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The Remembered Village Between Europe and Asia-Minor: Nea Magnisia at Bonegilla

Anoma Pieris

Abstract

The resilience of multiple troubled histories as constituent features of Australia's immigrant heritage draws attention to processes outside recognised nation-building narratives, not necessarily captured at commemorative sites. Immigrant and refugee lives gain dignity and value through empathetic recognition of the ontological connections that shaped their natal subjectivity prior to displacement, but representing them proves challenging. A village modelled from memory by a former European immigrant and exhibited at Victoria's Bonegilla heritage site inserts new knowledge of an early twentieth century conflict into Australian border space. This chapter examines the commemorative practices around the refugee village of Nea Magnisia exhibited at the 'Bonegilla Migrant Experience', the national heritage-listed former border camp, as illuminating how displacement is recollected and historicised. It explores the meaning and value of nostalgic reconstructions and their resonance for the reception of contemporary refugees. The chapter crosses multiple historical geographies: Greece, Turkey (Asia-Minor) and Australia following a single immigrant's story.

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Nea Magnisia, a village outside the Greek city of Thessaloniki, was one of several thousand refugee settlements created following the 1923 forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey, the disruptions of which shaped the modern history of Greece (Klapsis 2014). Resettled from Bursa, Muradiye and Hamidiye, in Anatolia, in Asia Minor (the Ottoman name for present day Turkey), residents adapted the rationalised grid of modular houses allotted by the Refugee Settlement Commission (Colonas 2003), transforming the bare land into a village. Few of these original buildings remain in the thriving rural town some 11 kilometres from the city.

This chapter uncovers Nea Magnisia's history through a group of architectural models built by Anastasios (Tasos) Kolokotronis and exhibited at the 'Bonegilla Immigrant Experience', a national heritage-listed, former border camp space marking the entry point of post-war European immigrants to Australia.[1] Having emigrated to Australia after the Second World War and fulfilled his migrant dreams, Tasos began to nostalgically replicate Nea Magnisia through miniatures. At Bonegilla they appear as anomalies, as a Greek-Australian immigrant's affective engagement with another nation's displacement heritage. However, whereas Nea Magnisia outside Thessaloniki is transformed by development, the remembered village persists.

What do the models of Nea Magnesia convey for their Australian setting and how might they accommodate displaced social memories? When does the story of an individual come to

represent the wider group, transcending personal experiences and journeys? This chapter argues that history, memory and material reconstruction combined in nostalgic recovery adds new value and purpose to existing displacement heritage. Ethical approaches towards current refugee reception can be learned through diasporic stories. These stories in turn may determine decisions on what is saved, discarded or reinvented when heritage is institutionalised.

Border camp heritage

Between the end of the Second World War and 1960, Australia's population rose from around 7 to 10 million and by 1961, from among the top ten migrant categories, Europeans (at 37%) were comparable with those from the United Kingdom (at 40.4%) (Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs, online; Phillips et al. 2010-11, 27, table 7).[2] Their arrival enriched and diversified Australian society, enabling ambitious programs of industrialisation, including major hydro-electric schemes, increased steel manufacture and railway expansion. From among some 2 million immigrants who arrived between 1945 and 1965, many European refugees and 'assisted' migrants passed through temporary facilities distributed throughout Australia; [3] many were former military camp sites built during the Second World War.[4] The vernacular heritage of these camp sites, many of which had been dismantled, gained prominence as a form of social memory when government policy turned to multiculturalism during the 1970s (Koleth 2010). Following the efforts of former immigrants and later the Albury Museum (Pennay 2009, 44-6), 'The Bonegilla Migrant Experience' (BME) came to be developed as the recognised commemorative camp space for these European arrivals within Australia's post-war displacement histories (Fig. 10.1).

<Fig. 10.1 near here>

Bonegilla's selection was partly due to the retention of some portions of the repurposed military training facility which had operated as a migrant camp from 1947-1971 (Pennay 2007, 2-4). The original military complex could house up to 8000 persons and was supported by civic facilities and amenities. A Prisoner of War (POW) Control Centre for Italian POWs awaiting repatriation was included between 1944 and 1947 (11). The migrant camp was administered by the army until 1949 and later, during the 1960s, co-located with army facilities (Pennay 2009, 46-9), its military oversight a troubling feature of many post war refugee camps at the time.

Camps like these—unlined, timber framed, modular, army huts, clad in unpainted corrugated, galvanised-iron sheets and modified for various functions—were poorly adapted for civilian occupants (Pennay 2007, 2; Dellios 2017, 15) and separation—first by gender and later as family groups, once the men departed on 2-year work assignments—meant that camp experiences were often negative. Programmes for assimilation refashioned immigrants as 'new Australians', ignorant of the systems and processes of Australia.[5] New-ness was also associated with lack of sophistication and manual labour. In the words of artist-architect Alex Selenitsch (2012), who passed through Bonegilla as a child, the camp was 'a machine for making Australians', in reference to Le Corbusier's (1986, 4) famous analogy of the house-machine.[6] However, Bonegilla was later feted as the birthplace of multiculturalism in Australia and a gathering point for popular non-Anglophone memories (Dellios 2017, 8, 173).

The distinctions made between British and other European immigrants was a legacy of the 'White Australia Policy' (Jupp 2002), a series of acts created since federation in 1901 that had restricted non-European entry into Australia converting its population to largely Anglophone with an Indigenous minority. British immigrants arriving after the Second World War found relatively favourable conditions such as improved facilities or family hostels and were eligible for Housing Commission accommodation (Pennay 2009, 50). They entered an Anglophone society. For example, photographs of the Tudor monarchy were once displayed at Tudor Hall, one of the larger barracks at Bonegilla, 'to help migrants identify with the British heritage of Australia' (BME Site Guide, 1).

Some 23 buildings of Block 19 preserved at Bonegilla earned a National heritage listing in 2007 and have evolved to incorporate migrant ephemera recalling daily routines and practices at the camp facility. These memory-fragments institutionalise popular memory at a clearly identified entry-point into Australia. Place identities and histories eviscerated by assimilation are retraced through photographs and artefacts. At Tudor Hall we learn that around 15,000 assisted Greek rural workers arrived in Australia under the *500 Greek Farmers Project* by July 1953; many worked as kitchen hands in the facility and on-the-job training helped them get employment elsewhere. 'A Greek Family', the Kaperonis family, is presented as typical, their story beginning with Bonegilla. Over 160,000 Greek immigrants came to Australia during the 1950s (Museum Victoria, online).

The 25 architectural models of Nea Magnisia appear unlike any other group of memorabilia at Tudor Hall, or the crude linear barracks that house them. The painted foam core miniatures of homes and institutions are embellished with human figures, farming implements, farm animals, vehicles and foliage. The brightly painted window frames and white washed walls evoke their Mediterranean origin. The models appear nostalgic; a migrant's longing for home. But, the prefix 'nea' (new) to the name Magnisia (Manisa in present-day Turkey) conveys a history of newness and displacement originating in an early twentieth century border conflict, when former Ottoman period cultural affiliations divided along Greek or Turkish national lines. Nea Magnisia was a new village for refugee families displaced from Bursa, and from Muradiye and Hamidiye in Manisa, during the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The end of the Ottoman Empire; the ensuing border conflicts and resultant forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey under the January 1923 Treaty of Lausanne saw formerly porous imperial borders retract around nation states. Tasos's ancestors who as fugitive relatives of the revolutionary, Theodore Kolokotronis (Kolokotronis 2010, 3) had fled Ottoman persecution to Muradiye in the nineteenth century (changing their family name to Karabetsoglou), were forced to return to Greece.

Despite the dispersal of these and similar populations throughout Australia, the complex upheavals of twentieth century Europe that prompted their emigration rarely entered the nation's history. Their culturally and linguistically diverse pasts were either deliberately forgotten or effaced by assimilation and post-war nation-building. Alexandra Dellios (2017, 34-6) notes that '[u]nder an assimilationist rationale, the inter-ethnic and political tensions that existed in migrant's homelands were expected to be left behind upon migration' (35),

but, in fact, they often persisted in inter-ethnic and political tensions within the camps. Other more distant border struggles and their extraterritorial memories accumulated to surface decades later as narrative threads within immigrant biographies.

Persons displaced by the dissolution of social or cultural systems often embody their residual features as integral to their self-knowledge. This embodied knowledge challenges the time-space parameters naturalised by host nations, presumed upon shared histories and geographies. Displaced persons, upon entering a society, unsettle emplaced and essentialised subjectivities. Political counter strategies of ethnic cleansing (or legalised cultural exclusions) seek to fortify sedimented values. Between the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Second World War, the national identities of Greece and of Australia were forged through such strategies.

Immigrants and refugees use facets of nostalgia as passive resistance to assimilation, in tactics James Scott might identify as weapons of the weak (Scott 1985). Distanced from natal ontological contexts, they may use simulation or representation to secure disengaged memories. These take different forms. Heritage sites, such as BME, conserved retrospectively, conceive of immigrant processing environments as ontological starting points; places where the diverse multi-ethnic and multi-lingual immigrants to Australia embarked on the path to Australian citizenship. Conversely, the tableau of Nea Magnisia stretches this history by attempting to recover a persistent but incongruent past that resonates

only with one particular stream within the Greek-Australian diaspora, those who share Asia-Minor heritage. Autobiographical interjections modify the flow of the collective narrative and objects mediate specific cultural memories. The places attached to these memories are spectral backdrops; other sites and histories that are only hinted at. By pricking these thin veins of nostalgia, we draw Europe into Australia, as a broader physical context for its displacement stories.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia's etymology from the Greek *nostos* (to return home) and *algia* (pain) suggests an intense longing for the native land, a desire for mythical return, or the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values notes Svetlans Boym (2001, 3, 8). She differentiates between restorative nostalgia evoking national past and future, as found in institutionalised memories, and reflective nostalgia based on individual and cultural memory (49). Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley (2006, 921) argue that the two dimensions of nostalgia, of melancholic reactions or utopian longings, are in fact relational and co-constitutive: nostalgia's central concern is with the concept of loss (923). Many writers discuss social modernity as coeval with nostalgia (Boym 2001, xvi), but also how individual memories construct or negotiate their relations to collective identities (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 925). For example, when asked for any objects for an exhibit of migrant's suitcases, Tasos instead highlighted what he had left behind. The reconstructed objects that convey *his* story mediate a situated shared social memory.

Miniatures play a complex role in this field of memory. As noted by Susan Stewart (1993, 69), they are linked to nostalgic versions of childhood and history, diminutive versions of experience preserved from contamination; capturing a reality which no longer exists (60). Conversely, architects use miniatures to visualise existing conditions or project possibilities. Tasos's miniatures both legitimise his nostalgia while documenting a planned refugee environment of the 1920s, among several thousand that received Asia-Minor refugees. They also reveal how refugees modified these basic environments over time. Whereas nostalgia is often presented in tension with modernity, the models uncover a modernising process.

Tasos's model-building skills, learned while studying farming technology at the American Farm School in Thessaloniki after the World War II, informs the rudimentary implements and vehicles that are miniaturised. Two unpublished accounts: *My Memories into Arts/Folklore* (Kolokotronis 2008) and *The Book of My Life* (Kolokotronis 2010) covering fifteen periods, from Greece (periods A-E) to Australia (periods F-P) supplement them. Tasos began building models of Nea Magnisia during the 1990s, some years following retirement, in his garage/workshop (Kolokotronis 2010, 266). As their numbers mounted, filling available space, he gifted them to the National Centre for Hellenic Studies at La Trobe University, where they were on display (2003-2008). Upon that centre's closure, the models were relocated to Bonegilla (curated by the Albury Library Museum), where they remained in a room in Tudor Hall from 2011-2018. By November 2018, however, the lack of climate controls at the site caused BME staff to consider terminating the display. Telephone conversations with them and with several curators in Melbourne, during December 2018,

uncovered the fragility of extra national features within immigrant heritage. While the models are presently retained, their future is uncertain compounded by evident incongruities.

Since Greta, the centre through which Tasos entered Australia, had been long-dismantled, there is no host camp for his immigration story. Europe's twentieth century catastrophes enter Australia's national narrative via the British experience of the two world wars. Third-generation migrants (the new audience for Bonegilla), educated in Australian history, may be unaware of their multi-layered past and their focus on post-migration histories and opportunities diminishes their relative value. Immigrants' memories are thus territorialised; their life histories are recommenced in recipient geographies and pasts that occurred outside the national border are rendered as nostalgic. Negative perceptions of nostalgia as sentimental or regressive (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 920), further silence and reduce these complex memories. Furthermore, Australia's physical distance from the sending nations and insulation from global processes deepens general ignorance of the former life-worlds of immigrants and refugees. The problem this poses for refugee histories becomes acute when border processing systems declare them stateless.

The Asia Minor Catastrophe

Nea Magnisia was shaped by the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and the creation of the Neohellenic state in 1912 (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997, 494) When the Greek nation stabilised its frontiers following the First World War (494). Encouraged by the 1920 Treaty of Sevres and egged on by the Allies (mainly Britain, France and the USA),

Greece used its armies to further pursue the Megali Idea, an irredentist ambition aimed at reclaiming trans-Aegean territories. Their failure and retreat, and the exodus of fearful Christians from the Asia-Minor territories, escalated into 'the Catastrophe'. Based on figures collected in the Ottoman census (around 1914), the Christian population of Asia Minor was estimated at between 1.2 -1.4 million largely from Pontus, Capadocia and Eastern Thrace (Klapsis 2014, 622).

Although violent acts were committed by both the retreating Greek Army and the retaliating Turkish forces, the expulsion had a greater impact on Greece. From September 1922 onwards consecutive waves of refugees, many of them women and children, made their way across the Aegean to Greek territory. Tasos describes the panic at Smyrna as recounted by elderly villagers (2010, 6) and later by fellow travellers enroute to Australia. The burning of that city appears as a psychic wound in many immigrant stories. The Convention of Lausanne,[7] for the forced compulsory exchange of Greek-Turkish populations, retroactively legitimised and safeguarded their eviction, from 1 May 1924. Refugees could take all movable property but could not return without authorisation of their former governments.

At the onset, displaced populations suffered high mortality rates due to dislocation and poor living conditions. The 400 families from Bursa and Manisa spent 4 years in tented accommodation in Thessaloniki's army quarters. They had insufficient food, sanitation or clothing, and suffered bouts of Malaria and Meningitis (Kolokotronis, 2010, 6). At the final count there were over 1 million refugees (Klapsis 2014, 632), the only exceptions being the Greek inhabitants of Constantinople and the Muslims of Thrace. Approximately 355,000 Muslims left Greece for Turkey (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997, 498). The majority of refugees

were settled in northern Greece: around 650,000 in the Macedonian region of Greece and Western Thrace with some 150,000 in urban areas and a further 117,000 refugees in Thessaloniki (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997, 494, 498).

The Convention legalised mutual ethnic cleansing so that each nation could achieve a culturally homogeneous polity, strengthening republican and communist politics in Greece and ridding the Turkish bureaucracy of its major critics (Gürsoy 2008, 96). This created the space for authoritarian government in both countries. The Greek population, which had increased from 2.6 to 4.7 million after the Balkan Wars, rose to 6.2 million following the Treaty of Lausanne (Kontogiorgi 2006, 50). Although of Greek Orthodox faith, the languages and cultures of the Asia-Minor refugees were alien to their fellow-Greeks. Similar feelings of estrangement were felt by Muslims arriving in Turkey. Border hostilities between Asia and Europe were embodied.

The New Greek Colonies

The Greek government could not provide for this huge influx of Asia Minor populations. A Resolution on 5 July 1923 saw the creation of a Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC) to monitor and administer the settlement process. The League of Nations administered funds and the Greek department of social welfare and several refugee relief organisations worked alongside (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997, 498; Colonas 2003, 168). Some 2.1 million acres were made available to the Commission for a group-oriented resettlement project ‘moulded to

the development needs of the country' (Kontogiorgi 2006, 79). Article 119 of the reformed constitution of 1927 permitted the establishment of refugee colonies including land division, town planning and the building of dwelling units. Rural and urban classifications of the refugee population determined the terms of integration into Greek society (Kontogiorgi 2006, 95). However, as Elisabeth Kontogiorgi notes in her incisive study of rural resettlement, groups were further divided by place of origin and relative levels of impoverishment – because those who fled before the Convention could not bring over their transportable property (95). As evident in Renée Hirschon's (1998) pivotal study of Kokinnia in Piraeus, individual and kinship relations centred on families were renegotiated in restricted and shared refugee properties (Hirschon, 134-165). Hundreds of Greek villages and suburbs bore the names of lost homelands and many societies and foundations keep their memory alive through collective nostalgia for the *hamenes patrides* (lost homelands in Greek) (Millas 227; see also Historical Archive of Hellenic Refugees, 1998). Conversely in Asia Minor due to smaller numbers affected in a smaller percentage of the population (3.8 % compared to 20% of the population of Greece) and media censorship until the late 1950s, there was less Turkish interest in the exchange at that time (Millas 2003, 227-8).

The compulsory population exchange transformed Thessaloniki. The city, re-planned by French architect Ernest Hébrard in 1918 following a devastating fire, was undergoing reconstruction in 1922. The mainly Jewish refugees displaced at that time had been accommodated locally, in camps not yet disassembled. Following the Beaux Artes model of functional zoning, a new axial design introduced modern apartment blocks (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997, 498-7) in a homogenous property grid- a form of individuation already apparent in Ottoman territories where rights over immovable property was granted irrespective of faith or ethnicity (Colonas 2003, 164). In Greece, a new law governing

horizontal property redistributed ownership within individual apartment buildings from 1929. Although settlement policy retained and respected community identities, the displaced population's sense of property was synonymous with modernity.

As observed by Vilma Hastaoglou-Martinidis (1997, 498), at first, whole families rented rooms in dwellings, and *paràνkes* (timber shacks) and houses abandoned by departing Muslims accommodated the refugee influx. But, once the exchange was ratified, and settlement legislated, the surface area of housing created by the Ministry of Social Welfare in Thessaloniki (390 hectares) was more than the surface area of the intra muros city (330 hectares) (499). More significantly, in her view, by expanding the local workforce quite substantially '[t]he refugee inflow speeded up the transformation of Thessaloniki into an industrial regional metropolis' (504). Some 509 new agrarian colonies were created for 180,000 people on 359,000 hectares; an 'epic enterprise' (498-9) (Fig. 10.2). Some 75 of these were in Thessaloniki's immediate vicinity, radically altering the marshy surrounding landscape and expediting Greece's first experiment in modern social housing. More than 50 new colonies formed a mosaic of hastily developed housing districts encircling the planned city (499). They were built on the urban fringe, at least one kilometre away from built-up areas, to preserve their social homogeneity (499). Despite some initial hostility, small land ownership proved to be 'a vehicle for urban development' and 'a means for social integration' (504) in Greece.

<Figure 10.2 near here>

The Macedonia Resettlement Directorate commissioned the Sommerfeld-Dehategе company (DHTG) to build 10,000 dwellings by May 1925, to be finished by the RSC, and a further 15,000 were built by local companies (Colonas 2003, 170). Fred Forbát, appointed technical director in late 1924 assumed oversight of the process (Athanassiou et al. 2017, 349). DHTG built the stone foundation, wooden frame and tiled roof, leaving adobe or masonry walls to be filled in by refugees. By 1930, the RSC added 52,000 dwellings, to the 64,000 abandoned by Muslims and 13,000, built initially by the Greek state (173). Within months of settlement the uniform linear houses were differentiated by brightly painted windows, white washed drains, porches, benches and planting (176).

In 1926, the refugees from Muradiye were allotted a settlement at Arapli, with offers of houses, farm land and compensation to married couples This prompted hasty marriages among them. They filled in and the RSC housing units and, despite marshy and mosquito infested ground, turned the barren land into a ‘paradise’ (Kolokotronis 2010, 8). The town was named Nea Magnisia, since the dominant population was from Manisa, while the settlers from Bursa occupied the north western section of the town grid.

The Remembered Village

Tasos’s models provide an auto-ethnography of how the refugees’ transformed their village over time. His modelling materials include foam core, textured papers, paint, sand, small pebbles and simple tools such as tweezers, a box cutter, white glue, and a box of paints.

Tasos describes a childhood watching the village assume its form. He writes (Kolokotronis 2008, 8-9),

> Persistently, I would go to watch various projects that were taking place in the village, like: houses, stables, bread baking ovens, wells, water pumping machines, ploughs and other farming equipments. Even I would go to Thessaloniki to watch some craftsmen building all sort of horse carts, packsaddles, iron works, also I would stare at the mechanics doing repairs on cars which in those days garages were operating outdoors.

Period maps show the evolution of the organic town of Arapli, sometimes called Lachanokipos (vegetable garden), from a small cluster of homes of Slavic speaking Greeks and Romani people to a rationalised grid.[8] The grid, as drawn by Tasos, identifying individual homeowners at that time (Fig. 10.3), shows a diamond-shaped town plan of 46 blocks, on one side of the railway northward to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Turkey. Many blocks were of similar proportions, with 6 properties of 1000 square metres each, their unfenced houses built against the boundary line (Kolokotronis 2010, 26). They came with no amenities, just the basic so-called 'German'- plan housing frames. Block 29 was shared by the Kolokotronis, Hadji Eleftherio and Iani Iannidis families.

<Figures 10.3 and 10.4 near here>

Tasos's models uncover the expansion from simple four-roomed houses to sizeable and multi-functional dwellings (Fig. 10.4). At the front half of their house was his father's coffee shop (1925-67), a multi-cultural (and multi-dialect) gathering space where a band of musicians would perform on weekends (2008, 22; 2010, 10) (Fig. 10.5). A kitchen, toilet and

outdoor oven were added at the back. Tasos helped Vasilis Hedjieleftherioy (Big Basil) and Niko Hatzimarkos build home-extensions for Athanasios and Anthi Hatzimarkos (1925-2003) (2008, 65) in 1942, including an entry hall and 4 rooms: kitchen-dining room, sitting-bedroom, and a black-smith and cart-making shop. Later additions were a cart port, fireplace and stable and a well with a hand pump, a chicken coop, outdoor toilet and pit. Manure accumulated in the front yard. The home of Mr A Hadjimarkos, the village president, built in 1925 (2008, 25) (Fig. 10.6), functioned as the community office and coffee house; his elevated status evident in a steel spiked fence around a concrete yard.

<Figures 10.5 and 10.6 near here>

New community buildings were added to accommodate the inflow of refugees through the reunification of dispersed families; the primary school, the council house, the communal well. The model of the mudbrick church of the Slavic Greeks, St Athanasios, (2008, 23) (Fig. 10.7), where Tasos was baptised, shows storks in the bell tower and names on the crosses in the grave yard. This soon gave way to a new church to Saint Panteleimona constructed inside the village on half the yard of Tasos's primary school (1936-mid 1970s) (Fig 10.8). Several models show structures dating from the Ottoman period such as the stone flour mill of Nea Magnisia and the landmark White Tower at Thessaloniki, a former Byzantine fortification rebuilt as a garrison and prison. The home of his wife Christina's grandparents in Porroia of Serres, in Greek-Macedonia is modelled as a two storey residence (1890-present) (58-9), whereas a typical regional dwelling shows a cantilevered upper storey with animals beneath. Human figures of the knife sharpener, the boulgour (who crushes grain), the wood cutter, the free trader and the carts for various uses animate the buildings. They are included as an effort

at educating school children in the mechanics of a previous era. A notable absence is of houses from Muradiye.

<Figures 10.7 and 10.8 near here>

Tasos learned of conditions at Muradiye, second hand, from fellow villagers who visited Turkey in 1994 (Kolokotronis 2010, 3-4, 13). Its spectral presence, insufficiently known to recreate in miniature, suggests a different kind of nostalgia, which Yael Navaro-Yashin (2012) in her study of Northern Cyprus, describes as an 'affective geography'. Her example, from the 1974 partition of the island suggests how we might theorise a post-social landscape, by interpreting the fragments of the displaced occupants' former homes and livelihoods. This third interpretation of 'spectral' nostalgia charts the underlying violence of eviction, uncovered in retrospective analyses, such Tolga Köker's on Muradiye (2003).

Köker bases her account on 14 interviews conducted by Leylâ Keskiner in 1998. The Turkish government subsidised the Turkish Maritime Company to transport the refugees, and they were allocated abandoned properties in the *Rum* (Greek Orthodox in Ottoman Turkish) neighbourhoods (198). Inappropriate land allocations, unfamiliar environmental conditions and inadequate compensation and assistance were among key complaints (201). Due to suffering caused by the retreating Greek army in 1922 when sections of Manisa and neighbouring towns were set on fire (Neyzi 2008, 115). Muslims arriving from Greece were greeted with hostility. For example, the local Muslim population of nearby Karaali village

used the railroad line as a hostile border between themselves and the new comers (200), although as Köker notes (2003, 202) subsequent refugees from the Balkans in 1939 were treated with similar hostility, symptomatic perhaps of the instability of the still-nascent Turkish national identity. There was a higher consensus on national identity in Greece by then, notes Millas (2003, 229).

At Muradiye, the entire former *Rum* was populated by Muslim *muhacirs* (refugees in Ottoman Turkish) who settled in three Mahalles (quarters) identified by Turkish national heroes. Some 598 of 2,833 residential buildings were unoccupied (Köker 2003, 194). Two mosques and twenty-two tea houses were the key sites of socialisation, and the largest employers were the municipality and a soda-pop bottling factory. While some built new apartment buildings, noted Köker, the majority lived in the original houses assigned to them upon arrival (195) while mythologising their large, abandoned properties in Greece. The breakup of social units in land allocations, the division of families and arbitrary place-assignments through a 'poorly organised and ill-planned resettlement programme' (205) had impoverished them.

The Village at War

The successes or failures of irredentist nationalism were soon buried in a different catastrophe, once Italy declared war on Greece in October 1940. Tasos's annotations record the buildings repurposed for mobilisation and defence. His father's café became a recruitment

point of soldiers for the Albanian front. It was used as an ammunitions clearing centre where children cleaned hundreds of boxes of cartridges and loaded them into magazines (Kolokotronis 2010, 16). The house next door was a wool storage centre where women knitted clothing for the troops. German occupation forces arrived in April 1941.

Tasos recalls a sky darkened with planes heading to attack the allied forces in Crete. A young man walked ten kilometres from Thessaloniki with a wardrobe on his back to exchange for bread and vegetables (22), and many city people, facing starvation under the occupation forces, came to barter for provisions. When his mother offered fruit to allied prisoners of war (23) Australians, New Zealanders and British] she was reprimanded at gun-point by a German soldier and a German tank shot a hole through their kitchen wall (51). The six kilometres between the village and Thessaloniki became a jungle of railways and ammunition stores – the target of allied raids.

Tasos's has modelled a 'Jewish cart' meant for heavy haulage from factories, ports and railway stations, used by Jewish fruit and vegetable merchants who visited during the flowering season to buy fruit crops in advance. He notes that it had small wheels and no springs, and could make a spot turn (30). The German soldiers rounded up the Jews in Thessaloniki confining them to a barbed wire enclosure from where they were 'repatriated' by train to concentration camps (31).

Tasos's account of wartime Greece is no longer nostalgic. In fact, we sense the build-up of circumstances that persuaded him to emigrate. Enroute to a new school in Thessaloniki, he witnessed a mass execution of civilians as a reprisal for an ambush on a German convoy and this experience ended his schooling (43). The final war years were spent with relatives at Veria, a partisan village fighting the Germans, where he helped supply food to resistance fighters, and witnessed many atrocities (44-51). The liberation of Greece, the execution of collaborators and the looting and destruction of public properties are among his worst memories. The complex of factories, buildings, barracks and storage between the village and Thassaloniki were dismantled and looted 'down to the last brick' (53). Construction of Nea Magnisia's Town Office, interrupted by war, resumed with the employment of three Italian POWs in 1945. It was torn down eventually in 1967 for a two storey office building.

The destruction and spectral recovery of buildings, recorded in Tasos's miniatures, unveil aspects of wartime violence, often suppressed in refugee stories. But in the case of Nea Magnisia, the greater casualties came later due to the northern expressway, which divided the village from its farmlands during the 1960s-1970s. The 1980s unification of Europe increased land values in the area, and properties were sub-divided and redeveloped by the residents.

Tasos spent the civil war years (1946-49) at the Farm School in Thessaloniki and later served in the army. Across many small encounters with public and private organisations, which uncovered levels of poverty and corruption, his decision to leave Greece solidified. An

immigration official diverted his application from Canada to Australia promising him blondes, beaches, and plenty of work (168).

Journey to Australia

In December 1954, along with 600 ‘assisted passage singles’ (men), Tasos arrived on the refurbished merchant and hospital ship, Cyrenia (Kolokotronis, 2010, 9) and was sent to Greta migrant centre in New South Wales. There he found many Eastern European and Baltic immigrants housed in two so-called hutted ‘cities’: the brown-coloured oiled timber weatherboard ‘Chocolate City’ and corrugated iron Nissen hutted ‘Silver City’ (Keating 1997). It resembled, he says, a concentration camp.

Greek migrants, who had difficulty learning the English script, were largely directed to manual jobs that did not recognise existing skills. After one month at Greta, with ‘scorching heat and millions of flies’ (2010, 180) and the work prospect of laying irrigation pipes in Queensland, he and two friends abandoned the camp. Tasos’s disillusion with and intense dislike of his ‘start of life in Australia’ (197), was echoed by many of his compatriots. Nevertheless he was disappointed to find Greta had been dismantled when he visited there with Christina in 2005.

Tasos's escape, his destitute wonderings in Sydney and journey to Melbourne mirrors the plight of many in an unfamiliar country; dependent on the other immigrants for rental opportunities and employment. But his five-year training in the Greek Royal and Mechanical Engineers (1948-53) served him well. He was employed as a motor mechanic, first at Queens Bridge Motors, and later at the Commonwealth Aircraft Company and Ansett Airlines. His marriage to Christina Tzega, a Greek school teacher whom he met at his boarding house in Richmond, and the birth of his two daughters Angela and Anna, further shaped his life in Australia.

The successes or failures of other immigrants from Greece, including from Nea Magnisia, are a recurring concern for Tasos, given the relative precarity of immigrant life. However, his natural abilities, and skills learned in Greece and later in Australia paved a comparatively smooth path. Christina and Tasos bought their first 'solid brick' house at 229 O'Heas Road in Pascoe Vale South in 1956 (339) for £5,000(Australian Pounds), sharing it with a Maltese, fellow-factory worker and his wife. They incrementally acquired pieces of second hand furniture—a kitchen table and equipment, chairs, couch and coffee table—and eventually graduated from a mattress on the floor to a bed. Tasos's first car, an American *Ford Customline* bought for £600 (Australian Pounds), joined a convoy of cars that set off on weekend picnics. He returned to Greece, for the first time, in 1967, to sell his assets and collect compensation for the loss of his farmlands to the expressway. His parents were by then deceased. In 1968 Tasos and Christina bought a larger house in Strathmore closer to his workplace (243). In 1972, a small beach-side holiday unit at Rosebud completed their

Australian dream. When, upon his retirement, Tasos recreated its buildings from memory, Nea Magnisia had been irrevocably transformed.

A place for Nea Magnisia?

The story of Nea Magnisia crosses the numerous borders between Europe and Asia created at the twilight of empires by emergent nation states. At Bonegilla, in contrast, a federation intent on population expansion partially relaxed its border controls. Between these two actions was the interregnum of the Second World War. Consequently, the identities at Nea Magnisia take into account Ottoman, Turkish, Greek and Greek-Macedonian histories and practices, whereas entry through Australia's migrant reception centres was narrowly inscribed. However, at both Nea Magnisia and Bonegilla, refugees learned the limits of sovereignty, they renounced their former nationalities, buried their pasts and were taught the dominant language. The basic refugee environments in which they made these transitions were without embellishments. As Dellios (2014) argues for Bonegilla, their multivocal memories and vernacular exchanges have enriched public memory outside official frameworks and broadened its representations and meanings. Rather than defining the 'beginning place' of life in Australia, the name of the memorial built at Bonegilla, the models suggest the depth and intensity of lives left behind. Not divested of the harsher realities of expulsion and war, they are efforts at conserving aspects of that history. The elasticity of such migrant memories stays the forces of assimilation, refusing to present blank cultural canvases to recipient countries.

In the summer of 2018, encouraged by Tasos, my partner Athanasios and I visited Nea Magnisia, where we attended the festival of St Pantaleimon, walked in a procession around the town and shared a community feast alongside his relatives. On his behalf, we accepted an award for having preserved their local history. The original refugee village was undifferentiable from the neighbouring village of Diavata and from similar suburbs in the city. Some 3-4 storey apartment blocks had replaced the small cottages recollected by Tasos of which we found approximately 13 (Fig 10.9 and 10.10). The church of St Athanasios, the school and the council house had assumed elaborate forms. The townspeople, struggling in a shrinking economy, found Tasos's nostalgia gratifying. However, it was more than nostalgia. This was a period when refugee accommodation was debated quite heatedly across the European public sphere, particularly in Greece, designated a transit country. On a bus ride from Diavata to Magnisia, we encountered many recent refugees. Diavata's former Anagnostopoulou military camp, repurposed as a 'Hospitality Centre' run by the Ministry of National Defence and Arbiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland, housed some 2000 Syrian and Palestinian refugees (Urban Literary Graffiti 2018). The United Nations Refugee Agency (2018) enumerated 60,000 refugees and migrants in Greece as of May 2018, considerably less than the 1923 influx.

<Figures 10.9 and 10.10 near here>

Displacement heritage

Despite the pressing political realities of forced or voluntary displacement, refugee heritage in Australia seems dwarfed by histories of multicultural immigrant endeavour and success. There are few historical references for these more precarious ontologies. While exceptional individuals – like the famous refugee architect, Harry Seidler (Wilton 1986) are recognised, others without pedigree go unnoticed. In contrast, Tasos's models illustrate Greece's integration of linguistically different Asia-Minor refugees through community identities and permanent dwellings. Identities thus solidified, sometimes against hostility, are later celebrated for their distinct cultural heritage. Such examples hold lessons on how modern systems of individuation may be adapted for collective identities, and how the stories of displaced persons may cross barriers of time, space and sovereignties. They need not reduce difficult pasts, fashioning ontologies through ephemera, but could construct nostalgic artefacts as enlightening and ongoing archives. Arguably precedents for similar forms of resuscitation are evident in Australia's convict heritage.

The miniatures of Nea Magnisia cannot convey immigrant fortitude in past migrant processing facilities. They offer back stories to contemporary detention environments, as the darkest chapter in migrant accommodation histories. While tales of escape may provide sketchy backdrops to individual displacement narratives, refugee histories in Australia begin at the nation's boundary. This opacity works in both directions. Ignorance of the Australian system produces functional gaps in new arrivals increasing dependencies and negating their cultural capabilities. Refugees are recast as economic and social burdens in the public eye. These attitudes build on post-war practices of notionally achieving social integration by suppressing immigrant back stories. Tasos's identity is far more fluid, accumulating several

cross-border spatial experiences as valid forms of cultural knowledge. Much can be gained from those transnational memories that refugees and immigrants want to share Such stories are valid bases for internationalising Australia; a means of overcoming historical insularity.

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[1] My grateful thanks to Tasos Kolokotronis for his generous supply of information, images and contacts. I interviewed Tasos initially in 2013, and again several times in 2018 and 2019.

[2] Although population data for this period is unstable, the 1954 Census measuring the top ten migrant categories shows an overseas born population of 47.9% from the United Kingdom and 27% Europeans. In 1961 southern Europeans from Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia

accounted for 20%. Greek migrants increased from 1.7% in 1947 to 2% in 1954 to 4.3% in 1961 and 6.2% in 1971.

[3] Camps included Bonegilla, Benalla, Rushworth in Victoria, Somers Greta and Kapooka in New South Wales, Stuart and Wacol in Queensland and Northam Holden, Graylands and Cunderdin in Western Australia.

[4] Aside from those who received individual sponsorship, around 170,000 refugees were processed by the International Refugee Organisation and many thousands more arrived through assisted passage arrangements where Australia paid for the passage of migrants through country to country arrangements overseen by the Intergovernment Committee for European Migration (ICEM).

[5] *New Australians* was a magazine produced by the Department of Immigration and distributed among arrivals.

[6] Le Corbusier (1923) in his book *Vers une architecture* declared that the house was a machine for living in.

[7] Lausanne Peace Treaty IV. Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations Signed at Lausanne, January 30, 1923.

[8] Cartographic Heritage Archives, Thessaloniki, 4384, 4389, Private Collection S. Demertzis.