be faithful to our traditions; we have to preserve what we inherited from our ancestors. If we forget our traditions we will lose our history and our identity.

For Alexandros tradition is an inseparable piece of his cultural heritage; it has a direct relation with history and identity. He feels a great sense of commitment and responsibility towards his tradition. His sense of national identity consists of all the customs and traditions that are passed from one generation to another. Alexandros is willing to do everything in order to keep the significance of tradition alive; he claims his very identity would disappear if he stopped actualising and believing in his traditions. This worry is

translated into the sense of fear and anxiety he exhibits in this citation, when referring to his

belief that 'we have to' remain faithful to tradition. This is combined with a feeling of

obligation towards previous generations, in order to ensure his identity is kept united and

consistent. katerina, from the student focus group, focuses more on the shared character of

traditions:

> Katerina (23): What I really like and find charming about the customs and traditions of my country is the sense of socialising. These are things that bring people closer, giving them the impression that the nation is simultaneously involved, even if only on an imaginary level.

Katerina's perception of tradition finds its reference in the everyday. What matters for her

is the interaction, the engagement and the exchange of opinions. Tradition is made through

everyday practices. The way people talk, dress or communicate is part of how tradition is

constructed and circulated in society. In Katerina's mind, the concept of tradition is

diffracted through the prism of a collective identity, where all Greek people act and

perform a range of social and cultural practices simultaneously. This is analogous to

Anderson's (1991) notion of 'imagined community', with the nation emerging as a shared

conceptualisation, constructed as much, if not more, through people's mutual imaginations

as their shared practices. The concept of tradition enables a collective performance that

allows Katerina to participate and recreate all these various elements that constitute this

particular collective imaginary atmosphere. For Katerina, the notion of tradition is

produced by the people themselves: the way they perform, celebrate and use their symbols,

histories and generally their culture, forms the nation itself. In this way the foundation of a

nation is built from below; from the ways subjects live and experience social and cultural

practices along with the stories they produce through them.

For some of the participants in another focus group which mostly contained teachers from

high schools and Athens university, tradition is seen more on a trivial level. Alexandra, for

example, says:

> Alexandra (40): These customs don't really mean anything to me. I think they have
> a stereotypical character and eventually they just become a habit.

Unlike Katerina's understanding of tradition (rooted in her experience of everyday social

and cultural practices), Alexandra experiences customs as something trivial; they are

simply practices that consist of stereotypical features that do not construct anything

important in relation to her tradition and to an extent to her identity. The existence of

customs leaves Alexandra indifferent. Unlike Alexandros and Katerina, Alexandra cannot

really make any kind of connection with the concept of customs and integrate them as part

of her national identity. Yet although for Alexandra the meaning of customs is associated

with 'stereotypes' and seems fixed, she finds something attractive in them:

> Alexandra (40): One thing that I like about my customs is the way they celebrate
> them in the provinces. I think they have a more traditional character than in the big
> cities, with more of a sense of authenticity.

The concept of tradition becomes differentiated between urban cities and the provinces.

When Alexandra refers to tradition as authentic in the provinces, she seems to believe that

in the provinces, tradition is a more lived, organic experience, closer to people's everyday

lives, whereas in cities, customs have become static. Alexandra can be seen as attempting

to reconnect with a tradition which is perceived as having gradually faded away in the face

of an urban lifestyle that alienates people from their history and cultural heritage.

Maria from the same focus group, places emphasis on how families relate to the

construction of traditions:

> Maria (35): I think that we have not really preserved our customs and traditions. I think that our traditions will disappear when my father's generation passes away.

Maria's understanding of tradition is constructed through her father. It seems that the

actualisation of tradition is divided between young and old generations. The parents are the

mediators through which tradition is transferred to younger generations; they are the key

figures that hold the responsibility of teaching their children about their customs. However,

in the same focus group, Alexia takes a much more emotional stance, describing her sense

of Greekness in relation to sensory experiences:

> Alexia (41): I think some of the elements of cultural practices that link Greek society take place at an imaginary level, in the way that Greek people experience and conceptualise such activities. For example, from the fact that Penelope and I prepare lamb every Easter Sunday, I can say that, at an imaginary level, this act in itself makes us both Greek. Since this sort of practice does not really happen anywhere else in the world, in a way it has an authentic character.

Alexia experiences the meaning of tradition the sensory experience of cooking the lamb on

Easter Sunday. This process gives her a shared understanding of what Greekness means.

But for her this process (as well as other cultural activities) works on an imaginary level,

becoming a habit that has passed into Greek people's unconscious as essential to their sense

of national identity. For Alexia, its cultural importance is, as a result, less connected to the

formal ceremonies associated with cooking the lamb, and more with its imaginary

resonance. Alexia is able to identify some practices that construct her sense of Greekness and of national identity through an imaginary level.

Benedict Anderson explores the idea that imagined 'communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson 1983: 6). Here Maria, Alexia, Alexandros and Alexandra perceived their participation in Greek national identity through the significance of tradition, family and ritual performances. Within their discussions and experiential accounts, from the imaginary significance of Easter Sunday to the magical atmosphere of Good Friday, participants were able to explore different 'styles' of belonging, through which they variously demonstrate how they see their relationship to a sense of Greekness and national identity.

The importance of history, origin and ancient Greece in relation to the construction of Greekness and national identity

In most of the focus groups, participants were keen to discuss the importance of ancient Greece, often seeing it as a major ingredient in their construction of national identity and Greekness, departing from concepts such as family, tradition and ritual performances. The narratives produced did not present ancient Greece, origin and ritual performances as features that collapsed into each other, but as elements to be explored distinctly and, at times, through potentially contradictory statements. Questions that participants frequently raised included: to what extent is the past 'real' or not; how is it transformed and modified in modern Greek society; is it incorporated as part of our present identity and, finally, is this past 'just' a myth, one that does not really fit into modern Greek society? In their efforts to explore these questions, participants drew on a range of significant social and political discourses. Some of these functioned as tools to develop and sustain a sense of Greekness,

while others created dilemmas due to what were perceived as their 'problematic' status. For example when the participants brought up as a topic the geo-political issue of Macedonia, they found the opportunity to draw on it not only as a way of defending their national identity, but also to express their passion and love for their history and culture. But when conversation turned to the exploitation of migrants, participants faced the challenge of how to confront the issue, whilst also accepting migration as part of their everyday lives.

As will be demonstrated below, the participants exhibit difficulty in combining their history and ancestry with contemporary social and political discourses. The subject of origin and of ancient Greece stand as anchors for their construction of identity; they are so much ingrained into their ways of living that it seems almost impossible to contemplate themselves without them. Participants' reactions were often highly reflexive; for example, Erato's response below is suggestive of a tendency amongst my participants to acknowledge the norms and codes that have affected their identities:

> Erato (30): I think that what we're collectively saying in this group is that the formation of our characters is reflected in – and explained by – our past; in our origins, in ancient Greece and so on. We have a tendency, I think, to use the past in order to understand and interpret the present; although in the present different things are happening.

Erato's position shows a lack of commitment to the present; she is more engaged to past realities than to what is happening to the present. She is absorbed by the past and, in particular, in the importance of ancient Greece. Her stance appears reflexive, but without showing any sign of translating this self-reflection into action, such as accepting the ethnic minorities that have arrived in Greece the last few years (the issue of ethnic minorities will be further discussed in the next section). On the contrary, ideas of origin are on their own

powerful enough to give her a great sense of confidence in her national identity. For Erato the interpretation of her present is made through the past, but Margarita another member of the group, responded with different thoughts:

> Margarita (32): I don't think this is true – without an obsession with our ancestry, nothing would stand. In other words, it is both our curse and the core of our existence. I think this ancient history is what makes us solid in the face of a fierce inferiority complex towards the West, and for me it is the one and only source of support.

For Margarita, ancient Greece consists of two opposing aspects. She feels completely detached from it, while also identifying with it. In her eyes, ancient Greece is, as a consequence, something of a trap that she is unable to escape from or resist. Ancient Greece hence assumes a primary importance in determining how her sense of Greekness and national identity should be presented to the outside world, and without it, Greek national identity would not be able to hold its own in comparison to the West.

In most of the focus groups, participants continued this theme, often seeing Greece's geographic location (between East and the West) as an important factor in the construction of their national identities. How they viewed ancient Greece was crucial in this process: Greek history was used to both promote and preserve their language, traditions and identity. In many respects, participants believe that Greece relies on this ancient past because it is perceived as its only salvation in relation to the dominant Western cultural influences. The reference to the ancient past is hence used as a defence mechanism. Margarita refers to this relationship an 'inferiority complex' in comparison with Westerners. The idea of ancient Greek civilisation comes to be used as a key touchstone in the defence and proof of participants' identities. For some, however, this value leaves it open to being appropriated.

> Margarita (32): I think, for us, the ancient past is the strongest element in defining
> Greek identity.

> Elizabeth (39): Because, according to the postmodern perception, this past has been
> used by the Westerners in order to legalise their own superiority.

Not only is the ancient Greek past frequently seen as the most accessible cultural element in
their national identity for Greeks, but also for other Europeans. For Greeks my participants
believed functions as proof of their national identity, whilst so they proposed for Europeans
themselves it is seen as functioning as a 'weapon' at an international level when it comes to
promoting their cultural superiority. As Elizabeth puts it:

> Elizabeth (39): Europeans say about the ancient Greeks how fantastic they are, and
> they forget the Egyptians, the Assyrians and so on. The centre of civilisation has to be
> in Europe, it couldn't be outside Europe. Other nations can be very controlling – of
> course they don't really care about Greece as a nation, but were only interested only
> in borrowing the idea of ancient Greece.

In this extract, Elisabeth proposes that the only positive feature about Greece that ends up
being focused on by non Greek Europeans is its ancient past; there is a contrasting lack of
concern in contemporary Greek cultural and social activities.

Elizabeth's perspective, in which the benefits that other European countries seek to acquire
from ancient Greek civilisation are not reciprocated, was not, however, shared by all.
Andrew, coming form the same focus group, puts forward an alternative perspective, as
well as suggesting a more complex relationship between East and West:

> Andrew (39): I think that in the last few years Greece has gradually approached
> Europe, and this is more marked with each new generation, as they reach towards the

European 'standards'. So if we were to try to locate Greece somewhere in between East and West, in the last few years I think we have shifted towards the West. Although Greece also happens to be the cradle of Western civilisation, we do have a lot of Eastern elements that characterise part of our identity.

Andrew does not specify who is included and excluded in what he refers to as a 'new' generation but, because of this group, Greece has started to become embedded into the social and cultural life of modern Western Europe. It is as if previous generations had placed Greece in isolation, unable to adjust to the standards of Western Europe. Andrew therefore presents Greece as being inferior to the rest of Europe (without, it should be noted, mentioning which European countries should be considered as examples worth emulating).

Although Greek national identity has undoubtedly been influenced by the West, it has also many Eastern influences. Andrew tries to bring this forward by presenting the origin of Greece as a mixture of cultural and historical elements. Trifonas (from the same focus group) similarly emphasises and acknowledges the role of the East in constituting Greekness:

> Trifonas (43): I have an objection here, which could be a paradox, in the sense that it could be my own subjective opinion and possibly a simplification of an intricate issue. To recall an experience of mine, I was once walking through a bazaar while on a trip to Constantinople, then, while lost in the mist of the Eastern bazaar, and while engaged in conversation with friends, I realised that I felt much more at home in this environment than the one which I have face while in Northern Italy or Switzerland or England.

Trifonas feels a great attachment to Istanbul [Constantinople] as a place that shapes part of his identity and his history. Through his travels, he has come to recognise some important commonalities with his own culture. Trifonas felt 'at home' in this location; feeling

Greekness through the sensory experiences he encountered in the city, through smells,

sounds, and the way in which people talk and communicate. Of course it is important to

note that this city has a very delicate historical relationship in relation to Greek national

identity, something that is apparent in Trifonas referring to the Turkish capital as

'Constantinople', (as Greek people named it) instead of Istanbul. 1453 saw the fall of

Constantinople, when the Ottoman Empire took over the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine

Empire lost all its political independence; thousands of people were killed and expelled

from the city. Hence, for Trifonas, the city carries certain sensory experiences, which make

him feel more 'at home' in comparison with other Northern European cities. Trifonas

asserts that what counts most for him in the construction of Greekness are his own

experiential accounts, something he shares with the rest of the focus group:

> Trifonas (43): What I am trying to convey here is that we shouldn't ignore the
> experience of who we are, where we belong and how we feel in relation to our
> identity. Since Greece was meant to be the birthplace of Western civilisation, which is
> a generally accepted historical standpoint, we also need to take into consideration the
> experiential elements of each Greek person. And so in my opinion the Greeks do not
> always feel that close to what we call 'Western manners'.

Trifonas places his emphasis on the idea of 'home'. His feeling of home is made out of

emotions; feelings he experiences in his everyday life. As he touches on in the above quote,

part of these experiences find their references in the roots of Eastern civilisation. Although

there are certain historical statements that place Greece as the cradle of western civilisation,

Trifonas believes that several cultural elements of Greek life are connected to the east.

Dionisis, another member of the focus group, shares a similar standpoint, but approaches it

from a different perspective in discussing the significance of religion. Being of the

Christian Orthodox faith, his religious affiliation has historical roots in the Byzantine Empire. In the focus group, he shared his experience of going to his local church every Sunday and assisting staff there. He talked passionately about his church and, as a consequence, became very irritated when discussions moved onto the government's proposal to remove religious affiliations from identity cards:

> Dionisis (49): We feel really very proud to have our religion on our identity card, because this underpins part of our identity, and we want it to be well known to all people in the world that we are Christian Orthodox.

Although the role of identity cards may appear mundane, for Dionisis they nonetheless stand as a marker of identity. He continues:

> Dionisis (49): In a way, by having our religious affiliation on our identity card we are trying to underline what our ancestors used to say: that if we cannot appreciate our past, then we cannot commemorate the present, therefore we cannot have a good future.

According to Dionisis' argument, religion reminds Greek people of the roots of their identity and those of their ancestors, acting as a link that keeps alive a sense of continuity between generations.

In this chapter so far, I have analysed how participants have tried to explore the role of ancient Greece and origin in relation to their construction of national identity. What emerges is a strong belief that the relationship between East and West and the history of ancient Greece are major indicators of their continuity with the past, with their culture and history as revealed through ancient Greek monuments and buildings, and Istanbul's churches and bazaars.

Macedonia

Another contentious topic for my respondents was the issue of Macedonia in relation to

ancient Greece. The relationship between Macedonian and Greek national identities

became prominent as a result of a dispute between the Greek and Yugoslav governments

that began in 1992, surrounding the correct name of Macedonia. Michalis, for instance,

says: 'I remember when the socialist government tried to defend the view that there is only

one Macedonia and I agree, we will never accept that there is a second place with the same

name!' Participants 'used' Macedonia as a way of narrating a series of complex issues

associated with culture, geography and politics; its name and its national symbols stand as

powerful elements when it comes to contextualising national identity.

There was one focus group that was very rigid and persistent in its views on this topic; they

argued that there is only one Macedonia, and that any other viewpoint is invalid. Penelope,

for example, says:

> Penelope (39): I think everyone knows that there is only one Macedonia, and that it
> is Greek. People have tried to contest that, but you cannot change the historical
> facts, can you?

Alexandra responds:

> Alexandra (40): There are sides who would like to create 'grey' zones on the map
> and in history. As far as I am concerned, such attempts are absurd and dangerous.
> We all know the truth, but some try to distort it to serve their own purposes.

The way that Penelope and Alexandra imagine Macedonia, its history and ancestry, leaves

little room for any doubt. Here it seems that the myth is already embedded, and has become

part of 'the truth' that Alexandra refers to. As with Barthes' work on the naturalising effect

of myth, the myth of Macedonia is presented as natural and timeless, as 'an expression of a

historically specific ideological vision of the world' (Graham 2003: 34).

Some participants held the opinion that, even if the issue of Macedonia does serve political

and ideological purposes, the mere existence of the dispute and the effect it has had on

contemporary Greek culture nevertheless forms part of participants' national identities.

Elizabeth, for example, says:

> Elizabeth (39): I see that Penelope and Alexandra are bothered by paradoxes and
> antitheses. In the case of Macedonia, for example, and all the surrounding reaction,
> debates and mobilisations [she alludes to the negative Greek reaction against the
> formation of Macedonia] – for years there was a state in Yugoslavia called
> Macedonia and yet nobody reacted or was against it.

Elizabeth's position appears more reflective. She is more wiling to engage with the

different political and social discourses relating to Macedonia. For Penelope and

Alexandra, the origin of Macedonia is taken for granted, and is not an issue that needs

questioning – but for Elizabeth, the issue is seen in terms of a clarification of the territory's

geographical and historical position.

As the debate intensified, Penelope expanded further on the issue:

> Penelope (39): I don't get it! I don't understand why there is so much fuss now, at
> this moment in time. Perhaps I am being reactive, but I think that behind all these
> issues are political and ideological advantages and so personally I become even
> more annoyed when everything is presented to the public as issues of national
> identity and pride.

While George adds:

> George (42): I think some situations are blown out of proportion. All of a sudden,
> we are made to worry about something that we had never really cared or thought
> about before. There is certainly some orchestration behind that.

For both participants, Macedonia carries an important history and ancestry. They agreed

about a level of responsibility in the media and other forces when it comes to

communicating the issue of Macedonia to the public. At this point in the discussion, some

participants revealed their awareness of both the positive and negative impacts that ancient

Greece has had on national identity. While they raised issues that ground the importance of

continuity and history to their identity, at the same time they recognised the negative

impact that ancient Greece has in relation to their sense of Greekness. Interestingly, when

participants talked about their sense of Greekness in isolation they seemed to reject the

significance of their ancient past, but when it came to defending Greekness in relation to

others, history became the key element in their identity. For example, Elena and Marilena

(from the same focus group) positioned themselves very negatively in relation to ancient

Greek civilisation.

> Elena (30): What really bothers me are all these stories about ancient Greek
> civilisation and the ancient Greek people and these scenarios about this famous
> historical past.

> Marilena (30): We keep hearing these stories about our ancient past over and over
> again, since we were kids. So we don't really think about it critically, it's just taken
> for granted.

Despite Penelope's apparent belief in the historical, territorial integrity of Macedonia, she

and Marilena criticizes the fact that Greek antiquity is part of her national identity. This is,

however, a history from which they seem to distance themselves – there is a sense of de-

identification which disrupts the unity of this historical past. They present this past as a

scenario created in order to serve certain purposes; the historical past that is conventionally

assumed to define the origin of what it means to be Greek is deconstructed as an artificial

and superficial creation. Instead of being a valuable source of knowledge that says

something about the roots of their country, it makes them angry and upset. I remember

vividly from when I was conducting the focus group how Marilena and Elena were almost

shouting at each other in their effort to articulate their irritation. In marked contrast,

Margarita comments:

> Margarita (32): Our Greek spirit never fell apart, basically there was a continuation
> from the ancient Greece to Byzantine Empire and finally to modern Greek
> civilisation, so in a way we are saying that we are the descendants of Perikles.

Margarita places emphasis on the meaning of origin and continuity; she locates national

identity in a lincar framework that traces its roots back to antiquity.

As another member of the group, Theodora emphasises:

> Theodora (30): But so many things have happened in between. How can we talk of
> a straight line? This certainty: it doesn't sound very convincing to me.

Thcodora seems unconvinced by this image of linear continuity; she perhaps has a different

perception of how Greek spirit is produced and actualised (though she does not explicitly

express it). Despite the negative role of ancient Greece for some of the participants,

Margarita is compelled to search for 'convenient' cultural features that can stand as

evidence of the continued importance of ancient Greek origin. She refers to the significance

of Greek language as another cultural element that constitutes part of her national identity:

Margarita (32): For example, in terms of continuity, in the Greek language that we speak today you can recognise a lot of ancient [Greek] word endings.

Margarita finds it difficult to accept the view that there is very little continuity between ancient and modern Greece and, in the effort to show, or rather to prove, that there must be a connection, she focuses on language. Elizabeth, however, displays a directly contradictory attitude:

Elizabeth (39): There were never people that spoke the same Greek language. Every community had its own dialect. It really bothers me when people argue that our language is a continuation of Homer's language, that there is continuity between his language and the present. No way! The Greek language is a constructed language.

Elizabeth refers to history to justify her argument. For her, Greek has already taken on so many influences that it is a 'constructed' language. When Elizabeth refers to Greek as a 'constructed' language, she implies particular connotations, specifically that today's language has not been grounded in a single 'homogeneous' and 'pure' form that has emerged directly from ancient Greece. On the contrary, it has been changed and transformed over time according to particular historical and social needs and demands. What is interesting is this continuous contradiction that the participants are faced with; on the one hand they sustain and defend their national identity by referring to the ancient past and language, and on the other hand they are very conscious of the changes to such elements and the residual difference on the nation's more contemporary identity. It is as though the social and cultural life of contemporary Greece and its vicissitudes are still interpreted and explained through the prism of ancient Greece. Participants were fully aware of the cultural pull between holding onto the past and creating a more modern future

based on ideals more appropriate to the 21st century.

Although Penelope identifies some of the problems with conceptualising contemporary Greece's in reference to ancient Greece, she nonetheless do not draw a strict line of demarcation between past and present. Penelope comments:

> Penelope (38): It is not that we feel like the direct ancestors of Alexander the Great, it is that we have been taught to feel like that, irrespective of whether Alexander the Great even existed or not. These are legends, fairytales and imaginary communities that have been used to serve a certain purpose and goals in the creation of a nation.

What Penelope recognises is a feeling of being obliged to Greek antiquity. Yet while on the one hand, it seems that there is great difficulty in accepting this past and incorporating it into the present, on the other hand it takes the shape of a fairytale which constitutes a major part of what is referred to as Greek national identity. From her comment, it seems that the communication of these mythic messages are not only confined to her own experiences, but incorporated within normative forms of cultural representations. These normative forms of cultural representations mythologise the content of ancient Greece. As a participant from another focus group expressed it: 'I don't know if the appropriate word is that they 'construct' the history of ancient Greece, but it seems that they [i.e., media representations] have transformed and modified it eventually converting it into a myth' (Maria, 35). Personal narratives and practices combine with media and institutional representations to allow participants not only to make their own interpretations and stories about the nation, but also to position themselves in relation to it. The different narratives that participants produce can be described as a process of interrelation; between participants' experiences and the normative forms of cultural representations. It is out of this dialogue that

participants form and sustain their ancient heritage and locate it as a dimension of Greek

national identity.

Within these ongoing processes, political and cultural ruptures have had a great impact on

how the ancient past is perceived. These ruptures stand as boundaries between past and

present. These boundaries may be temporary, and the drawing of boundaries may be a

continuous process, but they are nonetheless produced and reproduced through the ways

that participants experience and actualise these ruptures. These ideas were demonstrated in

one of the focus groups where John, for example, positions himself in relation to the past as

follows:

> John (28): I don't believe at all that there is a continuation from the ancient Greek
> tradition up to the present, I believe that this a very well constructed myth. As a
> nation, there are many things of which we cannot be proud: for example racism,
> sexism and many other social problems.

Iasonas complements John's comment:

> Iasonas (27): I agree that, beneath the surface of unity that we supposedly have as a
> society, there is a lot of discrimination against weaker groups. Immigrants,
> women… the everyday reality is a lot less glorious.

John breaks the continuity between ancient and modern Greece by stating that ancient

Greek civilisation is a constructed myth; a myth that has been created in such a way as to

provide a 'particular' historical past. In relation to the mythical content that national

commemorations or ritual practices contain, here the concept of myth acquires a more

complex interpretive meaning. As John says, it is a myth that cannot reconciled with

present social problems, and a myth that, therefore, creates a difficulty to the construction

of Greek national identity. And, as Iasonas adds, there is a lot of discrimination against

different groups, such as foreign workers and women, at every level, which is absent in

representations of ancient Greek civilisation.

Although the ancient past is an important historical period in Greek civilisation, it is one

which is difficult for many of my participants to integrate with contemporary realities.

Participants are so tied to their past that it seems that they see their contemporary realities

from a distance: the manner in which participants approached and described the present led

to a clear gap between 'past' and 'present'; between 'us' and 'others' – an apparent process

of disengagement and detachment. Therefore, the myth of ancient Greece works like a

boundary that divides the old portrayal of Greece from the new. On the one hand, historical

events and the conceptualisation of the past have shaped the ways through which

participants understand both contemporary issues and their experiences; on the other hand,

these experiences inform the ways through which participants construct – and reconstruct –

the former.

Migration

The arrival of migrants to Greece started in 1989, mostly due to political and economic

changes in Eastern Europe. The highest percentage of migrants that arrived in Greece were

Albanian: after the fall of the communist regime in Albania in 1991, thousands of people

were unemployed and almost 90% of the factories were closed (http://www.ce-

review.org/99/21/vidali21.html). The first great exodus of Albanian refugees was in 1991-

92, as they crossed borders with Greece and the sea separating Albania from Italy. Greece's

geographical location played a big role in the exodus of Albanians because of its extensive

coastlines and easily crossed borders. At that time the Greek government decided to open

the borders and issued a large number of visas, in order to let the members of the Greek

minority reunite with their families over the border. The Greek state, however, was not

really ready to accept such a large influx of migrants – particularly as from 1991 to 1998,

there was no concrete migration policy. Specialist institutions, such as advice centres for

the legal, social and economic orientation of immigrants (especially children), hardly

existed. Furthermore, Albanians – and other – immigrants were excluded from assistance

by the state, especially in relation to the provision of housing, health care and personal

safety. Additionally, Albanians found it difficult to find avenues for political, cultural and

social expression, or for recreation and socialisation (http://www.migrationinformation.org)

For these and other reasons, the influx of Albanians created emotional and social turmoil

amongst Greek citizens and in their sense of Greek national identity. As the government

was not ready to accept such numbers of migrants, Greek people faced the challenge of

how to integrate these newcomers into their social and cultural lifestyles.

My participants expressed confusion about the arrival of the Albanians in terms of what

elements or events should be considered part of their identity. Participants raised various

political and social debates in relation to the migrant issue; complexities, antitheses and

contradictions emerged. This was reflected in one of the focus groups where particular

Aphrodite comments:

Aphrodite (35): I think that nowadays the Greek national identity is more mixed because of
all these migrants that have been arriving in Greece the last few years.

From this perspective, the arrival of migrants in Greece diversifies Greek national identity.

As Aphrodite implies, the arrival of migrants broke up the previous 'homogeneous' state.

Other members of the group like Sotiris tries to approach migrants in a more constructed

way:

> Sotiris (28): I think that this mixture can be something creative and useful for the future. There are two sides that somebody can see and act upon. One is to send away all these migrants in order to be only 'Greeks' and the other side is to utilise them creatively and vice versa.

Manolis shares a similar view:

> Manolis (47): There are all these people who have sought a better life in Greece. My opinion is that we need to understand and accept them, and help them become a part of this country.

Sotiris position is reflective and open-minded. In a way he tries to distance himself from more conventional criticisms of migration and see the phenomenon of migrants in Greece as something positive – the existence of migrants could bring a different lifestyle in Greece through which Greek people could extract something creative and beneficial for their construction of identity. Manolis too expresses a very positive approach towards migrants. He implies that the integration of migrants depends on the efforts of the existing population to understand their origins, what sort of issues they have faced, and the circumstances that led them to Greece. Sotiris is also clearly aware that migrants are often perceived from two extreme perspectives: they are seen either very negatively or, by contrast, able to contribute constructively to Greek national identity. So, although Sotiris shows willingness to engage with the complexities that the issue of migration implies, he nonetheless makes a very sharp line of demarcation separating 'Greeks' from migrants. In his approach it therefore appears as if he relates to migration more as a spectator than as a person who is engaging with its complexities on a daily basis. He continues:

> Sotiris (28): The first opinion is coming maybe from the older generations where they think that if foreign elements come to their civilisation and their culture then they will lose forever what they considered in their mind as Greekness.

Sotiris' statement supports the suggestion that for older generations, migrants can disrupt an existing 'sense of Greekness'. In this context, migrants are perceived immediately as a group of people who can have a transformative, and potentially negative, impact on the culture and the traditions of the country.

It is worth noting that, in apparent, if relatively exceptional contradiction to Sotiris' assumption, one older participant coming from another focus group, talked about Albanian migrants with a friendly and a hospitable attitude, seemingly accepting and accommodating them without seeing them as a threatening group. Xaralambos comments:

> Xaralambos (62): We welcome the Albanians. We gave them food, clothes, jobs, and we see them simply as fellow human beings.

Xaralambos' hospitality was, however, relatively exceptional: in other focus groups, subjects were much more reluctant and fearful when discussing issues around migration, often exhibiting fear of 'losing their Greekness'. For most, in order for the Albanians to be accepted, participants suggested they should adapt and change, both in terms of their religious practices (there was an expectation that they should become Greek Orthodox) and by respecting and accepting the traditions of Greek society. Antony coming from another focus group comments:

> Antony (46): I don't think these people [the Albanians] can appreciate our way of life. This country has changed since they came, and I don't think it is for the better. We are losing our identity.

Antony thinks that Albanians have a negative impact on everyday life; they are constructed

as being incapable of appreciating and understanding the norms and values that compose

Greek lifestyle. Antony implies that Albanians cannot be perceived on an equal level to

Greeks; he considers them inferior, negatively affecting the development of Greek society.

This draws a negative picture that leaves little space for dialogue and interaction.

Sofia, responds to Antony saying the following:

> Sofia (57): When the Albanians arrived in Greece, some of them couldn't care about
> a thing, but some others were baptized as Greeks and now they cook lamb on Easter
> Sunday and celebrate every ritual and cultural ceremony.

For Sofia, as for Antony, the 'integration' of Albanians thus depends on them conforming

to the practices and traditions that constitute Greekness; there is no suggestion of a

willingness or need of Greek culture to adapt.

Among my participants there were particular issues around the quantity of Albanian

migrants in Greek society. It is a topic that emerged in all of the focus groups, often (as will

be seen shortly) in relation to their perceived speed of reproduction. In one of the focus

groups Alexandra comments:

> Alexandra (40): I am not at all racist, but with Albanians I am really racist. I cannot
> stand them, especially because there are so many in terms of percentage in
> comparison with other migrants that live in Greece.

Vasiliki answers:

Vasiliki (32): First of all they are so many that have flooded the country. And they keep having lots of children, so their numbers are growing. I'm a bit alarmed by that, to be honest.

There is a sense of fear and anxiety from Alexandra and Vasiliki in relation to the presence of Albanians. They think that their impact on their country will be almost wholly negative. Alexandra another member of the group, justifies her racism towards them on the grounds of number. She continues:

Alexandra (40): And you know something? I think that, in Greece, what will happen is exactly what happened in Yugoslavia – eventually a state will be created within a larger one. And there is another issue that raises some concern, at least to me: the issue of procreation. I mean, if Albanians raise eight or ten children per family when at the same time Greek families have a total of two or three, then you can see what sort of outcome there will be in a few years time; they will multiply.

Alexandra's position does not show any interest or curiosity to explore Albanian culture, on the contrary she perceives them as numbers. She expresses a fear that Albanians will one day outnumber Greeks, due to a perceived high birth rate. For Alexandra, Albanians are a threat to her national identity, affecting her idea of what constitutes Greekness. Mariana, however, adopts a different outlook:

Mariana (43): Well yes! There are many Albanians in Greece who might disturb and even annoy Greek society, however, I cannot stop thinking that Greek society does take advantage of the situation. On one hand, Albanians are working with minimal salaries (compared to those given to Greek workers) and most of the time without health insurance. On the other hand they are blamed for all sorts of things including [the fear] that they will take our houses and position in society.

Konstantine shares a similar view:

> Konstantine (29): Sometimes I can understand some of the fears that Greek people have, but there is also a lot of hypocrisy going on. I know people who publicly condemn the Albanian migration, but are quick to exploit Albanians at the workplace. This, to me, is dishonest.

Mariana and Konstantine take a critical stance towards Greek attitudes to migrants. During the focus group they were shouting in their attempts to explain the hypocrisy they identified to the rest of the group. There is a contradiction in how Mariana and Konstantine feel that Greek society generally treats Albanians – on the one hand they are afraid of them and do not want them in their territory, but on the other they are willing to exploit their presence for their own benefit. What Mariana suggests is that Greek society marginalises Albanians, and in so doing limits their impact on Greek national identity. Alexandra shares this ambivalent attitude more explicitly:

> Alexandra (40): If you think about it, there are infinite migrants in Greece. I mean I love them, I adore them, but up to a point – because if I feel that they are trying to play a power game, then my reaction is to say back off, this is Greece, this is my homeland and you can't overstep some lines.

Anthi adds:

> Anthi (37): I sympathise with the immigrants, but I am not naïve. I know that in some cases minorities are used to create tensions inside a country. I wouldn't like to see this happening in Greece as it has happened recently elsewhere in the Balkans.

Alexandra and Anthi seem to have pre-conceived ideas of Albanians attitudes. Both of them describe Albanians as an ethnic minority group that causes fear and threat for Greek

society. Anthi's and Alexandra's behaviour does not suggest a dialogical relationship with Albanians, but is more intolerant. They prefer to keep Albanians at a distance from their cultural and social life; there must be certain boundaries that migrants are not allowed to overstep. In this case, migrants can share cultural aspects that constitute the Greek national identity if and only if they follow the rules set down by Greek people. This position demonstrates a sense of power over the migrants, but also hides a sense of being threatened by them (implied in the suggestion of power games). Alexandra seems quite defensive in feeling that she should be ready to defend her personal and national identity under any circumstances. She continues:

> Alexandra (40): This is what I am talking about; this mixture. When they are part of our own circle, I am totally in agreement, I accept them and I do want to have relationships with them. However if I see things that I don't like, then I feel I am part of the dominant group; I have previously used that reasoning.

Alexandra feels privileged and completely in control, she feels empathy for them but at the same time she feels that she belongs to a dominant group. She feels superior and strong enough to treat them according to her own rules. This behaviour automatically frames Albanians as an unwelcome group, and therefore potentially subject to discrimination and racism.

This negative attitude of participants towards migration makes it difficult to integrate into the popular Greek imagination. It is revealing that only in one focus group did participants speak positively about accepting a new ethnic group. In comparison, the rest of the focus groups sought to assert their power in relation to threatening Albanians; a position that makes them feel that they are in full control and in charge of how the Albanian migrants

should act within Greek society.

Conclusions

In the focus groups meanings of Greeknees were unfolded through a variety of themes, derived from participants' experiences and everyday practices. The groups produced complex and contradictory styles of Greekness. They perceived their national identity with a sense of ambivalence because of its constructed character, which was sometimes described as mythical and magical. This position was highlighted through the celebration of national commemorations and ritual practices; the participants presented both as practices with particular elements that created negative feelings. Instead of being inspired and attracted by ceremonies, some critiqued them or avoided engagement with them.

Nevertheless participants did participate in a national identity through family and tradition. Within these spheres they noted significant cultural elements that contribute to their sense of Greekness. But what stands as an anchor of participants' national identity is the importance of ancient Greece, their origin and history; a relationship that is complex and contradictory. On the one hand there was a continuous effort from the participants to identify elements such as language, or the archaeological site of Macedonia, in order to support the continued value of ancient Greece as a touchstone for Greek identity. Conversely, taking the issue of migration as an example, the existence of ancient Greece created a barrier to the integration of other ethnic minorities. Instead of trying to find ways in which the two can coexist, between retaining the importance of ancient Greece and accepting migration, participants generally see one as excluding the other, creating confusion and instability in their attempts to capture a sense of Greekness.

As a result, two opposing views coexist. When participants talk about Greekness in isolation, they do not accept a relationship between modern Greece's more recent past and ancient Greece. On the other hand, when they try to defend their sense of Greekness in relation to others, history became the key element in their identity.

Participants present the idea of ancient Greece as a touchstone of their national identity, one that can potentially bind Greek people together by providing an imagined common history and ancestry. In the focus groups, themes such as the relationship between East and West, religious affiliation, or the site of Macedonia were consistently analysed and described with reference to Greece's ancient past. Participants used their past in every situation, regardless of their negative or positive consequences; for them it often seemed to be the sole frame by which they could confidently defend and define their identity. In so doing, the past becomes an 'impeccable' myth in participants' imaginations.

Nevertheless, it seems that participants' perceptions about the past are shaped in engagement with social, historical and political discourses in contemporary Greek society. The way the participants experience and conceptualise Greece's ancient past depends on how they interpret and understand the various meanings that have been produced and mythically constructed by the nation. Their experiential accounts and discursive practices depend not only on how they position themselves, but also on how they have been positioned by the norms of society and the narratives of past and present. National identity is comprised of an imaginary and symbolic system of cultural representations. As a result, they are critical of the relationship between ancient and modern Greece without really proposing alternatives. It can be said that their notion of origin is characterised by a kind of psychic stasis; they exist in a state of being blocked, unable to find a way out.

In the next chapter we will explore the allegory of fragments that emerges from participants' family photographs of social and cultural practices and its creation through an embodied memory of the senses. Consequently, we will consider how the allegory of senses is able to transmit a 'national' knowledge which, despite its subtle and fragile content, constitutes part of Greek cultural identity.

Chapter Five

A sense of belonging through fragments, traces, sounds and aromas

Introduction

So far in my research project I have tried to look for features that sustain and constitute the meaning of cultural dimensions of Greek national identity. In the focus groups, tradition, commemoration days, migration and ancient heritage were all themes explored by participants, and through which they created different styles of Greekness and what it means to be Greek. In particular, ancient Greece served as a reference point that informants constantly returned to when they described, or felt they had to provide justifications for their views on, issues relating to contemporary Greece. Ancient Greece therefore played a vital, yet complex role in participants' minds in relation to the shape and construction of contemporary Greek national identity. Specifically, its continuing importance as a reference point led to some considerable ambivalence and confusion concerning how social and political events should be seen in relation to this identity.

With this in mind, I will now proceed to examine how these findings sit in relation to the analysis of the individual interviews, participants from which were almost all drawn from the focus groups. As discussed in the chapter three (*Methods and Methodology*), I employed a method to collect information about participants' relationships with Greekness, involving a combination of visual and oral materials. My initial aim was to ask participants to choose photographs from their family album that related to a number of specific themes, including: national commemorations; ritual ceremonies which had personal relevance for them; an important figure they felt had played a profound role in shaping their life; places to which they felt a deep emotional connection; and

photographs they would take with them if they were about to go abroad. From these types of photographs participants began to produce a variety of 'snapshot stories' (which often ended up taking a similar form to life-story interviews) where new themes emerged, finding their reference in a range of different social and cultural discourses.

Even though the photographs that the participants brought came from family albums, it was immediately clear that they considered them to be personal memoirs; individual artefacts that they believed belonged to them. The memories and the stories they recalled can therefore be seen to 'move them in a web of associations and interpretations, which at the same time bring together the personal, the historical, and the social' (Kuhn 1994:4). As Annette Kuhn argues, memory work makes it possible to explore connections between 'public events, structures of feeling, family dramas, relation to class, national identity and gender, and 'personal' memory' (Kuhn 1995: 4). In this context, one of the themes that emerged from the participants, and which this chapter will be focusing on, is a sense of belonging to a place. The meaning of 'belonging' is inevitably complex, as there are so many ways for somebody to express a sense of belonging to a particular place or community. In this chapter, the particular focus will be on how participants' senses of belonging are approached through their perspectives on ancient monuments, scenery, food, habits and objects.

When first analysing the interviews, what struck me was that, when participants describe a photograph of, for example, an ancient monument, beautiful scenery, or a photograph from Istanbul, their sense of belonging was identified in relation to things or situations that were not visible in the photograph. This interaction, between a visual representation and their reactions to it, meant that I was able to recognise the importance of not only the visible and the immediately obvious, but also the particular elements that participants extract and focus on in producing their 'snapshot stories'.

This, I suggest, means that the snapshot acts like an 'allegory', which participants create when using their photographs to produce their stories. Allegory is a form of extended metaphor, in which the objects, persons and actions in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. I argue that literal and symbolic meanings are revealed through participants' allegorical narrations that relate to an embodied memory of senses.

These allegorical narrations created a series of fleeting images, which are like sudden constellations of past and present; Walter Benjamin described these as 'dialectical images' (McCole 1993: 287). Participants spoke about smells and sounds that they extracted from their photographs which they drew together part of their sense of belonging; these fleeting images frequently overlapped with, and sometimes sat in juxtaposition to, the conventional knowledge that photographs have acquired for the participants. They involve a particular atmosphere which, as a researcher, is sometimes difficult to articulate. This is what Benjamin refers to as the 'aura' of an object of perception (McCole 1993: 3). 'The aura stands as a juncture between a broad network of social and historical processes and it also appears sometimes as the 'atmosphere' that seems to envelop an object, a scene, or a moment' (McCole 1993:3). In this sense, what I intend to explore is how this 'auratic' perception informs a sense of belonging.

Monuments, objects, smells and sceneries are presented by the participants as a 'lived experience', embodied memories of everyday lives informed by the senses. In terms of the practicalities of the research process, on the one hand this made the photographs into something 'bigger' and richer than I initially anticipated, both in terms of the various social phenomena that they became related to, as well as occasionally leading to some impatience on my part as I listened to participants' stories, always anxious to know more, wondering what else there might be in a photograph, hidden and waiting to be

discovered. It is as if in allegory 'the vision of the reader is larger than the text; the

reader dreams to an excess, to an overabundance. To read an allegorical narration is to

see beyond the relations of narration, character, desire' (Stewart 1993: 3). As I will

explore below, although initially hidden, these revealed meanings had a power and

strength of their own, and enabled me as a researcher to consider how what I call

'cultural fragments' contribute towards a sense of belonging, often in ways different

from conventional understandings of Greekness.

Fragments of participants' photographs may appear as merely small, mundane details,

but I suggest that they are nonetheless able to be involved in the creation of 'new'

stories of the Greek imaginary, in 'redescriptions' of ancient monuments, sceneries or

objects. It is as if the small detail or fragment comes to represent the totality of a

participant's photograph with subject and fragment then coming together to construct a

knowledge of what a sense of belonging and Greekness mean. This relationship,

between individual fragment and the totality of a photograph, reminds us of what

Barthes refers to as the relation between the 'punctum' and the 'studium' (Barthes 2000).

Studium stands as 'an application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general,

enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity and the latter [the

punctum] is a detail of the photograph' (Barthes 2000: 26); He suggests that: 'It is not

possible to posit a rule of connection between the studium and the punctum (when it

happens to be there)' (Barthes 2000:42). Nevertheless I suggest that studium and

punctum *can* both stand in one photograph and be able to produce different kinds of

information for the viewer. The studium is therefore the cultural, the coded. 'Punctum is

that which breaks, pricks, or disturbs the studium; it is the accidental, uncoded, and

subjective' (Game 1991:142). What is particular to the punctum, and which

characterises it, is its temporal character; it is the rupture, the discontinuity of time, as

related to the operations of the unconscious (Ibid). Punctum unconscious operations

leave a space for an allegorical narration: allegory as a form of story which includes

symbolic and literal meanings, becomes feasible through the prompts and disturbances

that punctum produces. Punctum in comparison to studium does not have a fixed

identity but, on the contrary, provides the photograph with a temporality that comes to

challenge existing cultural forms of representation. Punctum is the detail, the partial

object, that nonetheless is strong enough to come signify the total meaning of the

photograph (Barthes 2000: 47). Quite particular details sparked participants' memories,

such as small decorative objects like a model fishing boat, or the deep blue of a

Mediterranean sea. It is details like these that acted as prompts, eliciting a series of

stories not only relating directly to these details, but connecting to a series of other

memories and stories, as can see in the following three recollections of time abroad:

> Alexandra (40): This is my room in the halls of residence I lived in when I
> studied abroad. Ah, my beautiful fishing boat! It's there on the shelf – it was my
> inspiration in those days, and a kind of company. It reminds me of so many
> moments with my friends, my family...

> Aphrodite (35): Everything in my country looks so beautiful when I look at it
> from abroad. It makes me feel a kind of power and superiority in relation to
> other cultures – certainly in terms of our language and our food, like our vine
> leaves, our meatballs, our colourful kiosks... It sounds very superficial, but this
> is how I feel a strong belonging to my country.

> Athanasios (39): Among other photographs on my wall while I was living in the
> UK was one of a friend of mine dancing a traditional Greek dance with his
> father. Back home, at an earlier age, I used to make fun of such things. But
> abroad, this photo eventually took on a whole new meaning. I was moved by the
> culture I came from and, to be honest, I was surprised that I felt so strongly. I
> liked it, though.

The three respondents shared a similar experience, having had the opportunity to travel

and live abroad. Alexandra, Aphrodite and Athanasios's perceptions of being abroad are

represented through features of their daily Greek lives: a fishing boat, food, kiosks, a

traditional dance... they refer to these as distinctive objects that characterise their sense of belonging. Although these objects might appear with a sense of simplicity, thanks to Alexandra, Aphrodite and Athanasios seeing them through their everyday life in Greece, when participants were abroad, these seemingly everyday ideals and objects take a different dimension. Although in Aphrodite's eyes there is a self-conscious awareness that this image of Greece is superficial, at the same she identifies with these seemingly superficial features. The superficiality of the vine leaves or the colourful kiosks come to represent her sense of belonging and Greekness. Her memories are shaped by sensory experiences that are linked to particular tastes and smells. As Howes suggests, 'The sensory order is not just something ones sees or hears about it, it is something one lives' (Howes 2005: 2). These images of Aphrodite's everyday life are represented through a sensory dimension; for her they stand as symbols of identification, symbols of representation, becoming more vivid when seen from outside her country.

As I will explore below, smells and sounds associated with ancient monuments, landscapes and objects appear as cultural fragments emerged from participants' photographs, representing and expressing a sensory experience of belonging. Senses appear 'as cumulative and accomplished, rather than given, bringing forward the relations between sense activity, representation, and expression' (Stewart 2005: 59).

Monuments and ancient sites: places embedded in sensory memories

In the responses examined so far in the focus groups, ancient Greece has been identified as a site of national identity unique to Greece. However, when participants showed me their own photographs of different ancient sites, it seemed that the notion of the past, and the idea of ancient Greece, was approached from a more multidimensional

perspective. Ancient sites appeared as 'lived objects' that have a reference point to participants' everyday life and sometimes are informed by the senses.

The reification of the ancient past and of its monuments manifested itself both in participants' photographs, and within various snapshot stories that were elicited from them. The narratives that the participants produced about ancient past and ancient sites went beyond the actual content of the photograph itself; rather, memories travel in and out of the photograph, revealing hidden meanings and fragments that give it vibrancy and movement while creating an enormous feeling of curiosity to learn and dream more about them. Participants spoke with considerable passion and showed a great deal of respect to these monuments, often describing them as very strong symbols of belonging and as emblems that represent the continuity of the link between ancient and modern Greece. Athena, for example, describes the temple of Poseidon at Sounio (a few kilometres away from the centre of Athens; it is located on a hill near the Mediterranean Sea), a temple which has stood as an inspiration for many Greek authors and poets. In her photograph, Athena poses with a friend in front of the temple, with the beautiful, somewhat imposing, view of the sea behind them. For her, the photograph elicits stories that are informed by the senses, and connect to an ancient Greek myth, an event from contemporary Greek history, and Greek literature:

> Athena (55): For me the columns of this temple are connected to a series of histories. Firstly, they connect with Greek mythology. Secondly, and very importantly, with our famous poet George Seferis [who won the Nobel prize a few years ago]. In one of his poems, Seferis talks about the national, historical event of 25 March [the day of the independence from the Ottoman empire]. He speaks of the columns of the temple and the Greek people who, during the war, managed with pride and daring to expel the Turks and bring back freedom to Greece after 400 years of slavery. The columns have a kind of melody and sound that remind us of all the struggles the Greek people had in order to achieve their freedom. These associations are why I like this temple so much – it says something important about Greece.

Her experience as a teacher of history and Greek literature in a public school is reflected in her admiration for the temple of Poseidon. The stories that she narrates connect the past and the present. For her the temple represents stories not only from Greek mythology but also substantial historical events that derive from contemporary Greek history. As she mentions, for George Seferis, the temple of Poseidon is the inspiration for one of his poems, where he writes about the day of liberation from Ottoman rule, underlining the pride and generosity of Greek people during that time. So for Athena the temple of Poseidon does not stand as a rigid and concrete symbol of the origins and ruins of Greek antiquity, but contains melodies, sounds and stories from throughout Greek culture and history. Her sense of belonging and her identification with the temple of Poseidon therefore involve a series of cultural elements that compose an image of contemporary Greece.

There does, however, appear to be another dimension to participants' memories of monuments or ancient sites. Although there are a generally accepted set of discourses around the idea of ancient Greece, for Greek participants ancient monuments do not so much symbolise their historical references, as serve as places that have points of reference in their everyday lives. Although ancient Greece has been represented as a 'national ideal', a cornerstone of Greek identity, participants' accounts were not constrained by the limitations of ancient Greek culture. Instead, they highlighted a number of elements that are closely linked to a far more contemporary image of Greece. For example, each ancient monument to which they referred is also perceived as a 'lived' experience, which is inextricably linked to childhood and their everyday lives. Panagiotis, for example, comments:

> Panagiotis (38): The ancient site of Delphi where my father would often take me as a child brings back memories of my childhood. We used to have a picnic there almost every weekend, when my father would tell me stories about his experiences of when the Germans invaded Greece during World War II.

It seems that the ancient site of Delphi, like others I will discuss below, becomes materialised according to the participants' everyday practices, with the meanings participants attach to them seeming to be highly subjective. Although Panagiotis was born in Athens, he spent a major part of his childhood and his adulthood in Chryso, the village where his father comes from, located a few kilometres away from Delphi. As a consequence, Delphi has great significance to him. But it is not as a static object: it seems that it has the capacity to belong to the past and present at the same time. It is as if its existence is timeless, but Panagioti's experiences give to it a particular, temporally contingent 'identity'. The content of Panagiotis photograph goes beyond its frame; Panagiotis' perception of the ancient site of Delphi flows amongst stories of the past and present that create new meanings; ancient culture is not perceived as a 'frozen' moment in time, it is instead a cultural heritage, which is constantly redefined, re-experienced and repositioned over time. Nikos suggests how monuments can become part of our everyday lives:

Nikos (46): We used to visit archaeological sites during school trips. I have a photo from one of them that I had found particularly fascinating. The name of the archaeological site is Vravrova. I remember we listened vaguely to what the teacher was saying about the place, just the basics, then quickly made up our own stories and acted out scenarios – mini-dramas – on that site. It was amusing, and I always have a fond remembrance of those excursions...

Nikos's occupation – a lecturer in the archaeology department in the university of Athens – seems to be reflected to the way that he perceives and experiences these ancient sites. Here for example, the archaeological site of Vravrona is presented through Nikos's photograph as a vibrant and 'lived' experience. The history of the place or 'the

basics' as Nikos refers to it while describing his photograph, prompted him to produce,

along with his friends, a series of alternative stories that related more to his everyday

life. The grandiose and imposing history of the site has been transformed by Nikos into

a series of 'scenarios' and 'mini-dramas': it is these elements that make this place so

special in his memory. Nikos's description of the actual content of the photograph works

as a starting point; the stories and scenarios that he then visualises create new ways of

seeing and remembering the archaeological site of Vravrona. Nikos's photograph

becomes like a moving object that can be reproduced again and again.

Margarita showed me a photograph of a very popular archaeological site: Knossos

(located in the east side of the island of Crete), in relation to which she expresses her

sense of belonging and identification:

> Margarita (32): I brought a photograph of this archaeological site because, for
> me, it has real meaning. As I told you, I went to high school at Heracleion in
> Crete; Knossos was just a few kilometres away. I remember that my parents
> used to take me there and, in my mind, Knossos was like a playschool. Knowing
> the myth of the Minotaur, I used to go up and down the ancient walls pretending
> that that they were a labyrinth. I was so happy running up and down the ancient
> walls, jumping all over the place.

The Minotaur is the mythological creature that inspires and prompts her to transform

this beautiful place into a nursery school. Margarita sees Knossos not only as an

archaeological place for which she has admiration and respect for the past, but as a

place that can be incorporated in her daily life, a living organ that combines the myth of

the past and the reality of the present. Margarita is able to view Knossos from both

angles; her memory blurs the lines between reality and fiction, between memory and

imagination. Moreover, through the same photograph, Margarita recreates an additional

level of meaning which explains her standpoint on other archaeological sites:

> Margarita: For me, the archaeological sites give you a sense of inexplicable mysticism. The reason that I feel this every time I touch them, derives from the fact that other people have touched these ancient walls or stones many years ago. And what really intrigues me is that the people who built these temples and monuments had a particular intention, nothing was built without a reason. Basically this is what I love in the archaeological sites; every time that I go there I don't just try to understand or to find out what the meaning behind them was, but for me what counts is the fact that these temples and sites have a specific function today.

For Margarita archaeological sites create a very particular environment, which intrigues her senses and stimulates her imagination; she feels completely spellbound by them. She is not necessarily interested in finding out the meanings of the temples in themselves. For her what counts is that these temples were built with particular purposes in mind. It seems that Margarita's approach to the archaeological sites does not involve an idealised notion of ancient Greek beauty or perfection, but rather her main focus is on the function and the utility of Greek temples. Moreover, for Margarita this exquisite mysticism that the Greek temples offer is unique and exclusive. As she suggests, based on her own experiences, the magic of Greek temples cannot be found in any other temples, anywhere in the world.

> Margarita: Of course I don't have the same feeling when I visit an archaeological site in Mexico or in Egypt, in comparison to a Greek one. I admire for example how people in Egypt managed to build these huge pyramids but I don't feel any type of continuity (though I know that's an illusion) in relation to my own time and place.

Margarita feels a complete identification with the Greek temples. She can recognise the beauty of other temples around the world, but it is Greek temples that constitute her history, link the past with the present and offer a seemingly endless, near-magical beauty. In her visual imagination a Greek temple stands as a bridge that links the past with the present. Nevertheless, the meanings of past and present are not conceptualised as a feature of national identity, but as places through which she shares some common

experiences with her ancestors. It seems that her understanding of the form of continuity between past and present mostly derives not from a taken for granted history, but from a series of personally mediated experiences that establish a linkage with her ancestors. These sorts of experiences offer the possibility of Margarita embracing and feeling attached to Knossos, but for reasons that do not have a direct connection to the often lifeless meanings which are commonly attributed to Knossos in relation to Greek history and therefore Greek national identity.

> Margarita: I feel that there is continuity between ancient and modern Greece. I have a relationship with this ancient past, with my ancestors. Even if I don't have it in terms of national identity, still I do believe that I have it in terms of some banal common experiences. For example they were listening to the same insects that I listen to [cicadas], they were making wine like I make wine, they were eating olives, just as I eat them. Although they didn't have the same type of relationship that I have with the site – for example they didn't have exactly the same view as I have – I still feel very close to them, thus I can understand this continuity. For me it has a genuine meaning – I can't explain what – but it's there.

Margarita's argument about the meanings of continuity and of the ancient Greek temples, makes reference to common habits that both she and her ancestors have lived and experienced in their daily life. Everyday practices such as the process of making wine, or eating olives, or even listening to particular types of insects that still exist today, stand in her memory as cultural features with a sensory dimension that are able to be used to narrate and explain her strong belief in continuity that the ancient temples signify. Even though the space has been transformed and modified, even if the olives or the wine have been processed and digested differently at different points in time, for Margarita they are still here and they contain many meanings and emotions that sometimes cannot be analysed through words. Her sense of ancient Greece comes alive through the banal and seemingly trivial, but highly sensory experiences of everyday life.

The smell and taste of wine and olives create a narrative in Margarita's mind, which is strong enough to constitute and provide a personal context to the meaning of ancient Greece. For Margarita, the past acquires a significance which is recognised through the taste and the smell of olives and wine; it is as if the past was hidden, near-dead, covered under many layers of debris from the present, until it came alive through the senses. Each of these appears like a 'fleeting sensation' (Proust 2005), which enables her to see and appreciate the past through a sensory dimension; these can be seen as 'involuntary sensory memories', whose appearance is not dependent on a particular prompt; in Margarita's case, as well in the rest of the participants', they emerge as sudden flashes, as kinaesthetic memories with an amorphous form; they arise from a layer of preverbal sensory experience (McCole 1993: 260).

Taking Margarita's statements into account, it seems that the way memory works is inseparable from the senses. From a single photograph, Margarita's memories create a series of associations and interpretations around the idea of the ancient temples, activated through the senses. Senses are formed through experiences; and experiences are changed and transformed in relation not only to internal but also to external processes; as Stewart argues: 'We may apprehend the world by means of our senses, but the senses themselves are shaped and modified by experience and the body bears a somatic memory of its encounters with what is outside it' (1999:19). Consequently, the idea of belonging, as constructed through Margarita's memories, has the potential to be continually perceived and re-perceived; there is therefore 'no such a thing as one moment of perception and then another of memory, representation, or objectification. Mnemonic processes are intertwined with the sensory order in such a manner as to render each perception a re-perception' (Seremetakis 1994:9). Memory and its sensory dimensions seem to be embedded in the situations and objects of our daily lives that as a

result also constitute part of our personal and cultural identity. Participants' sense of

belonging, as we will see below, is mediated through a series of small fragments – such

as an everyday activity, a poster or a smell – that emerge from their memories in various

forms and create a series of fleeting images, which are like sudden constellations of past

and present, similar to Walter Benjamin's notion of 'dialectical images' with an auratic

perception (McCole 1993:287). Margarita has the ability to articulate and to

contextualise her own sense of belonging in the sound of a bird and the taste of an olive.

In a way the senses of smell and sound create an auratic belonging, which is produced

by Margarita's narratives. Although we cannot really grasp the senses, or their 'texture',

they are able to translate participants' experiences into a story; as Stewart puts it, 'Wind

and water press against us and moves us, but they cannot be grasped... we can contain

them in our hands for no more than a moment' (Stewart 2002: 165). Belonging can

therefore be seen as being produced and informed by the senses. This is similar to what

I identified in my methodology chapter, in which knowledge is seen as produced not by

a 'single' experience but by grasping the sense of an experience (Fay 1996), or the

'colour' of experience. It therefore seems that 'memory cannot be confined to a pure

mentalist or subjective sphere. It is a culturally mediated material practice that is

activated by embodied acts and semantically dense objects' (Seremetakis 1994:9).

When the part takes the place of the whole. When a fragment transforms into a

cultural memory

A variety of different modes of remembering – through monuments, objects, smells,

sounds and aromas – signify a sense of belonging to a place for my participants. In each

participant's photographs, their sense of belonging is not felt to be represented by self-

contained components dictating why and how to belong; instead the instances they

focus on take the form of a fragment in a bigger picture. Although a fragment is just a small piece out of the whole photograph, the narratives that participants produced through them exceed the actual photographic space and eventually became a new photograph. Participants' memories gave to these fragments a sense of movement and made them lived objects that were able to represent another way of seeing the sense of their belonging in relation to the obvious content of the original photograph. Participants focus mainly on small fragments that allow them to compose a narrative out of a collection of elements that they identify with and incite a strong sense of belonging. Individual details come to overwhelm to the narrative of the whole photo; they 'prick' the participants to such an extent that ultimately these details prevail and provide an emotional connection to their own sense of belonging. It is like that the particular fragments that participants chose appeared as lived objects that 'fitting life inside the body rather than body inside the expansive temporality of life' (Stewart 1993: 40). In participants' minds the fragments are the ones that give meaning and construct the cultural identity of their country.

Within participants' stories their sense of belonging has a flexibility which means that it is able adapt to both psychological and social and cultural circumstances, which are constantly taking new forms. In the case of the participants, it is in relation to particular activities, objects and smells that my participants locate their national belonging. Part of what makes the photograph such a vivid medium and prompt for them is that it enables the informant to go beyond conventions implied by specific compositions, or conventional sets of significations; they do not put their emphasis on the descriptive and schematic narrative of the photograph but on the meanings they consider relevant. As Barthes writes: 'the photograph touches me if I withdraw it from its usual blah blah: "Technique", "Reality", "Reportage", "Art", etc: to say nothing, to shut my eyes, to

allow the detail to rise of its own accord into affective consciousness' (Barthes
2000:55).

Penelope tries to identify those things or situations that represent her sense of belonging
and Greekness more than anything else. One of her photographs depicts her as a child
playing in the garden beside her aunt who is drinking coffee with some friends.

> Penelope (39): For me this photograph characterises the meaning of Greekness
> and a sense of belonging to this country. I remember very vividly my aunt sitting
> outside in our garden drinking her coffee and chatting with her neighbours about
> all kinds of gossip and politics, while I was playing games with my friends. Can
> you see what I mean when I say that that is what Greece is for me? I remember
> all these women in my neighbourhood sitting outside, sewing, chatting,
> drinking, eating, and doing all kinds of different things. For me this is so pretty,
> it is an image that represents the meaning of Greekness more than anything else.
> For me, in relation to what I talked about before – with regard to the national
> holidays, Easter, funerals, the idea of family and church – this is the most real
> and pure Greek attitude. It doesn't include any sort of pretence or anything
> compulsory. On the contrary, it is completely spontaneous.

For Penelope the meaning of Greekness and her sense of belonging are to be found
within a memory of a daily occurrence in her childhood. The image of her aunt drinking
coffee and chatting with her friends while Penelope played, is infused with a strong
sense of innocence and purity, something that is absent in the contrasting 'constructed'
images that she feels obliged to serve and to participate in for the sake of 'tradition'.
What really stays in her memory, as part of a strong sense of belonging, are all the
things and activities that are not conventional but that tend rather to be spontaneous,
arbitrary, and more 'authentic'. What stays alive in her relation to the photograph are
the women chatting, sewing, drinking coffee, and her playing with friends.

Penelope's fragmented narratives give to her photograph a sense of movement, they
create a particular atmosphere, showing that the notion of 'belonging' is always on the
move, always in the process of reproducing new images, new sounds, new smells, that

find their reference in our everyday lives; at the same time, however, they suggest an

image of 'Greekness' that remains to be uncovered. In our interview, Penelope

continued showing me photographs that depicted other scenes from both her childhood

and adult life in Athens, which she felt demonstrated an idiosyncratic sense of

belonging:

> Penelope: I love this picture. It's a very old black and white photograph; me and
> my grandmother holding hands, smiling at each other. We are in Plaka, a place
> which still feels so homely and Greek to me, maybe because of the poignant
> sight of ancient monuments and Acropolis's rock. There's this big poster behind
> me, which advertises the film 'Vertigo', then showing at cine Paris. Open-air
> cinemas are oddly linked to my sense of belonging, my sense of being Greek. To
> me they are not simple, architectural spaces where you can enjoy a film. They
> are a whole attitude towards entertainment (being able to drink, smoke and eat a
> cheese pie!), which combines art with a specific mode of being which – to me –
> emits a sense of freedom and refinement. It's beyond watching a film, it entails a
> wider sense of feeling close to my culture and the Greek way of life.

In Penelope's memories the 'Vertigo' poster encapsulates part of her sense of

belonging. Her memories are captured in a series of small sensory details from her past

daily life. Her narrative introduces us to a series of seemingly mundane Greek cultural

reference points, through which she is able to describe and thereby recreate a whole

cultural atmosphere, in particular how open-air cinemas have been experienced and

were materialised through a sensory dimension. The experience of going to an open-air

cinema in Greece appears as a process full of embodied sensory experiences; the

appreciation of the atmosphere and the beauty of the film come alive through a set of

embodied actions: drinking, eating and smoking. The Vertigo poster, that appears to be

a minor detail in this picture, evokes a range beautiful memories for Penelope and a

very particular sense of belonging. The poster therefore becomes the object of an

embodied series of private experiences, memories and emotions.

Penelope's sense of belonging is further represented for her by a series of mundane

objects from her daily life; even when she went abroad to study, she took photographs

of her family, her friends and a few beaches on the Cycladic islands with her.

> Penelope: When I was in London I took with me photographs of my friends, my
> parents, my brother, and two or three beautiful beaches from some Greek
> islands.

In the previous photograph, Penelope's emphasis on belonging and Greekness was

based mostly on small details which acted as triggers to recall actions of her everyday

life. Similarly, here she takes images of her family and her friends with her, again not

'official' images, explicitly constructed as representing Greek social activity. Instead, as

a result of being abroad the photographs of her family stand as a point of reference in

her memory that allows her to remember a series of situations, thereby bringing her

closer to her country. (The idea of family will be explored in the next chapter, which

will argue that families represent and unite multiple parts of a participant's identity on

both personal and social levels.) Her family and her friends therefore act as a bridge

when she is abroad. For Penelope, it seems that her idea of belonging has been

embedded in her memory by incorporating two aspects: first, when being and living in

Greece, belonging comes through in her memory through particular actions, or even

textures, materials, smells and actions (smoking, drinking and eating a cheese pie), both

from her childhood and adulthood; and second, when she is abroad, her sense of

belonging emerges through memories of her family.

Violeta identifies her sense of belonging through photograph-inspired memories, and

even texture:

Violeta (27): I have this photo of me and two of my best friends, sitting at a table in a
tavern in Athens. We actually bought this photograph from a lady that would walk

around the place and take snapshots which customers could buy, as is the custom in some places in Greece. So, in a sense, even the photograph itself, its shiny paper, reminds me of Greek culture. I kind of find it interesting and funny at the same time.

Violeta experiences her sense of belonging through the texture and the type of her photograph. In this instance the photograph itself becomes a fragment, coming to represent interesting and humorous elements of Greek culture, with the shiny paper of the photograph, and the image of Violeta and her friends sitting in a tavern, reminding her of Greek culture. The fact that she bought this photograph suggests that, for Violeta, looking at this image is like seeing her culture through the gaze of a tourist. Although she lives in Athens and very often she has dinners with her friends in taverns like this, she here becomes a tourist, seeing her culture from a different perspective.

Sophocles showed me a photograph where he poses with his grandmother in his house in Athens. In the photograph he focuses on a small bracelet with a 'blue eye' that he is wearing, which has a special meaning for him:

Sophocles (51): My grandmother had given me a bracelet with a small 'eye': a tiny piece of jewellery that is said to protect you from negative energy that might come from others. As I grew up I came to believe less in such superstitions, but I still kept wearing it. It is so small, but carries with it a kind of magic... I sometimes feel it connects me to my grandmother and to my whole culture.

The 'eye' he refers to is a Greek symbol that is commonly thought to help ward off evil spirits. However, for Sophocles, is not this literal symbolism that makes him wear it – the jewellery becomes a fragment which encapsulates memories, feelings and emotions that make him feel closer to his grandmother. This tiny piece of jewellery is the medium through which Sophocles is able to communicate with his grandmother; it has become a narrative through which Sophocles feels a sense of attachment with his grandmother and with his whole culture. His belief about the small 'eye' has shifted away from its

superstitious significations and towards to a nostalgic memoir which has the power to invoke strong emotions for Sophocles.

Alexandra shows me photographs of the Southern Pelloponese Maniatikous towers:

> Alexandra (40): You asked what I would take abroad with me, and I would definitely take plenty of photographs and post cards of the Maniatikous towers.

Alexandra's parents were born in Southern Peloponnese and they still have a house there where they spent most of their summer holidays. Alexandra has very vivid memories of this place since she was a child and she is particularly attached to the Maniatikous towers. For her these ruins do not merely suggest the history of the place, but also become an intimate part of her own existence. The towers have been transformed through her memory into experiences, emotions and practices that relate to small details and mundane practices of her everyday life. As Stewart writes, 'The miniature, linked to nostalgic versions of childhood and history, presents a diminutive, and thereby manipulable, version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected by contamination' (Stewart 1993:69). The towers hide fragments of a series of childhood stories that only she is able to recognize and to uncover.

History embedded in the senses

The fragments that participants selected from their photographs come to recreate and reproduce another way of seeing their sense of belonging and what is constituted as their cultural identity. Their narratives open up the possibilities of understanding culture from a more mundane and everyday perspective and at the same time disrupting the linear framework with history and culture is more usually presented in Greek society. We cannot disregard the fact that our formally taught history has a direct relation with

small details and mundane practices of our everyday life. We live, remember and experience important historical or social moments intertwined with a series of personal moments. These moments have a sensory dimension, which play a vital role in shaping and reproducing cultural dimensions of national identity.

In their interviews, some of the participants repeatedly made the point that, although there are certain influential histories and stories that they encounter within social institutions such as school and family, these are not the only sources of knowledge which inform their sense of belonging. For them, the practice and understanding of their culture also derives from their own personal experience and comes into being through the senses, their habits, and ways of living. The taste or smell of a particular food can come to contain a series of participants' stories, through which they are able to describe their sense of a national belonging. For Nadia Seremetakis this means that, 'A series of my childhood memories emerge through the taste, the smell, and the juicy bite of a peach. My peach brings back to my life observations, commentaries, stories, some of which encapsulated whole epochs marked by their own sensibilities' (Seremetakis 1996: 31). Participants' perceptions of what it means to 'belong' are narrated through particular objects that stand as prompts in recalling and capturing different historical periods from ancient to modern Greece. It is not the objects themselves that contain participants memories, feelings and experiences of belonging; but the smells, aromas and tastes associated with those objects, through which participants' memories travel from past to present, creating a series of temporally non-linear narratives.

This argument can be examined in greater depth in relation to Elena's account, which reveals the complexity of an embodied sense of belonging, as revealed through her sensory relationship to Turkish culture. Despite the continuous historical and geographical conflicts between Greece and Turkey, participants' narratives were not

constrained by the historical limitations of this relationship; instead they highlighted

elements that emerged from their sensory experiences that can be seen as linked more to

a cultural identity which is not confined to national identity. They were able to

conceptualise this relationship without seeing it through the prism of political and social

discourses.

Elena showed me a photograph taken in what she referred to as 'Constantinople'

(Istanbul) and started narrating her relationship with Turkish culture and, to an extent,

with Eastern civilisation more generally; she says:

> Elena (30): One of the most important chapters of my life is my relationship
> with Turkish civilisation. Here I am in front of the Mausoleum of Xaroum.
> Xaroum was a woman who was living in a harem, a very fateful woman, who
> managed to make Suleiman the Majestic, a very powerful man who had already
> conquered half of Europe, burst into tears at her feet. I am telling this story
> because, as I told you, Near East civilisation and especially Turkish civilisation
> has a special place in my heart. After visiting Turkey I started reading novels
> and stories about Turkish history and I started learning Turkish. I'm very
> absorbed by this civilisation. I feel that this culture really represents part of my
> identity and I found myself very familiar with it.

Elena had travelled extensively throughout her life. This travelling seems to have had an

impact to the way she perceives and experiences her relationship with Turkish

civilisation. Within her travelling she has adopted a particular cultural knowledge which

shapes part of her identity and, to an extent, part of her sense of belonging. Elena is

completely absorbed by Turkish civilisation. The atmosphere of the streets of

'Constantinople' causes her to feel strong feelings and emotions, taking her back to the

time when it was inhabited by Greeks, with everything looking familiar to her. It seems

that her strong sense of belonging to Turkish culture goes beyond the stories and myths

that a Turkish monument represents. Her familiarity with Turkish culture has been

cultivated and developed beyond a monument or a historical building; it entails a series

of images that are experienced in sounds, smells and sights which have been digested and adapted as part of her Greek identity and national belonging. Elena's remembered account reminded me of when I recently visited Istanbul (I also kept calling it 'Constantinople') when I experienced the same sort of feeling. I was walking in the Turkish markets was and became absorbed by the variety of different smells of the spices, the sounds of the Turkish traditional music, and even the body language of Turkish people, which I found so familiar. I had the feeling that I had been to the place before, especially when I was sitting in a café equivalent to a Greek *kafenia*[1] drinking my Turkish coffee, where I felt a 'cultural atmosphere' that seemed similar to Greece. In this context, at the time, I found myself wondering how I could deny that part of my sense of belonging comes from Turkish culture? How could I deny that 400 years of the Ottoman Empire have shaped and transformed part of my identity?[2] Both my own experience and Elena's account reveal the importance of sensory cultural experiences; for both of us, these sensory experiences have shaped part of who we are. In other words it seems that, for both Elena and myself, being in Turkey makes us able to recognise and identify the fact that aspects of many of our daily habits construct our identity positions.

What is important is that participants define their sense of belonging and part of their identity within a broad process of knowledge assimilation, with aspects such as history, language, heritage, food and manners, among others. As Eva adds below:

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[1] *Kafenia* are public places in Greece where usually men go to have Greek-Turkish coffee and play cards or backgammon.
[2] The relationship between Turkey and Greece has a long and difficult history. Turkey conquered Greece for 400 years (1453-1831) and this left behind many traces in Greek history and identity. Also, being subject to Turkish power for over 400 years has created a big gap as far as the continuity of Greek history is concerned.

> Eva (28): I recently had a conversation with a friend of mine, who was planning to go to Turkey. While showing him some of my photographs of food markets, churches and various places in Istanbul and trying to give him some tips, I soon realised that my perception of this country is far from neutral. I can describe it as a love/hate relationship, because although I feel close to Turkish people in many ways – for example, we share the same immediacy in our manners, as well as many aspects of our everyday life, like food, musical rhythms, even geographical closeness which inevitably influences our relationship – at the same time, however, I feel very different to them and I think this is because I was brought up to feel different to them. In school I read a history that defined the Turks as the enemy, as barbarians even [laughs]. I also remember celebrating our independence from their occupation through celebrations during which all students read poems and waved Greek flags with joy and pride.

Through traveling Eva has created a particular perception about the significance and the peculiarities of her culture. Eva's identification with Turkish culture is experienced through a sensory as well as socio-historical dimension: on the one hand the common food and rhythms, and on the other the long-term historical conflict with the Turks are the two elements that both separate and bring together the two countries. It seems that Eva's memories of Turkish culture are caught between two poles. Although her photographs illustrate her strong familiarity with its culture – represented by food markets and buildings, for example – it is also difficult for her to disconnect herself from what she has been taught in school. Her relation towards Turkish civilization has been formed within both 'official history' and her personal experience, and the two do not seem to coincide.

Lucas also shared one of the sensory experiences he had while he was studying in London:

> Lucas (33): I have a photo from my first year as an MA student in London, close to Paddington station where I used to live with other international students. I am standing next to a guy from Turkey outside a coffee shop, sharing a sisha. He was probably one of the first Turks I ever met in person. We were polite to each other and somehow curious, but also kind of reserved, if you know what I mean. There we were, educated, young and 'progressive,' but still carrying in our minds stories from the past.

While Lucas was living abroad he met people from a range of different cultures, with some of them having a significant impact on him as shown from his photograph. The coffee shop and the sisha (a water pipe through which you smoke flavoured tobaccos) stand as sensory fragments that bring together Lucas and his friend and allow them to share some common elements of their culture; but at the same time, for Lucas, their shared but oppositional histories means he has some reservations. Although Lucas is just 33 years old and has only experienced the history that exists between Turkey and Greece from school books, it seems very difficult for him to put this history aside and to wholly accept his friend. History works as an aversive factor which intermingles into Lucas' everyday life and it creates a kind of boundary in his relationship with his Turkish friend.

Like the peach for Nadia Seremetakis, Turkish food and the smell of the Turkish markets all become fragmented narratives in participants' memories. At times these narratives transform or displace existing histories, as written in books or official papers. The relationship between participants' allegorical narration and their photographs appears as a from of conversation (Langford 2001); a conversation in which participants' employ photographic memories to try to fill gaps in their life, to try to understand where their experiences come, as a way of constructing a particular sense of belonging. Participants are therefore constantly trying to place a series of fragments into a narrative – a story which can ultimately never have a clear beginning nor a clear end; their memories belong rather to the realm of 'episodic' or life-history memories (Vroon 1997: 95-104).

For Walter Benjamin 'to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' … It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at the

moment of danger' (Benjamin 1973: 247). For Benjamin history is like a pile of debris,

full of traces and fragments that remain to be uncovered; history comes in flashes,

disrupts and interrupts the present, and ultimately these fragments are able to be used to

create and construct a new history with new elements and features that may be

represented as cultural 'fragments' of the national identity of a country. He calls each of

these instances a 'moment of danger', because it has a disruptive potential, one that can

affect the existing forms of historical, cultural and social knowledge that constitute

national identity. This describes well the ways memory worked in my interviews:

participants tried to remember by digging through layer upon layer of meaning and

patching together small fragments which were able to reveal official history as suffused

with personal experiences. This process reveals what I referred to as involuntary

memories. Involuntary memories are sudden and spontaneous, they interrupt

participants memories without warning; they break through voluntary memories

associated with the history of Greek culture, such as the frozen past of ancient Greece,

the forms of representation at ritual ceremonies and commemorations or the historical

conflicts between Greek and Turkish culture; participants therefore come to create a

new layer of meaning of what a sense of belonging means (McCole 1993: 260).

Involuntary memories arrive like sudden flashes with a sensory dimension; they do not

describe the totality of participants' sense of belonging to a particular place 'as it really

is', nor even as she/he remembers it, but rather they represent a process of the 'weaving

of memory' (McCole 1993: 259). In this context, participants memories appear as

'cinematic' images'; as Benjamin suggests the 'true picture of the past flits by;

(Benjamin as cited in Taussing 2006: 28). These memories may be fragile, as they can

shatter into pieces at any time, but their always unexpected arrival means that they

promise to re-emerge in an instant. It is therefore likely that the seemingly solid, stable

nature of Greek history is in fact composed of innumerable, similarly fragile moments, only eventually coming to 'maturity' through time, ripening like autumn fruit.

Conclusions

In this chapter the participants demonstrate different ways of remembering; they show that the construction of a sense of belonging may contain more than one element in relation to the Greek national identity. In earlier chapters, it was acknowledged by the participants in the focus groups that the idea of the past, in particular of ancient Greece, has a crucial impact on the shape of their everyday lives, and to an extent on the formation of their identity. Here, through presenting specific photographs from their family albums, they are able to create an additional space from which to define what a sense of belonging to a place means. Their photographs become implicated in constructing portraits of fragments in their memories; they act as 'dialectical images', provoking a series of stories, feelings and histories, which all produce alternate images of what belonging means to them.

The participants do not have full control over their memories; their memories emerge through a varied set of experiences that together create a complex version of what belonging means to them. This process reminds me of how works of art come to be made; although the artist has an initial idea of what she/he wants to paint, in the process of attempting to achieve it, a variety of factors inevitably cause this initial aim to be disrupted and changed, such as the spontaneous decision to use a different colour or texture. What emerges is connected to the initial idea, but modified by a host of new and unexpected brush strokes; this is, I suggest, analogous to how the voluntary and involuntary forms of memory work together.

As a result, in order to define and to conceptualise a meaning of belonging and (to an

extent) the national identity of Greece, what must be taken into consideration are not only historical forms of representation, but the contextualisation of participants' experiences. Although participants' memories are individual, they cannot be ignored and read as separate from what creates a national history. On the contrary, the reflections and the associations that participants' memories offer become a series of meanings and interpretations that contribute towards the cultural forms of knowledge that inform Greek national identity. The fragments and the details that participants recognise and focus on in their photographs, stand as individual explanations of the history of Greek culture. Images depict the concrete 'small, particular moments' in which the 'total historical event' waits to be discovered, the perceptible ur-phenomenon in which the origins of the present can be found (Benjamin 1991: 71). Even though these fragments in participants' ways of remembering are fluid – meaning they can change and transform at any time – this is both the danger and beauty of the ways in which past and present are interrelated and interwoven in of the creation of Greek national identity.

Participants make their own senses of belonging by trying to connect their own personal recollections with past events, monuments or ancient sites; they do not therefore attempt to make sense of Greek history by presenting its history as separate from their own memories. Memory therefore works by shaping participants' present stories about their past. Ancient temples, objects and sites thereby stand as the prompts and pretexts for memory that cause participants to remember and redefine their sense of belonging. History does not leave us an inventory which ascribes set meanings to its objects. Within their own photographs, participants develop a visual imagination, through which they are able to provide new interpretations, new meanings, and their own cultural knowledge of what a sense of belonging means to them. For the participants, memory

has also a sensory dimension; it is through the activation of the senses that participants make sense of their belonging. When informants chose sounds, aromas, smells and colours, it was as if they were treating their photographs as artefacts of sensory experience in which a sense of belonging is constituted by extracting the intangible from something tangible, but nonetheless 'real'.

It is therefore, I argue, worth taking the participants' fragments, and their narratives around what a sense of belonging means to them, as concrete, with genuine validity and substance, a recognition that the participants seemed to be demanding through their ways of remembering. Their ways of remembering should be recognised as processes that complement, redefine and rename the existing 'constructed' images that compose Greek national identity. However, it is a two-way process: in order for the fragmented images to acquire acceptance in relation to the formation of participants national identity, images cannot escape the need for the very symbols, signs, emblems and buildings that built the nation, and which participants continually attempt to redefine. These ideas will be explored further in the next chapter where I will look at how national holidays or ritual ceremonies have been produced, understood and practiced within familial forms of associations.

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Introduction

This chapter will focus on a variety of different photographs that participants chose from their family albums: those that illustrate parades of national commemorations (for example, 25 March and 28 October), religious ceremonies (particularly Easter), and ritual practices such as weddings and funerals. Such photographs act as a visual medium with the capacity to trigger memories.

In the course of the interviews, participants went through a process of what Annette Kuhn calls 'memory work': the unveiling of personal and cultural meanings within various contexts enabled by a photograph. In the process of remembering, participants articulate different familial associations which underline how, through individual memories and experiences, it is possible to better understand a nation, both socially and culturally. Although memories are individual, their links extend beyond the personal, bringing together the persoal with the familiar, the cultural, the historical and the social. Participants' memories, with their different levels of emotional and familial engagement, in turn come to identify the significance that national commemorations, ritual ceremonies, weddings and funerals have in Greek society. For example, in a participant's photograph of their grandparents taken on Easter Sunday, the grandparents become the familial figures through

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which the participant acquires meaning and significance of the event. The grandparents come to shape the participant's memories of how they conceptualise and experience a ritual ceremony such as this and – to an extent – their sense of being Greek. The exploration of memory makes it possible to connect 'public' historical events, (and, for example, the relations of class, gender and national identity they produce) and 'personal' memories. This can demonstrate how the inner 'personal' and the outer 'public' histories coexist, and form a 'web of interconnections that binds them together and made them visible' (Kuhn 1986:4). Within participants' photographs of Easter Sunday, food was another focal point – the sensory experiences and memories it provoked gave another meaning to significant days such as this. Food works like a mediator with the capacity to contextualise the significant content of a historical event or a religious ceremony.

However, when participants focused on photographs of Good Friday, weddings and funerals, their memories often presented a conflict in relation to their emotions and obligations. For example, in remembering mourning processes (either on a collective or a personal basis), participants recognised that feelings of suffering and pain, when interwoven with emotions of guilt and obligation, affected the formation of their identities. Emotions such as these often hide a fear of failure to meet the social ideals that participants' elders and society expect them to fulfil. Participants' experiences of a funeral or a wedding are mediated by a series of conventional practices and performances which come to serve as a social ideal.

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The role of grandparents as a fairytale symbol for cultural identity

According to many of my participants, the meanings of the Easter ceremony or of a national commemoration in Greece remain vivid because of the role of their grandparents. Grandparents are seen as the ones who make social and cultural practices happen; participants often participate in and recognise the significance of these practices through the eyes of their grandparents. My participants each brought a series of photographs taken on an Easter Sunday (or other national commemoration from years gone by) which depicted a grandmother or grandfather posing with them. This common occurrence within the groups forced me to question whether participants present and understand themselves as grandchildren in relation to these topics – and if, when taking on the position of grandchildren, they do not therefore occupy the position of adults. Even when grandparents were not in their photographs, participants' memories of these rituals frequently referred to them directly. Participants acknowledge a sense of Greekness with reference to the verbal and bodily language of their grandparents. For participants, it was not only the words their grandparents chose when telling their stories that absorbed them, but also their various intonations and facial expressions. As one participant said: 'I was so absorbed by the tone of my grandfather's voice; it was like a voice from a fairytale, and it was reflected in his facial expressions whenever he tried to convey his memories of Easter Sunday.' These social and cultural practices have been imprinted as an unforgettable experience, intrinsically linked with the presence of grandparents. It is as if the grandparents constitute a vital part of the activation of these social practices and traditions.

Alexandros, for example, showed me a series of family photographs taken at Easter, or

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'*Pascha*' in Greek – this is the most sacred and celebrated of all Greek holidays, with the

word *Pascha* coming the Hebrew 'pass over'. Easter for Alexandros means a family

celebration; his photograph of Easter Sunday prompts him to explain why and how Easter

has such a direct link to his ideas of Greekness and family. Immediately obvious in his

photograph are a series of roasted lambs, one next to the other. Beside them, members of

the family can be seen dancing, eating and enjoying this traditional ceremony. Alexandros

emphasises the religious aspect of Easter Sunday, but especially the traditional atmosphere

that he particularly associates with Greekness:

> Alexandros (68): Here I am with my parents and my grandmother, in the village
> where my father comes from. As you can see we usually cook lots of lamb, not
> only for the family but also for anybody else that wants to enjoy our celebration. In
> this photograph there are many activities that are taking place like dancing, singing
> traditional Greek songs, others eating red eggs and lamb... Easter especially is
> really linked to what we call Greekness and Greek tradition, and this is a feeling
> that I get from my family and especially my grandmother. My grandmother in
> particular makes me believe – in the process of the fast and indeed the whole ritual
> of the holy week – that this ceremonial tradition is something very religious and
> also very Greek.

Alexandros' experiences of Easter Sunday are embedded in his concept of family. His

complete attachment to a Greek Easter, which for him constitutes a key part of Greekness,

derives from the stories that his grandmother narrated to him. His grandmother thus

emerges as his interpreter of the traditions of a Greek Easter; the roast lamb and hard-boiled

red eggs, the traditional Greek dances, and the process of fasting all acquire a meaning

through her presence. She presents this religious ceremony within an educational and a

creative framework that enables Alexandros to fully participate. Therefore, for Alexandros,

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his grandmother is a figure who can transform the ritual of Easter for him, through a variety of practices that he is strongly drawn to. These are the practices that make the difference in his memory, shaping his conceptualisation of the Easter ceremony. The figure of the grandmother becomes a reference point for social knowledge, on a personal and collective level. For Alexandros, the knowledge – or the transmission of knowledge – is more convincing because it is presented by his grandmother, who acts as a key social and historical point of reference. Alexandros continues on this theme, referring to other photographs from Easter ceremonies:

> Alexandros (68): Here I am with my grandmother holding red eggs on Easter Sunday. I feel so grateful to my grandmother. She was the one who initiated me into this kind of Easter tradition, and I love every single ritual of it. In a way I feel like I am acting out a role, in that I see and experience the whole ceremony of Easter not as an observer but as a person who participates and follows all the religious processes. For me Easter is not a meaningless ceremony but a ceremony with lots of serious and important elements. I don't know whether this is a real or imaginary image of Easter, but what really counts to me is that I feel completely absorbed by it. Again, I am grateful to my parents and especially my grandmother who managed to pass on this tradition to me.

Alexandros is satisfied by his knowledge of the traditions Easter and their meaning. The red eggs, for example, are rooted in religious symbolism: the red egg in a Greek Easter is a symbol of Resurrection, representing the emergence of Christ from his tomb to everlasting life (with the red colour signifying the blood of Christ). People tap their eggs against those of their relatives, and the owner of the last un-cracked egg is considered lucky. To Alexandros, doing this with his grandmother is key to his memories of Easter. Moreover, he appreciates not only the traditions of Easter but also its religious importance, with his

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devotion to the ceremony emerging from beliefs that his grandmother instilled in him.

Whether these beliefs are valid or not is beside the point for him – what counts is that he is

completely integrated into this ritual ceremony. It seems that Alexandros would never have

taken Easter as seriously if his grandmother had not passed on these customs and presented

them so significantly.

Xaralambos also places emphasis on the role of his grandparents. His photographs depict

his father's village, where he used to go to celebrate a series of ritual ceremonies with his

parents and grandparents:

> Xaralambos (62): I really love this portrait of my grandparents. They are the people
> in my life that I owe a lot to. Because of them, I learned to appreciate the meaning
> of Easter celebrations and how to respect each and every commemoration that is
> part of my tradition. Although they didn't go to school like I did, I remember very
> vividly that when I was six or seven years old they used to tell me stories and
> fairytales about the war, of how they grew up and what they went through as
> children. Actually, that's how I learned a lot of Greek history.

Once more, grandparents appear as people possessing great wisdom and knowledge about

Greekness. For Xaralambos, grandparents are people to be admired and respected,

something that is rooted in his appreciation of their experience, past and self-taught

education. Moreover, to Xaralambos, it is the *way* his grandparents taught him that is

important, over and above the content of their teaching; even when they talk about dramatic

events such as war, their stories still sound like fairytales. His admiration for his

grandparents is grounded in their capacity to imbue events like wars with mythical or

fantastical elements. The result is that the historical significance of war is transformed from

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a 'family tale' to a fairytale; it is constituted through the everyday stories that his grandparents lived and experienced, which have taken the role of an imagined knowledge in Xaralambos' life. As he emphasises, this is how he learned about Greek history.

As I mentioned in my previous chapter and as demonstrated by Xaralambos, it is possible that, for my participants, the construction of history is founded in narratives of everyday life. In particular, it seems that grandparents have the capacity to transform narratives of their own everyday experience into a fairytale-esque story for their grandchildren. Whether their stories have a mythical and a real element, or both, what counts as valuable in both Alexandros' and Xaralambos' minds is that the history of their nation – and, in turn, their own sense of national identity – is constructed through the familial, the mundane and the everyday.

The importance of food as a symbolic medium for uniting families

As has already been suggested, food is another element that is integral to social and cultural practices, and participants' memories of them. As I will proceed to argue, participants' attitudes about sharing food allow us to understand the importance of Easter and other social events. Food is a medium that comes to signify a sense of belonging, as well as being a metaphor for Greekness. Understanding its significance contributes towards understanding the shape of Greek family bonds.

When discussing photographs of Easter time, participants focused in particular on fragments relating to the sensory and aesthetic dimensions of food. They engaged with this period through the memories of eating and drinking the traditional food associated with

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Easter. As Lupton argues, food is central to our sense of self, to our experience of embodiment, to the way we live in and through our bodies (Lupton 2005). Food becomes a form of communication (Calvino 1988); it marks boundaries between social classes, geographic regions, nations and cultural festivals (Lupton 2005). Food can also act as a prompt to evoke emotions and feelings, and to draw stories from the past into the present, all of which contribute towards building the sociocultural dimensions of a nation (Curtin 1992, Durak 1994, Proust 2005). In Greece, food is central to almost every organised social event, often acting as a marker of status, as well as a medium through which appreciation and respect towards the family can be demonstrated. Greek families tend to put in a lot of effort when preparing food for such traditional ceremonies, part of which generally involves a detailed discussion about what type of food is to be cooked, how and why. This preparation is a ritual in itself, which has to be completed to such a standard that guests will have nothing negative to say about the family. In the process of eating, various political, social and cultural conversations will inevitably come to the surface, with discussions often lasting hour after hour. Food is therefore a shared experience, one that provides the opportunity for people to perceive events or ceremonies from an alternate perspective. Amongst my participants, Easter was a particularly strong example of this process.

As I will discuss shortly, in their recollections of Easter, the extent to which participants focused on the traditional foods eaten on Easter Saturdays and Sundays, rather than the religious and ritualistic processes, was revealing. Athena, for example, showed me a photograph from Easter Saturday and remembered what her family usually ate, providing

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me with a detailed description:

> Athena (55): Here is a photograph from Easter Saturday, with all the family together at the table after coming back from the church at midnight, eating a special soup and red eggs. We usually cook this soup on the morning of Easter Saturday together with some other specialities, and we even decorate it with some of the red eggs and some sweet bread. Everything has to be ready by midnight. We are careful in the preparation and everything has to be perfectly presented, as we are expecting relatives to arrive.

Athena's memories of Easter Saturday are directly linked to food, remembering that particular night through its preparation. For me personally, seeing her photograph and hearing her describe the food, left me craving the experience: I wanted to smell the food and remember how it tasted. Like Athena, I have also come to understand what Easter Saturday means through the different dishes that have to be cooked. Food can also come to signify the broader social expectations that Greek families feel they have to live up to. For example, when Athena says that everything has to be perfectly presented because her relatives are coming, she indicates the expectation a family feels to cook well. By cooking the particular food associated with a ceremonial day you become a follower of tradition, as confirmed by Alexandra, in her reference to one of her photos:

> Alexandra (40): Here we are celebrating Easter Saturday night in my house, with my sister. Although it is just the two of us, we are following every single step of what has to be cooked that night according to tradition. We made the '*mageiritsa*' and we had our beautiful hard-boiled red eggs.

Although Alexandra did not go to church for the religious part of Easter Saturday, she

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remains faithful to her traditions through food. She also emphasises the fact that, even though most of her family was absent, it was important for her to at least prepare the traditional food so that she could feel that it was Easter. Here, she refers in particular to '*mageiritsa*', a soup made of lamb's innards, which is eaten to signify bringing the Lent fast to an end. As Athena describes, Easter Sunday has its own significance, with the lamb standing as a symbol for family togetherness, shared happiness and joy.

> Athena (55): Here is a photograph of the lamb we cook every Easter Sunday. That day my family usually go to church early in the morning, after which we all help to prepare the lamb. It is a day of happiness and joy that brings the family together, as well as many other friends who come over to share the lamb with us. The lamb is the medium that brings us all together; it has a very symbolic role. My father, the head of my family, is in charge, so he goes out to buy the lamb. Then early on Sunday, he begins the whole preparation. I sometimes help him but usually he does everything. My mother is in charge of the red eggs and preparing the table with all the other different types of food that day.

The whole family, as Athena describes, participates in the preparation of the lamb, and each of them is charged with different sorts of tasks. The father, for example, is the one who goes to buy the lamb, lights the fire and judges when it is ready. He is the one who has the primary responsibility for all the preparations of the lamb, with the rest of the family preparing the rest of the feast. Food is not only a medium which enables family happiness, but also a medium through which the family experiences and understands the religious context of Easter. According to Greek tradition, the lamb represents Jesus and connects his death to that of the lamb sacrificed on the first Passover. Considering how my participants spoke about this, I came to wonder whether my participants felt a necessity to attend the

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Easter preparations, perhaps as their own form of sacrifice, even if not religious. Indeed,

my participants spoke of an expectation that each member of the family should attend, and

forego other commitments in order to celebrate Easter Sunday with their family. In this

case, it seems that the lamb stands as a further collective and symbolic object, a medium

that brings the family together.

For Trifonas, the lamb also performed a symbolic function. Here, he talks about a

photograph of himself and his son posing in front of the cooked lamb:

> Trifonas (43): For me Easter Sunday is a very important day, because it is one
> more opportunity for the family to be together and to share the Easter atmosphere.
> Here I am with my son. My son has the '*philotimo*' to stay with us every year and
> celebrate Easter Sunday with us. This makes us happy, as does preparing the lamb
> with him. I love this photograph so much.

Trifonas connects the importance of Easter Sunday to the concept of family. He is very

proud that his son devotes himself to family traditions, saying that he has '*philotimo*', a

Greek word that translates literally as 'love of honour'. Although '*philotimo*' is not

captured adequately by any English word or phrase, it is a concept that refers to several

aspects of Greek character and social relations. Firstly, it implies a sense of responsibility

and obligation, particularly to the family. Secondly, it refers to appropriate behaviour

within the family; and finally it is strongly related to personal honour and self esteem

(Broome 1996: 66-7). All three of these understandings are relevant to what Sotiris expects

from his son. Not only does the actualisation of Easter Sunday come through the ritual of

eating, but food also brings the family together, in this case bringing to the surface

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particular aspects of Greek cultural identity such as '*philotimo*'. This raises the question of whether the family not only initiates other people into the historical and social context of ritualised social practices, but also becomes the means through which participants conceptualise them. And more than this, does the Greek family itself – in respect of the aforementioned honour, sacrifice and belonging – come to be formed by the values contained within these recognised social and cultural practices?

The cultural characteristics that emerge from Easter Sunday are on the one hand a sense of obligation and responsibility to others and, on the other, a sense of personal honour and self esteem, both of which become combined and constituted in Greek ways of belonging. However, instead of seeing these in opposition, we might conceptualise them as a result of an inter-subjective relationship – one that creates a fluid experience of Greekness. Participants' identity is formed in and through relation to familial and personal cultural components, which in turn contribute towards shaping national identity. I will explore this idea further in relation to participants' representations of the process of mourning, where they express how psychological and social needs can be transformed into a social ideal, used to define national identity.

Mourning as a collective and personal cultural activity

Concepts of death and mourning in Greek society emerged strongly in my participants' discussions of their photographs of Easter and, in particular, Good Friday. Participants' photographs of Good Friday acted as prompts through which particular characteristics of mourning were revealed. This became even more explicit when participants brought

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photographs of people they had lost. Participants often narrated a series of ritual processes, underlining a need or necessity to mourn in particular ways.

When somebody dies in a Greek family the process of mourning involves a significant display of public suffering. Each family member's mourning process consists of a series of rituals, involving special foods, flowers and songs that stand as a tribute to the person lost. These processes involve mixed feelings; the gestures are personal means of expressing love, but they are simultaneously important obligations or 'duties' that have to be made visible to others. Participants described this process as cathartic, one that each family undertakes to relieve themselves of feelings of guilt and pain. Margarita, for example, comments:

> Margarita (32): This is my chance to show my gratitude, to become involved; all these rituals bring me closer to the actual death. It is a paradox: I face death and at the same time free myself from it because I involve myself; I experience pain and loss but at the same time I pay my debt.

Margarita experiences the concept of death as a cathartic process, involving a complex mix of feelings that oscillate between freedom and obligation, pain and duty. On the one hand she is completely immersed in the pain and loss of death and mourning, but on other hand she sees this process as a ritual that needs to be done in order to free herself from death itself. These complex feelings are deeply ingrained in the whole idea of how Greek families mourn for somebody, and why they mourn so publicly – both of which are worth examining in depth. As I will argue, based on my participants' interviews, the process of mourning, both on a personal and collective level, seems to be strongly implicated in the

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formation of the Greek family and, to an extent, in shaping the beliefs and values that

constitute part of their cultural identity. Good Friday, for example, is seen as a collective

mourning activity that not only brings the family together in itself, but also through its

ritual ceremonies and customs, thus shaping the foundations of the family itself and typical

Greek ideas about death.

On Good Friday the way family members behave and interact with each other could easily

be interpreted as a practice of mourning. As I have myself experienced, there is often a

highly melancholic, 'heavy' atmosphere in a family house. As Xaralambos (62) says:

'Whenever I hear the sad ringing of the bells early on a Good Friday morning, I feel as if

somebody that I knew and loved deeply had died. As I look around the house I see other

faces, all feeling the same.' Similarly, Margarita (32), comments: 'It is the poignancy of the

day that affects me most; everything is quiet and simple, as if life has come to a standstill.'

Therefore, for many of my participants, the attachment to and identification with persons

who are mourned, has the potential to re-emerge over the Good Friday period, as Penelope

confirms: 'On Good Friday I am always sad and melancholic, it is as if Jesus Christ

represents people that I have lost over the years'. Good Friday becomes characterised by

strong feelings of admiration, respect and intense pain; mourning the death of Christ is

coupled with mourning her own relatives. In the evening of Good Friday a coffin

containing a symbolic figure of Christ is decorated with gold cloth and fresh flowers, and

the faithful bow and stoop to kiss the body. Then follows the procession of the

'Epitaphios', where the coffin is carried out of the church and paraded through the streets in

a lengthy funeral procession. In this way, Christ comes to signify all the people that

participants have ever lost, or imagine they could still lose. These absences, represented at

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that particular moment through Christ, create emotional bonds of suffering and pain that

bind together thousands of people. As Athena explains while describing her photograph of

the Good Friday procession, these sorts of reactions also appear to constitute part of the

cultural dimension of the Greek national identity:

> Athena (55): Apart from the fanatically religious element, there is a very strong
> traditional element which is very vivid on Good Friday. On Good Friday, along
> with thousands of people, you hold brown candles, mourn by singing psalms and
> follow everyone to the shrine of Christ in the church, which is decorated with
> flowers on Good Friday morning. The procession to the shrine is a very collective
> religious ceremony and constitutes a very strong element of our sense of
> Greekness.

Athena shows her strong attachment to the Good Friday procession, less for its religious

content than its importance in terms of tradition. She remembers the Good Friday ritual

processes by focusing on particular details, such as brown candles, or the psalms. It is

through these distinctive details that Athena's sense of Greekness and belonging is

constructed. Margarita also remembers the atmosphere of Good Friday by showing me a

photograph of her family taken over Easter.

> Margarita (32): Here I am with my family on Easter Sunday. I really love Easter in
> Greece, the whole holy week is so beautiful, not so much for its religious context
> but mostly for its sentimental and social elements. On Good Friday, when we go to
> the church to sing, cry and share the pain of Jesus Christ, we simultaneously
> socialise with our family and friends. Easter is a very family-rooted ceremony for
> me, in which I feel a particular atmosphere is created that presents the notion of
> death with a particular beauty.

As with other participants, Margarita describes Easter, and Good Friday in particular, as an

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occasion that can bring her family together, especially when her family and friends share the pain and suffering of Christ's death. She embraces the ceremony's unique atmosphere, with its sharing of strong emotions, but not necessarily its religious content. She perceives the day as a social space where family and friends share strong emotions around people that have died. The *extraordinary* ritual of mourning and, more specifically, her concept of death is embedded in her *ordinary* life; it is a 'natural' process, a continuation of life. She thus comes to see death from a less pessimistic standpoint; as she states: 'I feel a particular atmosphere is created which lends the concept of death a particular beauty'. Margarita does not see death as simply something 'bad' or 'macabre'; instead it contains beauty that waits to be recognised.

Alexandra has a similar perspective on death and mourning, as revealed when she showed me a personal photograph of her father's tomb:

> Alexandra (40): Here is a very macabre photograph. It's my father's tomb located in Mani (Southern Peloponnese). The concept of death is very important in Mani. Around my father's tomb there are lots of women dressed in black who mourn by singing special songs for the death of my father. In Mani funerals and Remembrance Day are very important social events. When I was a child I remember my father bringing the newspaper into the house and the first thing that he used to read about were the funerals and the remembrance day in order to see whether a relative or a friend had passed away. A funeral in Mani is a place of meeting and socialising. I also remember when my grandmother died, women in the streets dressing in black to mourn with *moirologia*.

Alexandra seems very familiar with Greek ideas surrounding death. In her birthplace funerals were one of the most important social events, and her father's ways of mourning also played a key role in how she conceptualises the idea of death. Another vivid

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experience of hers, which I suggest intensifies the importance of death for her, is her

memory of women dressing in black and singing '*moirologia*'. *Moirologia* are laments that

are sung to signify various aspects of mourning; they can stand as a tribute to a dead

person, a cathartic process for absolving people's guilt and a way of expressing the dead

person's destiny after death. Through such practices it seems that mourning in Greek

society becomes so embedded in participants' daily lives that it comes to constitute part of

their identity.

Participants' processes of mourning, either on a collective or personal basis, are

characterised by a series of complex emotions: participants' 'real' feelings of loss

interweave with a series of 'duties'. In the interviews, participants often discussed

mourning with reference to preconceived ideas about how and why they have to perform

particular processes. Stella, for example, says:

> Stella (44): Looking at this photograph of my grandmother, I remember seeing her
> crying with my mother and my aunt and I couldn't understand why. They were in
> black, cooking something with a smell that annoyed me... When I grew up and
> there was death in my family I reacted to it in a way that was almost automatic; so I
> wore black and helped to prepare the same food, the taste of which I never came to
> like.

Eleni, while looking at photographs of her brother, shares a similar experience:

> Eleni (28): When my brother died, I remember following this mundane procedure
> that has to be done for the sake of tradition. So I wore black clothes as a tribute to
> my brother, although to be honest I don't like wearing black. But as I said, it needs
> to be done, so I did what was expected and prepared the necessary food and so on.

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For Stella and Eleni their remembered meaning of death has been shaped out of the

particular practices that are followed when honouring those that have been lost; in and

through their memories death becomes a practice with moral and cultural significance – a

'dialectical relationship' (Lambek 1996) between their emotions and the practices that are

prescribed by others. It is out of this dialectical relationship that feelings of pain along with

obligation become deeply embedded in participants' experiences and come to constitute

aspects of Greekness. In this sense the mourning process has an idealised component; this

idealised meaning is not separate from participants' identity, but rather is part of it and, I

suggest, is recreated according to the values that have shaped participants and their sense of

Greekness.

Participants' mixed feelings of pain and obligation are not readily identifiable, but are

instead feelings, which direct participants to act in an almost automatic way. As Sara

Ahmed argues:

> The 'ideal self' does not have certain characteristics; the 'content' is in some way
> empty. Idealisation, which creates the effect of an ideal, is contingent because it is
> dependent on the values that are 'given to' subjects through the encounters with
> others. It is the gift of the ideal rather than the content of the ideal that matters.
> (Ahmed 2004:106)

Participants' conception of mourning, whether personal or collective, is formed through the

continuous interaction that they have with other members of their family and friends. It is

through this dialogue that meanings about the idea of death are produced, taking on – in the

case of my participants – forms of pain and obligation. The mourning process does not,

therefore, consist of elements that might be identified as the causes for a particular

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participant reacting in a particular way. Instead, it has an abstract character, an 'idealised'

quality, one that comes to constitute part of participants' national identity. In some cases,

this prevented my interviewees from actually feeling emotion. Panagiotis, for example,

says:

> Panagiotis (38): This is a photograph of my uncle. When he died, I followed all the
> rituals that you are supposed to at a funeral. I wore a black ribbon in my right hand,
> I sent the church a wreath made of white carnations as a tribute, I received
> condolences... but the truth is that I felt unable to express my grief.

When looking at the photograph of his uncle and remembering his funeral, Panagiotis

comes to recognise that his feelings of pain and loss are hidden or rather overshadowed by

the specifics of the funeral.

For others, there was no line of demarcation between where pain stops and obligation

begins. Aphrodite tries to explain this below:

> Aphrodite (35): In this photograph I am wearing black, after the death of my father.
> I have to say that the concept of death is very strong in my family but also I think
> in Greece more generally. It is very ingrained in our culture. We suffer a lot if
> someone in our family dies, but we suffer because we have to suffer as part of our
> obligation. So we do it in a very extreme way in order not to feel any guilt. But also
> the reason that we pay so much attention to the concept of death is because of
> religion. Religion plays a big role... all these processes that we have to follow
> when somebody dies – we have to cook special food, we have to wear special
> clothes, we have to sing special songs... these are all derived from our religion.
> Especially in the villages, people experience an individual death very collectively.
> They gather all the people of the village at the house of the person who has lost
> their relative and they all mourn together in front of the coffin through the whole
> night.

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Aphrodite's conceptualisation of death and mourning has strong implications for her relation to Greek national identity. Aphrodite expresses a conflicted view in terms of where her own pain stops and her obligation begins. It is as if she is unwilling (or unable) to give to the concept of loss a more 'realistic' dimension by separating her own emotions from those stemming from social obligations. It seems as if the internal processes of pain, suffering and loss become interwoven with another, into what I would call a 'mechanical' dimension. This becomes so ingrained that it becomes nigh-on inseparable from the suffering itself; as a result it is almost impossible for Aphrodite to separate out the elements that constitute her sense of loss. Instead, consciously or otherwise, she follows a cathartic process, informed by both her religion and her family, which absolves her of the guilt which she would otherwise feel. Aphrodite's sense of guilt appears as a self-reinforcing process, shaped by complex relationship between suffering and obligation; her personal feelings of mourning are in danger of being obscured in her struggle to conform to the obligatory forms of suffering that the mourning rituals demand. This process ensures that Aphrodite feels no guilt. She seems willing to sacrifice her pain and suffering for a traditional Greek process without personal content, which in turn creates a strong sense of national belonging and identity. There is a sense of subjugation and pride that Aphrodite calls upon in following the idealised mourning rituals. As with her sense of guilt, that of pride appears an important element in Aphrodite's process of identity construction. Her national belonging and identity can be preserved through the prism of a personal pride and sacrifice. Aphrodite's guilt seems deeply personal. In this context I ask both why she feels

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this way and where such feelings of guilt come from. To answer this, many different aspects need to be taken into consideration. It appears that the notion of guilt is not a feeling that Aphrodite has developed in isolation; on the contrary, I suggest that her awareness of guilt in this sense has been shaped by the ethical values, codes and beliefs of the society she lives in, which have been embedded in the ways she experiences the concept of death and mourning. Connerton argues that ritual performances are 'inscribed' in the body, and there are certain 'bodily automatisms' that make people remember and recollect their past. 'Both commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices contain a measure of insurance... every group, then, will entrust to bodily automatisms the values and categories which they are more anxious to conserve. They will know how well the past can be kept in mind by a habitual memory sedimented in the body' (Connerton 1989:102). From this perspective, bodily social memory is seen as an essential component of social memory, and hence provides a way of understanding the cultural tradition and history of a society which incorporates the body. Memory is therefore revealed as a continuous dialogical narrative and cultural operation that draws upon embodied forms of remembering. In Aphrodite's case, the inscribed bodily automatisms of mourning involving feelings of suffering, guilt and obligation, overlap and interweave with her private feelings of pain, together constituting a collective understanding of the concept of death.

Remembering weddings, Christmas and school days

As with the process of mourning, family relations have a great impact on participants' feelings, as expressed through their photographs of weddings, Christmas and school days.

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As I will argue, in each of these examples, participants' 'real' feelings are mixed with a form of suffering that relates to an ideal; both interact to produce a form of suffering which, while partly organised in relation to an imaginary construct, is nevertheless felt in a very real sense. Real and imaginary suffering are not opposed, but coincide. As will be discussed below, imaginary forms of suffering are mediated by a series of conventional practices, behaviours and performances that participants undertake within the public ceremony of a wedding. My participants suggest that although their beliefs about this practice are different to those imposed by society and family, they had reached a stage in their lives where they felt obliged to fulfil expectations for the sake of their parents. Participants' emotions are embedded in beliefs and ideas which constitute an idealised dimension to the wedding. Their narratives revealed feelings of shame or regret: they often feel trapped, unable to confess their true feelings about these practices to their parents.

Marriage in Greek society is an ancient, very traditional ceremony, involving many characteristics that constitute part of Greek national identity. Families usually become highly involved, not only in preparing the wedding, but also in the choice of who you marry (for example, in terms of their class, occupation and origin). In this context, the process of marriage becomes not an individual but a family decision. For participants, these sorts of practices raise significant concerns as they explore the meanings of their emotional or psychological worlds. Similar tensions can be observed in social practices such as national commemorations, or even more everyday experiences like being a good student at school. In each case participants express feelings of shame and sadness, but feel unable to transmit these feelings to their parents. From my participants' point of view, there is a line

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of demarcation between what their parents believe, and how their children act upon those feelings and beliefs. It is in marriage, however, that these lines emerge particularly strongly. Mariana, when showing me a photograph of her wedding, states:

> Mariana (43): I don't believe in marriage as part of our tradition; as something that has to be done. I believe more in its rituals. Otherwise the concept of marriage doesn't mean anything to me. Nevertheless I am willing to fulfil an imaginary commitment to my parents and to the parents of my boyfriend. What I mean is that I am ready to fulfil their wishes and their desires, which means getting married with a very traditional wedding, like they want, and following every single step in the whole process, as part of our tradition. Although I believe that from all of our traditions we should only keep those ones that we completely identify with, I am ready to make this sacrifice for my parents and to go against my beliefs.

Mariana's reaction to the wedding ceremony takes the form of a compromise. Although she does not see marriage as part of a tradition she believes in, her actions do not reflect this; she is prepared to fulfil the expectations demanded of her. She is ready to suppress her own ideas and to make, as she calls it, this 'sacrifice' for her parents. Sacrifice is a word laden with meaning. As Anthony Smith argues in an article that deals with the relationship between national identity and sacrifice, he states that it exists between 'the individual, the family, and the nation: loyalty and devotion to the nation appears as a natural extension of the solidarity and love for friends and family, and the sense of personal bereavement becomes a expression of a wider communal grief' (Smith 2001: 582). Sacrifice is embedded in Mariana's identity; it has taken the form of an experience which becomes actualised within the process of getting married and going against her own beliefs for the sake of an older generation. Making a sacrifice stands as a conscious priority for Mariana in

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relation to her choices. At this stage I therefore wonder what constitutes her identity? If

there is such a thing as self-identity, how, and in relation to what, has it been shaped? It

seems that a significant part of Mariana's identity is shaped in relation to the beliefs and

ideals her parents passed on to her, which ultimately became implicated in constituting and

transforming aspects of her identity.

Athena shares similar opinions to Mariana, but had a different experience:

> Athena (55): Here is a photograph of my wedding. I am now divorced but that time
> I was really very much in love; I loved him very much. But I remember that my
> father forced me to get married before leaving for the UK with my husband,
> because he didn't want me to stay with him without being married. I felt that I was
> very young to get married but I didn't have an alternative; I had to get married and
> so I did it. I was so upset and sad, but I had to follow my father's request. My
> father was so afraid of what people would say if they heard that his daughter was
> going to live with somebody without being married, so I had to do it no matter
> what.

Although Athena was quite happy to show me the photograph from her wedding, her

memories are bittersweet. Her emotions at that time involved sadness, because she was not

ready or simply didn't want to get married. Nevertheless, her father's wishes came first and

Athena accordingly repressed her own emotions. This was not only to satisfy her father, but

also relatives who were aware of her story. The wedding took on an additional obligatory

dimension, revealing both how the family comes together, and at the same time how it is

continually shaped and re-shaped.

As Aphrodite suggests, school also attempts to reinforce certain sorts of behaviour in

reference to social ideals. It is very hard, as Aphrodite says below, to verbalise the cause of

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a particular instance of personal turmoil when the cause is contrary to what parents believed

at that time:

> Aphrodite (35): I remember during the years of the dictatorship, I really hated
> school. I used to have a teacher who was very politicised, not against but for the
> dictatorship. This teacher was a witch-like figure in my eyes, and she really made
> me hate school. I never said anything to my parents about how unhappy I was in
> my school, because they had already built an image about me, about what a good,
> disciplined student I was, always getting very good grades... so I was very afraid of
> – and ashamed about – telling them. I thought that telling them would ruin all these
> strong foundations.

Aphrodite's reactions to her school experiences demonstrate considerable resistance. On

the one hand she was extremely sad, while on the other she was presenting herself to her

parents as if there was no tension between her internal feelings and her external

experiences. There was an inner struggle for Aphrodite; a conflict between her own

emotions and the demands of the social ideals that her parents and school attempted to

impose. Her emotional state at the time was generated in reference to social ideals and

beliefs so powerful as to conceal Aphrodite's identity. In this context, Aphrodite's feelings

of shame and fear related to an 'ideal' image that had already shaped her identity.

Mariana adopts a similar position in her memory of one particular Christmas, when her

parents took a photograph of her with Santa Claus:

> Mariana (43): Here I am with Santa Claus in the square in Kavala, the place I grew
> up. It was taken by my parents at Christmas time. I hate this photograph. I am
> pretending to smile but I am actually very sad. I didn't want to be in the
> photograph, but my parents insisted so much because they wanted to prove to their
> friends that they were following tradition. Since everybody in my place has one
> photograph with their child posing in front of the Santa Claus they also had to have

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one. My parents never stopped worrying about what other people might say. As you can see I am holding a balloon that my grandmother gave me. When I went back home I destroyed it in reaction to not wanting this photograph. I have to admit, since I was very young I have always reacted against my parents' perception that we have to be very careful how we act because of what other people will say. I was not interested what other people might say, I was interested in how I felt.

In remembering that day, Mariana re-experiences similar feelings of anger and sadness to those she had at the time. Nevertheless her reaction is paradoxical; she has no desire to pose in the photograph, but she does it regardless; she says she doesn't care about what other people might say but, in the act of posing, her actions suggest otherwise. Mariana's experience implies that she is living with a conflict; a conflict of which she is completely aware. She knows how she feels but she acts differently. This sort of attitude does not imply that her sense of self is dichotomous; on the contrary, Mariana's perception of her inner self has been framed by social ideals embedded in the way she performs and acts at social events. Mariana lives with this conflict, stranded between what she really feels about Christmas and her actions based on obligation and expectation. Somewhere in between those two types of feelings, her sense of identity and national belonging is produced.

Conclusions

In the process of remembering social and cultural practices, participants come to construct ways of being Greek through familial associations. Participants engaged with the ritual of Easter with the aid of learned connections to their history and tradition, not just through the family but through how they *imagine* the family. This imaginary element is often seen through the eyes of their grandparents. For my participants, grandparents act as a social,

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historical and familial figure, through which Easter and other national, religious or traditional events become unforgettable experiences. Through their grandparents participants develop a strong sense of belonging that is expressed in their desire to continue to perform these ritual ceremonies. This also occurs amongst participants when the sensory experiences of food comes to signify a sense of belonging. Food becomes the medium through which participants find a meaning to celebrate and preserve the tradition of such ceremonies – in particular Easter Sunday – in turn connecting Greece's past to its present.

Through the personal and collective process of mourning and marriage ceremonies, participants expressed greater ambivalence in relation both to their feelings and the rituals and practices themselves, frequently seeing them as having an obligatory dimension. It appears there is a continuous tension in how participants imagine social and cultural practices when they take the form of obligation or duty. This ambivalent attitude seems to affect participants' identity formation; they are in a constant struggle to integrate the social ideals that they feel are being imposed by families or by religious norms and values, while at the same time longing for freedom and independence from them. I suggest that participants' feelings and the social ideals that are imposed by their families should not be seen as separate. On the contrary, there is a dialectical relationship between the inner, mental life of participants and of social ideals; they are jointly implicated in the process of identity construction, which always has the capacity to be reshaped as a result of the ambivalence and conflict that exists between participants' inner and outer selves. Following Lambek, participants' memory can be seen as a moral-cultural practice (Lambek 2006), where there is a fluid, 'dialectical relationship' between the participants' understandings of

Chapter Six

Exploring the influence of familial associations and disassociations on the formation of a national identity, via the visual medium of photographs taken at significant events

a funeral or a wedding and those that family and society attempts to impose on them. Seeing memory as a moral-cultural practice allows the presentation of participants' inner, personal world as well as the outer world of 'public expression and the circulation of memories and stories of a society' (Kuhn 1985:5). In the case of my participants, this means coming to recognise feelings of security and belonging (through the presence of their grandparents and the symbolic metaphor of food) and a longing for independence and freedom (through funeral and weddings). These two positions create a tension and struggle in the participants in terms of their identity construction. It is out of this struggle that participants create an inter-subjective relationship that comes to create a collective understanding of belonging and Greekness.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions

This thesis aimed to explore how Greek people remember, perceive and experience social and cultural practices through photographs from their family albums, focusing specifically on national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and events such as funerals and weddings. As has been demonstrated in the thesis, although national commemorations, significant milestone events and meanings of ancient Greece come to represent Greek culture in a particular way, the mundane manifestations and the everyday details that participants mentioned in the process of remembering leaves space for them to be reflective and to re-evaluate the 'social imaginary' of Greek cultural identity.

There is a large literature on Greek personal and national identity (Seremetakis 1994, Kirtsoglou 2004, Loizos & Papataxsiarchis 1999, Doumanis 1997, and Papailias 2005). However, such work has not always looked closely enough at the relationship between national identity, everyday life, and the importance of the visual in the formation of national-cultural identity. My research has sought to address this, by examining the intersection of history, tradition, lifecycle events, family and issues of identity and culture – each by the prompts elicited from viewing old photographs.

In the last decade there have been a number of discussions about the role of the small states in the European Union's development and growing process. Many of the ideas raised were discussed based on a common European identity in the context of reform the European

Union. Due to the rise of supranational identities in Europe, it was important to examine the ways in which individuals recreate and actualise their sense of Greekness. It reveals to what extent notions such as social memory, narratives and images are related to understandings of personal and national identity.

This research aims to provide an original methodological contribution to the field by examining how Greekness is constituted through the use of personal family albums. A small number of writers have worked on personal photographs in Britain, Canada and America (Kuhn 1995, Langford 2001, Hirsch 1981) but hitherto no similar work has been done in Greece. Seremetakis (1994) examines how food can be a medium through which one is able to elicit narratives about the historicity and culture of one's country, while I focus instead on the process of remembering through participants' family photographs, narratives and sensory associations. More specifically, the way that I used and conducted the interviews brings an innovative methodological contribution to the field of visual sociology. Instead of me, as the researcher, selecting photographs relevant to national commemorations and ritual ceremonies – as is the practice in conventional uses of photo-elicitation methodologies (Prosser, 1998) – I decided to allow my interviewees to build up and construct narratives, based on the photographs that they themselves selected from their family albums. This method allowed my participants a safe, familiar arena in which to counter official representations of these practices and to construct a Greekness according to a personal, familial perspective as emerging from their everyday lives. If, by contrast, I had pre-selected photographs to show them, they would not have been as able to identify with the picture and relate the image to their personal experiences and memories of their everyday lives

I argue that their memories constructed a Greekness and sense of belonging which found its references in small details and invisible fragments. Interviewees' narratives emerged through a deep level of emotional engagement with the images they selected, which I suggest would not have been as forthcoming via a conventional photo-elicitation method. Indeed, in my interviews, my informants would often express excitement at being able to talk about their own lives, about their own experiences and stories, and how they had perceived their sense of Greekness over time; they suggested that they felt they were leading the interview and they were the ones that making decisions as to what was valuable and precious in terms of their own identity. As Margarita mentioned to me after we finished the interview, when I asked her how she felt about it: ' I feel really excited! I didn't feel any pressure from you at all. I felt that I structured this interview according to my own wishes'. Similarly, Panagiotis told me: ' I feel I am the owner of this interview. Whatever I've said has come from my own feelings without you having any imposed suggestions or comments'.

Although I asked my participants to bring photographs of national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and archaeological sites, I did not narrow down my criteria any further by, for example, suggesting they bring photographs of parades or flags. I did not, therefore, begin with or convey to my participants any preconceived ideas of what the symbols of a national commemoration were. On the contrary, I left it to them to decide what was significant and which symbols they believed composed these commemorative practices. I left my participants to explore all the various characteristics and fragments that construct the meaning of these practices. In other words I did not suggest an already determined representation of Greekness to my participants, but left them free to situate their own sense

of Greekness as they live it through their lives. In this way, by leaving my participants to construct the palette of what Greekness means, the material they provided to me for my analysis was more imbued with personal associations than it might otherwise have been.

These personal reflections also came from the fact that, as discussed in methodology chapter, rather than asking participants to go and photograph what Greekness means to them, they were asked to bring photographs from their whole life. This created a deep reservoir of potential self-knowledge of Greek cultural identity; my participants demonstrated how their sense of Greekness was constructed over time, with their narratives emerging in relation to different times and places across the full range of their lives' experiences. This contributed towards understanding the historicity of the identity of the national/cultural subject, with the historicity of the Greekness emerging in parallel to the history of the subject, both coming to life as they unfolded through reactions to the photographs.

The thesis also explored how memory operates in our relations to a photographic image, how an image is able to give shape to and contextualise participants' experiences by opening up knowledge of a ritual ceremony or a commemoration day. Processes of remembering and forgetting as prompted by family photographs gave a sense of freedom to my participants – they did not only relive the moments of their experiences through their family photographs, but also reconstructed them. The stories that they told were woven into the historically 'constructed' knowledge of national commemorations and ritual ceremonies. Participants' 'landscape of memory' (Antze & Lambek 1986) is shaped and constructed by the personal and social significance of specific memories as well as from meta-memory: the models, mechanisms and practices that influence the ways in which

society remembers. Memory work makes possible a potentially endless narrative that cannot be confined to a specific historical or cultural 'truth' and form of 'presentation'. Although the social and cultural practices of the Greek nation have particular, established forms of visibility stemming from traditions steeped in specific sets of symbols, such practices are then perpetuated, remembered and become part of a social history through the meanings that participants gave to their photographs. As Benjamin highlighted: 'An experienced event is finite, at least when confined in the single sphere of immediate experience; a remembered event is boundless, because it is only a key to all that came before and after it' (Benjamin 1929 cited in McCole 1993: 262).

As I raised in the introductory chapter, based on my own experience, I wanted to treat family photographs as material objects, not simply as memoirs of our past that are able to reveal and translate meanings that 'exist in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience' (Edwards 2006). Photographs as a visual medium have the capacity to trigger and shape memory by providing prompts and pretexts that make us remember. Within these prompts, people's memories go beyond the actual photographic frame and are able to reveal meanings and understandings that connect the familial with the historical, the personal and the collective. Using photographs in this way I was interested in exploring not so much *what* people remember from national commemorations and significant events but *how* they remember; what are the features, involving emotions and feelings that stay alive in their memories and, through them, come to construct another layer of knowledge of what it is that constitutes their cultural identity. In other words, what are the 'invisible fragments' that participants produce through their photographs of national commemorations and significant life events that come to constitute a way of seeing the cultural dimensions of Greek national

identity. As Sekula proposes: 'a photograph has to be understood through the everyday life and photographs have to be read as cultural history. We have to find ways to read the making and reception of ordinary pictures' (Sekula 1981:125).

Throughout the focus groups, as well as the semi-structured interviews, participants reveal in this thesis how a shared understanding of Greekness is constituted through three main elements: their senses, memories of their family and their understanding of ancient Greece. The sensory aromas of food and the recognition of national-specific music stimulated their memories, thus helping to demonstrate how Greekness and belonging is established. In the process of understanding their sense of Greekness, families play a significant role, in terms of transferring the knowledge of what a ritual ceremony or a national commemoration means. This knowledge, in turn, is shaped from the ways in which each member of the family experiences and actualises these practices in their everyday lives. It is through the ongoing transfer and reliving of this knowledge, as embedded in small details and mundane practices, that Greek cultural/national identity comes to endure in the lives of my participants.

An idea of what Ancient Greece is and means also becomes a cornerstone for participants' sense of Greekness. Ancient Greece is appreciated and experienced not as a long-forgotten period, but as a useful tool for demonstrating a sense of origin and tradition. In and through their photographs, participants perceive ancient monuments as vibrant, interactive objects that bring together the past and the present, the contemporary and the historical, the everyday and the familial. They are not simply frozen historical objects that symbolise their origin but seemingly have a 'soul' that comes alive through the manner in which they come

to participate in everyday sensory experiences. Ancient Greece is not simply a historical notion used to defend a sense of Greek identity, but an indicator that reminds them that there is a common code of communication between Greek subjects; a code repeatedly brought alive through smells and sounds in particular. In this context, their understanding of the meaning of national commemorations, lifecycle events and an ancient heritage is constructed through the practicing of cooking, smelling and eating particular national-specific foods.

However, participants also struggle to accept and integrate in their everyday lives a range of political, social and cultural changes that are taking place in their country. Understandings of recent patterns of migration in to Greece are overshadowed by the power of the meanings associated with Greek tradition and history. Ethnic minorities, particularly Albanians, are perceived to have disrupted and interfered with how participants conceptualise Greek culture. Their language, habits and different ways of life are represented as posing a challenge to participants. Migration is experienced as a threat to Greekness and not as a possibility of engaging in new forms of dialogue, or becoming open to new ideas and perspectives.

Furthermore – in the case of recent migration – national commemorations and lifecycle events are seen by participants as ambiguous and ambivalent in character. They are unsure of how to respond to the ways in which these ritual events are now taught in schools and represented in the contemporary media, associating these events primarily with a sense of obligation and duty. For the participants, the essence of their sense of Greekness and thus of their own identity is made through their feelings and emotions, and through the mundane manifestations of their everyday lives. Throughout the thesis, however, participants

attempted to locate this sense of Greekness in relationship to the more 'official' versions, to try to create a dialectical relationship between these two poles. This, it was revealed, sometimes left them feeling confused, trapped and guilty. It is out of this continuous – and sometimes contradictory – mythological narration that participants constitute their own styles of belonging and Greekness, resting upon their ways of remembering moments, feelings and actions that occur in their everyday lives.

I suggest that social and cultural practices come alive through the mundane habitual performances that participants experience in their everyday lives, and that participants' unreflective routines may acquire validity through the embodied inscribed memories of these practices. I agree with Connerton (1989) that aspects of the meaning of national commemorations and ritual ceremonies are practices which become deeply inscribed in embodied memories; however, when participants come to narrate these practices through their photographs, then the canvas of memory, its nuances and composition, takes on a much more fluid form. When narrated as 'participants' stories', memories leave much more space to envisage and 'construct' the history of these practices, and to formulate the role ancient Greece plays in constituting the contemporary Greek nation. The repeated, habitual performances of Greek traditions, such as national commemorations and ritual events, and participants' differing experiences of them, are active 'ingredients' in the construction of cultural dimensions of Greek national identity. Greek participants use 'the familiar building blocks of body, family and kinship in order to make sense of larger entities' (Herzfeld 1997: 5). In this way, national belonging and identity become remembered and sustained through the realm of mundane manifestations, and the ways in which participants attempt to transform the mundane, the personal and the familial, thus giving them a 'wholeness' or

sense of totality.

Within the realm of the personal and the familial, as demonstrated in the empirical chapters, participants came to produce a distinctive style of belonging (Anderson 1993). Although participants admit to following the conventional ways of performing Greek rituals and traditions, in their process of imagining and remembering them, new forms of knowledge emerge and are implicated in the creation of a subjective 'vision' of their nation. A number of issues were raised as a result of this and could be taking into consideration for further research, specifically: what are the shared symbolic systems that are used to create and recreate weddings, funerals, Easter and commemoration days in Greek society? Are these what we call the cultural dimensions of national identity, as constituted through the various, everyday and habitual ways of imagining and performing such practices? Is it possible for participants' narratives to become an established part of the history of their country? I suggest that forms of narration and representation, as produced through participants' stories, may in turn become reference points for Greek cultural identity. Narrating national commemorations and ritual ceremonies from an individual standpoint raises issues in terms of the relationship between history and myth; the ways in which the historical context of social and cultural practices interweaves with participants' imaginations. Throughout my thesis, the emotions, feelings, senses and mythical constructed memories that emerged from participants' habitual practices – such as the preparation of food on Good Friday, songs at a funeral, picnics under the temple of Apollo, or the smell of the lamb on Easter Sunday – come to comprise the 'social imaginary' of the Greek nation, where the meanings of symbols, myths and signs of ancient monuments, national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and important, rite-of-passage events are again reproduced through participants'

ways of remembering.

In particular, as each chapter revealed, the relationship between past and present, the relationship between east and west, the sensory dimension of monuments, ancient sites and objects, and the familial forms of association and disassociation become embedded in what I call the mythistorical narration of cultural identity – where Greek iconography, traditions and cultural practices assist in the creation of a national belonging.

As founded in chapter three participants expressed complex and contradictory styles of Greekness. They perceived their national identity with a sense of ambivalence because of its constructed character, which was sometimes described as mythical and magical. This position was reflected in the ways national commemorations are celebrated and actualised in Greek society. For my participants, they involve very nationalistic and military elements that often do not allow them to extract any sort of positive feeling. Participants did, however, participate in the construction of national identity through the means of family and tradition, coming to identify that tradition is built from the ways in which families interact and engage on an everyday level. To this end, tradition is made by the people themselves; from the ways in which they dress, cook, eat and communicate. Tradition becomes a collective process through which participants extract something meaningful in terms of their sense of Greekness. But what stands as a significant anchor for participants' national identity is the importance of ancient Greece; the nation's history and origin.

Participants perceive ancient Greece as a touchstone for their national identity, which is able to bring people together in the provision of a common history and ancestry. Interesting issues arose from this perception, however. On the one hand, participants tried to identify with the notion of language and the site of Macedonia (which carries a long history and

ancestry), and support the continued value of ancient Greece as a touchstone of their identity; but when the issue of migration was raised, ancient Greece then came to act as a barrier to the integration of ethnic minorities. Instead of trying to find ways in which the two can coexist, retaining the importance of ancient Greece and accepting ethnic minorities, participants perceive them as one excluding the other, creating confusion and instability in their efforts to capture a sense of Greekness. Therefore two opposing views coexist, creating a paradox: when participants talk about Greekness in isolation they do not accept a relationship between modern Greece's more recent past and ancient Greece; but when they try to defend their sense of Greekness from others, they constantly make reference to ancient Greece as the root of Greek identity. In themes such the relationship between east and west and religious affiliation, focus group participants consistently analysed and described these with reference to ancient Greece; participants used their past in every situation – no matter whether the consequences were negative or positive – in order to defend and support their sense of Greekness.

However the sorts of standpoints that participants expressed, relating to ancient Greece and its history and origin, are shaped in engagement with historical, social and political discourses in contemporary Greek society. The ways that participants perceive their past is dependent on how they interpret and understand the meanings that have been produced and mythically constructed by the nation. Their experiential accounts were defined not only by how they position themselves, but also how they have been positioned by the norms of society and the narratives of past and present. As a result, participants are critical of this relationship, yet without proposing any kind of alternative view. I suggested that this sort of standpoint indicates that the notion of origin is characterised by a kind of 'psychic' stasis;

participants seem to be blocked and unable to find another way. However such a stance also comes to underline a means of understanding their sense of Greekness.

In chapter five I describe participants bringing photographs from their family albums that related to ancient monuments, historical sites, objects and activities from their everyday lives – my participants' memories helped to shape their understanding of their sense of Greekness. Their photographs act as prompts through which participants extracted particular fragments and details that then produced a snapshot story. These snapshot stories are like an 'allegory'; an extended metaphor, in which the objects, persons and actions in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. I argue that literal and symbolic meanings are revealed through participants' allegorical narrations that relate to an embodied memory of senses.

The fragments and the details that participants reveal involve sensory experiences and emotions. For Benjamin allegory is also 'a form of expression' which, in this case, is reflected in the way some participants perceive and actualise ancient monuments and historical sites. In the interviews, through participants' allegorical narrations, monuments appeared as 'lived objects' with reference points to participants' everyday lives, sometimes also informed by the senses. In their process of remembering, participants' memories went in and out of the actual photographic frame to reveal hidden fragments that gave the photograph a sense of life and movement. The fragments and details that participants recognise and focus on in their photographs stand as individual explanations of their history and culture; they are full of smells, tastes and aromas. The temple of Poseidon, the archaeological site of Delphi and Knossos, and the bazaar in Istanbul all come to signify the notion of continuity between ancient and modern Greece, of origin and history, and the

relationship between east and west, each through the evocation of senses. Participants understand these places through fragments that have a reference point to an internal sensory experience, which often locates its origin in the process of drinking wine, eating olives or listening to certain melodies and sounds. It seems that the recognition of a nation, of a national belonging and identity, is read through participants 'synesthesia'; that is the 'union of the senses'; 'the way that different senses elaborate on each other, rather than being separate domains of experience' (Sutton 2005: 312-13). The experiences that my participants produce through their photographs become contextualized through sounds, smells and aromas; their sense of belonging is made out of seeing, listening and smelling sceneries, objects, and food of their everyday life. 'Senses hold the promise of the return of the memorable whole' (Sutton 2005:309).

Participants' fragments sometimes stand as 'dialectical images' that are formed through the way involuntary memories act. As Benjamin argues, involuntary memories are trivial, banal, fleeting images from our everyday experiences that do not have a sense of timing. Involuntary memories come to our minds without a warning, as sudden and instantaneous flashes. The difficulty with involuntary memories is that they cannot be grasped, since, as in the case of my participants, 'they arise from a layer of preverbal sensory experience... no one knows the particular tenacity with which memories are preserved in the sense of smell' (McCole 1993: 260). Sensory remembering can be difficult to grasp, demonstrating both the danger and the beauty of the way in which past and present are interwoven in the creation of Greekness and national belonging.

'Synesthetic qualities, when culturally elaborated, are an essential ingredient in ritual and everyday experiences of totality' (Sutton 2005: 315). The permanent, concrete form of

archaeological sites such as Knossos or Delphi, 'their material embodiments of timelessness' (McCole 1993: 136) and their aforementioned 'totality' are replaced by the arbitrary and fragile nature that allegory acquires. 'The single most important allegorical figure in Benjamin construction is that of the fragment'; 'allegory offers a patchwork of amorphous fragments' (McCole 1993: 137-141). In my participants' stories, allegorical fragments are embodied with sensory experiences that come to construct an understanding of what their sense of belonging and Greekness means.

Finally in chapter six participants further explored their sense of Greekness and the different ways of being Greek through familial forms of associations and dissociations; these forms were revealed through participants' photographs of national commemorations, ritual ceremonies and milestone events. Within these photographs, participants try to make connections between the events themselves and the cultural and social significance that they have in relation to their sense of Greekness. They undertook what Kuhn calls 'memory work' (Kuhn 1985); trying to unfold the different layers of social and cultural meanings that a family photograph can provide. Putting themselves into the picture (Spence 1988), seeing themselves in a national parade, and trying to remember what is there in the photograph, allowed them to relive and re-experience the significance – or otherwise – that a national parade or wedding ceremony, for example, holds in Greek culture. Their personal memories encompass a wide range of associations that constitute a public knowledge and understanding of the role of these events in relation to their sense of Greekness.

Within photographs of national commemorations, participants identified the presence of grandparents as a means of understanding and giving meaning to their sense of Greekenss. Grandparents, as posed in most of my participants' photographs, prompt memories that help

to shape the understanding of how national commemorations have become embedded in their culture. Grandparents thus gave an almost 'fairytale' element to the prescribed, 'official' understanding of national holidays; their experiential accounts become the basis in participants' memories of what these events mean. Moreover, as in the previous chapter, food becomes a symbolic metaphor, bringing the family together so as to actualise and celebrate these ritual ceremonies and national parades. Participants brought photographs that portrayed their family preparing the Easter Sunday lamb; from these photographs participants' stories showed how food often comes to stand as a marker of social status, as well as a medium through which appreciation and respect towards the family can be demonstrated. The preparation is a ritual itself that must be perfectly executed in order to satisfy every single guest that is invited. Not only the preparation but the eating itself lasts for hours, while people discuss all sort of political, social and cultural issues; therefore food is a shared experience that provides the opportunity for people to perceive events or ceremonies from an alternate perspective.

Through photographs of events such as weddings and funerals, however, participants expressed a hesitance in how their feelings are positioned or where they stand in relation to these events, particularly in light of many participants seeing them as an obligation. The social ideals imposed by families or religious norms and values are in contradiction to how participants feel about these events. Although they did participate in these events, following all the traditional steps for the sake of their families, at the same time they long for a freedom and independence from them. As a result their remembered meaning of a funeral or of a wedding is shaped out of the particular practices, norms and values that are followed when honouring those that have been lost or congratulating those getting married. In their

memories, a funeral or a wedding becomes a moral practice, a 'dialectical relationship' (Lambek 1996) between their emotions and the practices that are prescribed by others. It is out of this dialectical relationship that feelings – along with obligation – become deeply embedded in participants' experiences and come to constitute aspects of a sense of Greekness. Therefore through familial forms of association and disassociation participants come to recognise on the one hand a sense of belonging and security, and on the other hand a longing for independence and freedom. These two different positions create a tension and struggle for the participants.

In summary, participants' senses of Greekness were influenced by a number of often opposing factors. Participants demonstrated a longing for an origin, and a need to preserve and sustain ancient Greece as a touchstone for their identity – the result of a long and painful experience of wars and invasions that Greece has passed through generations throughout history. Greece's geographical location – between east and west – creates a sense of confusion for the participants in terms of the intermingling of traditional values, religion and linguistic tradition. Although most of the participants did not live through and experience wars, what has been imprinted in their memories thanks to knowledge acquired from school, media and popular culture is a strong feeling of their origin and a need to belong – whether to a community or culture. This sense of belonging, along with the incongruous understandings it involves, unfolds through participants' family albums. Through these photographs, participants come to contextualise their understandings of origin, history and ancestry through routine habits, unpredictable reactions and habitual performances that emerge in their everyday lives. Participants do not present history as separate from their own memories; memories shape participants stories, helping them

understand the sense of continuity between past and present through the sensory experience of visiting an ancient temple or archaeological site. As with ancient monuments, national commemorations are commonly seen to represent a sense of collective identity that participants come to recognise through familial forms of associations and dissociations. From this perspective, my participants' styles of belonging may appear as fleeting images in moments of danger; as 'dialectical'; able to provide insights offering a layer of knowledge around what contemporary Greekness and belonging has come to mean.

Appendix

Biographical information of the participants

1. Alexandros: He is 68 years old. He was born in Athens but he spent most of his childhood in the village where his parents come from. He is married and he has one son thirty years old.

2. Alexandra: She is 40 years old. She was born in Athens, and she is a teacher in a secondary school and works part-time in the ministry of education.

3. Alexia: She is 41 years old. She was born in Athens. She is a lecturer at the department of media and communication in Padeion university in Athens.

4. Andrew: Andrew is 39 years old. He was born in Athens. He is married and works in a private bank.

5. Anthi: She is 37 years old. She was born in Athens and she works as an archaeologist in the ministry of cultural affairs.

6. Antony: He is 46 years old and he was born in Athens. He is married and he works as a civil engineer.

7. Aphrodite: She is 35 years old. She was born in Athens. She works in a private bank.

8. Athanasios: He is 39 years old. He was born in Athens. He works as a graphic designer and he is married with two children.

9. Athena: She is 55 years old. She was born in Athens. She teaches history and literature in a public school in Athens. She is married and she has one daughter fifteen years old.

10. Daphne: She 55 years old. She was born and grew up in Athens. She spent most of the years of her childhood with her grandmother. Her grandmother looked after her

while her parents were working. She has a sister five years older than her and she works as a manager in an insurance company. She is married and she has a daughter eighteen years old.

11. Dionisis: He is 65 years old. He was born in Athens. He is married with one daughter 33 years old. He works as a doctor and offers a great deal of assistance to his local church every Sunday.

12. Eleni: She is 28 years. She was born in Athens. She does her master degree in Sociology in the Greek University in Athens.

13. Elena: She is 30 years old. She was born in Athens. She does her master degree in psychology in an American college in Athens.

14. Elizabeth: She is 39 years old. She was born in Athens. She is married and she has two kids. She has one brother 45 years old. She works in the ministry of cultural affairs.

15. Erato: She 30 years old. She was born in Athens. She is married and she has one son seven years old. She works as a teacher in a secondary school.

16. Eva: She is 28 years. She was born in Athens. She has one brother fifteen years old and she works as a translator.

17. George: He is 42 years old. He was born in Athens. He works as a graphic designer.

18. Iasonas: He is 27 year old. He was born in Athens. He does a B.A in media and communication in the university of Athens and he is in his final year.

19. John: He is 28 years old. He was born in Athens. He studies a master degree in media and communication in the university of Athens. He has a brother twenty-three years and he lives with his parents.

20. Katerina: She is 23 years old. She was born in Athens. She studies B.A in Sociology at the University of Athens. She has one brother 20 years old.

21. Kostantine: He is 29 years old. He was born in Athens. He works as a graphic designer and he has one sister 35 years old.

22. Lucas: He is 33 years old. He was born in Athens and works in a private bank.

23. Manolis: He is 47 years old. He was born also in Athens and he works as a lawyer. He is married and he has two kids; one girl ten years old and one boy fifteen years old.

24. Maria: She is 35 years old. She was born in Athens. She teaches literature in a public school in Athens. She is married and she has one son three years old.

25. Margarita: She is 32 years old. She was born in Athens. She works as a teacher in a primary school. She has one brother 28 years old.

26. Mariana: She is 43 years old. She was also born in Athens. She works as a lecturer in the Media and Communication department at the University of Athens. She is divorced and she has one daughter fourteen years old.

27. Marilena: She is 30 years old. She was born in Athens. She works in a company that does advertisement.

28. Michalis: He is 65 years old. He was born in Athens. He is retired but he used to be a doctor. He is married and he has one daughter 32 years old.

29. Nikos: He is 46 years old. He was born in Athens. He is a lecturer at the department of Archaeology in Athens University. He is married and he has one boy seven years old.

30. Panagiotis: He is 38 years old. He was born in Athens. He works as an architect. He is single and lives with his girlfriend.

31. Penelope: Penelope is 39 years old. She was born in Athens. She works as teacher in a primary school. She is married and she has one daughter five years old.

32. Sofia: He is 57 years old. She was born in Athens. She is divorced and works as manager in a private telephone company.

33. Stella: She is 44 years old. She was born and had grown up in Athens and lived with her parents in a suburb in the southern part of Athens. She teaches history in a secondary school in Athens.

34. Sophocles: He is 51 years old. He was born in Athens. He is married and works as an architect.

35. Sotiris: He is 28 years old. He was born in Athens. He studies media and communications in the Padeion University in Athens. He has a sister twenty two years old.

36. Theodora: She is 30 years old. She was born in Athens. She has one brother twenty-seven years old and one sister thirty three years old. She works as a graphic designer.

37. Trifonas: He is 43 years old. He was born in Athens and he is an architect. He is married with one son seventeen years old.

38. Vasiliki: She is 32 years old. She was born in Athens. She has a brother thirty-two years old and she works in a public bank.

30. Violeta: She is 27 years. She was born in Athens and studies a master degree in median and communication department at the University of Athens.

40. Xaralambos: He is 62 years old. He was born in Athens. He works as a lawyer. He is married and he has one daughter twenty three years old and one son twenty-six years old.

In total, 60 people participated in the focus groups; some of them continued to the face-to-face interviews. I have only given biographical details relating to those participants whose voices I used.

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