

MOTHERLAND, I SEE YOU

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# MOTHERLAND, I SEE YOU

The 20th-Century  
of Greek Cinema

EDITED BY

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DIMITRIS PAPANIKOLAOU

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23 November 1998

Walking off the stage at the  
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# Motherland, I See You

## Re-Examining 20th-Century Greek Cinema<sup>1</sup>

Dimitris Papanikolaou and Afroditi Nikolaidou

GREEK CINEMA has gone through a period of deep change over the last decade. The success of the New/Weird Wave and the dense socio-political history of the country since 2010—what is known internationally as “the Greek crisis”—have created a new context for understanding contemporary Greek Cinema, its relation to Greek culture and its position in international production, distribution and screening networks. Another change that the last decade has brought is the way in which we look back at the past: our willingness to watch the films of the Greek cinematic repository with fresh eyes.

The Hellenic Film Academy project *Motherland, I See You* is an attempt to return to the Greek cinematic past on this basis. Its aim was to shine a light on the complexity, variety and depth of twentieth-century Greek Cinema at a juncture at which new possibilities seem to be opening up for Greek film. Without seeking to be completist but aiming to engage and problematise, the programme was proposed to complement other comparable actions undertaken by institutions and groups to reveal new dynamics and propose new approaches. That is to say, *Motherland, I See You* was organised to be “a gesture towards the preservation, dissemination and study of Greek Cinema.” What we realised right from the start was that, today, these practices can only be defined as an ongoing conversation, an interactive experience; a political artistic process which begins with the experience of the present in order to (also) talk about the past. This book was designed from the very beginning as an integral part of the programme, along

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1. “MOTHERLAND, I SEE YOU” is a programme which seeks to preserve, digitise, promote and study twentieth-century Greek Cinema. A Hellenic Film Academy initiative, it operates under the Auspices of the “Greece 2021” Committee, the National Centre of Audio-visual Media and Communication (EKOME, the main sponsor of the event), the Greek Film Centre, the Athens and Epidaurus Festival and the Thessaloniki Film Festival, with the support of the Greek Film Archive and Finos Film.

with screenings, discussions and other parallel activities. Like them, it forms part of a work in progress which we hope will continue to expand in the future—just as we hope that other, similar initiatives will multiply in the years ahead. In the rest of this Introduction, we will describe not only the fundamental questions that interested the curatorial team as they set about choosing a first series of films (about which you can read below in the Appendix), but also—and mainly—the key criteria on the basis of which we invited our collaborators to contribute the thirty-four papers that form the core of this book.

## **For A Renewal of the Gaze**

As the title *Motherland, I See You* makes clear, a gesture such as this which turns to face the cinematic past, can only stem from a willingness to *renew the gaze*: to (re)watch the films, to become spectators again, redefining our relationship with the past of Greek Cinema as an aesthetic, sensory and social experience. But how easy is that to do?

Those of us who are involved in the making, studying and teaching of Greek Cinema recognize a key issue here: the limited access to the material (and to be more precise, to digitally restored and subtitled films). Renewed and alternative readings of a contemporary history of Greek Cinema are thus often undermined from the outset, precisely because our relationship with the material is fragmentary and circumstantial—even in the case of rather well-known and extensively studied films. Iconic works, such as the films of Michael Cacoyannis or Theodoros Angelopoulos, which could be considered to belong to a cinematic canon, are hard to find, let alone use in a seminar or configure for use in a video-essay. Even today, it is not easy to screen them for communities of spectators who could interact with them in a new environment. This is harder still outside Greece.

And yet, once series of films from the history of Greek Cinema can be presented to a new audience in an organised way, the dynamic that this creates will exceed all expectations. Obviously, tributes in film clubs, art cinemas, film festivals and the Greek Film Archive, as well as Greek Cinema retrospectives at universities, museums and film archives abroad, have never stopped happening—such events are, after all, tightly bound to the creation of cinephilia. What has made a difference in the context of Greek Cinema over the last decade is the willingness to re-screen films beyond a narrow cinematic canon and outside the narrow frames of tributes to specific directors or generations. We have seen tributes and series of screenings which pursue themes, forgotten points of view, unfamiliar compositions; which are rooted in the cinema auditorium, but also exploit new media and means allowing younger viewers to interact; which set in motion an

“archival challenge,” leading to certain films finding their way back out of the film library, and create inspiring ways to view, discuss and reproduce them; and which finally understand “cinematic space” as a broad, participatory and open concept, with a centrifugal dynamic and diverse narratives. Various initiatives by small groups with little or no official support, as well as by major institutions such as the Thessaloniki International Film Festival or the Greek Film Archive, or established events and university departments have followed this path.<sup>2</sup>

Very often, public screenings of—and discussions about—films from the archive of twentieth-century Greek Cinema can be turned into events in this way; they develop new platforms for dialogue and create new networks in which a new generation interested in cinema can participate, bringing along their new capacities in relation to the culture of the image.

It was through “film events”<sup>3</sup> such as these, especially since 2010, that we have come to appreciate the willingness of a new audience to play an active role in a reframing of older Greek films within the contemporary context. Suddenly, the whole concept of a “national cinema” (indeed, the cinema of a small nation in crisis) was transformed from a static cultural reference into an active field of comparison, critique and redefinition.

It is worth mentioning one such example here which, born of the enthusiasm of a group of filmmakers, ended up becoming an ongoing four-year-long festival

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2. This new perspective on, and relationship with, the cinematic past are also evident in the recent publishing strategy of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival. Rather than tributes to well-known filmmakers or traditionally framed periods and trends, recent years have privileged thematic issues that focus on conceptual and historical challenges (for example, *The Anthropocene*, *Destination: Journey*). Similarly, the Festival’s *A-Kατάλογοι* [*Non-Catalogues*] take a sidelong view at the programme each year. The *Non-Catalogue* of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Thessaloniki Film Festival, for example, “recalls through a collection of texts the crucial role art plays in transitional periods of crisis, which drastically change the ways in which we can live and think ‘together,’ as well as highlighting film’s affinities with the visual arts, history and the concept of film heritage.” See Thessaloniki Film Festival, 62<sup>nd</sup> Thessaloniki Film Festival *Non-Catalogue*, Nefeli, Athens 2021. See also the Greek Film Archive initiatives aimed at restoring and disseminating works of the early Greek Cinema (*The Apaches of Athens*/*Οι απάχηδες των Αθηνών*, *Asterio*/*Αστέρω*, *The Adventures of Villar*/*Οι περιπέτειες του Βιλλάρ*), or the recent effort made by the Film School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki to restore the film *Bouboulina* (dir. Kostas Andritsos, 1959).

3. Throughout this introduction, and in the process of assembling this book, we have been inspired by recent interrogations of what constitutes a “film event” and by the formulation of an open-ended concept in which the production, filming, making, screening, distribution and (trans)mediation of films is combined, thus not limiting the search for “events” to one of these processes alone. It is the interrelations and collisions between film events of different orders that make them legible as such. See Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, London 2002.

of films from the Greek twentieth century around Greece. Its title: *The Lost Highway of Greek Cinema*. As we have both argued elsewhere, by going back to projecting the material on the medium on which the films were shot (in 35 or 16mm), by connecting filmmakers of different generations through texts and discussions, by creating new promotional material and interacting with the audience through events both inside and outside the cinema auditorium, including the digital environment of social media (parties, concerts, exhibitions, videos, playlists and mixtapes), *The Lost Highway* stressed the “performative power of [film] through watching cinema as a collective and social event”<sup>4</sup> while also taking a new historicising look at Greek Cinema that would not be “simply historical or archival, but genealogical.”<sup>5</sup>

Inspired by these predecessors, the project *Motherland, I See You* collected and digitised (where necessary) a selection of films with a view to presenting and disseminating archives in as accessible a form as possible. A large number of films was discussed at the preliminary stage. Some were selected and the time-consuming procedures involved in searching for and securing rights were set in motion; as expected, these procedures often brought insurmountable problems to light, which meant that certain films had to be dropped.<sup>6</sup> We ended up with a series of forty-one films, including fiction and documentary films, both feature-length and shorts. We insist here on the term “series”: the films that would ultimately be included in this iteration of *Motherland, I See You* constitute one possible selection the primary aim of which was to convey as clearly as possible the logic that guided it: its rationale—even when the rationale points also to an array of other films that could have been included but were not, due to some obstacle that presented itself.

Our choices were intended to provide the material for a “festival on the move” which could draw on a repository of films each time, combine them in different ways, re-frame them in new places and offer them up to gazes and subjectivities to produce new histories.

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4. Afroditi Nikolaidou, Anna Poupou, «Εισαγωγή», Afroditi Nikolaidou, Anna Poupou (eds), *Η χαμένη λεωφόρος του ελληνικού σινεμά*, Nefeli, Athens 2019, p. 13. *The Lost Highway of Greek Cinema* was curated and organized by Alexis Alexiou, Afroditi Nikolaidou, Elina Psykou and Yannis Veslemes.

5. Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave: A Cinema of Biopolitics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2021, p. 94.

6. On this, see also the note by Syllas Tzoumerkas and Elina Psykou on p. 289 of this volume.

## A Festival on the Move and Archive Trouble

Hence *Motherland, I See You* is first and foremost the platform-in-progress of a *festival on the move*. In practice, the films that were selected and available form a first repository, selections of which now travel in different combinations to cinemas in twenty-one cities around Greece and the world in the first instance. Starting in the summer of 2021 (at the Athens Festival),<sup>7</sup> these screenings attracted great interest and often became the focal point for a new audience. We remember, for example, the enthusiasm that met the first screening of the restored copy of Alexis Damianos' *Evdokia/Eυδοκία* in Athens and how it shed light on the debate about new restoration methods,<sup>8</sup> as well as the moving reception given to Antoinetta Angelidi's film *Idées Fixes / Dies Irae* (*Variations on the same subject*) [*Idées Fixes / Dies Irae* (παράλλαγές στο ίδιο θέμα)] at the Thessaloniki Film Festival (5 November 2021) in an auditorium packed with young people eager to discuss the intertwining of the avant-garde with feminism, and Greek avant-garde cinema of the 1970s. It is due to experiences like these that we believe festivals "on the move" such as *Motherland, I See You* can change the culture of our relationship with the Greek cinematic past, and that there will be many more projects of this kind in the future.

At the same time, creating an educational platform that would allow this material to be used by educational institutions in Greece and abroad, and by researchers of Greek and World Cinema, constituted another aspect of the action and a key parallel objective. Creating a platform of this sort—and as a long-term project, at that—is vital at a time when Greek Cinema is enjoying unprecedented international attention. What is needed, therefore, is an accessible digital library of Greek Cinema that is available for bona fide research and teaching around the world. This is not a "narrow", "academic" goal, and its aim is not simply to refocus attention on the past of a national cinema that is currently in a state of flux. No, the stakes are much higher than that: creating an internationally accessible repository of films that supports and broadens analytical interest in them is a key method by which the cinema of a small nation such as Greece can ensure support from the current international production and distribution system.<sup>9</sup>

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7. [http://aefestival.gr/festival\\_events/chora-se-vlepo/](http://aefestival.gr/festival_events/chora-se-vlepo/)

8. See the text by Akis Kapranos, «Η Ευδοκία τραγουδάει ακόμα» [Evdokia Still Sings], *Lifo* (13 September 2021), available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/culture/cinema/i-eydokia-tragoy-daei-akoma>

9. The term "small nation cinemas" refers to a contemporary framework within which cinemas previously classified as peripheral can be examined. The term highlights the active ways—textual and extra-textual—by which, rather than simply surviving in the cracks of

*Motherland, I See You* sought to reflect on all this and to point a way forward. Therefore—and it is worth repeating this—neither the list of films nor the project approach is fixed: may such moves continue, spread and multiply. Synergies and collaborations are at the core of gestures like this, which transform a once theoretical or literary work into action; the films are screened and made accessible for teaching not only to reveal the riches of the film archive, but also to create an embodied renegotiation with its material: not simply archival search, but *archive trouble*. Our goal is thus to conceive a national film archive which ceases to be a “passive repository of information, becoming instead an active field of debate, which does not consist of material whose time has passed, but presents itself instead as an epistemological and cognitive experiment; in other words, [we would like to treat the archive] not as a place from which knowledge is taken, but as a complex of multiple sites where knowledge, always interwoven with power, is being produced.”<sup>10</sup>

Of course, to begin with, wanting to take a new look today at material from the cinematic past of a country like Greece is always and already an instance of archive trouble. Why? Because, quite simply, you are called upon from the very start to do battle with the inaccessibility, absence and/or deterioration of the material. Even if it is only a simple series of films you want to retrieve today, in whatever capacity you interact with the cinematic field, you realise how hard it is, with few exceptions, to watch, acquaint yourself with or even just “remember” and/or evaluate many of these films. Many films simply cannot be found.<sup>11</sup> And many of

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the global distribution network, these cinemas regroup, reconstruct themselves and deal with the contradictions and inequalities in the global transnational production, distribution and reception system. For more, see Mette Hortje and Duncan Petrie (eds), *The Cinema of Small Nations*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2007. Ground-breaking in this respect is Lydia Papadimitriou’s research into the new challenges that Greek Cinema is facing in a transnational circulation and production context (see, for instance, Lydia Papadimitriou, “Greek Cinema as European Cinema: Co-Productions, Eurimages and the Europeanization of Greek Cinema,” *Studies in European Cinema* 15/2-3 [2018], p. 215-234, and “Locating Contemporary Greek Film Cultures: Past, Present, Future and the Crisis,” *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 2/1 [2014], p. 1019). See also Toby Lee, *The Public Life of Cinema: Conflict and Collectivity in Austerity Greece*, University of California Press, Oakland 2020.

10. Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια*, Patakis, Athens 2018, p. 98-99. In this context, the term “archive trouble” denotes the tendency “to return (and reframe) the archive of the past through the embodied and critical experience of the precarity of the present”. Ibid. p. 100.

11. For example, the Greek Cinema from the decades prior to the 1950s is considered lost to a great extent, and research into this material is very often based on information other than the cinema image (for instance, newspaper or magazine articles). Nonetheless, even regarding these earlier periods, the more critical viewers “trouble” this film archive, the more



those that can, suffer from faded colours, scratches, worn soundtracks and—often—material interventions (such as cut scenes) which were made so that the film could conform to the standards of contemporary television broadcasting.

There is no doubt that all these detractions now form part of the history of the particular copy and of the medium on which it is technologically dependent. However, access to material that retains its aesthetic characteristics is more than a recognition of cinema as art (even if, or rather since, it is mass-produced for commercial purposes). It also turns the act of digitisation into a point of entry to an entire era, its cinematic technology and techniques, the way in which it views society and history, those representations it chooses to spotlight and those it chooses to silence. An act of curation and “restoration” of this sort constitutes a dialogue with the material in practice; more than just an intervention in the medium, it is also an embodied history of media in practice.

The digitisation and curation of a film, therefore, serves to underscore the history of the medium itself and invites the audience to reflect on—and experiment with—it through their senses. This occurs not as nostalgia or *in spite of* new technologies and the evolution of the viewing process itself, but actually *thanks to* the new possibilities that new technologies and new ways of viewing make available. The restoration and curation of analogue film material also occurs not in the absence of a new audience addicted to the digital image, but actually on the basis of new transmedial literacies. We have now proceeded so far into the age of the interventionary and interactive spectator—an ever-evolving version of what Laura Mulvey has called the “possessive spectator,” meaning a spectator who can now possess and manipulate fragments of moving images in a manner that often works against narrative coherence and aesthetic integrity.<sup>12</sup> Precisely for this reason, the curatorial return to the cinematic past also entails a confrontation with completely new social practices regarding the cinematic image.

No matter how tactfully one puts it, and no matter how much one may not want to shock formal purists and/or strict guardians of material cultural heritage, one has no choice but to face the fact that rescuing, curating and digitising the film archive of the past also means that it may find itself being used, at some point and

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material is eventually found. In this volume, Vassiliki Tsitsopoulou provides a fine example from the 1910s: in this case, archival research did not simply end up “finding” a film artefact, but it also analysed it in a way that elicited new ways of rethinking the period of early cinema and proposed new ideas about what constitutes a national film document. This type of research and conceptual questioning, as Tsitsopoulou herself points out, increases the chances of more material of this sort being found in the future.

12. Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, Reaktion Books, London 2006, p. 171.

in one way or another, as material in a student's or YouTuber's video essay, or as part of a new artistic practice based on montage and collage or pastiche. It may also mean that it is becoming material for popular use in the new media—the raw material for a post on a personal webpage, Facebook, Instagram or TikTok. Crucially, however, the fact that material from a film could conceivably be put to a different—and often decontextualised—use clearly does not mean that the original position, form and poetic wholeness of a cinematic work is compromised. In our contemporary context, the opposite is often the case: blocking any digital use of a work often leads to its original, analogue form deteriorating or being forgotten or physically lost. We honour the medium and its singularity not by turning away in abhorrence from the possibility of its digital use, but by thinking about its cross-media functionality and how this, after following a curiously intermittent route, circles back to support the original dialogue with the artistic work, the uniqueness of its initial articulation, the need for it to be archived in the most formal manner possible.

Obviously, we are not in any way implying that copyright issues should not be raised, or that the fate awaiting the film archive today is to become an object of fragmentary consumption. Rather, our argument is that the demand for an organised support of our material film heritage is much better articulated when it can also be based on this material's ready accessibility and everyday use, even if the latter is occasional or fragmentary. It is also worth noting the following at this point: the “intangible” aspect of a material heritage—meaning the memories, the archive of feelings activated by communities of viewers as they search for, retrieve, watch, re-watch and discuss films—certainly occupies a central, functional place in the restoration of the cinematic past. And this is even more true in a (small) national cinema context.

Something that we realised in recent years through initiatives such as *The Lost Highway of Greek Cinema* and now with *Motherland, I See You* was the extent to which cinematic archive trouble simultaneously provokes *both* emotional and embodied confrontation with the tangible side of film heritage (and with its new dissemination and management methods) *and* the archival curation of its intangible aspects—the whole galaxy of emotions and reactions which are associated with the viewing of films and which have been associated with them in the past, particularly in the context of the national everyday. Films and their restoration do not only evoke emotions, but they also constantly invoke and remind us of the existence of a dense archive of feelings.<sup>13</sup>

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13. We borrow the term “archive of feelings” from Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, Duke University Press, Durham 2003.

## From History to Histories

The existing histories of Greek Cinema are largely arranged according to a linear narrative: specifically, the trend to narrate a story that moves from *Early* to *Old* to *New* to *Contemporary* Greek Cinema.<sup>14</sup> It is a narrative that appears deterministic (which is also evident from the adjectives that are used, from “early” to “contemporary”), with the term “contemporary” (the most problematic of them all) denoting an eternal, ungraduated end point which extends constantly to encompass the present.

This teleology seemed ill-prepared to deal with what was to come after the dawn of the twenty-first century: namely, the emergence of the Weird/New Wave of Greek Cinema in a period of political, social and economic crisis, coupled with a substantial reorganisation within the Greek film industry. At the level of cultural politics and production, new generations of film-makers demanded new

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14. Early Greek Cinema refers to the period before World War II. Old Greek Cinema (OGC) generally refers to 1945-1970, during which a more mass-production-based system of film production emerged. New Greek Cinema (NGC) refers to the art cinema that developed in the 1970s. The NGC is conventionally considered to have begun with Theodoros Angelopoulos' *Reconstruction/Αναπαράσταση* (1970). However, all the more recent approaches place the birth of the NGC in the 1960s, with films such as *100 Hours in May/100 ώρες του Μάη* (Dimos Theos, Fotos Lambrinos, 1963), *Until the Ship Sails/...Μέχρι το πλοίο* (Alexis Damianos, 1966), *Kierion/Κιέριον* (Dimos Theos, 1967-1974) and *The Shepherds of Disorder/Οι Βοσκοί* (Nikos Papatakis, 1967). The term Contemporary Greek Cinema (CGC) has been used to define Greek Cinema after 1990, when the terms of production changed with the use of new technology, the far greater participation of private production companies and the new television channels, as well as the possibilities provided for networking and co-productions by European programmes (see Afroditi Nikolaidou, *Πόλη και κινηματογραφική μορφή. Οι ταινίες πόλης του Ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Panteion University, Athens 2012, p. 70-98). This periodisation, which is often done for pedagogical purposes, does have an epistemological basis, but can shift according to the criteria of any given researcher. The existing histories of Greek Cinema, such as those by Frixos Iliadis, Aglaia Mitropoulou and Giannis Soldatos, which are still used as core works of reference, reinforce this periodisation. Nevertheless, when presenting arguments in support of the periodisation that they champion, they do so by highlighting the brilliant exceptions (for instance, Cacoyannis as an auteur in the period of mass production). See Frixos Iliadis, *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος 1906-1960*, Fantasia, Athens 1960; Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος*, n. p., Athens 1968; Giannis Soldatos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, Aigokeros, Athens 1982. The traditional periodisation, as well as a certain unease with it, are reflected on in later works. For example, see the special issue of *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 18/1 (2000); Maria Paradeisi and Afroditi Nikolaidou (eds), *Από τον πρώιμο στον σύγχρονο ελληνικό κινηματογράφο: Ζητήματα μεθοδολογίας, θεωρίας, ιστορίας*, Gutenberg, Athens 2017; Elise-Anna Deveroudi, *Οι νέοι στις κωμωδίες του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου 1948-1974*, Centre for Neohellenic Studies, Athens 2004; Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, Continuum Publishing Corporation, New York, London 2012.

forms of funding and support and mobilised to form new institutions organised from the bottom up.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the films and critical discourse of these younger generations would play an iconoclastic role. The New/Weird Wave of Greek Cinema was not presented as a “historical curiosity” or as another, albeit off-kilter and unexpected, chapter tacked onto the old familiar sequence. Instead, the new wave acted as a historiographic catalyst: it made us question the periodisations and categories that had dominated until then. The early years of the twenty-first century brought with them a new critique of the methodological choices of the older Greek film historiography and a bolstering of—and international presence for—the field we call Greek Film Studies, which focuses on cinema but extends also to cultural studies, history, media studies, gender studies and political theory and science.<sup>16</sup>

The external impetus for *Motherland, I See You* may have been the celebration of the bicentenary of the declaration of Greek Independence and the founding of the modern Greek state that ensued, which provided a broader framework within which to redefine our relationship with national identity and culture. The essential trigger, however, was the new aesthetic, media, critical and cinephilic

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15. We are referring here to the activist initiative *Filmmakers in the Mist/Filmmakers of Greece* and the creation of the Hellenic Film Academy on 23 November 2009. See Maria Chalkou, “A New Cinema of ‘Emancipation’: Tendencies of Independence in Greek Cinema of the 2000s,” *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture* 3/2 (2012), p. 243-261; Afroditi Nikolaidou, Anna Poupou, «Κάποιες post-weird σκέψεις για το νέο κύμα του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου/Post-Weird Notes on the New Wave of Greek Cinema», *Non-Catalogue*, 58<sup>th</sup> Thessaloniki Film Festival, Thessaloniki 2017, p. 88-107; Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave*, op. cit. p. 29-51.

16. After 2009 and the emergence of the Weird/New Wave, historiographical approaches to Greek Cinema adopt a more trans-national perspective; they incorporate Greek Cinema into broader categories, such as Balkan and European Cinema; they tend to become polyphonic (see Lydia Papadimitriou, Yannis Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities*, Intellect, Bristol/Chicago 2012; Tonia Kazakopoulou, Mikela Fotiou (eds), *Contemporary Greek Film Cultures from 1990 to the Present*, Peter Lang, Oxford, New York 2017); they read the work of directors anew, introducing data from archival studies and placing them in the context of global movements and local artistic traditions (see Panayiota Mini, *Η κινηματογραφική μορφή του πόνου και της οδυνηρής αναπόλησης*, MIET, Athens 2018). Some still more focused approaches highlight disavowed aspects of Greek Cinema (see Konstantinos Kyriakos, *Επιθυμίες και πολιτική. Η queer ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου (1924-2016)*, Aigokeros, Athens 2017). For other recent examples of Greek Film Studies that adopt a decisively interdisciplinary approach, see also the *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* and *Filmicon: A Journal of Greek Film Studies*, as well as the discussion in Marios Psarras, *The Queer Greek Weird Wave: Ethics, Politics and the Crisis of Meaning*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2016 and Christos Dermentzopoulos, *Η επινόηση του τόπου. Νοσταλγία και μνήμη στην Πολιτική Κουζίνα*, Opportuna, Athens 2015.

idiom that has developed over the past fifteen years in Greece and about Greece. By following and systematising this trend, we understand that we actually need a contemporary and evolving *genealogy* of Greek Cinema more than we need a history and ethnography of Greek Cinema.

It is the right time to break through the traditional silos of Greek film history to shine a light on alternative connections, familiar genres in new contexts, forgotten narratives from the bottom or the fringes of the archive, the lost or disavowed achievements of a long twentieth century, without attempting to create a new canon, a new stagnant for what is called national film production.

How can we broaden the narrative? What, for example, would it mean to return to the Greek Cinema of the 1950s and 1960s without viewing it as “old” and “commercial”, and being ready to discuss questions relating to media politics and finances, global mobility and the mimicry dynamics of particular popular film genres (for example, musicals, comedies, films of social critique) or Greek society’s emotional over-investment in the image of certain of its stars? How would a feminist or queer perspective change the conversation on New Greek Cinema? What would new and detailed questions about the formation of the national/transnational in World Cinema in the first half of the twentieth century bring to Early Greek Cinema?

It is also worth rethinking not only the transnational but also the national characteristics of Greek Cinema in this way, by re-watching and re-screening films. We can see how, from the first silent productions and throughout its history, Greek Cinema has used national literary/cultural genres and texts (*Asterio/Aστέρω*, dir. D. Gaziadis, 1929); functioned as a broad field for reframing national history and addressing national trauma (*The Roundup/Το μπλόκο*, dir. A. Kyrou, 1965, and *The Travelling Players/Ο θίασος*, dir. Th. Angelopoulos, 1975); created extremely popular representations of the national narrative (*Papaflissas/Παπαφλέσσας*, dir. E. Andreou, 1971, and *Manto Mavrogenous/Μαντώ Μαυρογένους*, dir. K. Karagiannis, 1971); frequently subverted representations of the national narrative (*In the Time of the Greeks/Τον καιρό των Ελλήνων*, dir. L. Papastathis, 1981, *Alexander the Great/Μεγαλέξανδρος*, dir. Th. Angelopoulos, 1980); investigated the national and cultural archive (*100 Hours in May*, dir. D. Theos and F. Lambrinos; Z, dir. K. Gavras, 1969; *Mourning Rock/Αγέλαστος Πέτρα*, dir. F. Koutsaftis, 2001); made films that themselves become part of the national culture, the *lieux de memoire* to which we return and through which we express ourselves, such as *Stella/Στέλλα* (1955), dir. M. Cacoyannis, *The Ogre of Athens/Ο Δράκος* (1956), dir. N. Koundouros, and *Evdokia/Ευδοκία* (1971), dir. A. Damianos.

It is also worth our while to re-approach the cinematic topography of Hellenism—if by this term we mean not only the representation of landscape and place, but also a certain “cognitive mapping,” a way in which national subjects imagine

themselves on the world map through cinema. Crucial to this topography are the cinematic representations of Athens—from *Astero and the Adventures of Villar*, dir. J. Hepp (1924), to *A Neighbourhood Named "The Dream"/Συνοικία το όνειρο* (1961), dir. A. Alexandrakis and *From the Edge of the City/Από την άκρη της πόλης* (1998), dir. C. Giannaris—and the often contrasting filmic representations of the countryside, as in *Maddalena/Μανταλένα* (1960), dir. D. Dimopoulos, and *Fear/O φόβος* (1966), dir. K. Manoussakis. Cinema reveals the nation's geographical obsessions, traces the historical changes in its national space and mediates challenges in its formation as an imagined community.

Finally, we could also rethink how we define the connection between cinema and society, revisiting how certain issues are presented, judged and reframed, including emigration as in *Until the Ship Sails/...Μέχρι το πλοίο* (1966), dir. A. Diamianos; *Last Stop Kreuzberg/Τελευταίος σταθμός Κρόιτσμπεργκ* (1975), dir. G. Karypidis; migration to urban centres as in *The Heavy... Melon/Το βαρύ... πεπόνι* (1977), dir. P. Tasios; changes in the countryside as in *...Deserter/...λιποτάκτης* (1988), dir. G. Korras, C. Voupouras; social mobility and class as in *Face to Face/Πρόσωπο με πρόσωπο* (1966), dir. R. Manthoulis; gender and sexuality as in *From the Edge of the City/Από την άκρη της πόλης* (1998), dir. C. Giannaris; *Idées Fixes / Dies Irae (Variations on the Same Subject)* (1977), dir. A. Angelidi, and *Betty/Μπέττυ* (1979), dir. D. Stavrakas; counterculture as in *Sweet Bunch/Γλυκιά συμμορία* (1983), dir. N. Nikolaidis; collectives of resistance as in *Megara/Μέγαρα* (1974), dir. S. Maniatis, Y. Tsemberopoulos, and *Struggle of the Blind/O Αγώνας των Τυφλών* (1977), dir. M. Hatzimihali-Papaliou; changing moral codes as in *Anna's Engagement/Το προξενió της Άννας* (1972), dir. P. Voulgaris, and *John the Violent/Ιωάννης ο βίαιος* (1973), dir. T. Marketaki; the Greek family and its transformations as in *Fear/O φόβος* (1966), dir. K. Manoussakis; *The Shepherds of Disorder/Oι βοσκοί* (1967), dir. N. Papatakis; tradition, "modernisation" and tourism as in *Kiss the Girls/Κορίτσια για φίλημα* (1967), dir. G. Dalianidis, and *Theraic Dawn/Θηραϊκός όρθρος* (1967), dir. K. Sfikas, S. Tornes; and identity and difference as in *ROM* (1989), dir. M. Karamaghliolis, and *Athene/Αθήναι* (1995), dir. E. Stefani.

In the paragraphs above, we refer to specific topics and films which we discussed when we were selecting films for and preparing *Motherland, I See You*, in order to give a sense of how the curatorial team worked. These series of films, like their themes, could be extended *ad infinitum* (having read the paragraphs above, you are certain to think of other examples of films and themes, perhaps disagreeing with the ones we list here)—and this precisely was our goal: revisiting not only the films, but also the conversation between them. How do we *produce genealogies*? With this as a key question and goal, we also worked on putting together this book, a publication which we also wanted to propose as an alternative gesture towards the history of Greek Cinema. In the next and final section of this introduction, we will focus on the specific aspects of this book.

## From a Festival On the Move to an Open Book Project

Since the 1980s, the theory and practice of film histories around the world has largely ceased to be a history of directors, films and movements. The areas now examined no longer relate solely to the cinematic text, but instead include the production context, the reception, the study of the audience and the practice of cinema-going, as well as approaches to diverse spectators' interactive choices.<sup>17</sup> Aesthetic criticism and analysis today constitute just a small part of the whole, while a technological, economic and especially social and cultural film history focuses on medium-range research as well as a specific focus on new areas of knowledge. An even more recent turn in Film Studies links the personal and biographical with the social, the body and desire—in the way in which we interact with films—with their composition, highlighting the turn towards feeling, emotion and affect.<sup>18</sup>

The trends we are discussing seek neither a fixed and unchanging history of cinema nor a “total history”<sup>19</sup> which would try to establish once and for all the overall shape of the cinematic field through a multi-disciplinary approach and which would ultimately map a steady sequence of events that constellate in specific moments. Instead, rather than a total history, new approaches stand closer to a “general history,” one that takes a more genealogical approach to the “game of correlations and prevalences”<sup>20</sup> and views the “cinematic field” as a space in which events disperse and must be approached accordingly. Genealogy as a method does not seek origins, but rather an understanding of why forms appear at specific points in time; it may even study mistakes, wrong choices, unsuccessful or unfinished trajectories, tangents. As Michel Foucault tells us in another context, genealogy “must record the singularity of events beyond any monotonous finality,” “must seek them in the most unpromising places”, in spaces which may seem without history but are rich in emotions, affective attachments and possibilities.<sup>21</sup>

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17. Indicatively, see Robert C. Allen, Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice*, Knopf, New York 1985.

18. On feeling and affect in film, see, for example, Carl Plantinga, “Emotion and Affect,” Paisley Livingston, Carl Plantinga (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, Routledge, London, New York 2008, p. 86-96. Very useful more generally on the emotional/affective turn, and with references to the Greek cultural sphere, are the essays in Athena Athanasiou, Pothiti Hantzaroula, Kostas Yannakopoulos (eds), *Towards a New Epistemology: The “Affective” Turn*, special issue of *Historein* 8 (2008), and Eirini Avramopoulou (ed.), *Το συν-αίσθημα στο πολιτικό. Υποκειμενικότητες, ανισότητες και εξουσίες στον σύγχρονο κόσμο*, Nisos, Athens 2017.

19. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (in Greek, trans. Kostis Papagiorgis), Plethron, Athens 2017, p. 21.

20. Ibid.

21. Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault*

The book we made to accompany *Motherland, I See You* is inspired by this international turn towards a general, genealogical history and theory of cinema and expands on approaches that have already begun to appear in the context of Greek film studies. It started with the decision not to structure the volume around individual films or specific directors, even though the latter would have made it easier to read the plot of the films in a particular version of the programme.<sup>22</sup> Instead, we adopted from the outset a multi-perspectival and polyphonic approach which also deconstructs our own fixation with classic works, dates and time stamps. Our aim was neither to seek origins nor to propose a new canon; rather, we wanted to propose an open model for a multi-narrative history of a small national cinema, which would reflect the new trends in research and, as far as possible, raise new questions. How do you make a history that focuses not only on works but also on practices, that speaks not only of achievements, major events and certainties, but also of marginalisations, gaps, shortcomings and doubts?

In this volume, we have encouraged oblique approaches, connections which may appear incompatible but are fundamentally refreshing (for example, how actors shape the interpretive framework of a film, what a “national soundtrack” and a “national cinematic temporality” might entail) and original references. As a result, the perspective is sometimes macroscopic, shining a light on cinematic dominants, and sometimes microscopic, focusing on the minor event, a choice, a context (for instance, film publications and magazines), on a person or a moment.

We invited our contributors, therefore, to write short essays that each tell a story. To stimulate the sort of critical storytelling that we wanted, we used a device whose effectiveness we had witnessed elsewhere:<sup>23</sup> we asked the contributors to choose a date that would serve less as a milestone for what they wanted to say than as an occasion to rethink a certain event, theme, period, or sequence of films. The results, as you will see on the pages that follow, can often be surprising. For example, prompted by the date 30 December 1928, when the magazine *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* published an article entitled “Greek Films’ Greatest,” one of the essays (by Olga Kourelou) expounds on the first Greek women film stars, as well as on the concept of the star in Greek Cinema in general. Starting with the date 18 April 1966, when the film *Blood on the Land/Το χώμα βάφτηκε κόκκινο* was nominated for the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, Athena Kartalou-Aduku

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Reader, Pantheon, New York 1984, p. 76.

22. A useful collection of such plot summaries and credits is included as an epilogue to this book.

23. See Denis Hollier (ed.), *A New History of French Literature*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, London 1998, and the series of new literary histories that followed it from Harvard University Press.



explores the concept of genre in national cinema, while the date of Filopoulin Finos' funeral provides Anna Poupou with a springboard for an analysis of film production during the big studio era in which Finos was arguably the most important player: 25 April 1977, the date on which Betty Vakalidou, on the stage of a central Athenian theatre, read out the historical manifesto of trans sex-workers fighting discriminatory legislation on STDs, becomes the starting point for a short queer history of Greek Cinema (essay by Konstantinos Kyriakos). Starting with Pavlos Zannas' decision to translate Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* between 1968 and 1972, when he was imprisoned for anti-dictatorship activities, Kostis Kornetis writes about Greek Cinema during the dictatorship. Eirini Sifaki explains what another, seemingly "person-centred" moment in the 1970s—the appointment of Roviros Manthoulis as artistic director of the Greek State TV network ERT (1975)—actually meant: through him, we can see how the modes of audio-visual production were changing in Greece and appreciate television's now dominant role in the development of specific genres, as well as in changing the horizon of expectations that a large part of the audience had as they were transitioning from the long 1960s into the post-dictatorship era. Taking as its starting point the date on which the first Greek fiction-film-made-for-video was released, Ursula-Helen Cassavetes explains the socio-cultural significance of this short-lived genre for the 1980s, while Konstantinos Aivaliotis writes about the history of Greek documentary filmmaking by taking as his entry point November 1988, the month in which Andreas Pagoulatos organised "Cinema and Reality." A tense scene at the awards ceremony of the 1997 Thessaloniki Film Festival provides Kostas Peroulis with his way into the rivalry between "generations" in Greek Cinema, while Phevos Kallitsis reminds us of the closure of the Ellinikon Airport in Athens in 2001 as a symbol of the end of an era, while also discussing the management of urban public space and its dialogue with cinema.

This approach creates an "alternative" chronological canvas which *inter alia* seeks to highlight its fluidity as a core characteristic; the canvas can be extended in different directions in the future. In fact, it is actually the opposite of the sort of chronology that can be found in works of literary, cultural or film history in which a "historical timeline" is proposed and sometimes followed by—and/or printed alongside—the specialised "cultural timeline." In this more traditional arrangement, the timelines are presented as complete, and it is implied that socio-political Time (with a capital T) is a canvas on which the various developments in the cultural sphere are embroidered, as supplementary facets. Our chronology points in the opposite direction: artistic, economic or political events intersect in the pages that follow in an exercise in historical narrative which insists on showing that it is and will always remain incomplete, but also that, as a narrative, it is participatory; that it can evoke emotions, memories and counter-memories; and

that it is organised as a history of the present, which is to say that it is defined genealogically by the narrative's point of view.

These choices do not in any way imply an absence of concrete historiographical and analytical arguments; quite the contrary, in fact. In one of the volume's most personal texts, for example, Giorgos Sampatakakis focuses on the virtual absence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Greece as a subject, taking as his starting point a scene at the Thessaloniki Festival in which the director Alexis Bistikas played a lead role. Having constructed with his text what is essentially an unformed memory, Sampatakakis proceeds with a radical reading of Bistikas' most popular film, *Dawn/Το Χάραμα* (1994), through the prism of the memory of AIDS. The film, and a series of shots selected from it, are presented at the same time as a paradigm for the evocation of traumatic memory and as an indication of its absence. Presenting her own long-standing relationship with one of Zoi Laskari's lesser known and relatively underrated films, *Under the sign of Virgo/Στον αστερισμό της παρθένου* (1973), Vasiliki Lazaridou traces the importance of the embodied participation of both the star and the viewer in the production of meaning, narrative, networks of social participation and resistance, and—by means of this practice—a re-classification and re-evaluation of the film itself. Similarly, starting from the archive of feelings associated with a film and following not only its plot but also its “sensory and aesthetic modes,” Ioulia Mermigka shows in practice what a self-conscious and confident feminist look at the archive of Greek Cinema could entail. The feminist reading she proposes transcends the obvious social commentary of Tonia Marketaki's film *The Price of Love/Η τιμή της αγάπης* (1984) to reflect, instead, on the symbolic, archival, emotional and critical dynamics of the song *Love Has No Price/Τιμή δεν έχει η αγάπη*, in the film's opening and closing credits. Rather than letting the film as a whole guide her analysis of the instances of affective thickening and moments of explosive desire which the film documents (and provokes), Mermigka proposes that we do the opposite; that we provocatively rethink a queer feminist history of Greek Cinema based on these same affective thickenings and treat them not as omissions, obsessions or footnotes, but as profoundly historicising processes. Syllas Tzoumerkas does something similar when he takes a long, close look at three films by Michael Cacoyannis and Kostas Manoussakis. Based on specific scenes and an analysis that wishes to be simultaneously semiotic, emotional and sociological, Tzoumerkas, too, presents as a historiographical gesture his inclination to record beyond the “cartographically horizontal anatomy” of the films and to focus on the vertical ruptures that they provoke, “the cinematically transcendental, the Anarchic, the Unknown and Dizzying.”

We believe that essays such as these point the way to a history of the present for another reason, too: even though they are not often labelled as historiography,

they show ways of engaging with cinematic historiography which are extremely familiar to us. This is how, with gestures such as these, people who labour to create artistic works, to archive and to teach them, initiate a dialogue with the history of Greek Cinema as we speak, in the national everyday. Remember how you also are invited to revisit cinematic works today, triggered by a note on social media, by a podcast, or by an introduction before the special screening of a film. Emotional engagement, analysis which, over and above any horizontal mapping, is also moved by vertical investment, the sharing of our obsession with a scene, a soundtrack, a film, all these are not epistemological propositions made in a vacuum; they are the ways in which the history of cinema is being produced, constantly and with all of us in the picture, even more so today.

In conclusion, the essays that follow tell stories within the *longue durée* of Greek Cinema; a critical storytelling that raises questions and opens up frameworks for discussion: What does national cinema mean? Is the concept still functional and, more importantly, does it still hold up to inspection from a contemporary perspective? Curiously, several of the authors of this book, although they start with topics that could easily take them beyond the national context, end up stressing the staying importance of “national cinema” as an historical, analytical and (for some) aesthetic and psychosocial category (see the essays by Tsitsopoulou, Karalis and Hess). The importance of the “national public sphere” and the “national audience” is also noted (Dermentzopoulos, Mademli, Papa-georgiou and Phillis), alongside the significance of the communities of dialogue formed by critics and filmmakers (Walldén, Paradeisi and Kranakis) and of the time in the 1950s and 1960s when Greece became a “product for export” (Papadimitriou, Plantzos).

Stories of gendered radicalisation were often suppressed by the official history; but might they not have been present in more covert acts and in specific audiences’ reaction? The essays by Kourelou, Sampatakakis, Vassilopoulos, Kyr-iakos and Mermigka reveal just how complex a question this is, as well as providing new ways of answering it. What is the impact on our historical/analytical viewpoint every time we reconsider cinema as an industry with vertical and horizontal growth, an industry defined by institutions and by techno-economic developments, an industry subject not only to political control, but also to practices which generate debate, and of course an industry in constant synergy with other cultural industries such as the mass media, television and print? The texts by Venaki, Panagiotopoulos, Kouki, Mademli, Chalkou, Sifaki, Cassavetes and Aivaliotis provide specific examples. They reveal the new dynamics which the intersecting histories of technical and audio-visual developments, literary and cultural trends, the history of institutions and censorship, as well as sociological research can bring to film history.

As with the discussions following films screened in the main iterations of the *Motherland, I See You* programme, so too with the book written to accompany this project, the themes and axes began to multiply as the texts came in. This volume can therefore be seen as a history-in-progress that understands and shows how much it can only exist in the plural. As a festival on the move, and now also as an open and ongoing book project, *Motherland, I See You* cannot, in other words, fail to demonstrate how its title is also a grammatical oxymoron: three singulars which, once they are strung together in the context of archive trouble, immediately make you realise that they remain anything but singular. You start with the “motherland” and realise how much it has already proliferated by the end of that “I see you.” How many and how diverse the takes on that Motherland become, how different and multiple the conceptualisations, the narratives and desires, the projections and the perspectives. *Motherlands... we see you.*

# 4 November 1913

*The Battle of Dzhumaya*  
is released in Athenian theatres

## **Greek Balkan War Diplomacy Meets the Pre-History of the Feature-Length Documentary, or How Greece Found a Place in Early Film History**

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IN THE mid-1990s, the Pacific Film Archive at the University of California at Berkeley received a weathered case containing six reels of original tinted nitrate film from a San Francisco-based donor who wished to remain anonymous. The case was sent for storage to the UCLA Film & Television Archive where it caught the interest of film preservationist Blaine Bartell, who identified its contents as a 1913 non-fiction film related to the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. Since the print was not American-produced or readily recognizable as (film-)historically significant, it remained ineligible for preservation-restoration work for decades based on donor-determined priorities. A funding opportunity arose on the print's centenary just in time for the 2013 UCLA Festival of Preservation where it premiered under the title *With the Greeks in the Firing Line*.<sup>1</sup> The print contains re-edited material of two different subjects, only one of which, corresponding approximately to the first 1,184 m (3,875 ft) and lacking opening credits, was originally copyrighted for US distribution under the title given to the entire restoration. The remaining part (260 m/856 ft) is a rescued “orphan” in film archival parlance—that is, a work abandoned by its owner or copyright holder.<sup>2</sup> A version of the content of *With the Greeks* screened in the UK and

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1. The print was photochemically preserved, restored and digitised in 2013, with the support of the Packard Humanities Institute and the Stanford Theatre Film Laboratory.

2. The rubric “orphan” is relatively new in film studies, although it has been in use since the early 1990s among archivists faced with limited film preservation funding, exploding stocks

other English-speaking markets under the same title, starting in November 1913. Other versions were advertised in German-speaking areas as *Mit der Kamera in der Schlachtfrent/With the Camera in the Battlefront* and in France as *Sous la Mitraille/Under Shellfire*. The same month, another version was screened in Athens as *The Battle of Dzhumaya/H Máxi της Τζουμαγιάς*.

The UCLA festival programme note, which is based on German film scholarship, referred to the entire print as “a German war documentary,”<sup>3</sup> a nationalisation that is contestable, as I will argue. Indeed, the registered US copyright holders of *With the Greeks* were the German production company Express-Films Co. and its representative, Robert Schwobthaler. However, in its multi-national versions *With the Greeks in the Firing Line* is as much a part of early Greek film history as it is of early German film history, for reasons that go beyond film history. The San Francisco print is also a part of early American film history because, in its extant form, it is the product of a re-edition of unknown date that was addressed specifically to Greek-American audiences, and its screenings likely continued well past early 1914 when the copyrighted *With the Greeks* debuted in the US. The same factors that complicate the national attribution of the print do, however, validate the designation of *With the Greeks* as a documentary. The documentary, as the long-form genre that we would recognize today, is not supposed to have begun its evolution until after the beginning of World War I.

The specific circumstances that dictated the length, content and formal organisation of *With the Greeks* coincided with the declining profitability of short non-fiction films, which were Express-Films’ specialty and the mainstay of film production and exhibition in Germany and Europe overall before the 1910s.<sup>4</sup> The sensational content and previously unheard-of length of *With the Greeks* were ideally suited for exploitation under the newly introduced exclusive-rights system (*monopolfilm*). The *monopolfilm* system aimed at boosting producers’ profits

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of decaying, endangered celluloid holdings and a new international regime in intellectual property law. For narrow and broad definitions of “film orphanhood” and their implications, see the resources on the website of the Orphan Film Symposium, available at: <https://www.sc.edu/filmsymposium/orphanfilm.html>. Expanded definitions of the archival orphan include works that fall into unclaimed or contested areas of film heritage beyond the legal boundaries of copyright and public domain.

3. Jan-Christopher Horak, “From the Director,” *UCLA Festival of Preservation 16*, unpaginated; Blaine Bartell, “With the Greeks in the Firing Line 1913,” p. 28. In the synopsis the producer is mistakenly identified as Cherry Kearton. See also Jan-Christopher Horak, “With the Greeks in the Firing Line 1913”, (22 April 2013), available at: <https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/blogs/archival-spaces/2013/04/22/greeks-firing-line-1913>

4. Corinna Müller, *Frühe deutsche Kinematographie: Formale, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Entwicklungen, 1907-1912*, Metzler, Stuttgart 1994, p. 121-158.

through longer films, usually fiction, with special marketing potential, like the wildly popular German and Danish dramas starring Asta Nielsen. Marketed as a *monop-olfilm*, *With the Greeks* became Express-Films' greatest financial success.<sup>5</sup> It was a good investment: the Greek government as the purchaser of the company's services paid for travel expenses and bought positive prints at 1.64 Deutschmark per meter. Express-Films kept the negative, reserving exclusive rights over all filmed material, and made separate agreements with theatre owners and distributors, both in Greece and internationally, for exclusive sale or rental. This would explain the expensive ticket prices charged by the manager of Modern-Cinéma on the central square of Athens, where *The Battle of Dzhumaya*/Η Μάχη της Τζουμαγίδς premiered.<sup>6</sup>

*With the Greeks* is structured around an exposition of Bulgarian violations of The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 in the Greco-Bulgarian war over Macedonia in summer of 1913 (Second Balkan War). Articulated both spatially and chronologically, the exposition relies on intertitles and images to carry a dual evidentiary function: to establish the causes of the conflict, by documenting the violations that preceded the official hostilities, and to demonstrate the war's devastating effects. As Tom Gunning noted in a much-quoted essay, the transition from actualities<sup>7</sup> to the documentary is marked by a "move from films conceived as a look to a film form which embedded its images in a larger argument and used

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5. Uli Jung, Martin Loiperdinger (eds), *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland: Kaiserreich, 1895-1918*, Haus des Dokumentarfilms/Philipp Reclam jun., Stuttgart 2005, p. 374-380.

6. The press listed ticket prices ranging from 2.20 to 1.50 Drachmas for first- and second-class seats to 1.10 Drachmas for children. See *Estífa*, 1 November 1913, p. 2. On the same newspaper page, a newly opening cinema with an orchestra on *Odó Patissón*, a major Athenian street, advertised ticket prices for other shows at 0.40-0.60 Drachmas. The Modern-Cinéma, run by M. Embéoglou, was housed in a theatre known as *Théatron Kivélis* or *Syndérmatos* which doubled as a movie house. It was located on Constitution Square (*Plateá Syndérmatos*) at no. 3 *Mitropóleos* Street.

7. From the 1890s to the 1910s, filmed news or current events (*actualités*) and other early non-fiction genres grew from a single shot lasting from under a minute to several minutes (30 m/160 ft shot at a frame rate of 16-24 frames per second is an approximate baseline) to multi-shot sequences of increasing length and duration (up to 300 m/1,000 ft, or one reel). The latter length corresponded to 11 minutes of viewing time at 24 fps or 16 minutes at 16 fps. Filming and projection speeds were variable and could be as low as 12 fps. Films were sold or rented by the metre/foot. Until the early 1900s editing was minimal and most often done directly in the negative, by simply stopping and resuming filming after repositioning the heavy cameras or maintaining the same placement. Stationary tilting and panning or placing the camera in a moving vehicle were the standard camera movements. In the 1910s, cuts became more frequent.

those images as evidence to substantiate or intensify its discourse.”<sup>8</sup> Early actualities and other non-fiction genres adhered to an aesthetic of the “view.” They focused on visual access to places, events, activities and performances, inviting the spectator to look for the sake of curiosity, novelty or pleasure. The move from the “view” to the documentary, according to Gunning, becomes discernible in World War I propaganda films, which utilised “a strongly discursive arrangement of image and text [intertitles]” to formulate arguments about the conduct of the war based on the evidentiary power of the image.<sup>9</sup> They sought to prove or disprove claims of destruction inflicted on enemy or home territory by using images as evidence. It is not surprising, Gunning adds, that war would force the transition from the “view” to the documentary. As it turns out, it was a Balkan war and not World War I that did it.

The San Francisco print was shaped by multiple competing pressures at different points in time, something that distinguishes it from the tightly controlled World War I “government films” (Gunning’s wording) produced by the Great Powers. These pressures were inherent to the subaltern position of Greece and the other warring parties in the Balkan Wars vis-à-vis the Great Powers; they are manifest in the discontinuous and fragmented commissioning history of both components of the print, their non-chronological ordering in the re-edition, and in each component’s formal and thematic organisation. In particular, Great Power arbitration at the London Conference (from December 1912 to January 1913, and May 1913) fostered a climate of deference and uncertainty that endured throughout the film-planning and film-making process and well beyond. The London Conference inserted overarching imperial priorities into the ongoing regional conflict and rendered Greek military and naval successes more precarious. On top of the vague footing of the Balkan Alliance, the arbitration process manufactured and amplified additional differences between the various factions within the Greek political system and its two main poles: the crown and elected government. The traditional orientation of Greek foreign policy towards France and Britain did not produce guarantees that Greek gains against the Ottoman Empire would be secure in the face of Italian and Austro-Hungarian priorities.<sup>10</sup> Although

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8. Tom Gunning, “Before Documentary: Early Nonfiction Films and the ‘View’ Aesthetic,” Jonathan Kahana (ed.), *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016, p. 60.

9. Ibid.

10. Italy and Austria-Hungary were opposed to the Greek annexation of parts of Ottoman Albania (“Northern Epirus”) captured by the Greek army. All six powers of the Concert of Europe also reserved the final say over the fate of the North Aegean islands captured by the Greek Navy. Italy had just finished its own war against the Ottoman Empire (“Guerra Italo-Turca”, 1911-1912) capturing Libya and the ethnic-Greek-inhabited Dodecanese Islands.



the government under Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos continued to cast its lot with the French and British, the Germanophile segments of the Greek political and military elite, which were clustered around Crown Prince Constantine, brother-in-law of Kaiser Wilhelm II, increasingly began to look to Germany, a traditional supporter of the Ottoman Empire, as an intercessor. Express-Films entered the picture with the ascension of Constantine to the throne, after the less polarising King George I had been assassinated in Thessaloniki. Greek Foreign Ministry personnel, members of the delegation to the London Conference and various public figures closely associated with Constantine, both in civilian life and in his role as Commander-General of the Greek Army, were actively involved at every stage of the film's production.<sup>11</sup> Some were also captured by the camera.

The choice of Express-Films was tantamount to outsourcing Greek diplomacy to a private firm that was keenly engaged in German dynastic self-promotion. Express-Films advertised its actualities with the slogan "Hoist the German flag in your German theatre,"<sup>12</sup> had a long record in helping make the Kaiser "Germany's first film star"<sup>13</sup> and enjoyed a special relationship with the Hohenzollern dynasty.<sup>14</sup> Greece's Glücksburg princes, particularly Constantine and his younger brother Nikolaos, had numerous opportunities to notice Kaiser Wilhelm and his family's status as national—and "nationalising"—media personalities and their active patronage of the cinematograph to promote their image. The "Kaiser cult in film," which likely appealed to Constantine's autocratic tendencies, included actualities which were filmed in Corfu, where both the Hohenzollerns and the Glücksburgs had summer residences. The two families would have socialised and conducted informal diplomacy during their time together on the island. This is also where Robert Isidor Schwobthaler comes into the picture, well before 1913 when he joined Express-Films. Schwobthaler had been marketing travel films since 1904-1905, in partnership with the British cameraman Charles Raleigh, through their company,

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11. The Diplomatic & Historical Archive Service/Υπηρεσία Διπλωματικού και Ιστορικού Αρχείου of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ΥΔΙΑ) holds a folder of documents related to the commissioning of Express-Films. See «Κινηματογράφος 1913», folder no. 53, subfolder no. 8, Central Service/Κεντρική Υπηρεσία, 1913. Also available in digital form with accreditation.

12. Jung, Loiperdinger, *ibid.* p. 243.

13. *Ibid.* p. 253-268. See also Martin Loiperdinger, "The Kaiser's Cinema: An Archeology of Attitudes and Audiences," in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *A Second Life: German Cinema's First Decades*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 1996, p. 41-50.

14. Wolfgang Dittrich, "Fakten und Fragmente zur Freiburger Filmproduktionsgeschichte, 1901-1918", *Journal Film* 32 (1998), p. 100-109. Also available, with updates, at: <https://www.freiburg-postkolonial.de/Seiten/Dittrich-Film.htm> [15 July 2021].

Raleigh & Robert, based in Paris.<sup>15</sup> These films included at least one *Korfulfilm*.<sup>16</sup>

The San Francisco print in its entirety is heavily indebted to the *Kaiserfilme* and to another genre in which Express-Films and R&R specialised—that is, ethnographic expedition films. This was a variant of the travel film that took advantage of expeditions to remote colonial zones to collect marketable meterage of native peoples and wild nature, giving a scientific-educational veneer to the colonial project while boosting film companies' respectability. The influence of the *kaiserfilme* is more dominant in the orphan segment of uncertain source that closes the print. It follows a victory tour of the new crown prince, George, to Epirus including those parts ("Northern Epirus") that the London Conference eventually reserved for the projected Principality of Albania. It was a tour that the Greek Foreign Ministry was originally planning for Express-Films to shoot, as the archived correspondence shows. Unable to spare a camera operator, Express-Films engaged a former R&R associate, Odo Deodatus Tauern, an amateur ethnographer from Freiburg.<sup>17</sup> Tauern, however, never arrived in Epirus and was not involved in filming prince George's tour. Schwobthaler's participation in the orphan segment is also highly unlikely. His involvement with Express-Films only began in mid-July 1913, during the Greco-Bulgarian war.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, the formal

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15. Schwobthaler came from near Freiburg, where Express-Films was based. R&R and Express-Films had been distributing each other's films since the latter had been founded in 1910 by cameraman Bernhard Gotthart. Before starting Express-Films, Gotthart was a founding partner of Welt-Kinematograph, another Freiburg-based film company specialising in actualities and other non-fiction genres. See Jung, Loiperdinger and Dittrich, op. cit. Gotthart's name appears in Express-Films' Greek correspondence.

16. In 1908, R&R filmed or edited an actuality of the Kaiser and his family at the Achilleion in Corfu: *Die Ankunft der Kaiserlichen Familie auf Korfu/The Arrival of the Imperial Family in Corfu*. The same year the company also released *Auf Korfu/In Corfu* and *Die Perle des Jonischen Meeres/The Pearl of the Ionian Sea*. See Jung, Loiperdinger, op. cit. p. 317. All three titles probably included the same 140-m material marketed as a *kaiserfilm* and as travel films. It was common practice at the time for film companies to re-market the same actuality under different titles/non-fiction genres.

17. Tauern, who was affiliated with the ethnographic museum in Freiburg, participated in an expedition to Dutch Indonesia and provided filmed material for the R&R film *Sitten und Gebräuche der Sakais, der Ureinwohner der Berge Malakkas/Manners and Customs of the Sakais, the Indigenous People of the Mountains of Malacca*, Raleigh, Robert, 1911. In 1913, the same film was re-edited and re-sold under different titles by Express-Films. Jung, Loiperdinger, *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*, p. 189.

18. The communications between Express-Films and the Greek Foreign Ministry extended from April through late June/early July 1913, well past Prince George's tour had taken place (mid-June 1913), interestingly, without registering any awareness that the planning had become obsolete. Neither Schwobthaler nor his assistant, the cameraman Albert Herr, are ever mentioned in the correspondence.

features of the ethnographic-expeditionary film are evident in both the victory tour film and *With the Greeks*.

In *With the Greeks*, Schwobthaler incorporated himself into the film, both visually and textually, as a privileged German ethnographic and military witness chosen by Constantine to convey the film's diplomatic message to the Kaiser and to Germany. The first image of the print is a written permit from the General Staff addressed to "all military authorities," informing them that "Messrs. Schwobthaler and Herr" are proceeding to the General Headquarters "on special Assignment" and inviting them to "provide every assistance."<sup>19</sup> It is followed by shots of two telegrams from Schwobthaler to Express-Films announcing the departure to the front from the German Consulate in Thessaloniki, the royal permission and the facilitation by Prince Nikolaos.<sup>20</sup> "Living pictures" of Schwobthaler and Herr on location wearing pith helmets—the visual trademark of expeditionary ethnographers and explorers of non-European native lands in early travel films—are interpolated into the visual-textual argumentative flow of the sequences.

These interpolations are the semiotic equivalent of the "German look" embedded in the visual field. A telling example is the shot sequence from Constantine's campaign headquarters in Libounovo (Levunovo). The establishing shot is of Schwobthaler crossing the frame in the foreground after making a brief sign to a passing soldier. When Constantine emerges from the building, the intertitles notify us that His Majesty is about to enter "in conversation with the German military attaché, Captain [Hauptman] Cunze."<sup>21</sup> A medium-long shot of the two men talking in private follows.<sup>22</sup> The German civilian and military observers are linked to each other in opening and closing the only sequence that features Constantine. Another notable example of the interpolated-embedded German look involves a frontal shot of an evzone displaying his attire to the spectator, with Schwobthaler stepping into the frame to offer the subject a cigarette. Schwobthaler's presence in the shot adds a physical anthropology dimension to the image, as it demonstrates by comparison the short stature of the evzone. There is also a long, inserted studio shot of Schwobthaler dramatically directing Herr's look off screen, while the latter squints in feigned concentration. The insert, which

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19. This is the Greek text of the permit as it appears on screen. The English intertitle inflates and embellishes: "Translation. 'Permit issued by the Greek War Office authorising the camera-men to circulate freely over the whole battlefield and to enter the firing-line.'"

20. The date of the telegrams is in code and cannot be verified.

21. English intertitle.

22. Captain Cunze's visit to observe the destruction left behind by the Bulgarian army was pre-arranged, and the Greek press was made aware of it. See «Το ενδιαφέρον του Κάιζερ διά τους βουλγαρισμούς», *Ακρόπολις* (12 August 1913), p. 3.

opens the battle sections of the film, singles out Schwobthaler as the leading and knowing observer.

In the above paragraphs, I tried to suggest some of the ways in which the print of *With the Greeks in the Firing Line* intersects with and modifies early non-fiction film history based on new information provided by Greek archival sources. As a historical artefact, the print complicates the dual genealogy of the feature-length documentary, which attaches particular significance to *The Battle of the Somme* (1916) and *Nanook of the North* (1922), and it changes the international configuration at the genre's origins.<sup>23</sup> The framing of the restoration in the published archival notes has prioritised the German origins and authorship of the entire print. Close scrutiny, however, especially in light of the chronology of the Greek correspondence and the firmly datable and identifiable print segments, does not support an unqualified attribution. As it stands, the print reflects early film production, marketing and exhibition practices, which allowed for multiple re-editing of variously sourced material. But if conception, funding, subject-matter and content organisation are measures of nationality, *With the Greeks* should be considered the earliest surviving Greek non-fiction film. On the bi-national balance sheet, even the incorporation of the German ethnographic gaze confirms more than it denies the film's Greekness. *With the Greeks* is an incredibly rich text, both filmically and historically, and it deserves further screening and research.<sup>24</sup>

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23. Joshua Glick, Charles Musser, "Documentary's *Longue Durée*: Reimagining the Documentary Tradition", *World Records Journal* 2 (2018), available at: <https://vols.worldrecords-journal.org/02/04>.

24. The restoration was first screened in Greece at the amphitheatre of the Gennadius Library-American School of Classical Studies at Athens, on 5 February 2019, in digital format. I introduced the screening and provided live voice-over narration. I also conducted the second and last Greek screening at the Arachova Ethnographic Museum on 19 September 2019.

# 30 December 1928

*Film Star/Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* publishes  
the article “Greek Films’ Greatest”

## Greek Film Stardom: A Foreign and Female Affair

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FROM THE START, film stardom developed in Greece as a foreign and gendered notion. Early Greek Cinema drew its actors mainly from vaudeville, since the general negative view towards the nascent film production in the 1910s and 1920s prevented leading dramatic stage actors from migrating to the screen.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the first Greek “picture personalities”<sup>2</sup> were comedians: Spiros Dimitrakopoulos, otherwise called Spiridion after his screen persona, who produced, wrote and starred in the first shorts to be filmed in Greece; Kimon Spathopoulos; Nikos Sfakianos or Sfakianakis, also known by his screen character, Villar; and Mihail Mihail. These actors were already established as popular comedians of variety shows. However, instead of bringing to the cinema types and performance styles developed in Greek revue and operetta, they built their images on foreign film models. Specifically, Dimitrakopoulos modelled his Spiridion persona on Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle due to their physical resemblance; Sfakianakis’s Villar was inspired by Mack Sennett,<sup>3</sup> while Spathopoulos and Mihail competed for the title of “Greece’s Charlot.”

Of these, Mihail Mihail is the most significant, as the existing evidence suggests that he was Greece’s first film star (although, except for Vrasidas Karalis,

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1. Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, “Silent Greek Cinema: In Search of Academic Recognition,” Lydia Papadimitriou, Yannis Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities*, Intellect, Bristol, Chicago 2012, p. 122-123.

2. Here I employ the term in the way in which Richard deCordova uses it in *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America*, University of Urbana, Urbana 1990.

3. Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, Continuum, New York, London 2012, p. 11.

historians of Greek Cinema do not acknowledge him as such). Like Spiridion and Villar, Mihail acquired considerable fame based on a recognizable comic identity, which was built on his amusing, repetitive name and which was recycled in his films' titles and contents—for example, in *Mihail is Broke/ Ο Μιχαήλ δεν έχει ψιλά* (Likourgos Kalapothakis, 1923). What distinguished Mihail, however, from the other early film protagonists was that his identity circulated not only intra- but also extra-textually. Writer, producer and star of his films, Mihail was very proactive in his self-promotion: he invariably invited journalists to his shoots and notified newspapers about his films' screenings; he publicly proclaimed himself the “King of Laughter” or “The Greek Charlot”; and he even wrote an autobiography.<sup>4</sup>

What is more, the discourse around his professional identity in publicity material was combined with information about his personal life. Andreas Dimitriadis observes that, in his attempts to further “imitate” his Hollywood counterparts, Mihail leaked stories in the press about his personal life in which he appeared “constantly in love, preferably with a well-known female protagonist.”<sup>5</sup> Concetta Moschou, his first co-star, is the female lead with whom he was mostly known to be associated. Mihail's romantic involvement with her not only developed on screen in two consecutive films—*Concetta's Love Saves Mihail/Ο έρωας της Κοντσέτας σώζει τον Μιχαήλ* (Likourgos Kalapothakis, 1924) and *Mihail and Concetta's Marriage/Ο Γάμος του Μιχαήλ και της Κοντσέτας* (Likourgos Kalapothakis, 1924)—but it was also replayed off-screen, with Mihail confirming rumours of their love affair despite Moschou's claims to the contrary. Notwithstanding its validity, this story is important for it reveals one of the key aspects of stardom, which, as Richard deCordova argues, was in fact what gave rise to the star phenomenon in America in the early 1910s: the duality between an actor's public and private image.<sup>6</sup> Hence, Mihail exhibiting the traits of Hollywood stardom, coupled with the fact that all first Greek film stars constructed their image on Hollywood models (such as Arbuckle, Sennett and Chaplin), suggests that film stardom was perceived as foreign—although, as we will see shortly, the tradition of the star was not alien to Greek culture, and predated cinema.

This view is further supported by the very terminology used in Greek film writing. Unlike his Hollywood equivalent, Charlie Chaplin, Mihail was not referred to as a star but as an actor. *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ*, one of the earliest and the longest-running Greek film journal, tended to designate Greek actors as *kallitehnis* (artist), *protagonistis* (protagonist) and *diasimos ithopios* (famous actor), while it re-

4. Andreas Dimitriadis, «Ο ηθοποιός Μιχαήλ Μιχαήλ», Christina Adamou (ed.), *Ο ηθοποιός ανάμεσα στη σκηνή και στην οθόνη*, Kastaniotis, Athens 2008, p. 217-218.

5. Ibid. p. 220.

6. DeCordova, *Picture Personalities*, op. cit.

served the title “star” for foreign actors, especially those coming from Hollywood. The few times when the word “star” was used in relation to Greek actors, it had two dimensions. On the one hand, it was used sarcastically. With the appearance of the first organised film companies around 1927 (such as Dag Films and Ajax Films), *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* published a number of advertisements and articles about auditions, film acting schools and contests for the discovery of Greek stars. These, however, tended to be accompanied by condescending remarks berating Greek amateurs’ “stardom craze,”<sup>7</sup> at a time when “film production was virtually non-existent.”<sup>8</sup>

These remarks are understandable considering both the nature of the publication and the status of Greek Cinema. In her examination of *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ*’s role in the creation of early Greek film culture, Vassiliki Tsitsopoulou sees the magazine’s championing of Euro-American movie imports as the product of “a cultural logic that naturalises the core-periphery relationship” at the heart of coloniality.<sup>9</sup> In this light, the singling out of foreign stars over the indigenous “amateurs” is in line with the magazine’s general “phobic”<sup>10</sup> attitude towards Hollywood, emanating from Greek culture’s traditional peripheral status vis-à-vis the European and American core. This attitude must have been strengthened by the fact that, far from being the functional institution that it had become in technologically advanced nations, cinema in Greece was an underdeveloped enterprise; its lack of funds and infrastructure made it heavily dependent on other countries for the final production of its films (films had to be sent to Germany or Egypt for post-production).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, if cinema had not yet become a national institution, then how could stars be viewed as such? It was not until the post-war era with the emergence of a robust national film industry that stardom became “nationalised”—epitomised by “our national star”, Aliki Vougiouklaki.

On the other hand, if not mockingly, in the Greek context the term “star” was used in relation to women. In *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ*, it was generally female screen actresses who were called stars. Indicative of this is an article published on 30 December 1928, titled “Greek Films’ Greatest [Αἱ πρῶται τῶν ἐλληνικῶν ταινιῶν]”, in which the feminine grammatical ending of the adjective “πρῶται”

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7. Vion Papamihailis, «Τὰ πρόσωπα τοῦ ἀστέρος (The Qualities of a Star)», *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* (20 March 1927), p. 3.

8. Anon. «Κινηματογραφική Εβδομάς (Weekly Film News)», *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* (2 January 1927), p. 25-26.

9. Vassiliki Tsitsopoulou, “Coloniality and Early Greek Film Culture”, Lydia Papadimitriou, Yannis Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities*, Intellect, Bristol, Chicago 2012, p. 76.

10. Ibid. p. 90.

11. Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. 31.

points directly to the gender identity of the “greatest” in Greek Cinema.<sup>12</sup> Here, the prolific female film critic Iris Skaraveou hailed the fact that the new year would see the release of several Greek films. Yet, instead of discussing the films themselves, Skaraveou focused on the films’ stars, considering only the female ones whom she favourably compared to their American and French counterparts by praising them for their unpretentiousness and intellect.

In particular, there exists evidence of two actresses who were designated as stars. The first one was Frida Poupelina, the wife and muse of one of Early Greek Cinema’s pioneers, Ahilleas Madras. Poupelina was even labelled a “Hollywood star” because of her work there before her move to Greek Cinema, even though she only appeared in bit parts in American films.<sup>13</sup> The second actress was Mary Sayanou. According to most historical accounts of Greek Cinema as well as industry professionals’ memoirs, Sayanou is considered to be the first Greek film star.<sup>14</sup> In her history of Greek Cinema, Aglaia Mitropoulou claims that Sayanou became Greece’s first star after the enormous success of her second starring role in *Kiss me Maritsa/Φίλησέ με Μαρίτσα* (Dimitris Gaziadis, 1931).<sup>15</sup> However, according to an article in *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ*, Sayanou was already being called a star after her first film appearance in *Away from the World/Μακριά απ’ τον κόσμο* (Dimitris Tsakiris, 1930), celebrated for her beauty, unique *photogénie* (which in Greek implies one’s ability to photograph well) and spontaneous acting—elements that were all considered extremely well-suited for cinema.<sup>16</sup>

The predilection for associating stardom with female actresses may be understood in light of the tradition of *vedettismos*, a term that refers to female theatrical stardom in Greece. Stemming from the theatrical French term *vedette*, meaning a prominent person, a Greek *vedetta* denotes a female protagonist. Theatre historians are unanimous in their view of stardom as quintessentially female. As the theatre director Alexis Solomos has noted, “our theatrical life has always been dominated by the system of the beehive. Women have been the queens of the market and the generators of entertainment.”<sup>17</sup> Likewise, in *Womenocracy*

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12. Iris Skaraveou, «Αι πρώται των ελληνικών ταινιών (Greek Films’ Greatest)», *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* (30 December 1928), p. II.

13. Ο Argos, «Κινηματογραφικής Εβδομάς (Weekly Film News)», *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* (20 May 1928), p. 10.

14. Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Papazisis, Athens 2006, p. 79; Yorgos Lazaridis, *Φλας Μπακ: Μια ζωή σινεμά*, Nea Sinora, Athens 1999, p. 128.

15. Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, p. 79.

16. Iris Skaraveou, «Η εμφάνιση της Κ. Σαγιάνου στο φιλμ (Mrs Sayanou’s Appearance on Film)», *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* (16 February 1930), p. I.

17. Reference found in Markos D. Freris, «Το φαινόμενο της ‘Μεγάλης πρωταγωνίστριας’» (The Phenomenon of the ‘Great Female Protagonist’), Vassilis Panayotopoulos (ed.), *Για τη*



[Γυναικοκρατία], a book devoted to Greece's leading stage protagonists, Marinos Kousoumidis justifies his focus on female actors on the grounds that "it was women who became idolised, [...] constructing around them a mythic aura and the fabulous tradition of the 'vedetta.'" <sup>18</sup> The conflation of *vedettismos* with femininity can be seen as originating from the general sexualisation of acting and stardom, which have traditionally carried such "feminine" connotations as narcissism, spectacle and objectification. For instance, echoing this habitual assumption, Guy Austin draws a connection between grammatical gender and star image, arguing that in French "stars are feminine (*la star* or *la vedette*)," because acting "is a profession of display, and hence ranks as ornamental, a masquerade, and no job for a 'real' man." <sup>19</sup> Although the grammatical argument can be taken only so far, given that in French *la star* and *la vedette* are used for both men and women whereas in Greek *to asteri* is neuter, Austin's observation is pertinent to the Greek context: in Greek, *vedetta* only applied to women, thus pointing precisely to the traditional association of stardom with femininity within Greek culture.

While the term *vedetta* gradually became obsolete (and ended up being used pejoratively to denote a capricious female star), the legacy of *vedettismos* remained. *Vedettismos* has been primarily characterised by a duality—that is, an antagonism between two leading *vedettes*. <sup>20</sup> This began in the nineteenth century with the emergence of the "first Greek idols," <sup>21</sup> Evangelia Paraskevopoulou and Ekaterini Veroni. It continued in the twentieth century with the antagonism between Greek theatre's *grandes dames*, Marika Kotopouli and Kyveli, and then with the competition between Eleni Papadaki and Katina Paxinou during the interwar years. The last time that *vedettismos* became reanimated was in the post-war era, through the rivalry between the "blonde" Aliko Vougiouklaki and the "brunette" Tzeni Karezi. This rivalry, however, was acted out primarily on the screen rather than on the stage, as during the 1960s and 1970s (the so-called "Greek Studio System" years) cinema had overtaken the theatre as the most popular form of entertainment, whose main attraction was its stars.

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Μαρίκα Κοτοπούλη και το θέατρο στην Ερμούπολη: Πρακτικά Συμποσίου, Ερμούπολη Σύρου, August 1994, Kedro Neoellinikon Erevnon Ethnikou Idrimatos Erevnon, Athens 1996, p. 41.

18. Marinos Kousoumidis, *Γυναικοκρατία στο θέατρο*, Yannis V. Vasdekis, Athens 1984, p. 9.

19. Guy Austin, *Stars in Modern French Film*, Arnold, London 2003, p. 48.

20. Freris, "The Phenomenon of the 'Great Female Protagonist'", op. cit. p. 31.

21. Yannis Sideris, *Ιστορία του Νέου Ελληνικού Θεάτρου 1794-1944*, Kastaniotis, Athens 2000, p. 187.



22 April 1929

Dimitris Gaziadis' *Astero* premieres  
at Splendid Cinema in Athens

## The Construction of Cinematic Temporality

**Vrasidas Karalis**

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**W**HEN did Greeks form their specific cinematic perspective? How was it constructed and by whom? The answer is both simple and complicated, pertaining to the changes in the visual regimes of making and perceiving first photographic and then cinematic images in general. Certainly, it was a long process of collective efforts in interconnected stages replete with contradictions, affirmations and setbacks. It had already started in nineteenth-century painting, with the conscious attempt to create dynamic images by detaching them from the hieratic and static immobility of Byzantine iconography and naïve pictoriality of folk artists.

The American poet Vachel Lindsay noticed first a distinct Greek visual mood, as he called it, in “the photoplay of painting-in-motion” in one of the earliest studies of cinematic poetics, pointing out that “[h]ere is a picture of Mary Pickford as Fanchon the Cricket. She is in the cottage with the strange old mother. I have seen a painting in this mood by the Greek Nikolas Gysis.”<sup>1</sup> The main representative of the Munich School in Greece, Nikolaos Gyzis (1842-1901), introduced his impressionistic chromatic style of blurring contours and figures, using pictorial space as the locus for the fleeting emergence of disembodied abstractions. In contrast to the inner radiance of forms in Byzantine iconography, he discovered that the human face was a hybrid space of light and darkness: it was not illuminated from within, but it received light from outside. Hence, the question of pictorial

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1. Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture*, intr. Stanley Kauffman, The Modern Library, New York 2000, p. 92 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1915).

contrast, the dialectic between light and dark, became one of the central issues of early cinematic production in Greece.

Gyzis and many other painters of the period, such as Konstantinos Parthenis (1878-1967) and Nikolaos Lytras (1883-1927),<sup>2</sup> tried to incorporate new epistemologies of seeing and to promote emerging visual cultures by foregrounding the new sense of spatio-temporal *discontinuities* that appeared in Greek society before and after World War I. Cinema came at the forefront of such transition from the two-dimensional spatiality of traditional iconography to the new *perspectival* optics of modernity, which presupposed a perception of depth, a linearity of formal arrangements and ultimately psychological projections onto the image itself. In the earliest surviving film, *The Adventures of Villar/Οι περιπέτειες του Βιλλάρ* (1924) by Joseph Hepp, the sense of an impromptu and euphoric use of the medium is obvious as an interplay between what the spectators have already seen (Charlie Chaplin and the likes) and what they were actually watching on the cinematic screen. The camera moved freely and frantically, following the most unscripted action film ever; there is no attempt to edit the images or work on its materiality. The director was exploring the possibilities of the medium; the subject-matter was secondary. The real protagonist was not Villar (Nikos Sfakianakis) but the camera itself. Most early films consist of collated episodes, time-sequences, without a conscious attempt to create a distinct filmic experience through narrative continuity.

*Asterō/Αστέρω* (1929) was produced precisely when the nexus between the emerging aesthetics of film-culture and the necessities of film-industry started becoming inextricable. The question of cinema as art was already critically discussed by intellectuals such as Fotos Polites, Tellos Agras and even the screen writer of *Asterō*, Pavlos Nirvanas. The pioneer photographer Miltos Manakis was conscious of these questions concerning photography: "A good photograph depends on the play of light [...] And this is something only an artist can do, someone who knows what is attractive, divine and aesthetic."<sup>3</sup> Dimitris Gaziadis and his brothers, Mihalis and Konstantinos, children of the pioneer photographer Anastasios Gaziadis, had to prove that cinema was indeed an art and moreover a legitimate art form that could construct "Greek images" appealing to the visual regimes of a specific spectatorship as it was formed and shaped during the 1920s.

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2. Gyzis' *The Capucin Monk/Κανουταίνος* (1883), Parthenis' *Christ/Ο Χριστός* (1900) and *The Slope/Πλαγιά* (1908) and finally Lytras' *Self-Portrait/Αυτοπροσωπογραφία* (undated) frame a new perception of what constitutes the luminosity of the human form, in contrast to what had prevailed until then.

3. Christos K. Christodoulou, *The Manakis Brothers: The Greek Pioneers of the Balkan Cinema*, Thessaloniki Organization for the Cultural Capital of Europe, Thessaloniki 1997, p. 179.

Gaziadis understood that, in order to make “Greek films,” he had to visualise—indeed, to produce—the space in which the disparate urban populations, mainly of Athens, would actively participate in the social project for an integrated social sphere. There were major events that he had to confront: first, the rapid displacement of the rural population towards urban centres; second, the gradual formation of an industrial proletariat; and finally, the still fresh trauma of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, with refugees living destitute in the environs of Athens. In his vision statement for Dag Films, Gaziadis declared that he not only wanted to make films but also create a new conceptual category, that of the film-spectator—and he had already published a brief pamphlet on how to become an actor for cinema.<sup>4</sup>

The connection of mass culture with a unified public sphere during the period of the optimistic reconstruction of Eleftherios Venizelos’ government between 1928 and 1932 caused Gaziadis to conceive of cinematic experience in terms of a vertical classless society, a classless society that could contribute to the seamless incorporation of the refugees in Greek society and frame the cathartic sublimation of the trauma through the establishment of a grand encompassing mythos of shared origins. The mythopoetics of Greek films had to frame a perception of temporality in a visual language that could facilitate the integrating policies of Venizelos’ liberal government and determine the optics of a shared public sphere, as was happening at the same time in literature with the famous manifesto *Ελεύθερο πνεύμα* (*The Free Spirit*) (1929) by Giorgos Theotokas and its “quest for new values and new forms”.<sup>5</sup>

*Astero* begins with fast shots of the modern city of Athens, full of the hustle and bustle of cars, buses and trams while recording people walking frantically in the streets of the city. The juxtaposition between the Acropolis and the emerging modernity of the period is stressed through the presence of fashionably dressed women taking a stroll inside the Parthenon. Their chic clothes stand for the relentless modernisation that Venizelos’ political vision was advocating. Then, the most important symbol of modernisation since the time of Charilaos Trikoupis, the train, carries the camera away on a dream-like journey back to pristine mountains and forests, “surprised,” as the intertitle says, “with its own audacity going through landscapes whose form has not changed over the last three thousand years”.<sup>6</sup> It is not simply a relocation in place but also a dislocation in time; the

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4. Dim. A. Gaziadis, «H Dag Film», in Giannis Soldatos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου. Ντοκουμέντα 1900-1970*, vol. 4, Aigokeros, Athens 2004, p. 60-61.

5. Giorgos Theotokas, *Ελεύθερο πνεύμα*, K. Th. Dimaras (ed.), Hermes, New Greek Library, Athens 1973, p. 74.

6. A poem accompanied the beginning of the film: “In Greece, all changed utterly, / time

perennial and unsullied Greek countryside becomes the localised embodiment of continuity and duration, an archetypal cypher of self-revelation. Anna Poupou observes that “the railway traversing natural landscapes [...] serves as a passage not only from the cityscape to the countryside but also from historical time to a-temporality”.<sup>7</sup> The ontological unity between nature and culture, between the animality of existence and the humanity of conscience is here firmly re-established. Gaziadis himself had worked with Fritz Lang, G. W. Pabst, Alexander Korda and Ernst Lubitsch in Germany, and his work in the expressionist atmosphere of the Weimar Republic informs his images with questions about authenticity, history and identity, questions that had shaped the turbulent German thinking during the 1920s, the “time of the philosophical magicians,”<sup>8</sup> according to Wolfram Eilenberger.

The camera condenses the temporal disjunction between the viewer and the story by establishing a mood of nostalgic fusion. In the oneiric transference of the real to the irrevocably vanished, human figures stand for lost identities and repressed memories. The camera records shepherds with their flocks and their perfectly clean foustanelles. As the spectators are transported to another era—themselves living in a period when foustanelles were no longer common or fashionable in the Greek countryside—the camera insists on mountain ranges with dense forests and heavy snow, at precisely the moment when the advancing modernity of technological domination has already obliterated their pristine unity. The authenticity of such landscapes was replaced by their photographs for tourists and holiday souvenirs, losing their “aura of authenticity” with their very mechanical dissemination, as Walter Benjamin claimed in the very same period.

The film is about loss and absence. Everything depicted therein is no longer there; the ghost-images facilitating the psychological transference to a lost autochthonicity stand at the heart of the visual language established by Gaziadis. Against this background of primordial timelessness, theme-images such as the master-father, the orphan stepdaughter, the friction between father and son, the libidinal friction between young men, the religious super-ego, the depiction of madness, the psychodynamic triangulation between all main characters are pieced together in a linear and Aristotelian manner. In the midst of the timeless

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everything transformed; / yet remained unaffected solely / flock and shepherd unreformed.” See Frixos Iliadis, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος 1906-1960*, Fantasia Publications, Athens 1960, p. 29.

7. Anna Poupou, “Modern Space and Narration in the Greek Films of the Inter-War period,” *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 4 (2017), p. 250.

8. Wolfram Eilenberger, *Time of the Magicians: The Invention of Modern Thought 1919-1929* (transl. Shaun Whiteside), Allen Lane, London 2020, p. 16-17.

landscape, the sleek typed letter from the solicitor in Kolonaki, which solves the legal issue of ownership over the land, indicates that the whole film was a cultural fantasy—indeed, the daydreaming of someone who has been traumatised by the acuity of history and modernity. If we take the beginning of the film and relocate it to the end, we have Theo Angelopoulos' *Megalexandros*/ *Μεγαλέξανδρος* (1980) in reverse: "This is how Alexander entered the cities," as the narrator says in the final scene of Angelopoulos' political fable. The dialectic between escaping to the village and then eloping to the city, the interstitial reality of being elsewhere and nowhere, is one of the main themes of Greek Cinema until well into the 1990s.

When trying to convince Pavlos Nirvanas to become a screenwriter, the Gaziadis brothers declared: "They accused us that our movies were lacking in Greekness. We therefore want to present a purely Greek movie. A movie with a Greek story, Greek characters, Greek psychology, Greek landscape, Greek colour. A movie coming out of Greek nature and Greek life."<sup>9</sup> The script by Pavlos Nirvanas begins with this premise but soon, in an uncanny way, finds its sources in what the viewers probably had already seen in cinemas before, contributing to the emergence of a *cinematic unconscious* in the experience of films as social texts. The story is adapted from the American novel *Ramona* (1884) by Helen Hunt Jackson—although the Greek poet Kostis Palamas' only theatrical endeavour, *Triseygeni*, can be occasionally detected on the horizon of the script. *Ramona* had already been made into film three times, by D. W. Griffith (1910), Donald Crisp (1916) and Edwin Carewe (1928), the latter being most popular of all and the first ever film with synchronised sound and image.

The adventures of Carewe's film bear a close resemblance to *Astero's*. Despite its success, it was considered lost, until a copy appeared later in Prague, in 1939. This copy, in turn, was looted first by the Germans and then by the Soviets, only to be repatriated to Czechoslovakia in the 1960s and then finally to the USA in the 2010s, premiering in Los Angeles in 2014 for the first time after eighty-six years. Gaziadis' *Astero* had a similar trajectory. The original silent film was lost for almost seventy years, except for a 13-minute segment preserved in Alekos Sakellarios' film *That Old Time*/*Τον παλιό εκείνο τον καιρό* (1964) from the talking release in 1933, but a complete copy was found at the Cinémathèque Française in 2003. Now with a copy of about 60 minutes, despite some missing parts, we can see the full complexity of the adaptation that Nirvanas accomplished with his script and understand the full scope of Gaziadis' chef-d'oeuvre.

The modifications are many and somehow critical. For example, the first adaptation by D. W. Griffith, who had made the controversial film *The Birth of*

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9. Pavlos Nirvanas, «Γύρω από μία ταινία», *Nea Estia* 58 (15 May 1929), p. 365-366.

*a Nation*, bears from its first credit the revealing subtitle: "A Story of the White Man's Injustice to the Indian." The strong anti-racist and anti-classist message is obvious in all American films, involving both Mexican- and African-Americans and their harsh treatment by the Anglo-Saxon establishment. Structural similarities are interesting. Carewe's film, for example, starring the Mexican superstar Dolores del Rio, is punctuated by one of the most poignant and popular songs of the period, a sensation that the Greek version effectively replicated as the screening was accompanied by music composed by Dimitris Rodios. The famous *Nocturnal Song*/*Νυκτωδία* still remains one of the most popular and touching melodies of the Greek repertory—later effectively revived with the new adaptation of the film by Dinos Dimopoulos (1959) for the superstar Aliki Vougiouklaki. The predicament of women and parentless children in Greek society replaces the predicament of minorities in the American films: the cinematic imaginary foregrounds an analogy of ruptures in the continuum of different societies through homologous codes of representing "injustice."

The similarities end there, however. Gaziadis' camera uses predominantly eye-level shots interspersed with high-angle panoramic frames of high mountains or steep cliffs. Furthermore, the camera attempts some timid close-ups of the human face and, on some occasions, frames the director's point of view: the pan and tilting shots predicate emotional reactions and underscore affective response to the story. The affective response is further enhanced by film tinting, as the lush black and white frames are followed by blue- or sepia-tinted shots that give the film its immersive feeling of dream-like sequences. In a crucial moment of the story, the camera is placed over the head of a dog calling out after the fall and death of its master. The spectator looks through the eyes of the dog, a rather radical recalibration towards a post-human gaze. Gaziadis has an affectionate gaze for animals and their treatment by the villagers. The depiction of the village fool dressed in woman's clothes is a telling gesture, paving the way for Michael Cacoyannis' depiction of a similar gender-less character in *Zorba the Greek*/*Αλέξης Ζορμπάς* (1964). Overall, the most important element of the visual poetics consists of the fact that the camera avoids staying still: it eschews photographic immobility and, despite focusing mainly on frontal facial shots, also moves in all directions to present shots from below or above eye-level.

Gaziadis *psychologises* action by establishing a subjective point of view. Astero's madness, for example, shot superbly by Gaziadis, is rendered as seen through the eyes of Astero, by a shaking camera indicating a disturbed mind, superimposing a deep dark tint on the film and pointing towards the mental de-realisation of the image. (Mihalis Gaziadis had worked in Hollywood with Griffith, and the inter-filmic dialogue with the latter's *Broken Blossoms* [1919] establishes another subtext in the spectator's reception of the film.) In the last part of the film, human



forms are depicted as shadows and dark ideograms against a faded and blurred landscape.<sup>10</sup> Towards the end, we watch fast transitions between scenes almost unconnected in temporal and spatial continuity. Gaziadis creates the aesthetics of ellipsis that we will find again in some of the best Greek films, such as Nikos Koundouros' *Young Aphrodites*/*Μικρές Αφροδίτες* (1964) and Theo Angelopoulos' *Reconstruction*/*Αναπαράσταση* (1970). Iris-shots zoom in and out of each scene at a frantic pace and function to invite the spectators' eyes to enter the high cosmic drama which they otherwise would have been unable to witness.

Gaziadis wanted to create a unity of visual epistemologies by weaving a specific temporality into the act of seeing films. He was credited with the introduction of the "happy ending" as a device to resolve the emotional tensions and friction in codes of representation. The device originates from classical Aristotelian theatre, but the way in which it is employed here, through the exuberant performative rhetoric of his actors, is extremely significant for the development of a specific temporal visibility in Greek films. At the performative level, the film depicts a conflict between theatricality and cinematic dramatisation. Aimilios Veakis, the patriarch in the film, exhibits the extrovert and demonstrative acting of his imposing theatrical career.

The film promoted the necessity of social reconciliation and communal solidarity as a strong possibility within the ruptured continuum of society. Melodrama visualised the latent tensions and class frictions during the urban modernisation of the country under the optimism of such possibility, given that 1929 and 1930 were the two most successful years of Venizelos' reformist government.

However, beyond the narratological model, the experience of a cinematic temporality becomes the most significant formal *gestalt* constructed in the film. Gaziadis structured his images on the great paradox of cinema: the camera wants to capture time, while at the same time it has to free time from the past, establishing a perpetual present for the sensory experience of the spectator. In a way, *Astero* is the first film of self-reflexivity in Greek Cinema: it reconstructs the missing presence of the past in the present moment as active reality.

In a rather dismissive note, Giannis Soldatos charged the film as "inaugurating the only Greek exportable cinematic product: folklorism".<sup>11</sup> However, the structure of the film, despite its obvious gaps in continuity, offered the first complete cinematic encoding of visual temporality in Greece, at a moment when society was struggling to re-imagine its own grand narratives of origins. The background

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10. Reviewers, among them Iris Skaravaïou, pointed out the problem of "weak lighting, especially in open-air sequences". See Soldatos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου: Ντοκουμέντα 1900-1970*, op. cit. vol. 4, p. 55.

11. Soldatos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου. 1900-1967*, op. cit. vol. I, p. 30.

trauma of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, as I stated elsewhere, “was present but not represented.”<sup>12</sup> In order for it to be represented, a new function for filmic images was needed. The film was released in the same year as the first wave of avant-garde films appeared, such as Pabst's *Pandora's Box*, Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, Eisenstein's lost *General Line*, and Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou*, films that indicated a looming “crisis in the action-image” which had dominated the early cinematic projects.

Within its epochal context, *Astero* was structured like most films of its period: they struggled, as Gilles Deleuze observed, to translate “action-images [...] into mental images,” transforming the director into “a man of interpretations, of symbolic acts and of abstract relations.”<sup>13</sup> Deleuze notes that the process lasted for years, and the transition was completed only much later with Italian Neo-Realism, through the introduction of the montage, something that happened in Greece only with Yorgos Tzavellas' *Applauses/Χειροκροτήματα* (1944), the movie that “gave existence to decoupage,”<sup>14</sup> according to the perceptive observation by Giannis Soldatos. Yet, as we can now testify, after its retrieval in 2018, it seems that Dimitris Gaziadis' *The Apaches of Athens/Οι Απόχηδες των Αθηνών* (1930) also used decoupage distinctly, even if discreetly.

In Greece, the process had already started with Gaziadis and the conscious and repetitive employment of iris-shots, in order to condense visual time and bring the spectators within the flow of the story. Some of Mihalis Gaziadis' later films, such as Gregg Tallas' *The Barefoot Battalion/Το ξυπόλητο τάγμα* (1954), show the radical change in his camera, having abandoned immobility as its central framing device and now running fast, almost following the flow of time. Aglaia Mitropoulou noted that, in the first films by Gaziadis, the “absence of visual rhythm” was quite obvious.<sup>15</sup> She also reveals—the film *The Harbour of Tears/Το λιμάνι των δακρύων* (1928) does not survive—that Gaziadis introduced slow motion for the first time in Greek Cinema. This gives the impression that, through Gaziadis, Greek cinematic visuality was indeed searching for its specific and distinct visual temporality, not simply based on the “Greek story” but in the experience of a localised sense of time, under the psychological needs, symbolic iconography and social impositions of the Greek public sphere in *statu nascendi*.

After 1944, however, the rise of Neo-Realism and the filmic incorporation of

12. Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, Bloomsbury, London 2012, p. 44.

13. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (transl. Hugh Tomlinson, Barbara Habberjam), University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 1986, p. 200.

14. Soldatos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου. 1900-1967*, op. cit. vol. I, p. 42.

15. Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Papazisis Publications, Athens 2006, p. 75.

music as a diegetic element foregrounded cinematic images, and the emerging “time-image” held a different central purpose, according to Deleuze: “to make time and thought perceptible, to make them visible and of sound.”<sup>16</sup> In this process, *Astero* for the first time framed a form of cinematic visibility which both epitomises and transcends its historical and social context. Drawing from one of the earliest studies on cinema, we can claim that *Astero*’s structure was not reproducing any form of reality but translated, in its fragmented manner, observed characteristics of the real “into the forms of the medium”,<sup>17</sup> establishing a narrative language for cinematic representations, a language that received its full complexity in the 1950s and was re-imagined in the 1970s.

*Astero* articulated the visual grammar and the narrative syntax of the formal *gestalten* that were to become the foundational regimes of genre-structure and industry production in Greece for decades. All Greek films are variations on the originary scheme constructed by Dimitris and Mihalīs Gaziadis, challenged only by Theo Angelopoulos’ re-invention of cinematic temporality which made silence and the un-representable elemental units of the cinematic experience, through the elongation of diegetic time.<sup>18</sup> *Astero* stands at the very beginning of the transformation of physical reality into a both ideologically and psychologically symbolic space of conflict and sublimation. Its “rural romanticism” and “moral conclusion,” according to Iris Skaravaïou,<sup>19</sup> managed to transcend the “irregular rhythm” of the earlier Greek films, establishing the iconological temporality that permanently defined cinematic language in the country.

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16. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: Time-Image* (transl. Hugh Tomlinson, Barbara Habberjam), University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 1989, p. 18.

17. Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art*, Faber and Faber, London 1958, p. 12-13.

18. Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. 148.

19. Iris Skaravaïou, «Μια ενδιαφέρουσα συνέντευξίς με τον κ. Δημήτριον Γαζιάδη (A Significant Interview with Mr. Dimitrios Gaziadis)», in Soldatos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου. 1900-1967*, op. cit. vol. 4, p. 45.



25 January 1932

The premiere of *The Lover of the Shepherdess* in Athens

## The Transition to Mechanically Reproduced Sound

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THE DEBUT of the first Greek film to use sound-on-film technology, *The Lover of the Shepherdess*/*Ο Αγαπητικός της Βοσκοπούλας*, on 25 January 1932, simultaneously represents the culmination of a major push to create a national cinema and the beginning of a rapid decline in the number and quality of Greek films being produced. Sound, of course, has been a part of cinematic spectacle since its beginnings. Orchestras and musicians provided musical accompaniment, and live narrators or *bonimenteurs* explained the story line, acted out scenes and provided sound effects. The arrival of mechanically reproduced sound, however, dramatically changed the dynamics of film, particularly in small markets such as Greece, with limited production capabilities. Before the arrival of fixed soundscapes, cinema was an international language with local flourishes. After the arrival of sound, cinema remained an international language, but one that was increasingly nationally inflected. The pressure to create a national cinema with both visual and sonic integrity ultimately proved to be too much for Greece's fledgling cinema industry. Greek film production would lag until the industry was reborn after World War II.

The initial push to create feature-length fiction films that could be defined as having specifically Greek—as opposed to generically cosmopolitan—content, occurred from 1914 through 1920.<sup>1</sup> In 1914, an entrepreneur from Smyrna, Konstan-

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1. This was the same period when German, French and American studios were mobilising cinema as a propaganda vehicle for their World-War-I military campaigns. Greece, building on the success of the royal-family-funded Balkan Wars documentary *With the Greeks in the Firing Line* (1913), seems to have followed a similar model. For more information on *With the*

tinios Bahatoris, established Greece's first film studio, Athini Film (Αθήνη Φιλμ), and started work on the first Greek full-length feature film, an adaptation of the popular dramatic idyll *Golfo/Γκόλφω*. He hired an Athens-based Italian projectionist and cameraman, Filippo Martelli, and used theatrical actors for principal roles.<sup>2</sup> A trickle of feature films followed in subsequent years. In 1916, the Kosmatou-Glitsou (Κοσμάτου-Γλιτσού) Company began shooting *The Wax Doll/Η Κερένια Κούκλα*, based on a maudlin novel by Konstantinos Hristomanos.<sup>3</sup> The film is remembered as both artistic and commercial failure.<sup>4</sup> Also in 1916, a group led by Dimos Vratsanos and Josef Hepp formed Asty Films (Άστυ Φιλμ) and began work on a variety of short films as well as a feature film, *The Climb up Calvary/Ο Ανήφορος του Γολγοθά*, that proposed to explore the crucifixion of Christ through the vision of a nun. The film was abandoned, in the end, due to a combination of difficulties on the set and political trouble.<sup>5</sup> Vratsanos and Hepp did, however, complete a shorter light comedy in 1920, *Annoula's Dowry/Η προίκα της Αννούλας*, which adapted Dimitrios Koromilas's well-known comic idyll, *Maroula's Luck/Η τύχη της Μαρούλας*.<sup>6</sup>

After the collapse of Asty Films, Greek feature-film production entered a period of hibernation as cinema companies chose to focus on shorter comedies and actualités. The status quo, however, began to change in 1928. There are two major impetuses for this shift. The first was the 27 July 1927 presidential decree addressing the regulation of cinema in Greece, which included a requirement that

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Greeks in the Firing Line, see Vassiliki Tsitsopoulou's chapter in this book.

2. Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, «Κινηματογράφος (Cinema)», *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ού Αιώνα*, Khristos Khatziisif (ed.), Vivliorama, Athens 1999, p. 395; Argyris Tsiapos, *Οι πρώτες ταινίες του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου: Η ιστορία του προπολεμικού ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, Argyris Tsiapos, Serres 2018, p. 68-69.

3. Tsiapos, *ibid.* p. 86-87. Giannis Soldatos and Delveroudi also recount the history of *The Wax Doll*. See Giannis Soldatos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, vol. I, Aigokeros, Athens 1989, p. 33-34; Delveroudi, *ibid.* p. 396.

4. Kostas Dafnis, «Το Ελληνικό φιλμ: Για το καλύτερο αύριο της Ελληνικής παραγωγής (The Greek Film: For a Better Tomorrow for Greek Production)», *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* 14/273 (7 June 1931), p. 4.

5. The story of the failure of *The Climb Up Calvary* has acquired almost mythical dimensions. Dimos Vratsanos mentions political problems in «Η κινηματογραφία εν Ελλάδι», *Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ* 1/1 (25 May 1924), p. 4. Manolis Arkolakis locates the shooting of the film in the years of the National Schism and provides a detailed explanation of the political context in "Greek Film Industry (1896-1939): Economic Structure and Representation," available at: [https://www.academia.edu/3776020/Greek\\_Film\\_Industry\\_1896\\_1939\\_Economic\\_Structure\\_and\\_Representation](https://www.academia.edu/3776020/Greek_Film_Industry_1896_1939_Economic_Structure_and_Representation) [9 July 2021], p. 7. Tsiapos documents many of the stories that have been told about the film over the years. See Tsiapos, *Οι πρώτες ταινίες του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, *op. cit.* p. 97.

6. Tsiapos, *ibid.* p. 97-99.

cinemas exhibit films with Greek content.<sup>7</sup> Eliza-Anna Delveroudi has argued convincingly that this requirement spurred domestic film production, by providing filmmakers with a reliable market for their products.<sup>8</sup> The second impetus was the arrival of commercial films with mechanically reproduced sound. Sound film, initially using sound-on-disc technology, became commercially viable in the United States in 1927. Sound-on-disc technology, however, did not arrive in Greece until 22 October 1929, with the screening of *Fox Movietone Follies*.<sup>9</sup> The addition of dedicated sound content transformed cinema from a cosmopolitan medium that could be comparatively easily translated across cultures to a medium where culturally specific content was at a premium.<sup>10</sup> Adapting to this new status quo was easier for economically and culturally powerful imperial powers and more difficult for peripheral nations such as Greece.

Even before the actual arrival of sound film in Greece, there is evidence that Greek film production was attempting to respond to the growing international significance of film sound. *Astero/Aστέρω*, the third film of the period's most prolific production company, DAG Films, was advertised as both being "filmed on the peaks of Greek mountains" and featuring "Greek music" by Demetrios Rodios, a composer of popular Athenian song. The songs were performed by the popular tenor Antonis Delendas.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, DAG Films' next film, *The Storm/Η Μπόρα*—a drama about a soldier, his wife and his friend set in the aftermath of the Asia Minor campaign—featured more "Greek music" by Rodios, this time sung by tenor

7. The decree was an elaboration and clarification of a previous 1925 Legislative Decree that had been passed in the early days of the Pangalos Dictatorship. For more details on the two decrees, see «Περί κυρώσεως του από 13-15 Σεπτεμβρίου 1925 νομοθετικού διατάγματος "περί κινηματογράφων" (On the Approval of the legal order "On Cinemas" of 13-15 September 1925)», *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* (*The Newspaper of the Government*) A/172 (16 August 1927), p. 1229-1230, and «Περί κινηματογράφων (On Cinemas)», *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* [*The Newspaper of the Government*] A/2610 (17 September 1925), p. 1715-1717.

8. Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, «Η Οικογένεια Γαζιάδη και η DAG Film Co [The Gaziadis Family and DAG Film Co]», Tasos Sakellariopoulos, Argyro Vatsaki (eds), *Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος και η Πολιτιστική Πολιτική: Πρακτικά Συμποσίου*, p. 250.

9. Tsiapos, *Οι πρώτες ταινίες του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, op. cit. p. 199.

10. I make this argument in "Sound and the Nation: Rethinking the History of Early Greek Film Production", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 18/1 (2002), p. 13-39.

11. Different versions of the advertising flyer for the film can be found online. One is available in the online version of Argyris Tsiapos, "Astero (Aστέρω)," *The First Films of Greek Cinema*, available at: [http://protestainies.blogspot.com/2016/02/blog-post\\_0.html](http://protestainies.blogspot.com/2016/02/blog-post_0.html) [9 July 2021]. Another is available at Eleftherios G. Skiadas, «Η βουκολική ταινία 'Aστέρω' και η οικογένεια Γαζιάδη», *Τα Αθηναϊκά* (30 October 2018), available at: <https://www.taathinaika.gr/i-voukoli-ki-tainias-astero-kai-i-oikogeneia-anastasiou-gaziadi/> [9 July 2021].

Konstantinos Stellakis.<sup>12</sup> *The Storm*, which was released a month after *Fox Movietone Follies*, is frequently referred to as the first Greek film to feature mechanically reproduced sound.<sup>13</sup> The extent of the recorded sound, however, seems to have been limited to a few sound effects.

The film that deserves the title of the first Greek sound film—and, indeed, at the time was advertised as such—is DAG Films' fifth film, *The Apaches of Athens*/*Οι Απόχηδες των Αθηνών*, which used sound-on-disc technology for both music and sound effects.<sup>14</sup> A copy of the film was found in the Cinémathèque Française in 2014, but the accompanying discs have been lost.<sup>15</sup> *The Apaches of Athens* was based on a popular operetta by composer Nikos Hatzia Apostolou and librettist Giannis Prineas that, as Vassiliki Tsitsopoulou argues, adapted “the transatlantic *apache* entertainment vogue” for the Greek market by replacing the *apaches* of Paris (a racist slang term that transposed the supposed savagery of Native American Apaches to the Parisian underclass) with the *alanía* of Athens (a milder Greek term referring to street urchins and petty criminals).<sup>16</sup> Although the operetta, according to Tsitsopoulou, featured extended linguistic and musical contrasts between the *alanía* and members of Athenian high society, the film seems to have minimised this dialectic, incorporating only one scene in a tavern that featured *rembetiko tragoudi*, the popular music form of the urban masses during the interwar period.<sup>17</sup>

The sonic breadcrumbs that allow us to reconstruct the soundscape of this period—recordings of *Astero* and other songs written by Rodios; the libretto for the operetta and recordings of songs from it; and recordings of the two tenors, Delendas and Stellakis—suggest that film music was far more indebted to European art song than to local musical traditions such as *rembetiko* or *dimotiko tragoudi*, the folk music of rural populations. Delendas and Stellakis were

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12. Konstantinos Stellakis was a trained opera singer who made some recordings in Greece before embarking on a career in Germany.

13. Tsiapos, *The First Films of Greek Cinema* (print version), p. 198.

14. A photograph of the advertisement for the film can be found in the online version of Tsiapos, «Οι απόχηδες των Αθηνών: Η πρώτη κινηματογραφική διασκευή οπερέτας (The Apaches of Athens: The First Cinematic Adaptation of an Opera)», *The First Films of Greek Cinema*, available at: [http://protestainies.blogspot.com/2016/02/blog-post\\_86.html](http://protestainies.blogspot.com/2016/02/blog-post_86.html) [9 July 2021].

15. Vassiliki Tsitsopoulou, “Rediscovering a Film Historical Outlier: *The Apaches of Athens* (D. Gaziadis, 1930),” unpublished, p. 1. Quoted with permission from the author.

16. *Ibid.* p. 2-6.

17. *Ibid.* p. 10. *Rembetiko* music was a popular music form that grew in popularity in the aftermath of the Asia Minor Catastrophe and was embraced by the dislocated, economically challenged populations of port-cities and other urban centres of the Greek-speaking world. Thematically, it addresses the broad swath of the joys and sorrows that these populations faced.



both professionally trained, and Rodios studied at the National Conservatory. Hatziapostolou was one of the mainstays of Athenian Operetta, a lighter form of opera that, influenced by European prototypes, had evolved from the Greek comic idyll and flourished in the early 1900s. In following this sort of a trajectory, Greek Cinema was not at all an outlier. Instead, it reflects early sound cinema's indebtedness to extant forms of musical theatre.

The most successful Greek sound film of the period was *The Lover of the Shepherdess*, released on 25 January 1932. It was the second film of a new production company, Olympia Films (Ολυμπία Φιλμ), which had been founded by former DAG Films employees Dimitris Tsakiris and Orestes Laskos.<sup>18</sup> After filming had been completed in Greece, the film was taken to Germany where a soundtrack was added using sound-on-film technology. By all accounts a dramatic improvement over previous attempts to produce a sound cinema, the film was a major success, the first Greek film to play in Athens for four straight weeks.<sup>19</sup>

It did not, however, spark a tidal wave of Greek sound films. DAG Films, for their part, made one last film, a comedy titled *Out with Poverty!* / *Εξω φτώχεια*, which was released in 1932 amidst publicity claiming that the firm was making plans to acquire Fox Movietone sound-on-film technology.<sup>20</sup> Its failure at the box office, however, sealed the fate of the company. The following years saw other attempts at articulating a Greek sound cinema: two Turkish co-productions in 1933, *The Wrong Way* / *Ο κακός δρόμος*, which featured Greece's two star-actresses of the stage, Marika Kotopoulou and Kyveli, and *On the Waves of Bosphorus* / *Στα κύματα του Βοσπόρου*, as well as Olympia Films' last film, *Miss Lawyer* / *Δεσποινίς δικηγόρος*. These films were widely panned by critics, as was *You Are Wanted on the Phone* / *Σας ζητούν στο τηλέφωνο*, a production by the new company Pallas Films (Παλλάς Φιλμς), which debuted in December 1934 and featured cosmopolitan musical forms: "a rumba, a tango, a foxtrot, and a barcarolle."<sup>21</sup> Finally, from 1937 to 1939, a series of six sound films were produced for the Greek market in the Egyptian studios of Togo Mizrahi. The establishment of a thriving domestic sound film industry, however, would have to wait until the conclusion of World War II.

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18. Delveroudi explores the impact of the departure of Tsakiris and Laskos on Greece's film industry and on DAG Films. See "The Gaziadis Family and DAG Film Co", op. cit. p. 259-266.

19. Ibid. p. 266.

20. Οπερατέρ (Cameraman), «Ο Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος (The Greek Cinema)», *Το Παράν (The Talkie)*, 30 January 1932, reproduced in Giannis Soldatos, *Ο ελληνικός κινηματογράφος. Ντοκουμέντα Ι, Μεσοπόλεμος*, Aigokeros, Athens 1994, p. 109.

21. Tsiapos, *The First Films of Greek Cinema* (print version), op. cit. p. 323.

What was it that ultimately led to the failure of Greek sound film in this period? Economic and technical considerations are part of the story. The absence of a Greek sound studio and Greek-owned sound-on-film equipment was clearly a significant factor. Dubbing in a rented studio under time and financial constraints led to poor synchronisation and suboptimal products that disappointed audiences. Another significant factor was the absence of financial incentives from the state, such as tax abatements for filmmakers and tariffs on imported films. Dimitrios Gaziadis, for one, complained that the lack of support from the Greek government had hamstrung the development of an indigenous film culture.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, the financial crisis of 1932 and Greece's default on its debt likely had major consequences. Credit was frozen, and the Drachma was devalued by 60 percent, making the purchase of raw materials prohibitively expensive.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the installation of fascist-leaning Ioannis Metaxas as prime minister/dictator in 1936 had a stultifying effect on free expression. The Italian Campaign in Greece and the German Occupation of Athens were the last nails in the coffin, stopping film production entirely from 1940 to 1946.

Cultural factors, however, should not be discounted either. Greek filmmakers in the pre-war period failed to articulate a soundscape that was capable, musically and linguistically, of appealing to a broad-based cinema audience. Although we have almost no record of how audiences responded to Greek films of the period, we can postulate that the European art song that dominated cinema sound in the early 1930s appealed to the cosmopolitan audiences of the first-run Athenian cinemas, but that it did not resonate in the same way with the working-class audiences that eventually became the backbone of Greece's cinema industry in the 1950s and 1960s. Textual evidence confirms this hypothesis. The figure of Uncle Chronis in *The Lover of the Shepherdess* is a bumbling, folksy character who speaks in a high, wheezy voice and is clearly meant to represent lower social strata. Yet, his performance of *The Death of Yero-Dimos*/*Ο Γέρο-Δήμος πέθανε*, the emotional climax of the film, is done in a polished operatic baritone. The

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22. Loros Fantazis, «Το Ελληνικό Φίλμ Εκπνέει (Greek Film Expires)», *Κινηματογραφικός Ασκήρ* 8/14 (22 March 1931), p. 9.

23. Greece did not suffer the kind of massive economic contraction during the Great Depression that nations such as the United States, Great Britain and Germany did. Instead, Greece suffered a financial crisis brought on by a hard Drachma that was pegged to the gold standard and an inability to refinance its national debt. The resulting Greek default froze credit markets for private individuals and companies, and led to a devalued Drachma, which would have raised the cost of servicing foreign-denominated loans and the price of imported raw materials. For more on the financial crisis of 1932, see Lefteris Tsoulfidis, Michel Zouboulakis, "Greek Sovereign Defaults in Retrospect and Prospect", *South-Eastern Europe Journal of Economics* 2 (2016), p. 141-157.

disjunction between sound and image is jarring and undermines the integrity of the narrative.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, *The Apaches of Athens* dealt with a variety of themes—upward mobility, class conflict, inheritance and the pretensions of *nouveaux riches* diasporic Greeks—that eventually became staples of Greek popular cinema. Film critic Iris Skaravaïou’s response to the film, however, suggests a potential split in the audience. Noting that the film has sacrificed emotional aspects of the original scenario in order to emphasise “ethnographic” depictions of the working class, her suggestion that the film will appeal to “the spirit of the masses” insinuates that it is not up to the standards of cosmopolitan audiences. This point is reinforced by the amount of space she devotes to complaining about the soundtrack and by her conclusion that the film will score “major box-office success in the countryside.”<sup>25</sup>

Cinema during this period was searching for a musical genre and a sonic synthesis that had not yet been created. It would emerge, however, after World War II, in the form of new musical genres such as the *archontorembetiko* and the *laïko tragoudi* of the 1950s, both of which evolved out of the pre-war *rembetiko tragoudi* and incorporated elements of the European art song that was popular among more cosmopolitan segments of the population in the pre-war period.<sup>26</sup> These two genres would form the sonic synthesis between the folk and the cosmopolitan that in the 1950s and 1960s became the foundation of a flourishing Greek popular cinema which incorporated musical performance and elements of the musical genre into the vast majority of films.

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24. I explore the struggle of *The Lover of the Shepherdess* “to articulate a middle course between ‘authentic’ and ‘modern’ folksong” in much greater detail in “Sound and the Nation: Rethinking the History of Early Greek Film Production”, op. cit. p. 25-32.

25. Iris Skaravaïou, «Οι Απόχηδες των Αθηνών (*The Apaches of Athens*)», *Κινηματογραφικός Ασκήρ* 7/16 (11 May 1930), p. 6.

26. *Archontorembetiko* combines the rhythmic patterns of *rembetiko tragoudi* with more European-style orchestration and more polished vocals that blended European and indigenous singing styles. *Laïko tragoudi* blends *rembetiko tragoudi* with other aspects of Greece’s demotic music tradition and a modernised performance that incorporates electric amplification and elevates the role of the singer and lead bouzouki player to preeminent positions.



# 3 December 1944

The “December Events” mark the beginning of the Greek Civil War

## Popular Cinema and Historical Trauma

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ON 3 DECEMBER 1944, shortly after the departure of the German army of occupation from Athens and the liberation of the city, the fierce battles of the *Dekemvriana* begin,<sup>1</sup> which would determine the subsequent course taken by Greece and lead to a bloody and particularly brutal civil war (1946-1949). This civil strife would remain an open wound for decades to come, and it is no coincidence that historians and social scientists seek to explain multiple aspects of modern Greek post-war reality through the prism of that period. For its part, the Greek post-war cinema of 1950-1975 would chart its own singular course as a defining element of Greek popular culture.<sup>2</sup> Disdained by the scholarly culture of the establishment, along with other elements of working-class and popular culture, it would employ its own popular models and seek its own versions of historical fact on celluloid. Returning today

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1. See, indicatively, Menelaos Charalambidis, *Δεκεμβριανά 1944. Η μάχη της Αθήνας*, Alexandria, Athens 2014.

2. The so-called commercial or Old Greek Cinema took shape primarily in the 1950s and 1960s, while it was gradually replaced by the paradigm of the New Greek Cinema in the 1970s. The Old Greek Cinema (OGC), as it was disparagingly called by exponents mainly of the so-called New Greek Cinema (NGC), or otherwise the commercial or producer-centric cinema—always in contradistinction to a director-centric cinema of the auteur which was considered artistic and not commercial—has never been allotted the place it deserves as a historiographical document and more. See Christos Dermentzopoulos, «Ταινίες για όλη την ελληνική οικογένεια: Ο λαϊκός κινηματογράφος στην Ελλάδα (1950-1975)», Christos Dermentzopoulos, Giannis Papatheodorou (eds), *Συνηθισμένοι Άνθρωποι. Μελέτες για τη λαϊκή και τη δημοφιλή κουλτούρα*, Opportuna, Patras 2021, p. 433-480.

to the voluminous film production of this period to explain and interpret this singular repository of cinema, we are led to seek the multiple versions of collective memory presented in Greek Cinema and the traumatic memories of the nation's recent post-war history in particular.

A country's collective memory can never be homogeneous, nor can its culture. Depictions of memory run through the cinematic corpus and create images that reshape the present as cultural and/or prosthetic memory,<sup>3</sup> along with the ways in which a society reflects on its future as it looks to the past. These images are always multifaceted, mediated and perceived differently in every historical context by their audience, which differs from one place and one time to another. However, they do convey "structures of feeling"<sup>4</sup> from past eras and always function as historical documents with fascinating viewpoints. Thus, the recent past becomes a subject for discussion and finds its way back into the current situation in a variety of ways.

The Civil War was over by the end of that most difficult decade, the 1940s, and the popular classes tried to adapt to the new conditions. Popular cinema would fill an important gap in the Greek public sphere, especially in entertainment and education, while it would also help popular culture adapt to the new realities of mass consumption and post-war economic development through the mix of consolation and critique that it offered.<sup>5</sup> In this context, it is now clear that

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3. For the meaning of cultural memory, see mainly Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto 2006. Assmann's work "has particularly influenced the field of memory studies, distinguishing collective and social memory, as defined by Halbwachs, from cultural memory, which, according to the German thinker, does not contain the oral tradition as social and collective memory do, but is based instead on specific elements from the past which are remembered via particular cultural forms and elements of institutional communication, such as films, rituals, texts, monuments etc. As a result, cultural memory is constructed, reconstructed and adapted, while, through it, society as a whole secures its cultural heritage and individual social groups maintain their social knowledge, perceive their uniqueness, and reconstruct their cultural identity in perpetuity." (Christos Dermentzopoulos, *Η επιβίωση του τόπου. Νοσταλγία και μνήμη στην Πολιτική κουζίνα*, Opportuna, Patras 2015, p. 53-54.) On prosthetic memory as memory that is not rooted in the lived experience of the audience, but rather in the films they watch, which convey and ultimately implant the memory of the narrated events in the film-goer's memory, thus influencing identities and culture in general, see Alison Landsberg, "Prosthetic Memory: *Total Recall* and *Blade Runner*," *Body and Society* 1 (1995), p. 175-189; *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York 2004.

4. See Raymond Williams, *Culture and History* (in Greek, transl. V. Apostolidou), Gnosi, Athens 1994, p. 137-147.

5. For the years 1956-1957, see *The Fortune Teller/Η καφετζού* by Alekos Sakellarios (1956), *The Girl from Corfu/Πρωτευουσινίκες περιπέτειες* by Giannis Petropoulakis (1957), *The Auntie from Chicago/Η θεία από το Σικάγο* by Sakellarios (1957), *Horse and Carriage/Το αμαξάκι* by Dinos Dimopoulos (1957) and *West Side and East Side/Λαός και Κολωνάκι* by Giannis Dalianidis (1959).

the identity of Greek Cinema does not coincide, as is does in various national cinemas,<sup>6</sup> with the identity of the dominant culture, but deviates from it and sometimes even goes against it. Be that as it may, the identity of Greek popular cinema spotlights the heterogeneity of Greek culture, while striking a balance between acceptance and consensus, on the one hand, and challenge, rupture and denial, on the other, through its peculiar hybridisations. Still, these polyphonic and dialogic aspects—to use Bakhtin's terms<sup>7</sup>—of the films produced in post-war Greece, as well as of the artefacts of popular culture in general (indicatively, films produced in the early 1950s, such as *Bloody Christmas/Ματωμένα Χριστούγεννα* by George Zervos [1951], *Bitter Bread/Πικρό Ψωμί* by Grigoris Grigoriou [1951], *Lily of the Harbour/Η Αγνή του λιμανιού* by Yorgos Tzavellas [1952], *Black Soil/Μάυρη γη* by Stelios Tatasopoulos [1952], *The Counterfeit Coin/Η κάλπικη λίρα* by Tzavellas [1955], *Golfo, Girl of the Mountains/Γκόλφω* by Orestis Laskos [1955] and *Good Times, Money and Love/Γλέντι, λεφτά κι αγάπη* by Nikos Tsiforos [1955]) deal with heroic, patriotic or national-historical themes which do not arise from a long folk tradition but are introduced into the corpus of works through the subjects' daily life and their experience in the context of the modern Greek state and its educational mechanisms; it is very hard for them to distance themselves from the dominant ideology.<sup>8</sup> Thus, for example, in the few historical films made about the 1821

6. See Jean-Michel Frodon, *La Projection nationale: Cinéma et Nation*, Odile Jacob, Paris 1998; Mette Hjort, Scott MacKenzie (eds), *Cinema and Nation*, Routledge, London, New York 2000; Alan Williams (ed.) *Film and Nationalism*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, London 2002; Pierre Sorlin, *Ευρωπαϊκός κινηματογράφος, Ευρωπαϊκές κοινωνίες. 1939-1990* (transl. Efi Latifi), Nefeli, Athens 2004; Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, University Press Amsterdam, Amsterdam 2005; Valentina Vitali, Paul Willemen (eds), *Theorising National Cinema*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2008; Andrew Higson, «Η έννοια του Εθνικού Κινηματογράφου» (transl. Maria Chalkou), *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 2 (2014), available at: <http://filmiconjournal.com/journal/article/pdf/2014/2/11> [10 August 2021].

7. As Stam notes regarding the study of popular and “mass” culture, “[w]e really need analytical categories, like those used by Bakhtin, which subvert Manichean evaluations, leaving room for a given expression or discourse to be progressive and regressive at the same time. [...] Too often, the Puritan Left throw the seeds of pleasure out with the dirty water of ideology.” Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (in Greek), Patakis, Athens 2006, p. 394. See also Christos Dermentzopoulos, “Bakhtine et théorie des genres au cinéma: Les limites du dialogisme,” Mykola Polyuha, Clive Thomson, Anthony Wall (eds), *Dialogues with Bakhtinian Theory: Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Mikhail Bakhtin Conference*, Mestengo Press, Canada, London 2012, p. 183-192.

8. See Christos Dermentzopoulos, «Κινηματογράφος και επανάσταση. Αναπαραστάσεις της επανάστασης του 1821 στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο των ειδών (1950-1975)», in *Διαπραγματεύσεις για τον πόλεμο: Αναπαραστάσεις του πολέμου στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο*, Film Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic and Historical Archive Department, Papazisis, Athens 2006, p. 239-253.

Revolution (indicatively *The Exodus from Messolonghi*/Η έξοδος του Μεσολογγίου by Dimitris Doukas [1965], *Kalavryta 1821*/Καλάβρυτα 1821 by Spyros Ziagos [1970], *Papaflessas*/Η μεγάλη στιγμή του '21: Παπαφλέσσας by Erricos Andreou [1971], *Manto Mavrogenous*/Μαντώ Μαυρογένους by Kostas Karagiannis [1971] and *The Souliotes*/Σουλιώτες by Dimitris Papakonstadis [1972]), the viewpoint presented is entirely in line with the dominant national ideology. Consequently, these works largely constitute ideological structures which correspond to the ideology of the Greek nation-state. The dominant culture and nationalism are articulated, as aspects of modernisation, with traditional mentalities and perceptions; hence, we find the same images of the past reproduced in these films as we do in the written discourse of both official and public history.

The same is true, with minor differences, of films portraying World War II (war, occupation, resistance). In these films (for instance, *The Flame of Freedom*/Η φλόγα της ελευθερίας by Panagiotis Spyros [1951], *Heaven is Ours*/Οι ουρανοί είναι δικοί μας by Dinos Dimopoulos [1953], *The Island of the Brave*/Το νησί των γενναίων by Dimis Dadiras [1959], *Dawn of Triumph*/Η αυγή του θριάμβου by Filippos Fylaktos [1960] and *The Forgotten Heroes*/Ξεχασμένοι ήρωες by Nikos Gardelis [1966]) the love stories are intertwined with shared and accepted narratives of the dominant culture: national resistance is downplayed in the context of a more generalised national and universal participation on the part of the Greek people; heroism is an inherent biological attribute of the Greeks; national solidarity prevails; the military are considered as guardians of the motherland; and so on.<sup>9</sup> Still, alternative narratives exist here, too (for example, in *The Barefoot Battalion*/Το ξυπόλητο τάγμα by Gregg Tallas [1954], *The Man on the Train*/Ο άνθρωπος του τραίνου by Dimopoulos [1957], *Trouble for Fathers*/Δελησταύρου και υιός by Sakellarios [1957], *Murder in Kolonaki*/Εγκλημα στο Κολωνάκι by Jannis Aliferis [1959] and also in the “singular” film *The Roundup*/Το μπλόκο by Adonis Kyrou [1965]) which, albeit allusively, present realities that had been experienced by the cinema-goers of the time: the informers and the black marketeers, the crushing of post-occupation hopes, civil strife and the losers' fate, the heroism of everyday people. And while, through the blanket control of the filmed product and the self-censorship of filmmakers, war films acquired an intensely ideological dimension during the military dictatorship—as did films about 1821, allowing the colonels to legitimise their actions through the cinematic product—one can still find differences and deviations from the hegemonic nationalist narrative.<sup>10</sup>

9. See, mainly, Yannis Andritsos, *Η Κατοχή και η Αντίσταση στον Ελληνικό Κινηματογράφο*, Aigokeros, Athens 2004.

10. Let us recall the films featuring Thanasis Veggos, a special case in Greek Cinema. See, mainly, the film *What Did You Do in the War, Thanasis* by Dinos Katsouridis (1971). See Paraskevas Mouratidis, «Οι Γερμανοί ξανάρχονται... Τι έκανες στον πόλεμο Θανάση; Η



But what about the other genres of popular cinema during this period? How did the comedies and farces, the various flavours of melodrama, drawing-room dramas, Greek musicals, tales of mountain brigands and bucolic dramas (known to professionals in the field as *foustanella* films)—to refer to the key genres—represent the recent historical past? Until the late 1960s, contemporary audiences remained fanatically attached to these films, which they enjoyed immensely and saw as their world, often in contradistinction to the world of the “official” learned culture. The frequent clashes between the popular and the scholarly, *rebetiko* and foreign songs, the world of the streetwise and the salon, rich and poor—the contrasting pairs are endless—underscore this division in Greek society.<sup>11</sup> What is more, the audience itself is not homogeneous, with different social strata watching different genres of contemporary Greek Cinema in different theatres.<sup>12</sup> This generic division attests to the divisions in the audience, while the cinematic genres cover different aspects of the contrasting ideology and practice of the different social classes and, ultimately, of the historical subjects themselves.

Politics was either absent from, or only superficially present (mainly in comedies), in the vast majority of films produced for the popular cinema of this period.<sup>13</sup> This is only to be expected, since strict state censorship and, still more so, Greek filmmakers’ self-censorship forestalled any attempt at meaningfully critiquing political and social developments. Thus, the cinematic genres that emerged after

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ιστορική μαρτυρία και η πολιτική λειτουργία δύο σατιρικών κωμωδιών», *Mnimon* 29 (2008), p. 151-174. See also Stelios Kymionis, «Συναίνεση και διαφωνία στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο κατά την περίοδο της δικτατορίας των συνταγματαρχών: οι πολιτικές στάσεις των ταινιών *Δώστε τα χέρια* και *Αυτοί που μίλησαν με το θάνατο*», *Ουτοπία* 47 (2001), p. 89-102.

11. See Christos Dermentzopoulos, «Ρεμπέτικο τραγούδι και ελληνικός κινηματογράφος των ειδών (1950-1975): Σκέψεις γύρω από την αναζήτηση μιας εν δυνάμει λαϊκής αντίστασης στα αντικείμενα του αστικού λαϊκού πολιτισμού», Christos Dermentzopoulos, Manos Spyridakis (eds), *Ανθρωπολογία, κουλτούρα και πολιτική*, Metaichmio, Athens 2004.

12. During the 1950s, there were cases of directors (auteurs) who either overtly or implicitly present a perspective different from the hegemonic in Greek Cinema as a cultural practice and an industry. Examples include Giorgos Tzavellas and Orestis Laskos, Nikos Koundouros and Michael Cacoyannis. However, their films lie on the cusp between a more creative and independent cinema, on the one hand, and a popular cinema of mass consumption, on the other. In the 1960s, the appearance of directors such as Adonis Kyrou, Roviros Manthoulis, Takis Kanellopoulos, Kostas Manoussakis, Alekos Alexandrakis and Alexis Damianos would prepare the way for the following decade’s New Greek Cinema, the new wave that would sweep away the old models and make its presence felt in contemporary cinema from the late 1970s on. However, this change would be combined with the absence of a mass audience, which is now turning to new cultural technologies, new behaviours and consumer habits.

13. See Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, «Η πολιτική στις κωμωδίες του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου», *Τα Ιστορικά* 14/26 (1997), p. 145-164.

the Civil War were mainly focused on the folksy and the bucolic, avoiding any reference to the political situation.<sup>14</sup> In the 1960s, the so-called golden age of popular cinema, production grew to the point that nearly a thousand films were made during the decade, which also saw the Greeks crowned as the world's most ardent cinema-lovers in terms of tickets sold at the box office per capita of the population.<sup>15</sup> It is clear that Greek Cinema could only have functioned as popular spectacle if it enjoyed widespread acceptance with the public. The mass production and establishment of a large market for cultural products observed at this time occurred in parallel with the growth in mass consumption and the development of cultural technologies and visual culture over the long 1960s.<sup>16</sup>

Although this popular cinema functioned, in proportion to the size of the country, as a strong cultural industry<sup>17</sup> oriented towards the “diverting” side of everyday culture, there were always elements in its films/products, but also in the attitudes of the audience, that show that the world presented in Greek post-war cinema did pose questions about the recent past as well as the present. However, it did so almost always covertly and allusively—as, for example, in *Attik's Street Organ/Το οργανάκι* by Frixos Iliadis (1955), *Stournara 288 (Poverty and Aristocracy)/Στουρνάρα 288 (Φτώχεια και αριστοκρατία)* by Dimopoulos (1959), *Astero/Αστέρω* by Dimopoulos (1959), *Dead Man's Treasure/Ο θησαυρός του μακαρίτη* by Tsiforos (1959), *Thodoros and the Shotgun/Ο Θόδωρος και το δίκανο* by Dimopoulos (1962), *The Persecuted/Ο κατατρεγμένος* by Apostolos Tegopoulos (1966), *Dollar, Welcome/Καλώς ήρθε το*

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14. The strict framework under which the post-war popular cinema had to operate, in terms of censorship and state control, are well-known. It was forbidden to refer to the difficult legacy of the Civil War or the harsh world of the 1950s that followed in its wake. The conditions introduced by the Metaxas regime remained in force for a long time, while both censorship and the high tax on tickets (with additional extraordinary levies) are enshrined in the 1952 Constitution. During the 1960s, the censorship committees—those responsible for filming permits as well as those charged with issuing performance licenses—were all-powerful (Law 4208 of 1961) and appointed directly by the Ministry of the Presidency. See Andritsos, *Η Κατοχή και η Αντίσταση*, op. cit. p. 20.

15. See Larry Langman, *Destination Hollywood: The Influence of Europeans on American Filmmaking*, McFarland, Jefferson 2000, p. 196. In the 1967-1968 season, for example, 117 films were shot, and more than 137 million tickets were sold “officially” at the box office. Vrasidas Karalis argues that Greek Cinema competed with India's Bollywood during this period for first place globally, and the number of cinemas increased exponentially as loci for shared experience, consumption and public life. Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, Continuum, New York 2012, p. 79-80.

16. See Arthur Marwick, “The Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties: Voices of Reaction, Protest, and Permeation,” *The International History Review* 27/4 (2005), p. 780-806.

17. See Christos Xenos, *Η Ελληνική κινηματογραφική παραγωγή 1942-1990: Πολιτισμικές και παραγωγικές μεταβολές*, unpubl. PhD thesis, Panteion University, Athens 2021.

δολάριο by Sakellarios (1967) and *The Odyssey of an Uprooted Man*/Η Οδύσσεια ενός ξεριζωμένου by Tegopoulos (1969). The polyphony expressed in the films' discourse may generally have been dominated by the voices of consensus, but there was always room for the opposing view and the voices of resistance. Thus, the narrative models of the cinema of the period converse through hybridisations with the different versions of the national imaginary and of national identity, without always identifying with them. The fact that the Greek population embraced this cinema, which would be lambasted so viciously by the intellectuals and auteurs-directors to come, is indicative not only of a climate and perception of the relationship between the popular and the scholarly,<sup>18</sup> but also of the alienation that would gradually spread through this cinema as the 1960s neared their end and a military dictatorship was imposed. As a result, the particular national identity of Greek Cinema largely corresponds with the reality of the society of the time—a society of dreams, of time-honoured popular perceptions of what is right versus the new urban values, of exchanging ancestral land for an apartment in a block built on that land and the new opportunities for social mobility that came with all the above.

Still, the cinematic genres are not undifferentiated and homogeneous and do not simply copy the corresponding Hollywood models, and while they do mirror them to a degree, they display several peculiarities. Nor does their ideological structure effortlessly identify in its totality with the dominant ideological structures of the era in which they emerged. The melodramas of the 1950s—for instance, *The Drunkard*/Ο μεθύστακας by Tzavellas (1950), *Mimikos and Mary*/Ο Μιμίκος και η Μαίρη by Grigoriou (1958) and *My Life Begins with You*/Η ζωή μου αρχίζει με σένα by Fylaktos (1958)—or those of the 1960s—for example, *Orphan Girl in the Hands of Strangers*/Ορφανή σε ξένα χέρια by Errikos Thalassinos (1962), *The Despised*/Οι καταφρονεμένοι by Nikos Varveris (1965), *Despise Me, My Love*/Περιφρόνα με γλυκειά μου by Tegopoulos (1965), *The Man Who Came Back from the Pain*/Ο άνθρωπος που γύρισε από τον πόνο by Tegopoulos (1966), *I Accuse the Powerful*/Κατηγορώ τους δυνατούς by Tegopoulos (1970) and *Visibility Zero*/Ορατότης μηδέν by Nikos Foskolos (1970)—are thus of a different order.

The Greek Cinema of mass consumption and popular culture functioned as a popular spectacle on the fringes of the dominant ideology. Faced with the political climate of the post-war era, harsh censorship and the heavy tax on its products, it formed its own image of the recent past and of contemporary Greek reality. At

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18. The fierce polemics directed at the Old Greek Cinema and its “populism” reveal anew the classic dichotomies between the learned and the popular, “quality” and “commercial” works, high and low, artistic and mass or, as Dimitriou rightly notes, between the “elite” and the “unaccustomed”. (Sotiris Dimitriou, *Ο κινηματογράφος σήμερα: Ανθρωπολογικές, πολιτικές και σημειωτικές διαστώσεις*, Savvalas, Athens 2011, p. 44.)

the same time, it managed to establish itself as an organised market for cultural consumer products. In the end, the films of the Greek Cinema accorded only to a certain degree with the dominant ideology's image of popular culture and the historical past. This image related to the popular classes' acceptance of the new social realities of post-civil war Greece. Thus, the so-called "commercial cinema of genres" was one of the main mechanisms whereby stereotypes, ideology, mythologies and social attitudes were produced and reproduced in contemporary Greek society, thus contributing to the process whereby the tragic memories of recent Greek history, and primarily the events of the 1940s, were forgotten. At the same time, however, all the dominant cinematic genres (melodrama, comedy and the mountain adventure film, primarily)<sup>19</sup> spotlighted the main contrast emerging in Greece's heterogeneous culture at the time: not only the friction between the traditional morality of the countryside and the moral code of the urban working class, but also, more generally, the tension between the recent past and the new urban reality.<sup>20</sup> Present in films such as Laskos' *Golfo, Girl of the Mountains/Γκόλφω*, Kostas Andritsos' *Maria from Pentagioi/Μαρία η Πενταγιώτισσα* (1957), Dimopoulos' *Asterol/Αστέρω*, Tatasopoulos' *Lyngos the Archbandit/Λύγκος ο λεβέντης, ο αρχιληστής* (1959), Andritsos' *Tsakitzis, Protector of the Poor/Τσακιτζής ο προστάτης των φτωχών* (1960), Andritsos' *The Decoy/Ο κράχτης* (1964) and Thanos Santas' *Society Has Wronged Us/Η κοινωνία μας αδίκησε* (1967), these contradictions are sometimes resolved and sometimes lead to a dramatic impasse.

As a vehicle for contemporary urban mythology in the field of the imaginary, the Greek popular cinema of this period helped people overcome the difficulties presented by the new reality, aiding in the forgetting of the recent traumatic past. It also helped smooth the transition from the solidarity and traditional communal values of the past to the social acquiescence of the petit bourgeois ideal and the modernising imperatives of post-war society, which came accompanied by the fetishisation of the new consumer products that this reality created. At the same time, however, it projected another unheralded reality which survived on the fringes of the dominant reality: the reality of the subalterns, who were seeking a place in this new state of affairs and who bore within the victories and defeats of the post-civil war era.<sup>21</sup>

19. On the mountain adventure genre, see Stelios Kymionis, "The Genre of Mountain Film: The Ideological Parameters of Its Subgenres," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 18/1 (2000), p. 53-66, and Christos Dermentzopoulos, «Παράδοση και νεοτερικότητα στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο: Οι ταινίες του είδους της ορεινής περιπέτειας», *Οπτικοακουστική κουλτούρα*, vol. I (2002).

20. See, especially, Evangelos Zachos-Papazachariou, *Η λαϊκότητα στον παλιό ελληνικό κινηματογράφο*, Farfoulas, Athens 2010.

21. Dermentzopoulos, «Ταινίες για όλη την ελληνική οικογένεια: Ο λαϊκός κινηματογράφος στην Ελλάδα (1950-1975)», op. cit.

# 29 October 1950

## Reconstitution of the Greek National Tourism Organisation

### Tourism, Cinema and the Branding of Greece

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IN 1950, just as the Civil War had ended and Greece had firmly entered the American sphere of influence, the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) [Ελληνικός Οργανισμός Τουρισμού (EOT)]—originally founded in 1929—was reconstituted.<sup>1</sup> Hailing a new era in which tourism was expected to play a major role in the economic growth of the country, the state-run organisation's priority was investment in infrastructure, as best represented by the construction of the modernist exclusive hotels "Xenia".<sup>2</sup> Cinema was not within the GNTO's (nor indeed the state's) remit in those days. By 1950, after years of disruption, Greek Cinema entered a period of growth as free enterprise, with the number of films produced—and film companies founded—steadily increasing. By the late 1950s and mid-1960s, a commercial film industry was firmly established while movie-going became one of the nation's favourite leisure activities.

As profit-making industries and popular activities, the trajectories of tourism and cinema in post-war Greece were mostly parallel. However, in establishing a

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1. Yiouli Eptakili, "A History of Tourism in Greece through the 1950s," *ekathimerini.com* (21 November 2013), available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/culture/155648/a-history-of-tourism-in-greece-through-the-1950s/>. See also Law 4397/1929 – FEK 309/A/24-08-1929, available at: <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-ekpaideuse/n-4397-1929.html>; and Law 1965/1950 – FEK 255/A/29-10-1950, available at: <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-tourismos/an-1565-1950.html> [21 July 2021].

2. The Xenia hotels were built in tourist hotspots across the country, partly funded by the American Aid in Greece. See Myrianthe Moussa, "Constructing Tourism in Greece in the 50s and 60s: The Xenia Hotels Project," *Journal of Tourism Research* 17 (2017), p. 271-272.

new brand for Greece—one that would help attract foreign visitors (and currency) while also shaping a modern national image—their paths often coincided. Cinema created and circulated tourist-informed images of the nation, projecting fantasies, hopes and desires—and promising an existing utopia. Indirectly, it served to advertise Greece as a tourist destination, while later it also engaged with its downsides.

One of the first and most influential films that projected a tourist utopian vision of Greece was not Greek: it was the 1957 American studio production *Boy on A Dolphin/ Το Παιδί και το Δελφίνι* (dir. Jean Negulesco), shot on location in Greece, mainly on the island of Hydra and in Athens. The film did not explicitly refer to tourism, but its use of spectacular locations as a backdrop for a plot involving the discovery of antiquities, combined with the voluptuous on-screen presence of Sophia Loren, rendered it an ideal showcase for both the cultural and the sensual promises of Greece. The establishing shots at the very start of the film, which consist of post-card-like images of islands that could have well served as standalone advertising clips for the attractions of Greece, are clearly informed by what we may call a tourist visual aesthetic. We see the picturesque windmills of Mykonos, the antiquities of Delos, the castles of Rhodes, the traditional houses of Poros, the stone-paved port of Hydra—and the blue sea everywhere. The painted maps that help the audience situate these locations also include images of means of transport—an airplane, a ship and a boat—not only foreshadowing plot points, but also inviting the audience to project their own imaginary trip to this land of promise, and potentially even planning an actual one.

Greek Cinema did not have the means, nor the gaze, of a Hollywood production in the 1950s—nor ever, indeed. Addressed primarily to a national audience, the dominant concern of popular Greek Cinema was upward social mobility, usually secured through an appropriate marriage. Two Greek comedies released in 1957, the same year as *Boy on a Dolphin*, exemplify the differences between the American film's vision and what we may call the (limited) tourist gaze of Greek Cinema in this decade. *The Aunt from Chicago/Η θεία από το Σικάγο* (dir. Alekos Sakellarios) tells the story of the return of a rich emigrant from the US (Georgia Vassileiadou), focusing on the ways in which she modernises her brother's ultra-conservative family and finds suitable husbands for his three adult daughters—and herself. *Holidays in Aegina/Διακοπές στην Αίγινα* (dir. Andreas Lambrinos), with mega-star-to-be Aliki Vougiouklaki in one of her first leading roles, was shot on location on the island of Aegina; it is a romance between the holidaymaker Aliki and the local aristocrat Jean (Andreas Barkoulis). While *The Aunt from Chicago* mostly takes place indoors, towards the beginning of the film it includes a scene on the beach. Aiming to ridicule the ultra-conservative mores of the father who insists on his daughters covering up as much flesh as possible even when

going swimming, the sequence not only celebrates the pleasures of the sea, but also indulges the spectators to a clandestine shot showing the girls' naked backs as they begin to undress. Tourism is not explicitly on the agenda here, but the promise of a freer and more sensual future is implied, and it is associated with the natural landscape of Greece.

As its title suggests, *Holidays in Aegina* is more explicitly about tourism—that is, domestic tourism. Aliki and her widowed father (Lambros Konstandaras) visit Aegina to stay for the summer. The director showcases different locations on the island and includes panoramic shots of the picturesque port from the approaching passenger boat, or views of the island from up the mountain. We also get to see Aliki in swimwear; while, following the characters, we visit tavernas, cafes and dance clubs. The island, however, appears little changed from the arrival of the Athenians—there is no tourist development in sight—and the locals treat the guests like family. With the notable exception of a cameo of a young French woman in the penultimate scene, whose presence suggests a new era of sexual permissiveness, there are no foreign characters in the film. The island is presented as a beautiful place, but the overall effect is one of familiarity and cosiness, rather than exoticism and desire. If the American film projected foreign fantasies and desires onto the cultural and natural attractions of the country, the Greek films of the 1950s recorded a more modest engagement with the familiar pleasures of the Greek summer.

While in the 1950s tourism was officially placed on the agenda for development and nation-branding, it was in the 1960s that its true potential emerged. Not only did the number of visitors significantly increase, but the brand image of Greece as the land of sea, sun, sensual freedom and—for those more culturally minded—antiquities became globally entrenched. Two US-funded and -distributed films that associated Greece with spontaneity and emotional fulfilment, set against a spectacular natural background, contributed significantly to creating a tourism-related national brand. These are Jules Dassin's *Never on Sunday/Ποτέ την Κυριακή* (1960), starring Melina Mercouri in the role of the free-spirited prostitute who never works on Sundays;<sup>3</sup> and Michael Cacoyannis' *Zorba the Greek/Αλέξης Ζορμπάς* (1964), an adaptation of Nikos Kazantzakis' novel, with Anthony Quinn in the role of the impulsive, larger-than-life, titular character. Unlike *Boy on a Dolphin*, neither film was shot in spectacular colour. However, their impact on creating a brand image of Greece that appealed to prospective tourists was even higher, as

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3. In his article "What Makes a Film 'Greek': Inward Investment, Outward Aspirations and the Case of Jules Dassin's *Pote tin Kyriaki/Never on Sunday* (1960)", *Film History* 29/2 (2017), p. 1-31, Yannis Tzioumakis examines the film's production history and argues that the film should be included in the Greek Cinema canon.

evidenced by their acclaim and reach.<sup>4</sup> With music by Manos Hadjidakis and Mikis Theodorakis, respectively, the two films' use of *bouzouki* music and the dances *hasapiko* and *sirtaki* also created what we may call a "sonic brand" for Greece.

Reflecting the actual expansion of tourism and the wider circulation of tourist imagery of Greece in this decade, 1960s Greek films register a more extensive engagement with tourism as subject-matter and backdrop. This is particularly evident in the most popular genre of the decade, the musical, which takes its singing and dancing characters to various tourist hotspots around the country, while also integrating plotlines specifically related to tourism.<sup>5</sup> Giannis Dalianidis' *Kiss the Girls/Kopítsa για φίλημα* (1965) is indicative. Opening in a Greek tourist agency in New York, the film acknowledges from the start the innocent and ignorant tourist gaze of foreigners, mildly ridiculing it. As the two main female characters (Rena Vlachopoulou and Zoi Laskari) return to Greece to experience for themselves the beauties and pleasures of the country that they have been selling via holiday packages to foreign tourists, the audience witnesses with them what the film presents as the authentic Greece—the one offered by the Greek (tourist and cinematic) gaze. Like *The Aunt from Chicago*, *Kiss the Girls* uses the trope of the female unmarried emigrant's return home and the search for an appropriate husband both for herself and for younger relatives; yet, the emphasis here is placed on celebrating the modernising Greece and its natural beauties, rather than exposing the outmoded ways of an older generation. The film depicts a Greece full of the energy of young enterprising people. It stresses that the natural beauties of the country are not just its picturesque landscapes, but, quite crucially, the spectacle of young women in bikinis, too. The plot is driven by romance, combined with plenty of comic misunderstandings and twists, but the action takes us to beaches, islands (Hydra and Rhodes) and other impressive locations, where we have the opportunity to see Greece's "natural beauties"—in both meanings of the word.

A similar formula, with variations, can be found in most of Dalianidis' musicals of this decade. Spectacular post-card-like images of Greece are combined with plots that increasingly engage with tourism as a subject-matter, featuring

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4. *Never on Sunday* won one Academy Award (Best Original song for Manos Hadjidakis) and *Zorba the Greek* three (Best Cinematography for Walter Lassaly, Best Art Direction for Dionysis Photopoulos, Best Supporting Actress for Lila Kedrova). The three films' international box office data are as follows: *Boy on a Dolphin* grossed \$3.3 million, *Never on Sunday* \$4 million and *Zorba the Greek* \$23.5 million. Source: IMDb.

5. For more on the relationship between tourism and the musical, see Lydia Papadimitriou, "Travelling on Screen: Tourism and the Greek Film Musical", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 18/1 (2000), p. 95-104; and Lydia Papadimitriou, *The Greek Film Musical: A Critical and Cultural History*, McFarland, Jefferson, London 2006.



characters who act as domestic tourists or who (increasingly) work for tourism. Films such as *The Blue Beads*/*Οι θαλασσιές οι χάντρες* (1967) or *Mermaids and Lads*/*Γοργόνες και μάγκες* (1968) feature characters that seek to make money in the tourist industry, and the films' plots expose the downsides of some tourist endeavours. The critique offered via these plot lines clashes with the celebratory visual aesthetic of the images that reproduce tourist stereotypes, pointing to a complex and often ambivalent overall message about tourism in these films.<sup>6</sup>

In the decades that followed, ambivalence towards tourism dominated the public discourse, as the phenomenon of mass tourism brought plenty of visitors and cash into the country, but also a lot of natural and cultural destruction. At the same time, the commercial film industry, as it had developed in the 1950s and 1960s, radically transformed, as new modes of entertainment, notably television, took over. In the auteur, state-subsidy-dependent art cinema that emerged, tourism was rarely celebrated. In Panos Koutras' 2014 road movie *Xenia*, in their journey from the south to the north of Greece, the two main characters spend a few nights in a deserted and dilapidated "Xenia" hotel. Symbolising the collapse of the exclusive NGTO vision of tourism imagined in the 1950s, and ironically pointing to the corruption of the meaning of the word *xenia* (*philoxenia*/hospitality) in a globalised world that keeps erecting boundaries to separate people, the film is an excellent example of Greek art cinema's critical perspective on the utopian promises of tourism.

But art cinema does not have the final word. Tourism and cinema carry on interacting in different ways, especially as technological changes have made the ability to create and circulate moving images available to all. Nowadays, the brand image of Greece is produced by professionals, as much as by the holidaymakers themselves, who record on mobile phones and post on social media accounts of their own tourist experiences—whether positive or negative.

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6. For more on this tension, see Papadimitriou, "Travelling on Screen", and *The Greek Film Musical*, op. cit.



# August 1954

The first advertisement for the Greek movie projector “Athena” is published in the magazine *Film Star/Κινηματογραφικός Αστήρ*

## Notes on Material Film Heritage: Towards a Historiography of “National” Cinema, Beyond the Boundaries of Representation

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“MY TURN... It's my turn to have a seat... Get out of my way, I'll shoot you! Harder! Faster!” On the doorstep of the building that houses the Cinema Museum in the Thessaloniki Port, a group of children—exclusively boys who visit the space during a school excursion—make up a game with the bulky movie projector that stands still in this informal waiting area. They ride it as if it were a military tank, they fake loading its tank with ammunition, they imitate the blast of a machine gun, they grope around buttons to bring ever so sharply an invisible enemy into focus. A few metres away from the scene, a couple of students record their classmates playing, most probably not driven by an eagerness to document, but rather in a mirroring gesture or reflex, reproducing or recycling an embodied code of visual communication by whatever means possible.

When the students move away, this atypical monument (or offering) looms bare, like an oversized artefact that has escaped a cabinet of curiosities: out in the open, there is no label or tag to explain the features of this physical object; no textual sign to mediate between this device of ghostly technical reproductions (or its replica for that matter) and the passers-by who move on the edges of these institutional premises, on their boundary with the public space. The identity of this modern ruin is inscribed on its very body: ZEISS IKON: ERNEMANN IV 95802—the signature of the once powerful German industry of visual technologies (and, more specifically, the most important manufacturer of super 8 cameras

until World War II).<sup>1</sup> The cryptic inscription necessarily prompts a different entry cue, challenging our expectations as visitors. What do we anticipate to see in a museum devoted to the history of Greek Cinema, when we are welcomed by anonymous—yet imported or replicated—ruins? How are we tempted to approach the artefacts of a cultural activity that started when the country was still part of an empire? Could these relics of technology narrate a different story of memory and identity, cultural colonialism and appropriation, discovery and loss, beyond the boundaries of representation and its legacies?

Crossing the narrow foyer of the museum, the visitor encounters another idle projection machine—a sibling technology of display that renders this set of questions all the more complex. Conveniently positioned in a prominent space in the main corridor, yet overloaded with contextual information posted on the wall, this eponymous device named “Athena” was manufactured by Ioannis Pissanos’ company, not the first local company producing components of the film apparatus, but the first to be branded as producing exclusively “Greek” film technology and the first to use Greekness as a quality label for this modern medium. During the post-World War II period, a period identified with the industrialisation of national economy and cinema alike, Pissanos’ company became competitive on the local market,<sup>2</sup> not only by lowering prices, but also by boosting national sentiment and evoking a sense of responsibility towards reinvigorating the economy at the dawn of the country’s imagined modernisation. This intention was explicitly stated in words through printed promotional material—the commonplace “[b]y buying Greek products you support our national economy and therefore your business” was a key motto in the campaign—and implicitly suggested through an image, since the logo of the company itself conveyed the sacredness of the mission: the head of the Olympian goddess of wisdom against the background of a Maltese cross (a symbol of the seven Knightly Virtues) condensed and reproduced earthly mythologies, aiming to shape and sustain the newly imagined communities.

If Benedict Anderson discusses the rise of modern nationalisms in the nineteenth century by using metaphors of optics and technology as analytical tools—“The ‘nation’ thus became something capable of being consciously aspired to from early on rather than a slowly sharpening frame of vision. [...] The ‘na-

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1. “Zeiss Icon Founded 1927,” Wayweiser Collection Entry, Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments, Harvard University, available at: <http://waywisefas.harvard.edu/people/3812/zeiss-ikon;sessionid=29131E25DA54A781386195BC87B24A35/> [30 August 2021].

2. More than twenty percent of theatres in the country were using equipment produced by Pissanos’ company. For more information regarding the production of visual technologies in Greece, see Nikos Theodosiou, *Κινηματογραφικά μηχανήματα made in Greece*, Thessaloniki Cinema Museum Publications, Thessaloniki, Athens 2009.

tion' proved an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent"<sup>3</sup>—the visual technologies with an origin trademark become part of a larger projection scheme: "Every nation is a projection of the way a given society imagines itself at a certain historical moment."<sup>4</sup> The study of Greek film production in the 1950s employs not only film representations but also the mechanisms that create these "techno-images" in a collective endeavour. If the process of building a visual representation is based on the illusion of sampling or exemplifying a community, then the focus on the devices of mediation reveals the arbitrariness of representation as an artifice—thus relocating the prime use of images not into the realm of imagi/nation (and probability), but into the world of dreams (and impossibility).

The two movie projectors hosted at the Thessaloniki Cinema Museum both stand as monuments of this desire of *poetics*—of transcending reality through (film)making, but through different agencies of mediation. On the one hand, the "German" projector, a silent monument in Foucauldian terms, an example of "inert traces, objects without context, and things left by the past,"<sup>5</sup> invites the viewer to understand it through their senses, bringing its material attributes to their individual perception. A remnant of the time that simply sits in time, isolated from a larger narrative devoid of a convenient framing, reclaims its affect by reminding of the value of unlearning. It is this abstraction that encourages intuition: the students riding on the projectors—performing a highly gendered gesture along the way—have not yet been taught (and most probably they never will) about Étienne-Jules Marey's chronophotographic gun, constructed by this cinema pioneer in his effort to capture animal locomotion within a single film frame. They might be too young to think about the weaponisation of vision and the relation between the entertainment industry and warfare—so eloquently visualised in Harun Farocki's *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969). They have not read Paul Virilio's study about the relation between warring and seeing, where he famously proclaimed "there is no war, then, without representation. [...] Weapons are tools not just of destruction but also of perception."<sup>6</sup> Ruins of visual technology can inscribe historical narratives on their materiality, evoking an intuitive (haptic) knowledge that can mobilise film heritage in unprecedented directions.

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3. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed., Verso, London, New York 2006, p. 67.

4. Stathis Gourgouris, "Notes on the Nation's Dream-Work," *Qui Parle* 7/1 (1993), p. 81-101.

5. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (transl. A. M. Sheridan Smith), Pantheon Books, New York 1972, p. 7.

6. Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (transl. Patrick Camiller), Verso, London 2019, p. 8.

On the other hand, the “Greek” projector—a monument-turned-into-a-document, an information-riddled block that fits neatly in a uniform historical narrative—becomes the springboard for the immersion of the viewer in a labyrinth: the main exhibition space of the Thessaloniki Cinema Museum, which emulates the shape of an unravelling film reel, framing each exhibition room as an actual frame of a film strip, where a sequence of Greek film history is condensed. “Athena” welcomes the viewer to an environment where artefacts from the decades of film production in Greece, props, stills, ephemera and other pieces of documentation testifying to an intense network of signs, relations, artistic practices and thought processes, are presented either in a staged fashion or on interactive monitor screens, with a very particular performative register. This restored ruin—a well-preserved, yet mutated obsolete piece of visual technology (what remains from a projection machine when there is no film to feed into it?)—invites the viewer to a physical experience of the film medium; an immersion that highlights the material attributes of the cinematic image by immersing the body in a larger-than-life medium. This dialogue between cinematic technique (the stop-frame, the sequence, the montage) and the agency of film as an object is more than a safe gimmick: evidently, Greek film heritage is not to be narrated through a display of fixed, immutable representations, but through what Bruno Latour describes as visual inscriptions: codifications of the complex processes and networks of interaction between humans and non-humans that evolve non-linearly over the course of historical time.<sup>7</sup>

Whereas the immersion of the visitor resembles an expedition into uncharted territory, the treasure hunt of the “national” film heritage only seemingly follows a thread through the labyrinth—the explorer is constantly haunted by counter-narratives inscribed in the building’s spectral strata. These entanglements and mirroring exercises of national history and film historiography, media archaeology and visual technology, dream and desire (and its institutionalisation) could not have found a home more hospitable than the ground floor of a former Customs Office building: the edifice commissioned by the Ottoman state in the early twentieth century (shortly before the incorporation of Thessaloniki into the Greek State in 1912) to a newly-established French company, designed by a Levantine architect, built by a Jewish architect<sup>8</sup> and repurposed within the framework of the appointment of Thessaloniki as European Capital of Culture in 1997, archives the history of the place in its very architectural structure, keeping stories of coexistence,

7. Bruno Latour, Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*, 2nd ed., Princeton University Press, New York 1986.

8. *200 έργα πολιτισμού για τη Θεσσαλονίκη του 21ου αιώνα*, Organization for the Cultural Capital of Europe, Thessaloniki 1997.

exclusion, war, extinction and shifts in governance stratified and, therefore, at first glance invisible. It is a larger monument that inscribes the desire to *visualise* a national narrative of collective seeing into its foundations.

Normative “national” film heritage is said to entail the ways in which a country is “seen” through this cumulative process of retrieving representations. Yet, in a world fascinated by invisible mediations that eliminate the distance between past and present, proximate and remote, inscriptions of obsolete film technologies redirect our attention to the devised mechanisms that inform this gaze, archiving hidden narratives of what is at stake when moving images are made. For a nation addicted to archaeologies old and new, this is by no means an impossible projection.





5 June 1955

20th Century Fox organises a press conference  
in Athens to announce the production  
of *Boy on a Dolphin*

## Hollywood, Greek Antiquities and the Kindness of Strangers

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ON 5 JUNE 1955, during a press conference at Athens' emblematic Grande Bretagne Hotel, the Greeks were informed that 20th Century Fox, the unrivalled colossus of American Cinema at the time, had decided to film *Boy on a Dolphin* on the Greek island of Hydra.<sup>1</sup> Based on a novel by David Devine, the movie was meant, according to producer Samuel G. Engel who led the conference, to "make Greece known to America," a plan apparently conceived by the company's president, Greek-born Spyros Skouras, in collaboration with John Peurifoy, former American ambassador to Greece.

Following a series of dead-end deliberations and false starts, Italian upcoming actress Sophia Loren was cast in the leading role of Phaedra, a local island girl making her living through sponge diving. Alan Ladd and Clifton Webb were cast as the film's two leading men, while a lesser role was given to legendary Greek theatre actor Alexis Minotis, then residing in Hollywood and a friend of Skouras. Minotis had, allegedly, encouraged Konstantinos Karamanlis, who as Greece's on-and-off prime minister in the turbulent 1950s was looking for ways to boost the country's tourist economy, to get in touch with Skouras in the first place.<sup>2</sup> The

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1. Stavros Zoumboulakis, «Όταν η Σοφία Λόρεν μάζευε σφουγγάρια στην Ύδρα», *Το Βήμα* (25 July 2014), available at: <https://www.tovima.gr/2014/07/25/culture/otan-i-sofia-loren-mazeye-sfoygaria-stin-ydra/> [11 July 2021].

2. Tasos Kontrogiannidis, «Η Σοφία Λόρεν στην Ύδρα, για 'Το παιδί και το δελφίνι'», *NewsPepper* (19 August 2018), available at: <https://www.newspepper.gr/istories-i-sofia-loren->

movie was directed by Romanian-born Jean Negulesco, already acclaimed for his earlier work, including the 1954 hit *Three Coins in the Fountain*.

The film's storyline brings together most of the trademark qualities that were used to repackage Greece for the global tourist market in the 1960s and 1970s, as an exotic seascape of eternal summer, where local girls are exquisitely sensual albeit modest and kind, and men tend to be short and dark-skinned, simple-minded, rather unsightly and terribly uncivilised. More often than not, ancient ruins and (less so) Byzantine chapels may be seen to dot the background, forming a large part of the cultural and social life of the natives. And, at least in the case of this particular scenario, classical antiquities may be found in the country's dry land or lying on the bed of its deep blue sea.

This markedly American way of viewing Greece was explicitly tailored for a wider, middle-class audience happy to consume culture as commodity and enjoy international travelling as a new form of leisure.<sup>3</sup> Goaded by an emerging desire to commodify the country and its heritage, Greek authorities were typically happy to oblige, in return for greater international visibility for the country and considerable successes for their own financial plans. The Greek tourist industry effort, as a result, was spearheaded by a desire, on the one hand, to make the country appear as a land of ancient splendours—a heterotopia of ruins, so to speak—and as a state on the fast track towards modernisation, on the other.<sup>4</sup>

"You say he's only a statue, | And what can a statue achieve. | And yet while I'm gazing at you, | My heart tells my head to believe,"<sup>5</sup> sings Julie London in the film's title-sequence, in lyrics by Paul Francis Webster set to music by Greek composer Takis Morakis. (The song's Greek version, *Ti ein' afto pou to lene agapi/What Is This [Thing] That They Call Love*, also heard in the movie, has now become an all-time classic of Greek music.) Seven minutes into the film, Phaedra discovers the "boy" the storyline is all about: it is the statue of a toddler, seemingly made of gold, riding a dolphin—this one cast in bronze. The pair come from a shipwreck, which Phaedra discovers by accident during one of her dives. The local doctor

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stin-ydra-gia-to-paidi-kai-to-delfini/ [11 July 2021].

3. Stavros Alifragkis, Emilia Athanassiou, "Educating Greece in Modernity: Post-War Tourism and Western Politics," *The Journal of Architecture* 18 (2013), p. 699-720.

4. Dimitris Plantzos, "Scenes of Greece's Heterotopia," Yannis Aesopos (ed.), *Tourism Landscapes: Remaking Greece*, 14th International Architectural Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, Athens 2015, p. 204-317.

5. The idea of living statues, especially antique statues coming to life, is a well-used motif in the cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, looking back at the classical myth of Pygmalion among others; see Vito Adriaensens, "Of Swords, Sandals, and Statues: The Myth of the Living Statue," Steven Jacobs, Susan Felleman, Vito Adriaensens, Lisa Colpaert (eds), *Screening Statues: Sculpture and Cinema*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2015, p. 137-155.

(an alcoholic Briton!) identifies the find based on an old myth and some actual artefacts from the island of Delos. Next, we find Phaedra in Athens, where American archaeologists are busy rebuilding the Stoa of Attalos at the Agora (and one would think giving the Parthenon a once-over as well).

In a story filled with Greek antiquities and their dire predicament either at the hands of ignorant Greek peasants (and criminal Albanians) or as valuable loot desired by suspicious foreigners, the movie never really deviates from its true purpose: to advertise Greece as a tourist destination, filled with breathtaking sites, albeit thoroughly modernised. From its title-sequence, a ludicrously random presentation of the “Islands of Greece” featuring extensive scenes from Rhodes and Mykonos, otherwise unrelated to the plot, to prolonged shots of the Agora, the Acropolis, Epidaurus and Meteora, the film reads like a documentary about Greek archaeological treasures—that is, when the camera does not dwell too much on the country’s motorways, freshly built at the time, some newly modernised restaurants and its cosmopolitan tourist resorts.

This contrived juxtaposition between a refined middle class of (mostly) men of the world and the ignorant, naïve and brutish Greek peasants was to become an international trademark, affecting the ways in which cinema portrayed the country and its people. Often enough, Greek involvement was more noticeable, rendering the entire enterprise a self-colonisation project of sorts. If *Boy on a Dolphin* featured only one significant Greek credit (Morakis, for the title-song), other, somewhat later productions, would count a bit more on the natives themselves.

Melina Mercouri, most notably, was perhaps cast as an anti-Loren in *Never on Sunday*, released by United Artists in 1960. Directed by Jules Dassin, an acclaimed American director and by that time already Melina’s devoted partner, the film was conceived as a vehicle for her as much as for Greece. In Dassin’s own script, Melina (“Ilia” in the film), playing a Piraeus prostitute famously always resting on Sundays, is thought to represent “the purity that was Greece”; in the eyes of Homer Thrace, an American classicist and intellectual (played by Dassin himself) who “came to Greece to find the truth,” Ilia needs to reconnect with Greece’s glorious past and the “truth” lying in the writings of the Greek philosophers—she needs to embrace “reason instead of fantasy, morality instead of immorality.”

Even though *Never on Sunday* remains indecisive about its own agenda, it seems to recycle a stereotypical belief, also shared by many Greek intellectuals since at least the interwar years, that there exists an irreparable divide between East and West, affecting Greece’s standing with both. The film, moreover, suggests—as *Boy on a Dolphin* also did in its own way—that Greece’s classical past (coveted by the West which treats it as part of its own intellectual genealogy) often clashes with its people’s Balkan or Eastern Mediterranean present (which

rather defines Greece as part of the Orient).<sup>6</sup> *Never on Sunday's* international success helped consolidate these stereotypes: Melina won the award for Best Actress at the 1960 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for an Oscar, while the title-song by Manos Hadjidakis, which did succeed in receiving the Academy Award for that year, went on to become an international hit by many different singers in many different languages. Alongside Theodorakis' famous sirtaki dance from *Zorba*, it came to typify the way in which foreigners saw Greece—and even the way in which Greeks chose to represent themselves to themselves and others, especially when gains from tourism were to be had.

In both *Boy on a Dolphin* and *Never on Sunday*, archaeophilia—the love of antiquity and antiquities—is what Greece's visitors expect from the country's modern inhabitants; these visitors feel free to express their dismay when the locals fail to share Western enthusiasm for their own past. At the same time, however, both female protagonists in the two films are shown to harbour an embodied, sensorial and quasi-metaphysical relationship with the material antiquities of their land: while *Boy on a Dolphin's* Phaedra initially collaborates with an American smuggler hoping to sell a “Greek national treasure,” as the film's archaeologist calls the statue, she then comes to her senses and realises that her valuable find must remain in Greece (while she surrenders herself to the attractive archaeologist); Iliia, on the other hand, although blissfully ignorant of the actual content of Greek mythology, is shown emotionally enjoying performances of Greek drama (which she thoroughly misunderstands), and she then seems completely at ease discussing her ideas about Greek philosophy (such as they are) during a night stroll through the magnificently filmed site of the Athenian Acropolis.

In films such as *Boy on a Dolphin* and *Never on Sunday*, despite their many differences, Greece is stereotypically portrayed as part of the “Orient,” a place isolated from the global mainstream, “as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption,” in Edward Said's words.<sup>7</sup> Habitually constructed as a world apart, somewhat eccentric although regrettably backward, Greece is portrayed, by friends and foes alike, as a landscape of ancient glories and modern distractions from modernity itself, a land defined by its own “separateness,” its quasi-feminine “penetrability,” its “supine malleability,” to paraphrase Said once again.<sup>8</sup> Like in the 1971 international hit *Akropolis Adieu*, written by Christian Bruhn

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6. Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology Through the Looking-Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987, p. 95-122; Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization and the Institution of Modern Greece*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto 1996, p. 47-89.

7. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York 1978, p. 206.

8. Ibid.

and Georg Buschor and performed in German by French singer Mireille Mathieu, where a male traveller to Athens bids farewell to his local girlfriend in the face of the city's emblematic landmark, Phaedra and Ilia are cast in the two movies as competing metaphors for Greece, significantly gendered female: a place to visit, yet certainly also a place to leave behind.

However, the success of the two movies (as well as a few others, such as *The Guns of Navarone* of 1961 and, of course, the massively successful *Zorba the Greek* in 1964) meant that Greece was, in fact, revisited. Rhodes, Mykonos, Attica with its scenic coastline and Hydra itself were soon to become international tourist destinations, a development that has defined their cultural identity to the present day. By the time Dassin and Mercouri filmed part of their new movie, *Phaedra*, in Hydra in 1962, the island was virtually unrecognizable: although the heterotopic exoticism constructed with *Boy on a Dolphin* remains, now the island comes across as both deservedly cosmopolitan and refreshingly modernised.

*Phaedra*, however, is once again about archaeophilia (among other Greek vices, such as—tellingly—adultery within the family). The storyline itself, scripted by Greek novelist Margarita Lyberaki, is based on *Hippolytus* by Euripides (as well as Racine's *Phèdre*); thus, the film manages to combine ancient Greek pathos with Melina's acting hyperbole. Although the film was neither a commercial nor an artistic success and has aged rather badly in the sixty-odd years since its production, it still makes a good case-study of the way in which Greek intellectuals and their friends constructed an image for the country and its people, an image that relied on the exceptionality that was Greece: for no apparent reason, the film's title-sequence features prolonged shots of the Parthenon frieze as exhibited in the British Museum, and when Melina first meets Anthony Perkins in the movie (cast as her step-son and future lover), they meet in that museum's Duveen Gallery, beautifully shot standing against the Parthenon sculptures. This might well anticipate Melina's later campaign, as Greek minister of culture, for the return of the "marbles" to Greece; at any rate, within the movie itself, it stands as a reminder of the burden of Greekness upon Greece's modern inhabitants, once again narrated as a blessing in disguise. By 1988, however, when Alexis Bistikas directed *The Marbles/Ta mármará*, his first short film, Melina had already become an iconic Greek artist and politician, celebrated perhaps for her activism during the dictatorship years (1967-1974) rather than her talent. Bistikas, however, pays homage to both, having his young Greek protagonist relating with Melina's campaign in the present as well as her portrayal of a proud young Greek woman in *Stella*, the venerated retelling of *Carmen* directed by Michael Cacoyannis in 1956.

The extent to which these narratives about Greekness affected the Greeks themselves is difficult to determine. On some occasions, such as when, on 8 November 1956, throngs of youngsters disturbed Sophia Loren's shooting day

at Pasalimani in Piraeus,<sup>9</sup> locals decided to behave like insubordinate natives; on others, they seemed happier to accommodate. Greek Cinema, at the same time, was able to comment on Hydra's newly found cosmopolitanism in its own way: Cacoyannis's *A Girl in Black/Το κορίτσι με τα μαύρα*, also filmed in 1956, shows an under-modernised Hydra in a much more sombre light, with no ancient statues in sight, but with the burden of Greek tragedy—and a particularly Greek sense of narrative fatalism—quite obvious in its plot. Thankfully, the film's protagonists, Elli Lambeti and Dimitris Horn, came from Athens and not Hollywood, and this contrast remains obvious throughout; quite tellingly, the couple's first scene in the movie happens on the very spot in the island's harbour where the two protagonists of *Boy on a Dolphin* share their last scene together—a passionate kissing scene no less.

Although Greece remained grateful to the disorderly armies of tourists, vagabonds and hippies who kept arriving, summer after summer, to find themselves in the bars and on the beaches of Mykonos, Santorini, Hydra, Rhodes and Crete, some Greeks reserved their right to make fun of all this: in a refreshingly satirical sequence from *Efthychia's Suitors/Οι γαμπροί της Ευτυχίας*, a Greek situational comedy filmed by Socratis Kapsaskis in 1962, the same year *Phaedra* was released, we are treated to a panorama of Hydra as playground for the Greek and the international 1960s: a crowd of well-to-do Athenians spend their summer vacation in a house suspiciously similar to the one where Melina had her fateful affair with her step-son in *Phaedra*. The island is filled with polyglot plein-air painters and scantily clad sunbathers, traditional sights and modern sounds. No music by Hadjidakis or Theodorakis is to be heard however—only *Voulez Vous Cha Cha Avec Moi* by Tito Rodríguez, mockingly warbled by legendary Greek comic actress Georgia Vassileiadou, in the title-role of ageing Efthychia, who has come to Hydra to socialise exclusively with foreigners, as she “cannot stand the locals.”

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9. Stephanos Milesis, «Η Σοφία Λόρεν στο Πασαλιμάνι του 1956», *Pireorama* (18 May 2012), available at: <http://pireorama.blogspot.com/2012/05/57.html?m=1> [11 July 2021].

15 August 1957

Michael Cacoyannis films the icon of the Virgin of Tinos being paraded through the streets for the final scene of *A Matter of Dignity*<sup>1</sup>

*May God-Fearing Lips Be Made Dumb*<sup>2</sup>

Syllas Tzoumerkas

Director

IN Michael Cacoyannis' *A Girl in Black*/*Το κορίτσι με τα μαύρα* (1956), two men from the capital with an emotionally charged relationship visit an island. One of the two becomes involved in the life of the black-clad daughter of the woman who has rented them their room; when he intervenes in the history of the family and its complex relations with the other islanders, destructive as well as redemptive developments are set in motion.

In *A Matter of Dignity*/*Το τελευταίο ψέμα* (1958), Cacoyannis' next film, a haute bourgeois Athenian family tries to conceal their bankruptcy under lies, pretence and criminality—until their maid makes the mistake of asking for the wages they owe her, which she needs to help out her child.

In *The Fear*/*Ο φόβος* (1966), directed by Kostas Manoussakis, the attempt to cover up a rape and murder on a farm beside a bog brings disaster upon the culprit and his family, who are complicit in the cover-up.

Although they belong to different genres—the first is an ethnographic melodrama, the second a melodrama of social class and the third an intense psychosexual thriller—there is a strange parallel between these three films, which I consider the best Greek Cinema made in the 1950s and 1960s: in all three, there

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1. This text follows on from two earlier texts: one on Kostas Manoussakis' *The Fear* included in the volume *Η χαμένη λεωφόρος του Ελληνικού Σινεμά* (*Lost Highway of Greek Cinema*, 2019), and another on Giorgos Tsaoulis' editing for both *The Fear* and *A Matter of Dignity* in *Κόψε Κάτι* (*Cut Something*, a special Thessaloniki Film Festival publication about editing, 2021).

2. A “mishearing” of Psalm 30:19, substituting “the God-fearing” for “the deceitful.”

is dramaturgical use of muteness in the roles of their victims, all of whom are true innocents.

The films' three victims are voiceless, which is to say mute and totally defenceless within the structures of Greek society; each of the three works dissects society in a different context—an island, a posh Athenian neighbourhood, a nameless village beside a bog. Elli Lambeti's sister in *A Girl in Black* is already dead when the film begins, in the least developed and foregrounded use of the mechanism in question. In the second film, there is the son (Vassilis Kailas) of the maid, a child who "loses his voice" due to the shock of a fall. And lastly, the mute maid (Elli Fotiou) in the third is touched by angels, has visions and, in the words of the father of the family (Alexis Damianos), "gets everyone into trouble." All three have lost at least their father, while it is easy to believe that the third, the ward, given her age and the setting, is one of the many left orphaned by the recent wars—like another leading female protagonist in the cinema of the time, the character played by Margarita Papageorgiou in Nikos Koundouros' *The Ogre of Athens/O δράκος* (1956).

In the first film, the voicelessness is a conscious decision made by someone who haunts the heroes from the recent past, someone who has decided to bid farewell to life. In the second, the voicelessness occurs in the present tense, which is to say that we are present for the moment that brings it on. And in the third, it is congenital, a disability and a "misfortune" in the eyes of the inhabitants, but God and His Grace compensate for it with visions (Chryssa says she sees the Virgin Mary and others confirm it) and the bizarre idea that she somehow brings good luck to the house—both aspects of the case are reported extremely vividly and almost sensually in the local newspaper when she disappears. Thus, she is not exactly treated as a *person*, but rather like the little lizards that stick their heads out of the cracks in building walls and stare, which superstition insists must never be killed under any circumstance.

The others talk through and around these three rather strange and speechless creatures, both while they are alive and, in the case of the two who die, after their deaths. Everyone speaks, which is to say that they plot, cover up, con, lash out, lie, then lie some more and—every now and then, when they have no choice—tell the truth; like a barnyard cacophony, it never ends. There's a hubbub in the harbour around Stefanos Stratigos' beautiful boat in *A Girl in Black*; in the noisy taverns, the shops and drawing rooms in *A Matter of Dignity*; in the dusty main street of the village through which Alexis Damianos walks on his hard, square heels in *The Fear*; the buses like the one that Elli Lambeti boards with her hens and worldly goods in that inimitable haughtily vulnerable way, in *A Matter of Dignity*; and like the other bus from which Elena Nathanail alights with her suitcase, in *The Fear*, ready to dive deep into the family morass once more after a brief escape.

And all these talkers are the people I imagine singing the psalm and praying



that “all deceitful lips be struck dumb” during the litany of the Virgin Mary come March each year. But, as always here, in this country, it is actually the lips of those who live pious, innocent lives that are silent. The deceitful lips most likely belong to the members of the three communities in the three films: the parents and children of the central families, the uncles on the periphery, all the clueless old men and strange old women, the handsome youths and pretty girls, the security forces on patrol. For it is they who talk and domineer, in a silent conspiracy both conscious and subconscious, weaving the tough transparent threads and nets in which all the three films’ characters will ultimately be ensnared and—in most cases—destroyed.

Of course, the wish that they have all made back then in March, in church, that deceitful lips should be struck dumb (without knowing that they are wishing it on themselves), is granted in all three films, in horrible and dizzying cinematic ways. This is because, ultimately, the mute characters are given a voice, in a way, in all three films.

In the first, a new criminal “joke” played by the island’s thugs which leaves children dead in its wake leads Lambeti’s heroine to clash with them aloud, to transcend the position of her family and the perceptions of her gender to say out loud that “there’s no shame in loving; it’s fear and lies that are shameful,” to force the “jokers” to turn themselves in and take belated bitter revenge for her sister who committed suicide because they never tired of joking about how ugly she was. The ghost of the voicelessness embodied by the sweet sister, the one they call a “monster,” with the “whore” mother (Eleni Zafeiriou) and the flawed brother (Anestis Vlachos), dissolves in the now speaking mouth of her “lucky” sister who remained alive. The sun and its reflection on the waters as they surge into the boat to drown any children whom they can catch, and the moon as well as some trees that are strangely luminous at night, are the magical common denominators.

In the second film, the public humiliation of the horribly rich family struggling to sell their daughter off in marriage at a good price, in the hope that it will save them, is ward off by the near-murder of their maid. When the maid threatens to shout it from the rooftops that they are bankrupt and owe her wages, she, the mother of the voiceless child, is attacked by a sad duo: the aphasic mother and the weak-willed daughter. Together, mother and daughter fight furiously to keep the window shut, so that their—I suppose—equally dignified and well brought-up neighbours will not hear. I cannot imagine that they are much bothered by the grocer (Kostas Fermas), who just a few scenes earlier once again allowed the maid to do the shopping on credit. But the daughter is done for good with her family and their lies. In fact, she is most likely done with herself. She takes the child with her to Tinos, opening the film’s epilogue with an awe-inspiring bodily miracle and

a new voice whose first utterance is a sob merged with a scream, to the sound of bells. Here, the magical factor is depicted and fully embodied in the remaining elements of the final scene: the celebrations of the Feast of the Virgin on Tinos.

In the third film, some vengeful lake fish, like the ones that are eaten and vomited a few scenes earlier, bring about the denouement, by raising to the surface of the lake the body of the ward-maid who was raped and murdered by the son (Anestis Vlachos) on his half-sister's wedding day. Everything comes to light, joined together in the mind of the viewer over the dizziness of the freeze-frames in the final scene, in which the son dances, surrounded and frightened by the inhabitants of his village and the now pitiful members of his family: the sad bride-sister, the troubled groom, the speechless father, the warm stepmother. The sickles and the scarecrows, the hay ricks, dusty soil and muddy earth, the reeds, the cool nights and drowsy noontimes—these are the magical factor here.

Running through all three films, voicelessness becomes the dramatic mechanism *par excellence* for expressing the directors' superlative misanthropy, their unvarnished abhorrence for the good folk of these environs and the mystic darkness that they read into their communities, but also the chinks of light that they permit in their translation of the human experience—both of *their* era, with the particular political, social and class characteristics of the post-war period and, because all three films are outstanding, every era.

Together with the two directors, the directors of photography (Lassaly, Gardelis) and the editor who worked on all three films (Tsaoulis), a largely shared cast and amateur extras from the weird gallery of the ethnographic documentary, the films achieve something impossible: depicting the contemporary social order in the Greek Cinema of the time through silences, bodies, sound and the delivery of dialogue. This can be seen in other films, too, but there the goal in the overwhelming majority of cases is to flatter the social classes in question, while here the aim is to demolish their narcissism. The actors are Anestis Vlachos in *A Girl in Black* and *The Fear*, Elli Lambeti, Eleni Zafeiriou and Kostas Fermas in *A Girl in Black* and *A Matter of Dignity*, Mary Chronopoulou in *A Matter of Dignity* and *The Fear*, along with Giorgos Fountas, Dimitris Horn, Notis Pergialis, Stefanos Stratigos and Thanassis Veggos in *A Girl in Black*, Giorgos Pappas, Athena Michailidou, Michalis Nikolinakos, Dimitris Papamichail and Vassilis Kailas in *A Matter of Dignity*, and Alexis Damianos, Elli Fotiou, Elena Nathanail, Spyros Fokas and Thodoros Katsadramis (the gendarme) in *The Fear*. And this is extremely important, because otherwise—if we do not know what they see, what they hear, what they live—what would be the point of their speechlessness? So what is this community that rises before them, Medusa-like?

In relation to the actors and to social class, I shall note here as examples the following fragments and moments from the three films:

Zafeiriou resting her head on the hand lying on the table when she apologises to her daughter in *A Girl in Black*.

Lambeti's upright head in *A Girl in Black* and its tilt—slight or more pronounced—in *A Matter of Dignity*.

Horn and Pergialis' pleasantly round and moist articulation, and the contrast with the spat-out, dry-mouthed, stiff delivery of those around them (Fountas, Vlachos, Stratigos et al.) in *A Girl in Black*.

The open-necked shirt and wonderful belly laugh of Stefanos Stratigos in *A Girl in Black*.

The entire scene in which Elli Lambeti takes the bus from Delphi to Athens in *A Matter of Dignity*.

The contrast in how the waists of the main female roles and Giorgos Pappas' belly is handled in *A Matter of Dignity*.

Zafeiriou's perfect ambiguous reaction in the grocer's shop, when the grocer mockingly calls her a "monkey!" and she is not displeased, in *A Matter of Dignity*.

The differentiated depiction—in terms of social class, too—of the homosexual attraction and tension between Horn and Pergialis in *A Girl in Black*, and between Fotiou-Nathanail and Vlachos-Katsadramis in *The Fear*.

Chronopoulou's enunciation and the look in her eye in the night scene in which she "says everything she hadn't said for so many years" to Damianos in *The Fear*.

Damianos' out-of-the-side-of-his-mouth "Get up!" to Anestis Vlachos at the wedding feast in *The Fear*.

The different postures of the protagonists in *The Fear*: Damianos leaning back on his heels, Chronopoulou slightly hunched over, Nathanail bolt upright with those porcelain, so-thin-they-might-break ankles, Fotiou wide-eyed and short of breath, Fokas' forehead wrinkled but not in thought, Anestis Vlachos' whole body—even his one glass eye—responding and translating everything that happens around it into a sexual stimulus. That last body gave Greek Cinema its most desperate, full-body dance, in the film's epilogue.

One could add a lot more examples that signify the thrilling precision that these three films achieve.

In all of them, and in the fall that they narrate with all the means at their disposal, the world of their decades—the 1950s and 1960s—finds its most authentic expression, its most three-dimensional condensation into drama and its most transcendent rupture: easily, totally and irreversibly, like breaking a shell. With the dramatic *realisation* of three muffled (yet eventually voiced) crimes, they define forever the essence of the three communities, but also the three landscapes: the island, Athens and the plain. The three films drive a knife into the country's

underbelly, precisely where it needed to be stabbed. And their cut is so powerful and definitive, because the cinematically transcendental, the anarchic, the vertical, the unknown and the dizzying conspire with the voiceless on the solid ground of the most precise, cartographic, earthly, horizontal anatomy.

# 3 August 1961

The first screening of the film *A Neighbourhood Named "The Dream"* is interrupted by law enforcement agents

## Anticommunism and Greek Cinema<sup>1</sup>

Eleni Kouki

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ON THE morning of Thursday, 3 August 1961, the producers and actors of the film *A Neighbourhood Named "The Dream"* / *Συνοικία το Όνειρο* arrived at Radio City, a cinema theatre on Patission Street to prepare the official avant-premiere that was to begin at 11am. Greek and foreign journalists, cinema critics, as well as the cultural attachés from various embassies had been invited. However, when they arrived, they realised that the entrance had been blocked and that it was guarded by men from the 16th Police Station of Patissia. The people involved in the making of the film protested the irregular nature of the intervention and rushed to show the official permit issued by the Ministry of the Presidency allowing the screening. Thus, at 11:15am the policemen were obliged to open the doors, but they remained there to make sure that the terms of the permit would be meticulously observed. As a result, they denied entry to anyone without an invitation, including those who had worked on the making of the film and had organised the screening, but had not thought to provide themselves with invitations. Among those left outside were actor Manos Katrakis and composer Mikis Theodorakis. The ensuing dialogue is reminiscent of the farcical situations on which many films of the Old Greek Cinema were based: "But it is Theodorakis, he has composed the music and he wants to listen to his work. In fact, he is going to speak...", the attendees protested, receiving the policeman's astonishing reply: "I don't care who he is."

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1. This article is part of the project "Censorship in Cinema and the Visual Arts: The Greek experience from the post-war years until today" (CIVIL). The project is funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI) and by the General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI); Work Contract No. 883.

I only know one thing: he will not go in without an invitation.” Hence, further delay was caused until all those who had worked for the making of the film produced the necessary piece of paper.<sup>2</sup>

In the end, the screening started at 11:40am. However, at 11:55am a determined sergeant entered the cinema and announced that the permit had been revoked and that the screening had to be interrupted. Tryfon Triantafyllakos himself, deputy minister to the Prime Minister, had called and announced this decision. Alekos Alexandrakis, the protagonist, director and producer of the film, protested, and in response the sergeant turned the power switch off, immediately interrupting the screening, despite the risk of causing damage to the projection apparatus. Then, the police force that had entered the dark theatre demanded its immediate evacuation. Alekos Livaditis, a popular actor of musical theatre, remained in his seat. To the orders of the policemen, he answered politely that he had been invited to watch a film and that he would leave only if the people who had worked in the making of the film announced the suspension. He was arrested despite the protests of Vassilis Mesolongitis, chairman of the Association of Greek Actors, who had also been invited. To empty the theatre as quickly as possible, the policemen started pushing the spectators. Kostas Nitsos, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Ta Néa*, was dragged out of the theatre under threat of violence. The actor Nikos Vougas was also taken to the police station.

The relationship between Greek Cinema and censorship has been a long and stable one. In the interwar years, when Greek commercial cinema took its first steps, a strict legal framework was adopted to provide for its supervision at every stage of production, from shooting to its release in theatres.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, the incident we have just described is not a deviation from the norm, but the norm evident in a long, unbroken chain of state control. At the same time, however, it is a special case. The incident itself gives us some clues. If Greek Cinema was under such systematic control, why did the Ministry of the Presidency have to retract its own decision? Why did the film receive a screening permit in the first place, if the deputy minister was so strongly opposed to it? It was precisely this institutional contradiction that turned the normality of censorship into a spectacularly violent event which was widely reported in the press, raised fear in the government of a general strike among those working in the performing arts and finally opened a

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2. The description of the incident is from the newspaper *Η Αυγή* (4 August 1961), p. 1. Similar but briefer reports are found in other newspapers of that day—for instance, *Ta Néa* and *Το Βήμα*.

3. Maria Chalkou, «Κινηματογράφος και λογοκρισία στην Ελλάδα από τα πρώιμα χρόνια έως τη Μεταπολίτευση», Penelope Petsini, Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Λεξικό λογοκρισίας στην Ελλάδα*, Kastaniotis, Athens 2018, p. 82-99.

heated debate about the conditions under which filmmaking was carried out in Greece in the 1960s, a period of rapid reconstruction of the country.<sup>4</sup>

The answer lies in the anti-communism that served as the Greek state's official ideology from 1946 until 1974, and perhaps even later. Politics had always been one of the main reasons for censorship in both cinema and other forms of art—with ups and downs, the study of which allows us to better understand the social rhythm of the time.<sup>5</sup> The first years, during the civil war between the elected government and the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), were the hardest. The institutionalisation of anti-communism led to the adoption of a series of laws which stripped any citizen deemed dangerous by the state security mechanism of their rights—concerning life, property, education and employment. These laws survived the end of the civil conflict in 1949, were incorporated into the new constitution of 1952 and functioned as a para-constitution.<sup>6</sup>

The end of the Civil War may not have brought about their abolition, but at least it led to their gradual partial inactivation. From 1955 to 1958, the repression of communism diminished markedly. However, the elections of 11 May 1958 and the electoral rise of the EDA, the left-wing party that represented the losing side of the Civil War, mobilised the reflexes of the right-wing Karamanlis government. In the following months, the arrests and banishments of EDA members multiplied, while violent incidents occurred, such as the burning of EDA's offices. In Argos, after an attack on the EDA offices, the gendarmerie arrested some of its local members, accusing them of arson.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, a reorganisation of state mechanisms of persecution, surveillance and propaganda began. Pre-existing departments, such as the Directorate-General of Press and Information (GGTP) of the Ministry of the Presidency, were supported with new funds to carry out the new anti-communist struggle. In addition, new coordinating bodies were set up, such as the Directorate-General for National Security (GDEA) under the Ministry of the Interior, or existing ones

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4. About the possibility of a strike, see *Η Καθημερινή* (4 August 1961), p. 2. For more general comments about the incident and the state's arbitrary intervention in relation to broader cinema standards in Greece, see, for example, Dimitris Psathas, «Ελαφρότητες», *Τα Νέα* (10 August 1961), p. 1; M. S., «Συνοικία το Όνειρο, και Κράτος. Ο Φασισμός», *Επιθεώρηση Τέχνης* 80-81 (1961).

5. Kostis Karpozilos, «Αντικομμουνισμός και λογοκρισία», Petsini, Christopoulos (eds), *Λεξικό λογοκρισίας στην Ελλάδα*, op. cit. p. 54-65.

6. Stratis Bournazos, «Το κράτος των εθνικοφρόνων: Αντικομμουνιστικός λόγος και πρακτικές», Christos Chatziiosif (ed.), *Η ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ού αιώνα*, Vivliorama, Athens 2009, vol. 4, p. 9-49.

7. Spyros Linardatos, *Από τον Εμφύλιο στη Χούντα*, Το Vima Vivliothiki, Athens 2009, vol. 3, p. 85-86.

were upgraded, such as the Intelligence Service under the GGTP, the successor of the Directorate for Information.<sup>8</sup> Those who targeted the film *A Neighbourhood Named "The Dream"* were of the GDEA and the Intelligence Service.

The shooting of the film *A Neighbourhood Named "The Dream,"* a story about a petty crook who, upon his release from prison, returns to his poor neighbourhood and tries to set up a scheme to earn money, began in February 1961. It was produced by Alekos Alexandrakis and Aliki Georgouli, both famous actors at that time, especially Alexandrakis who was already a famous *jeune premier* of commercial cinema. Their intention to make a quality commercial film met with a very positive response in a number of publications. Their effort was promoted by left-wing publications with direct connections to EDA, such as the newspaper *Αυγή* and the magazines *Δρόμοι της Ειρήνης* and *Επιθεώρηση Τέχνης*. Some non-left-wing publications also supported this effort. For example, the newspaper *Καθημερινή*, an influential right-wing publication, was extremely positive about the project.

This cross-party support allows us to understand the intersecting dreams to which the film *A Neighbourhood Named "The Dream"* gave birth. The attempt to make a quality film fostered expectations for a more socially conscious cinema that would help shape a more conscious audience. At the same time, it was accepted as a necessary step for the establishment of a national cinema that would go beyond the stage of popular, low-quality entertainment and create commercial products that could meet world standards, promote the new productive forces of Greece and bring prestige to the country, as well as economic benefits. According to the newspaper *Καθημερινή*, in June 1961, on the eve of the completion of shooting, the film was eligible to participate in the Venice Film Festival, as long as it did not face the same problems with censorship that Nikos Koundouros's *Magic City/Μαγική Πόλη* had previously faced, "under the unsubstantiated excuse that we always show foreigners a poor and lower-class Greece [...] A work of art is always the best advertisement for a country, no matter if it shows that we have clean hostels or not."<sup>9</sup> This advice, which seems to be addressed less to the newspaper's readers and more to those in charge, sums up the great contradiction of a state experiencing rapid growth, such as Greece in the early 1960s, while at the same time continuing to have strict control mechanisms.

Yet, apart from dreams, the film also provoked fear. The GDEA was the first to assume that the production company of the film was "under the influence of communism, and possibly a business belonging to the party."<sup>10</sup> Then the Intelli-

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8. Ioannis Stefanidis, «Η Δημοκρατία δυσχερής: Η ανάπτυξη των μηχανισμών του 'αντικομμουνιστικού αγώνος' 1958-1961», *Μνήμων* 29 (2008), p. 199-241.

9. *Η Καθημερινή* (22 June 1961), p. 3.

10. General State Archives (GAK), Archive of the Secretariat-General for Press and



gence Service turned this assumption into certainty: communism was waging a new kind of war by utilising cinema, too, and by founding a company with Aliki Georgouli as its “virtual owner.”<sup>11</sup> In order to back the theory of an organised “cultural war” they submitted a list with alleged communist businesses which tried to infiltrate different areas of culture.<sup>12</sup> Somewhat later, they came back with a new theory that emphasised further the significance of this attempt. The film was not just an instrument of propaganda, but a cover for recruitment—through shooting in the poor Athenian neighbourhood of Asymatos, communism forged new ties with the lower classes.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact that the shooting of the film was completed and a screening permit issued shows that not everyone at the GDTP shared the view that the film was dangerous. The Intelligence Service thought that the GDTP’s control mechanisms had to be “improved” and requested the informal participation of members of the Intelligence Service in the cinema control committee. In other words, a war was raging between the old members of the GDTP and the new staff fighting the struggle against communism, which eventually forced the competent deputy minister Triantafyllakos to intervene publicly and irregularly, causing the incidents during the avant-premiere we described earlier.

After the avant-premiere, state surveillance continued. The Greek consulate took steps to exclude the film from the Venice Film Festival.<sup>14</sup> The movie went through a second censorship committee; it was cut, issued an 18 certificate and deemed “inappropriate for minors,” a fact that from the outset limited its chances to sell tickets.<sup>15</sup> Its producers were harassed so as not to screen it at the Thessaloniki Film Festival (then called Cinema Week), and there were rumours that the festival committee was pressured to downgrade the film with regard to awards.<sup>16</sup> In the end, when it was released to theatres, on the eve of the 1961 elections, the so-called elections of “violence and fraud,” the screening of the film in provincial

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Information, file 252/1, Ir. Kontopoul[os], «Η υπό των κομμουνιστών χρησιμοποίησις των κινηματογραφικών έργων ως μέσων προπαγάνδας» (17 March 1961).

11. Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive Society (ELIA), Tryfon Triantafyllakos’ archive, file, ΥΠ.ΠΑ. 2, «Κομμουνιστική κινηματογραφική επιχείρησις» (April 1961).

12. ELIA, Tryfon Triantafyllakos’s archive, file, ΥΠ.ΠΑ 2, «Σημείωμα επί των πρόσφατων ενεργειών της κομμουνιστικής προπαγάνδας», n. d. (c. July 1961).

13. ELIA, Tryfon Triantafyllakos’s archive, file, ΥΠ.ΠΑ 2, Service note, N. Gogousis to Tr. Triantafyllakos (21 July 1961).

14. M. S., «Συννοικία το Όνειρο, και Κράτος ο Φασισμός».

15. GAK, Archive of the Secretariat-General for Press and Information, file 1107, box 123002.

16. *Τα Νέα* (26 September 1961), p. 2.

theatres encountered problems.<sup>17</sup> Shortly afterwards, the production company that had made the film was disbanded.

Although the press of the time reported the persecution of the film, the exact reason for this persecution was not revealed in public debate; neither the authorities made public their theory about the “communist culture war,” nor did the protesting publications highlight the purely political aspects of this persecution. Thus, it was mostly thought that the film had been persecuted because of its aesthetics, which were not in line with the image of the country’s triumphant reconstruction that Konstantinos Karamanlis’ right-wing government was creating for Greece. Therefore, the incidents of the film’s persecution were not directly linked to the wider context of the persecution of the political left, as this was organised after 1958 and culminated in the events surrounding the 1961 elections. Research into the classified documents of the Intelligence Service of the time allows us to understand in its entirety the history of the film *A Neighbourhood Named “The Dream”* and to rethink cinema not only as a narrative, but as a commercial, cultural and entertainment product that circulated through networks (for example, cinema theatres) and resulted in events, festivals and special screenings, as a social arena for consensus and controversy.

How did official anti-communism formulate a framework of practices for the control of cinema? In which cases was it effective, and in which cases did it act as the trigger for a cultural counterattack by those censored? In this respect, the development of an artistic language of innuendo that eventually became predominant during the dictatorship of 1967-1974, already existed and took shape in the period of the feeble democracy before 1967, even if it was not enough to protect the film *A Neighbourhood Named “The Dream”* from persecution.

The resilience of government practices even after the end of official anti-communism is also of interest. The fact that the first Karamanlis government after the fall of the dictatorship did not allow the film *The Travelling Players*/*Ο θίασος* to officially represent Greece at the 1975 Cannes Film Festival (thus preventing it from being considered for one of the big prizes) was a relapse which linked the 1950s with the 1960s and the 1970s—it linked *Magical City*/*Μαγική πόλη* with *A Neighbourhood Named “The Dream”* and eventually with *The Travelling Players*. These incidents, of course, are not unknown to us, but we are called upon to look at them again within the dynamic context of attack/counterattack that they created.

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17. Angelos Geraïoudakis, «Όταν ο Αλέκος Αλεξανδράκης ‘φαλίρισε’ για την πιο λογοκριμένη ελληνική ταινία (vid)», *Έθνος* (27 November 2019), available at: [https://www.ethnos.gr/politismos/sinema/74421\\_otan-o-alekos-alexandrakis-falirise-gia-tin-pio-logokrime-ni-elliniki-tainia](https://www.ethnos.gr/politismos/sinema/74421_otan-o-alekos-alexandrakis-falirise-gia-tin-pio-logokrime-ni-elliniki-tainia) [3 June 2021].

26 May 1962

*Electra* wins the Best Cinematic Transposition  
Award at the Cannes Film Festival

Filming the (Tragic) Past

**Aspasia-Maria Alexiou**

Dramaturge at the National Theatre of Greece

**A**T THE 1962 Cannes Film Festival, Michael Cacoyannis' *Electra*/Ηλέκτρα, in the official selection and competing for the Palme d'Or, won the award for "best cinematic transposition" as it was based on the eponymous tragedy by Euripides (422-413 BC).<sup>1</sup> In Cacoyannis' own words, "[c]inema can liberate tragedy's terrifying power with the immediacy of reality, without diminishing from its essential grandeur. This conviction became an obsession one day in June 1961, when Euripides' *Electra* found its way into my hands."<sup>2</sup>

But how could a play born out of the development of the theatrical phenomenon in the fifth century BC in classical Athens come to monopolise the thoughts of a Greek Cypriot artist of the twentieth century? And why would a series of very different Greek filmmakers turn to ancient Greek tragedy as a source of inspiration?

At the start of her book on the history of Greek Cinema, Aglaia Mitropoulou presents an extended genealogy for cinema, reaching not only back to the spirit of the philosophers, craftsmen and artists of ancient Greece, but also to its three tragic poets.<sup>3</sup> Beyond any rhetorical exaggeration, this proposed genealogy reveals in typical fashion the "modern Greek need" to be continually (re)turning to and (re)connecting with the ancient Greek past, as though this were the font in which even an alien and far later rediscovery must be baptised.

Looking back at Greek Cinema's first steps, one notices that the first short documentary was dedicated to the revival of the Olympic Games in 1906.<sup>4</sup> Then,

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1. M. J. Cropp, "Introduction to *Electra*", Euripides, *Electra* (transl. M. J. Cropp), Aris & Phillips Classical Texts, Oxbow Books, Oxford 1988, p. I-II.

2. Michael Cacoyannis, *Δηλαδή...*, Kastaniotis, Athens 1990, p. 44.

3. Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, n. p., Athens 1980, p. II-13.

4. The title of the documentary was *Olympic Games*/Ολυμπιακοί Αγώνες, and it was shot by

Dimitris and Mihalis Gaziadis engaged in a different kind of revival, that of ancient drama, as envisioned by Angelos Sikelianos and Eva Palmer-Sikelianos. The brothers' short documentary *The Delphic Festivals* traces the first Delphic Festivals and preserves scenes from the 1927 production of *Prometheus Bound*/*Προμηθέας Δεσμώτης*.<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that, unlike Mitropoulou and Soldatos, Vrasidas Karalis recognizes the creative potential of an archival approach and treats the film by the Gaziadis brothers and Meravidis as an artwork in its own right, as a cinematic proposal rather than simply a conventional attempt at documentation. Dimos Vratsanos, too, would film this important performance of Aeschylus' play, in collaboration with Octave and Melpo Merlier.<sup>6</sup> Tasos Meletopoulos shot a short film about the first modern-day performance in the ancient theatre of Epidauros, a production of Sophocles' *Electra* directed by Dimitris Rontiris (1938).<sup>7</sup>

No other similar attempts at recording seem to have been made in this period, possibly because, even in those recordings that do exist, their creators' motives related more to the use of the historical and archaeological sites. It seems that these loci confirmed the significance of the event (the performance and the filming), with no aim in evidence to create a broader cinematic archive of stage approaches to tragedy—hence the emphasis on these performances, rather than others staged in indoor theatres.<sup>8</sup> Some twenty years later, Vassilis Maros made the documentary *Katina Paxinou and the Ancient Greek Theatre* (1959), a BBC production dedicated to the great tragedienne, with the participation of the actress herself and her husband, the actor and director Alexis Minotis.<sup>9</sup> In 1962, Ted Zarpas filmed the whole

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the French cameraman Leon (Leons according to Mitropoulou); see Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, *ibid.* p. 23; Giannis Soldatos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., vol. I (1900-1967), Aigokeros, Athens 1999, p. 294. In fact, they were Intercalated Games since they were not staged in an Olympic year. Vrasidas Karalis does not consider this to have been the first Greek *journal* in his *A History of Greek Cinema*, Bloomsbury, London 2012, p. 3.

5. Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, p. 68, 189; Soldatos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, vol. I, p. 24-25; for a more detailed approach, see Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, *ibid.* p. 16. Karalis is particularly approving and notes that “despite their meagre technical means, Meravidis and Gaziadis managed to move the camera horizontally and to create visual effects similar to those on ancient Greek vases.” He is the only one of the three who includes Dimitris Meravidis as an important collaborator in the project. See Konstantinos Kyriakos, *Από τη σκηνή στην οθόνη*, Aigokeros, Athens 2002, p. 131-133.

6. Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, *op. cit.* p. 189-190.

7. *Ibid.* p. 79.

8. See also the opinion expressed later by Angelos Terzakis, Head of the Drama Department at the National Theatre of Greece: “Ancient Drama should be performed in its natural space: the countryside,” in his notes on “The National Theatre and Ancient Drama,” *Epidauros 1961*, National Theatre of Greece, Ancient Theatre of Epidauros, p. 10.

9. Soldatos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 296.

of Sophocles' *Electra* directed by Takis Mouzenidis, with Anna Synodinou in the title role and Thanos Kotsopoulos as Orestes—a production of the National Theatre of Greece, it was performed in the ancient theatre of Epidaurus.<sup>10</sup>

The degree to which these archival efforts interacted with the theatre scene remains unclear—that is, if and how the cinematic function provided feedback of a sort on the theatrical function in terms of the representability and scope of the tragic.<sup>11</sup> The career of Katina Paxinou serves to reframe this question. The Greek actress, who began her career as a classical singer, has come to be identified with the performance of tragedy, but she also acted in quality American and European films. Paxinou lived in the United States for a decade or so, performing in Broadway shows and excelling in Sam Wood's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943)<sup>12</sup> and Dudley Nichols' *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1947), a film adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's play of the same name. O'Neill created a modern tragedy, a reworking of the *Oresteia* with added psychoanalytical elements. In the film, Paxinou plays Christine Mannon (the Clytemnestra figure), having already played Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* at the National Theatre of Greece in 1932. In one sense, her past as a performer guaranteed her authenticity on the screen and is typical of the ways in which modern Greece was introduced to the West. But one may wonder what Paxinou brought back with her to Greece and the National Theatre. How did these and her later film appearances (in films directed by Welles and Visconti) inform her performances in ancient Greek tragedy at the National Theatre (and hence at Epidaurus) and vice versa? To what extent can her career be seen as the summation of influences that ran both ways?<sup>13</sup> Even when it seemed unbroken, self-evidently linear or even hermetically sealed, how did the performance tradition of tragedy in Greece interact with broader trends beyond it? Paxinou the “star tragedienne” threw a spotlight on an interpretative connection between ancient tragedy and its modern versions (in, for instance, the work of Lorca, Brecht or O'Neill), but also texts that are not linked to the concept so directly and obviously (by, for example, O'Casey or Dürrenmatt).<sup>14</sup>

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10. Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, op. cit. p. 193.

11. For ancient Greek comedy's first steps in Greek Cinema, see Katy Diamantakou, «Το θεατρικό και κινηματογραφικό ντεμπούτο του Αριστοφάνη στη νεότερη Ελλάδα: οι δύο όψεις του αρχαιοελληνικού κωμικού Ιανού», Giorgos P. Pefanis, Ioanna Athanasatou (eds), *Σκηνές, εικόνες, βλέμματα. Διασταυρώσεις του θεάτρου και του κινηματογράφου*, Athens University, Athens 2021, p. 101-115.

12. For this, she won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress.

13. See her text «Μια μεσογειακή Μπερνάρντα (A Mediterranean Bernarda)», in the programme for the production of *The House of Bernarda Alba*, National Theatre of Greece, Nea Skini, 1986-1987 season, p. 31-35.

14. The same overstressing of Paxinou's status as a tragic actress and of the linear route

Pressing ahead with our illustrative tour of the relationship between Greek Cinema and ancient Greek tragedy, I would like to highlight one more milestone. In 1961, George Tzavellas attempted not to record a theatrical performance, but rather to film Sophocles' *Antigone*/Αντιγόνη.<sup>15</sup> Vrasidas Karalis acknowledges the difficulties the project presented: "He [Tzavellas] had to [...] create for Sophocles' tragedy a cinematic public space by reconfiguring its structure."<sup>16</sup> In the film, Irene Papas played Antigone and Manos Katrakis Creon. The same two actors also appear in Cacoyannis' *Electra*—a film that featured the Greek countryside as a "cinematic public space," privileging outdoor shoots amidst the poor and arid landscape over scenographic solutions whose imposing structures would directly reference aesthetic proposals that had already been tried and tested in the theatre.

Michael Cacoyannis has argued that Euripides' tragedies are the closest to our modern temperament<sup>17</sup> and to the cinematic medium, to the extent that, if the tragic poet were alive today, he would have been a screenwriter.<sup>18</sup> Also, in many of his interviews, the director has described how he happened to end up reading Euripides' *Electra*, a work he knew nothing about, rather than Sophocles' more popular version, and became fascinated by the tragedian's world and his writing.<sup>19</sup> Even as a mythicised memory, this narrative reveals two main axes: the unknown and the familiar. Both served as building blocks for his film.

*Electra* does not feature one single approach to acting, nor is the characters' appearance entirely unitary. Although this also probably stems from the actors' different backgrounds, it is clear that Cacoyannis made use of these differences in his directing. At one extreme, the archaic mother (Aleka Katselli) looks as if she and her mute female followers have been lifted straight off an ancient amphora—they are enigmatic, impenetrable, hostile. At the other extreme, there is the daughter, played by Irene Papas, in whom the director "recognized" Electra at

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by which ancient Greek tragedy supposedly influenced contemporary manifestations of the tragic is also evident in the critical reception of her performances; see, for example, in relation to *The Visit of the Old Lady*: "It is obvious that Dürrenmatt has been influenced by ancient Greek tragedy, by both its spirit and its technique. Claire is another Medea, who takes her revenge in a different, modern way. Once again, Katina Paxinou proved what a star tragedian she is". Babis Klaras, *Η Βραδυνή* (3 February 1961).

15. Soldatos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, op. cit. vol. I, p. 319-322.

16. Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. 96.

17. See, for instance, Cacoyannis, *Δηλαδή...*, op. cit. p. 17-18, 25.

18. Cacoyannis, *Δηλαδή...*, ibid. p. 102, and his most illuminating comment of all, in Lydia Carras' documentary *My Life and Times: Michael Cacoyannis/Μια ζωή, μια εποχή-Μιχάλης Κακογιάννης* (2008): "Christ, that guy [Euripides] was a born screenwriter!"

19. See, for instance, the exclusive interview that Michael Cacoyannis gave Thodoris Koutsogiannopoulos in June 2004, which is included in the Greek DVD version of *Electra*; see also the chapter "An Introduction to Euripides' Theatre", in *Δηλαδή...*, op. cit. p. 15-31.

first sight<sup>20</sup>—an Electra-Greece who is forced to live alongside the old power (or rather with its usurpers) and is oppressed by it.<sup>21</sup> This tension is also reflected on the aesthetic level and seems to articulate, among other things, a commentary on the creative process itself, which is suffocating under the weight of tradition.

Through and beyond its political-social content, the film's aesthetic proposal was also articulated by the presence of Papas and her short-cropped hair. Cacoyannis' description of how he stood beside the hairdresser, urging her to trim "just a little bit more" of Papas' hair, like an archaeologist bringing a head to light, is characteristic: "And her head became a trademark."<sup>22</sup> His discourse here addresses not so much the collaboration between director and actress, but a kind of insight that brought a previously unseen but pre-existing dynamic to light: "Suddenly, she absolutely came into her own as a great talent."<sup>23</sup> In any case, as mentioned above, Cacoyannis underscores the irresistible fascination which both the text and Papas exerted on him: "I was enchanted and sat down and wrote the script for Irene based on *Electra*."<sup>24</sup>

This record of the creative process as an instinctive procedure reveals something more general about the context in which the film was received by critics and audiences at the time. Even creative interventions had to be draped in the mantle of fidelity and remain true, if not to the letter, then at least to the spirit of the author, as a kind of inspired excavation that brings the "meaning" of the text to light, free from the ravages of time.<sup>25</sup> That is to say, the ancient hypotext remains at the point of departure. It is no coincidence that the critiques proffered by certain critics are reminiscent of reviews of modernist theatrical performances of ancient drama, since, according to their texts, both tragedy and grandeur were absent: "The heroes have been brought down to the level of everyday people; [...] they have thus become more 'familiar,' but they have ceased to be tragic."<sup>26</sup>

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20. Cacoyannis, in Carras' documentary *My Life and Times: Michael Cacoyannis*, op. cit.

21. See also the following statement: "The condemnation of the ruling class in Greek tragedy is damning in a way rarely encountered in works of our own day." Cacoyannis, *Δηλαδή...*, op. cit. p. 96.

22. Cacoyannis, in Carras' documentary, *My Life and Times: Michael Cacoyannis*, op. cit. See also his reference to the new fashion in hairstyles (the "coupe-Electra") in his interview with Koutsogiannopoulos.

23. Cacoyannis, in Carras' documentary, *My Life and Times: Michael Cacoyannis*, op. cit.: "I owe her something, for becoming the cornerstone of the trilogy." Once again, Papas is presented as "structurally essential," as a source of inspiration but not exactly its conscious bearer.

24. Cacoyannis, *ibid*.

25. See "I feel such a kinship with him [Euripides], it's as though the 'liberties' I take are at his bidding." Cacoyannis, *Δηλαδή...*, op. cit. p. 104.

26. From an extract from Marios Ploritis' review of Cacoyannis' film quoted in Solda-

However, such a reading seemingly ignores the political demand for the tragic to be recognizable in these “familiar folk.” After all, Electra and the chorus of women that accompanies her have more modern (and, of course, poorer) costumes than the other characters. In reality, even Papas’ figure is hard to read today as an everyday heroine. Still, it is obvious that—through and beyond the stylisation, her iconic appearance, the close-ups of her face and the archetypal qualities attributed to her<sup>27</sup>—she represents a recognizable Greek woman of the present day experiencing extreme precarity and devastation. And she is recognizable, not because her story is taken from the newspapers of the time, but because Cacoyannis, his cast and crew succeeded in connecting the myth to a living reality.

As a synthesis with elements drawn from the ancient text, the contemporary political and cultural reality of Greece and Cyprus,<sup>28</sup> and Cacoyannis’ theatrical training in England, *Electra* captures the image of a generation that has embraced certain elements of the past and is struggling to shake off others. This ambivalent relationship with the past and what the younger generation inherited and moulded as an archive of ideas, images, traditions and emotions<sup>29</sup> is present in the film both as an aesthetic quest and in the realm of the tragic protagonists. But Cacoyannis’ film was also appreciated as a wonderful way out of this dilemma, a kind of detour. The film’s success and reach beyond Greece placed it, along with many other cultural texts, in the category of “testimony” that preserves the sense of a perpetual and “self-evident” creative continuity in Greek culture. In other words, although the world of the film is a world of inequality and suffering, its reception and success contributed to a new, attractive image of Greece being added to the national palimpsest.

In the history of Greek Cinema, between Cacoyannis’ work and the next film that I will address, came films such as Jules Dassin’s *Phaedra/Φαίδρα* (1962) and *A Dream of Passion/Κραυγή γυναικών* (1978, inspired by *Medea*), Vassilis Fotopoulos’ *Orestis/Ορέστης* (1969), Theo Angelopoulos’ *The Travelling Players/Ο θίασος* (1975,

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tos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, op. cit. vol. I, p. 332; cf. the more extreme view expressed by Spyros Melas: “Why do we need to say, for example, Euripides’ Electra and Clytemnestra [...] and not Dimitra from Koropi and her mother, Theodora [...]?” Cacoyannis, *Δηλαδή...*, op. cit. p. 331.

27. Alekos Sakellarios speaks of the appearance of an “ancient goddess” in *Λες και ήταν χθες*, anniversary ed., Menandros, Athens 2018, p. 390.

28. His *Trojan Women/Τρωάδες* (1971) and *Iphigenia/Ιφιγένεια* (1977), both of which take Euripides’ tragedies as starting points, are still more interwoven with the realities of Cyprus and its political context.

29. My use of the concept of the archive is influenced greatly by the work of Dimitris Papanikolaou; see, for example, *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια: Έθνος, πόθος και συγγένεια την εποχή της κρίσης*, Patakis, Athens 2018, and the introduction to this volume.



with a direct reference to the *Oresteia*), Dimos Theos' *Proceedings/H διαδικασία* (1976, which engages with *Antigone*), Giorgos Panousopoulos' *Mania/Manía* (1985, which draws on the *Bacchae*), *Oh Babylon* (1989) by Costas Ferris (which is also based on the *Bacchae*), *The Years of the Big Heat/Ta χρόνια της μεγάλης ζέσης* (1991) by Frieda Liappa (with references to Sophocles' *Electra*), *Thief or Reality/Κλέφτης ή η πραγματικότητα* (2001) by Antoinetta Angelidi (with elements from *Antigone*)<sup>30</sup> and *Hostage/Όμηρος* (2004) by Constantine Giannaris (which recalls *Ajax*)—<sup>31</sup>films which directly or indirectly reference and sometimes “shake up”<sup>32</sup> the archive of ancient Greek tragedy.

Panos Koutras' *Strella. A Woman's Way/Στρέλλα* (2009) engages with Greek Cinema's apprenticeship in the tragic, while simultaneously sticking its tongue out at it. For a start, it is not inspired by a single tragedy or mythical cycle in any explicit way, neither retaining the non-time of myth nor updating the tragic plot into the present. The incestuous relationship between the transgender daughter and the father newly released from prison can clearly be recognized as an inversion and complication of the Oedipal myth, but the film also interrogates and ultimately repositions the very notion of tragedy. It is not structured around tragic fate,<sup>33</sup> nor does it replace it with a biological-political determinism—that is, the identity of the protagonist *Strella* as a poor trans woman, the child of a broken home, does not automatically mean that she will be unhappy, let alone that *Strella* and the audience will achieve catharsis “through mercy and fear.”<sup>34</sup>

The dialogue between Mary (Betty Vakalidou) and *Strella* (Mina Orfanou) in which the former expresses her intense disapproval of the love affair between the latter and her father, Giorgos, is characteristic: “It's hubris, darling, [...] like the

30. For an overview of these films and many more, see the exhaustive research and commentary by Kyriakos, «Οι τραγικοί μύθοι στην οθόνη (Tragic Myths on Screen)», *Από τη σκηνή στην οθόνη*, Aigokeros, Athens 2002, p. 126-168.

31. See Kyriakos' paper «Δυο “αιρετικές” πολιτικές αναγνώσεις του *Αίαντα* του Σοφοκλή από τον Βασίλη Παπαβασιλείου (Επίδαυρος, 1996) και τον Κωνσταντίνο Γιάνναρη (στην ταινία *Όμηρος*, 2004) (Two ‘Heretical’ Political Readings of Sophocles' *Ajax* by Vassilis Papavassiliou [Epidaurus, 1996] and Constantine Giannaris [in the film *Hostage*, 2004])», Konstantinos Kyriakos (ed.), *Το αρχαίο ελληνικό θέατρο και η πρόσληψή του*, Proceedings of the 4th Panhellenic Theatrical Conference, 26-29 May 2011, Department of Theatre Studies, University of Patras, Patras 2015, p. 351-362.

32. The term is from Papanikolaou, *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια*, op. cit. p. 177-179.

33. Moreover, for Terry Eagleton, the emphasis on fate as a primary driver of tragedy is mistaken and misleading in multiple ways. Eagleton, “Freedom, Fate and Justice,” *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, Oxford 2003, p. 101-152.

34. For Papanikolaou, the “story of *Strella* [...] also slips away from the idea of hubris and from the taboo of incest and the notion of insurmountable trauma.” See his *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια*, op. cit. p. 351.

ancient women used to say, [...] that Sophocles or Euripides.” As Mary is speaking, Strella intersperses questions which culminate in: “Who are they? Trans?” To this Mary replies: “Don’t take the piss! It’s taboo, child, can’t you see?” But shortly afterwards, amidst the coughing fits that foretell her death: “What can I say? I hope the two of you find a way, if you love each other as you say... That’s what matters! Sure, it will be something new. [...] Good Lord! How times have changed, eh? ... Just not in time for me.”<sup>35</sup>

*Strella* depicts and precipitates this change in part through its iconic lead, Mina Orfanou. Unlike Cacoyannis, Koutras—as he recounts in Panagiotis Evangelidis’ making-of, *Shooting Strella*—was not particularly impressed the first time the two met, until he was won over by Orfanou’s “energy and humour” and realised that she was ideal to play Strella. In the next scene, the actress jokes about her previous work in front of the camera, listing the titles of films, real and imaginary, in which her own—invisible—participation left no trace. The film performs a similar gesture, avoiding didacticism and moralising, as it asserts the visibility and citizenship of its characters with a mixture of tragedy, melodrama and irony.<sup>36</sup> In this way, it not only exploits the tragic myth, but also indirectly critiques the political and social conditions that make a story tragic, while undermining the aesthetic conventions which portray and very often reproduce these contexts. This rejection of convention is highlighted at the end of the film, which is neither a Hollywood happy ending nor a “tragic end.”<sup>37</sup> The shaping of new conditions of coexistence, and in particular the recognition of the possibility and the need for new terms within the network of family, love and friendships, the household in the broadest sense of the word and its connotations, are illustrated at a festive dinner with Strella, her best friend Alex, who is now looking after his little sister *in loco parentis*, Giorgos, his (ex?) lover Nikos and Nikos’ Ukrainian prison buddy, Yuri, around the table.

The conversation between Greek Cinema and ancient Greek tragedy as a corpus of theatrical performances and interpretations, texts, myths, concepts and form can be traced through the films mentioned here. It is a conversation that recalls but also reshapes the connection between modern and ancient Greek

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35. See the screenplay, Panos C. Koutras, Panagiotis Evangelidis, *Στρέλλα*, Colourful Planet, Athens 2010, p. 87-88.

36. See again Papanikolaou’s (op. cit.) multi-faceted approach in the relevant chapter “A Film for the Whole Family: *Strella*, Trans Politics and Queer Frankness”, passim, and especially p. 346 (which contains the analysis of its mixed form) and p. 404-412.

37. Koutras refers to a “happy ending”, but I would say that the film transcends the convention; see Koutras, Evangelidis, *Strella*, op. cit. p. 117. Evangelidis speaks of “a new fragile balance between life and happiness.”

culture, and it demonstrates Greece's efforts to, on the one hand, develop (and export) the cultural texts that make it a “worthy successor” of its own antiquity and, on the other hand, to subvert its continuing definition in relation to the past.



27 May 1963

Left-wing MP Grigoris Lambrakis dies  
in hospital after an assassination attempt

## Political Trauma and Documentary

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THE ASSASSINATION of Grigoris Lambrakis—left-wing MP and a leading figure of the Greek peace movement in the 1960s—by members of the so-called para-state in Thessaloniki in May 1963 was a deeply traumatic event that functioned as a catalyst accelerating the change of the country's political paradigm with the fall of the Right and the rise to power of the Centre Union.<sup>1</sup> The blast caused by Lambrakis' assassination also reached the field of art, contributing drastically to its politicisation and radicalisation. It resulted not only in the creation of the Lambrakis' Youth organisation which combined politics and culture through its actions, but also inspired specific works such as the novel *Z* (1966) by Vassilis Vassilikos and its film adaptation by Costa-Gavras three years later.

The creation of the short documentary *100 Hours in May/100 ώρες του Μάη* (1963/64) was a direct reaction to this event, with the poetic title describing the length of time that Lambrakis survived after the lethal blow.<sup>2</sup> Although it is known

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2. For a detailed discussion of the documentary *100 Hours in May*, see Maria Chalkou, «Εκατό ώρες του Μάη: Ένα ριζοσπαστικό, πολιτικό ντοκιμαντέρ και η απόπειρα εξαφάνισής του από τη δημόσια σφαίρα», Andreas Maratos (ed.), *1821-2021, Μνήμες τεχνών-θραύσματα ιστορίας*, Nisos, Athens 2021, p. 551-568, and Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, «Κινήματα νεολαίας και Κινηματογράφος στην Ελλάδα της δεκαετίας του 1960», Vangelis Karamanolakis, Evi Olymbitou, Ioanna Papathanasiou (eds), *Η ελληνική νεολαία στον 20ό αιώνα: Πολιτικές διαδρομές*,

as the work of two young directors, Dimos Theos and Fotos Lambrinos, whose leading role is not disputed, it was the result of a much more collaborative work: the conception of the idea, the gathering of the research material and the shooting were linked to the “EDA3 Element” (the filmmakers’ Party Base Organisation of the official political body of the Left of which the two directors were members) and to the Union of Greek Cinema Technicians (EOTEK) influenced by the EDA. The documentary was made with the encouragement of the instructor of the “Element” Mimis Despotidis;<sup>4</sup> the journalistic material and other evidence was provided by him and by Vassilis Efraimidis, EDA MP, while the entire work was filmed with the participation of members of the “Element” and EOTEK.

The shooting was clandestine, without a filming permit, which of course carried a risk for the filmmakers and entailed great practical difficulties. In the absence of a portable 16mm camera, a heavy 35mm one was used, which limited the mobility of the cinematographers and did not allow synchronous sound recording. The film negatives were also scraps, leftovers from commercial cinema productions where the persons involved in the making of the film worked. Despite the adversities, footage was recorded of Lambrakis’ hospitalisation, the neighbourhood of Toumba where the headquarters of the para-state organisation were located, the arrival of Lambrakis’ body at the Larissa railway station in Athens, the public worship at the Athens Cathedral, the massive procession towards the First Cemetery of Athens and Lambrakis’ burial. At the same time, in order to fill the narrative gaps, dramatised scenes were shot. They were either re-enactments of real events, such as the preparation of the tricycle used for the attack, and Manolis Chatziapostolou (“Tiger”)’s wanderings on the night streets of Thessaloniki, or invented incidents with symbolic implications, such as a child playing hide-and-seek leaning against a wall on which the half-erased phrase “Long live Zorro the liberator (Ζήτω ο ελευθερωτής Ζορρό)” can be traced. The double Z in the Greek phrase implied the well-known slogan of the time about Lambrakis being alive, also linking him indirectly to the mythical hero. In addition, *100 Hours in May* displayed a wide range of archival material such as photographs, newspaper clippings, sketches, maps, official and other documents. It even incorporated archival footage from the Bertrand Russell movement, including the international anti-war protest of 1963 in the British town of Aldermaston with the participation of the Greek delegation and Lambrakis himself.

The film, investigating the assassination plot and the conditions that led to Lambrakis’ murder, adopts a series of narrative and formal experimentations, un-

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κοινωνικές πρακτικές και πολιτιστικές εκφράσεις, Themelio, Athens 2010, p. 309-317.

3. United Democratic Left (Ενιαία Δημοκρατική Αριστερά).

4. Left-wing intellectual.

precedented for Greek documentary films. On the one hand, it employs a complex narrative structure which is based on flashbacks and alternations between past and present. Using the assassination as a narrative vehicle, it walks the viewer through Greece's modern political history, from the Metaxas Dictatorship and the Occupation to the 1961 elections of "violence and fraud" and the "Relentless Struggle," revealing a dense nexus of underground ties and an undisrupted continuum of persons, institutions and practices of the political elite. Special emphasis is placed on the diachronic actions of para-state mechanisms, their collaboration with the Occupation forces and their links with the Gendarmerie and the right-wing state, which is presented as a dark and para-institutional locus of intrigues, violence and crime. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient cinematic documents and the plethora of static material led to choices which brought to life still images and allowed them to converse with cinematic material. Thus, through the use of a special effects machine, a moving camera was adopted which runs through static material, and an elaborate and nervous montage was employed, tightly organising the diverse material into a unified and expressive whole.

It is noteworthy that, at a highly polarised and turbulent time and having a recent and particularly charged subject to deal with, *100 Hours in May* articulated an objective and well-documented discourse, avoiding practices of sentimental manipulation. Despite the emotional charge of the images themselves, the film primarily addressed the logic of the spectators demanding their attention in order to understand the complex narrative puzzle. Both the sound design (including the austere music score chosen by Nikiforos Rotas) and the voice-over commentary contributed to the general sense of de-dramatisation. Theos employed a well-informed, "dry" and "journalistic" voice-over and gave the role of the narrator not to an actor, but to Thodoros Malikiosis—co-founder, together with Despotidis, of the Themelio publishing house—who spoke with neutrality and emotional restraint.

*100 Hours in May* has preserved astonishing events and today constitutes a priceless document of a turbulent era. The rise of the people's mass movement, the contestation of the political hegemony of the Right and the relative liberalisation of the public sphere after the rise to power of the Centre Union allowed the creation of other short documentary films,<sup>5</sup> which either had hidden political messages—for example, *Prespes/Πρέσπες* (1966) by Takis Hatzopoulos and *Gazil/Γκάζι* (1967) by Dimitris Stavrakas—and themes touching upon politics—such as films about migration, for example, *Letter from Charleroi/Γράμμα από το Σαρλερουά* (1965) by Lambros Liaropoulos—or their content was explicitly political. In the

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5. For a general overview of short documentaries in the 1960s, see Maria Chalkou, *Towards the Creation of 'Quality' Greek National Cinema in the 1960s*, unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008.

latter category we can place *March Towards the People/Πορεία προς το Λαό* (1962) and *The New Relentless Struggle/Ο νέος Ανένδοτος* (1965) by Giorgos Zervoulakos, which followed Georgios Papandreou in his political campaigns, as well as *Greek Life I & II/Ελληνική ζωή I & II* (1964), also known as EDA's *Newsreels/Επίκαιρα της ΕΔΑ*, a short-lived attempt at producing alternative newsreels by EDA and Leon Loisios. Here, in addition to social and cultural topics, we find images from strikes, an interview given by the president of the Republic of Cyprus, Makarios, and dramatic scenes from the explosion of a mine during the Gorgopotamos celebrations in November 1964. However, one may say that *100 Hours in May* is the first complete and self-contained Greek political documentary where a left-wing political discourse is articulated openly and without self-censorship. At the same time, the film is the first Greek investigative documentary or "film reportage," as it was called by the filmmakers themselves,<sup>6</sup> inaugurating a genre which was to blossom in television decades later.<sup>7</sup>

Inevitably, *100 Hours in May* clashed with censorship. Although it received a release permit under the Centre Union government—after delays, retractions and changes among the members of the censorship committee—its public screening was in the end cancelled through an intervention by the public prosecutor, on the basis of the pending trial of the Lambrakis case which supposedly was at risk of being influenced by the film. Despite the constant legal battle by Theos, it was not possible to screen the film and acquire a permit for exporting it abroad, not even after the end of the trial. With the imposition of the dictatorship in 1967, Theos escaped abroad, taking the film with him. It was then screened at the festival of Tours in 1968, while in Greece it was shown for the first time after the fall of the dictatorship. The freeze of the film's circulation for almost a decade does not allow us to draw safe conclusions regarding whether *100 Hours in May* influenced Greek documentarists. However, if it did not bequeath, it certainly anticipated a series of practices in Greek Cinema, making apparent the contribution of the 1960s in shaping the character of the New Greek Cinema, which was to be recognized as a distinct trend during the dictatorship and to become dominant after its fall.

In an environment of conscious a-politicisation of Greek Cinema, the rupture created by *100 Hours in May* on a thematic level introduced the politically militant

6. Dimos Theos, Fotos Lambrinos, «Εκατό ώρες του Μάη», op. cit. p. 7, General State Archives (TAK), Central Agency, Archive of the General Secretariat of Press and Information, series "Greek films," f. 36.

7. On journalistic documentaries in Greece, see Afroditi Nikolaidou, "Greek TV Documentary Journalism: Discourses, Forms and Authorship," *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 5 (2018), p. 44-66.



documentary and, in general, political cinema in Greece. At the same time, *100 Hours in May* proposed a new production model which included, in addition to self-funding, the risk of clandestine shooting of political events. Along the same lines, during the dictatorship, daring filmmakers such as Pantelis Voulgaris, Nikos Kavoukidis, Kostas Zyrinis and others secretly filmed anti-dictatorship events as they were unfolding, such as the funeral of Georgios Papandreou (1888-1968), the occupation by the students of the Law School of the University of Athens, the Athens Polytechnic uprising and its suppression (1973), strikes and the like, producing a rich pool of archival material which was used in the making of many post-dictatorship documentaries. Some of the materials were sent abroad where anti-dictatorship cinematic activities developed—such as *Ce n'est pas que le début*, by Voulgaris (1968), *Greece of Christian Greeks/Ελλάς Ελλήνων Χριστιανών* by Kostas Chronopoulos (1971) and *Polytechnieo Speaking/Εδώ Πολυτεχνείο* by Dimitris Makris (1974)—contributing to the dissemination of information and the struggle against the dictatorship. However, most of them became known only after the fall of the junta, enriched with footage from the first months of the restitution of democracy, such as *Testimonies/Μαρτυρίες* (1975) by Kavoukidis. Thus, the documentaries of the time included the return of the exiled and the liberation of political prisoners, electoral gatherings, big concerts—such as *Songs of Fire/Τα τραγούδια της φωτιάς* by Nikos Koundouros (1975)—the first celebrations for the Athens Polytechnic uprising, personal testimonies and labour mobilisations, often accompanied by critical reflections on the incomplete fulfilment of expectations for substantial democratisation and real political change.<sup>8</sup>

In a way similar to *100 Hours in May*, but in a renewed context of international cinematic influences and political radicalisation, shooting itself, the ensuing documentaries and their viewing in alternative venues constituted acts of radical activism and political intervention. Some of the documentaries were the result of co-operative directing, such as *Megara/Μέγαρα* (1974) by Yorgos Tsemberopoulos and Sakis Maniatis—regarding the forced expropriation of arable land in Megara by the dictatorship in order to build an oil refinery—or by politicised collectives. Thus, *Struggle/Αγώνας* (1975), which depicts the anti-dictatorship student demonstrations and the workers' and farmers' strikes in the first year after the fall of the dictatorship, was the work of the “Group of six,” while *New Parthenon/Νέος Παρθενώνας* (1975) which deals with the places of political exile, Makronissos and Gyaros, was made by the “Group of four.” Of course, the culture of co-operatives and the spirit of the collective in the field of documentaries, apart from the “EDA

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8. For a detailed review of political documentaries during the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship years, see Stathis Valoukos, *Νέος Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος (1965-1981): Ιστορία και πολιτική*, Aigokeros, Athens 2011, p. 99-127.

Element" and the co-operation between Theos and Lambrinos, constituted a wider phenomenon in the 1960s, with characteristic examples the "Group of five"<sup>9</sup> and the co-directing of *Thirean Matins/Θηραικός όρθρος* (1967) by Kostas Sfikas and Stavros Tornés.

*100 Hours in May* turned to history and revisited the past in an attempt to bring to the fore silenced truths and at the same time provide a mechanism to understand the present, introducing a pattern that became central in New Greek Cinema. This interpretive schema was, at the time, predominant among the Left, according to which the traumatic past survived in the present and determined it or even merged with it. The intertwined relationship between past and present—that is, the continuation of the right-wing state from Metaxas' regime until the fall of the junta, and consequently the continuation of the resistance and the struggles of the people—was to run through the historical and political narratives of the documentaries in the post-dictatorship era—among them *The Age of the Sea/Η ηλικία της θάλασσας* by Takis Papagiannidis (1978) and *Performance for One Role/Παράσταση για έναν ρόλο* by Dionysis Grigoratos (1978), while also pervading films of fiction such as *The Travelling Players/Ο θίασος* by Theo Angelopoulos (1975).

The extensive use and collation of archival material (for instance, newsreels), often static and reworked through the special effects machine, constituted an additional widespread practice that led to the creation of many documentaries of the "compilation" type, such as *The Age of the Sea and Civil War Discourse/Εμφύλιος λόγος* by Diamantis Leventakos (1978). However, similarly to *100 Hours in May*, authentic historical evidence usually coexisted with dramatisation and fiction. Political documentaries of the time invested, in many ways, in techniques of reconstructing events and testimonies,<sup>10</sup> as in *The Rehearsal/Η δοκιμή* by Jules Dassin (1974), *The Age of the Sea* and *Performance for One Role*—even in the accompanying voice-over narration—sometimes by adopting Brechtian methods for commenting on and interconnecting the narrated events, and sometimes by recalling directly the trauma for its emotional revival. The emotional restraint characterising *100 Hours in May*—which in the form of a Brechtian detachment would become a crucial parameter of emblematic fictional narratives in the New Greek Cinema of the 1970s, as in *The Travelling Players* and *Happy Day* by Pan-

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9. Roviros, Mathoulis, Iraklis Papadakis, Fotis Mesthenaios, Roussos Koundouros and Giannis Bakogiannopoulos.

10. On the performativity of political documentaries, see Afroditi Nikolaidou, «Η στρατηγική της επιτελεστικότητας στα πολιτικά ντοκιμαντέρ για τη Δικτατορία: Η δοκιμή του Ζυλ Ντασέν και Τα τραγούδια της φωτιάς του Νίκου Κούνδουρου», Πρακτικά Ε' Πανελληνίου Θεατρικού Συνεδρίου, Athens 2018, p. 239-247.

telis Voulgaris (1976)—was not the rule in the political documentaries. On the contrary, the transition from an era of exclusions and imposed silence to one of inclusion and freedom of speech, introduced in the post-dictatorship era, was accompanied by a massive and emotional memory explosion, as well as a spate of works which tried to deal, mostly in emotional terms, with the historico-political trauma of the Left—that is, its defeat in the civil war, the frustration of its visions and its persecution.

Although in the 1960s *100 Hours in May* was fully banished from the public sphere, subsequent political documentaries were not treated in the same way, as they were consumed *en masse* in their time. This does not mean that some filmmakers during the dictatorship did not pay a price for their activism—Pantelis Voulgaris was exiled to Gyros after the Athens Polytechnic uprising—or that in the post-dictatorship era there were no obstacles to the release of some documentaries. Such obstacles included police violence during screenings, as with *Filmed Scenes of '73/Κινηματογραφημένες σκηνές του '73* by Kostas Zyris and Lambros Papadimitrakis (1974); the prohibition of screening during the Thessaloniki Anti-Festival in the case of *Education/Παιδεία* by Yiannis Typaldos (1977); an exit ban for *Education* and *The Struggle of the Blind/Ο αγώνας των τυφλών* by Mary Chatzimichali-Papaliou (1977); lawsuits by the Church in the case of *The Struggle of the Blind*; the prohibition of screening in theatres and subsequent approval after cuts, as happened with *Greece of Christian Greeks* and *The Shots Fired in the Morning Are Not the Last/Οι πυροβολισμοί που πέσαν το πρωί δεν είναι οι τελευταίοι* by Andreas Pantzis (1976) and *The Trial of the Junta/Η δίκη της Χούντας* by Theodosios Theodosopoulos (1981); and the cancellation of the television screening in the case of *Performance for One Role*.<sup>11</sup> The survival of these phenomena after the fall of the junta, with clear restrictions on the expression of the political, reveals that the Metapolitefsi (the post-dictatorship era) was not an automatic transition from one condition to a completely different one—for example, the withdrawal of the legal framework for cinema censorship occurred only in 1986. The above-mentioned censorial interventions also underline the fear of the impact and influence of cinema on the public, and especially of documentaries. Reflexive responses to this fear are activated in confrontational settings and in times of tension, as shown by the recent financial crisis in Greece.

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11. On the censorship of political cinema during the post-dictatorship era, see Penelope Petsini, «Από τον 'κατευνασμό των πολιτικών παθών' στη 'δεξιά κουλτούρα': Μάχες της μνήμης και πολιτική λογοκρισία στη μεταπολίτευση», Penelope Petsini, Maria Chalkou, Stratis Brounazos (eds), «Λογοκρισία και Δημοκρατία. Μετεμφυλιακό κράτος και Μεταπολίτευση», *Αρχαιοτάξιο* 22 (2020), p. 93-114.



# 18 April 1966

*Blood on the Land* is nominated for  
Best Foreign Film at the Academy Awards

## Greek Cinema and the Concept of Genre

**Athena Kartalou-Aduku**

PhD in Communication, Media and Culture

ON 28 APRIL 1966, *Blood on the Land*/*To χώμα βάφτηκε κόκκινο* was on the list of films nominated for the best foreign film Oscar award, constituting yet another “exceptional occasion” for Greek Cinema in the 1960s. This nomination was part of a series of other similar nominations. Two years earlier, in 1964, another film by the same director, *The Red Lanterns*/*Ta κόκκινα φανάρια*, had also been nominated for the same award, while also competing in the Cannes Film Festival;<sup>1</sup> in 1962, one more nomination of a Greek film, *Electra*/*Ηλέκτρα* by the Greek-Cypriot director Michael Cacoyannis was competing for the same award by the American Academy, while in 1965 *Zorba the Greek* was nominated for six Oscars, winning three.<sup>2</sup>

This period was characterised by a series of successes for Greek films; they constitute a constant reference when journalistic and/or online writings want to talk about the successful, glorious past of Greek Cinema.<sup>3</sup> This wholesale approach notwithstanding, there is always space for new, more analytical and systematic approaches.<sup>4</sup> Fifteen years ago,<sup>5</sup> I proposed a reading of *Blood on the Land*

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1. <https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/73-editions/retrospective/1964/selection/competition-1>

2. <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies>

3. <https://www.in.gr/2020/02/03/life/oles-oi-ellinikes-ypopsifiotites-kai-nikes-stin-istoria-ton-oskar/>, <https://www.thedailyowl.gr/all-time-greek-nominations/>

4. See, for example, the analysis of dance in the film *Zorba the Greek* in Mimina Pateraki, C. Mountakis, “Zorba’s Cinematic Dance: Global Fame, Local Claim Beyond Studios and Screens,” *Science of Dance* 6 (2013), available at: [https://www.academia.edu/10995162/Zorba\\_s\\_Cinematic\\_Dance\\_Global\\_Fame\\_Local\\_Claim\\_Beyond\\_Studios\\_and\\_Screens](https://www.academia.edu/10995162/Zorba_s_Cinematic_Dance_Global_Fame_Local_Claim_Beyond_Studios_and_Screens) [15 July 2021].

5. Athena Kartalou, «Αναπαραστάσεις μίας κοινωνικής σύγκρουσης στο μεταίχμιο της

as part of a more general argument regarding genre in Greek Cinema.<sup>6</sup>

My analysis aimed at providing a general explanatory schema about genres and the way in which they developed within genre cinema, taking Greek Cinema as a special case study. I observed a tendency for the genre canvas to be determined by dipoles on the basis of expression (comedy/melodrama), characters (comedian/[melo]dramatic), time frame (present/past) and space (urban/rural) in two main directions: on the one hand, melodramatic expression and (melo)dramatic hero, past and rural (for instance, in the subgenre of mountain films), and on the other hand, comic expression and comic hero, present and urban (for example, in romantic comedies). As it evolved, this schema led to a narrative shift from the past and the rural to the present and the urban, in the end imposing an urbanisation of the narratives and heroes of melodramatic expression and eventually suggesting new heroes, more dramatic and less (melo)dramatic. *Blood on the Land* constitutes a crucial point in this evolution, as its main characters put forward new demands, of a more dramatic nature, while new generic characteristics were introduced.

What I would add in this analysis now, is a widening of the point of view concerning genre in the evolution of Greek Cinema, taking more centrally into account the concept of “national” film. I am taking a cue from a phrase by Vassilis Georgiadis, the director of *Blood on the Land*. I quote here from the transcript of the interview that the director gave to Giannis Bakogiannopoulos on the Greek National Radio (EIR) in 1965, shortly before the first official screenings of the film in January 1966: “I am flattered to believe that my efforts for this ‘something new,’ as you say, bore fruit and that this time my collaborators and I produced our first national film.”<sup>7</sup>

In the first instance, Georgiadis himself bases the use of the term “national film” on the subject-matter of his film, which concerns a “more general” subject originating from historical sources, placed in a specific place (Thessaly) and time (1907): the peasant uprising demanding a fair land redistribution.<sup>8</sup> It is clear that

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ελληνικής κινηματογραφικής παραγωγής: *Το χώμα βόφτηκε κόκκινο* (1965)», Fotini Tomai (ed.), *Ο πόλεμος στον κινηματογράφο*, Papazisis, Athens 2006, p. 139-156.

6. Athena Kartalou, *Το ανεκπλήρωτο είδος: Οι ταινίες κοινωνικής καταγγελίας της «Φίνος Φιλμ»*, unpubl. PhD thesis, Athens 2005, available at: <https://phdtheses.ekt.gr/eadd/handle/10442/15592> [15 July 2021]; for a summary, see Afroditi Nikolaidou, Anna Poupou, Maria Chalkou, “Editorial Note,” Afroditi Nikolaidou, Anna Poupou, Maria Chalkou (eds), *Old Games, New Rules: Rethinking Genre in Greek Cinema from the 1970s to the Present*, special issue of *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 4 (2017) <https://filmiconjournal.com/journal/article/pdf/2017/4/1>, p. 4.

7. «Για την “πρώτη εθνική ταινία”—Μια συζήτηση του Βασίλη Γεωργιάδη με τον Γιάννη Μπακογιαννόπουλο», Giannis Soldatos (ed.), *Βασίλης Γεωργιάδης*, 40th Film Festival of Thessaloniki—Greek Association of Film Critics, Aigokeros, Athens 1999, p. 28-29.

8. Ibid. p. 28.

the wider political climate in Greece after 1963—and until 1967—was favourable to such a subject matter,<sup>9</sup> because of the nature of the film, which was progressive but not to such an extent as to cause friction in a cinema of consensus.<sup>10</sup>

In *Blood on the Land*, this subject-matter is visually served (also) through the representation of space, since it is filmed entirely in the flatland of Thessaly, which is also the narrative space—a choice which led the director back to some of his earlier genre choices<sup>11</sup> related to mountain films.<sup>12</sup> However, this does not explain the choice of the flatland of Thessaly as filming location. We should not ignore the fact that filming far from Athens for such a long time considerably increased the cost for studios such as Finos Film.<sup>13</sup> In the end, the choice of the flatland of Thessaly seems to play a different role, other than genre or “naturalism” or “neo-realistic” influence, a role related to the concept of “national film.”<sup>14</sup>

A first explanation which gives meaning to such a choice may be related to *Zorba the Greek*, since this film had also been entirely filmed in Crete, exactly a year before.<sup>15</sup> When *Blood on the Land* was in the stage of preparation and decision-making regarding filming, *Zorba the Greek* had already been nominated for the Oscar awards. In this way, the latter exercised a kind of “canon” pressure and set high standards for the next film aiming to reach that high point. And one of the prerequisites seems to have been the choice of filming location where, following the example of *Zorba the Greek*, the historical (the 1907 events), the narrative (film) and the real (filming location) space ought to coincide at any cost.

However, *Zorba the Greek* seems to have functioned as a counterpoint for *Blood on the Land* vis-à-vis the dipole quality cinema/genre cinema. The former film is identified with its director Michael Cacoyannis, who had already been rec-

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9. About comedy, see Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, «Ο θησαυρός του μακαρίτη: η κωμωδία, 1950-1970», *Οπτικοακουστική κουλτούρα*, vol. I, *Ξαναβλέποντας τον Παλιό Ελληνικό Κινηματογράφο*, Centre of Audiovisual Studies, Athens 2002, p. 70; about (melo)dramas, see Marinos Kousoumidis, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, Kastaniotis, Athens 1981, p. 119, 123.

10. In fact, the Ministry of the Presidency, to which the scenarios were submitted for approval, supported the creation of films of this kind. Giorgos Lazaridis, *Φλας μπακ. Μια ζωή σινεμά*, Nea Synora-Livani, Athens 1999, p. 480-481.

11. «Για την “πρώτη εθνική ταινία”...», p. 28.

12. Stelios Kymionis, “The Genre of Mountain Film: The Ideological Parameters of its Sub-genres,” *Greek Film*, special issue of the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 16/1 (2000), p. 53-66.

13. Companies with privately owned studios seek the economies of scale brought by the ownership of filming locations.

14. For the durability of this role of the flatlands of Thessaly, “The ‘Άγριες Μέλισσες’ (Wild Bees) could be read as the feminist *Blood on the Land*,” Nikitas Fessas, «Φεμινισμός και Άγριες Μέλισσες», *Το ποντίκι* (17 October 2019).

15. Erato Basea, “Zorba the Greek, Sixties Exotica and a New Cinema in Hollywood and Greece,” *Studies in European Cinema* 12/1 (2015), p. 13.

ognized as an auteur in European film festivals since the previous decade.<sup>16</sup> Georgiadis may well have presented his work at the Academy Awards and in Cannes, but domestically he was more recognized as a director of commercial and genre films. To reverse this impression and to establish “Georgiadis” as a director with creative power, the latter had to be evident at the production stage. This dynamic was supported through both the choice of filming location and the duration of filming—both of them costly choices that prioritised the director’s “artistic vision” and the “quality” of the film over production costs.

In this analysis, *Zorba the Greek* repeatedly appears as a rival to *Blood on the Land*, defining—since it pre-existed—the above-mentioned categories that constitute the concept of “national film.” Nevertheless, Georgiadis not only does *not* consider it to be the first national film, but not even a national film at all, and he seems to be right in doing so because this film is not Greek—at least when it comes to its production and funding. Its nomination for the main categories at the Oscars and not for the best foreign language film Oscar, in accordance with the American Film Academy rules, was made based on the criterion of American funding, rather than the nationality of the director and/or the subject-matter of the film, thus rendering it American as far as the Academy Awards were concerned. However, the most important reason was that this film, when it was screened in Greece in winter 1964, had already provoked many discussions and contestations as to whether it was, actually, a faithful representation of Greece.<sup>17</sup>

As reviewers in Greece contested the “nationalness” of *Zorba the Greek*, at least for a short while, this allowed Georgiadis to put forward his own film as the first “national” one. In retrospect, however, one realises that the situation was much more complex: the participation of Michael Cacoyannis’ *Zorba the Greek* in the nominations for the most important film awards in the world and the film’s contribution to strengthening Greece’s tourist image at the time—despite any objections by reviewers and others—as well as its inclusion in the study of Greek Cinema over time, make this film part of the national canon.

Accordingly, *Blood on the Land* does not constitute a “purely” Greek film. This film had been hailed as the first Greek western,<sup>18</sup> something that could contradict

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16. See, for example, Babis Kolonias, «Η Ηλέκτρα στις Κάννες», Babis Kolonias (ed.), *Μιχάλης Κακογιάννης. 36ο Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης*, Kastaniotis, Athens 1995, p. 158-172.

17. For a record and analysis of the related discussion, see Erato Basea, “Zorba the Greek,” *op. cit.*

18. On the reviews by Antonis Moschovakis, Vassilis Rafailidis and Aglaia Mitropoulou, see Stathis Valoukos, *Φιλμογραφία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, Aigokeros, Athens 1998, p. 309; on those by M. and A. Mitropoulou and Kostas Stamatiou, see Soldatos (ed.), *Βασίλης Γεωργιάδης*, *op. cit.* p. 80-81.



its conception as a “national” film as this was a foreign genre, inscribed in the film since its making, as one can tell from its promotional poster which reminds us of pictures of westerns, with a man in a classic duel scene, a rifle in his hands, and in the background the man who died in the duel, his companion and his horse. However, this aspect does not count in a decisive way, nor does it make the film less “national,” since the newly introduced genre served a “national goal” and was a way to attract the crucial audience unfamiliar with Greek Cinema: those who select films for awards.

In sum, a “national” film is basically a film with the history of the country as its subject-matter, filmed in natural locations which identify with the real locations of the story narrated and made by a director recognized for his/her artistic value who also comes from the same country. A decisive role in attributing this term to a film is played by the way in which reviewers receive the film’s “Greekness”—that is, the way in which it speaks about/represents the nation/country, a feature which is counterbalanced by the rulings of other available discourses such as those of history or theoretical analysis. Finally, genre, language and funding sources do not affect whether the film is “national,” as long as it aims at participating in high prestige international contests and is successful.

This description can become a productive typology for the categorization of films and almost forces us to view the group “national films” as a genre in itself. Indeed, we find here the main dipole rural/past which carries with it the (melo-) dramatic expression and the corresponding hero from the typology of reading the genres discussed above. Additional parameters are of course needed in order to determine the “national” character of films and to differentiate them from other films—such as the films within the same dipoles, but following literary models from other countries such as *An Enemy of the People*/*Ο εχθρός του λαού* (1972).<sup>19</sup>

The above description may become a productive typology and enrich the initial schema by including categories suggested on the basis of the new analytical paradigms developed around the Greek New/Weird Wave. I am thinking here of the more recent analyses which record, investigate and try to decipher recently produced Greek films, offering a similar genre typology for them, too.<sup>20</sup> Intuitively,

19. See the analysis of *An Enemy of the People* (1972) in Athena Kartalou, ch. 8, *Το ανεκπλήρωτο είδος: Οι ταινίες κοινωνικής καταγγελίας της «Φίνος Φιλμ»*, op. cit. p. 358-374.

20. See, for example, Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave: A Cinema of Biopolitics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2021; Irini Sifaki, Anastasia Stamou, Maria Papadopoulou, *Η ανάδυση ενός νέου κύματος στον σύγχρονο ελληνικό κινηματογράφο*, National Centre for Social Research, Athens 2020, available at: <https://www.openbook.gr/i-anadysi-enos-neoy-kymatos-ston-sygchrono-elliniko-kinimatografo/> [15 July 2020]; Afroditi Nikolaidou, Anna Poupou, «Κάποιες post-weird σκέψεις για το νέο κύμα του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου», *Non-Catalogue*, 58th Thessaloniki Film Festival, Thessaloniki 2017, p. 88-105; Lydia Papadimitriou, Yannis

I think that the group of films that such recent analyses focus on, and the terms in which they talk about these films' "nationness", are similar, especially if we take into account the relation with institutions outside Greece.

Thus, the analysis of the promotional dimension of the term Greek Weird Wave (by Sifaki, Stamou and Papadopoulou<sup>21</sup>), "legitimises" once again the introduction of the dipole extroversion/introversion regarding the intentions of the directors and the producers to export their films. The turn to genre, as described by Nikolaidou and Poupou,<sup>22</sup> as well as by Chalkou,<sup>23</sup> emphasising the way in which a number of contemporary directors deal with genres within the category of "art film," opens up new ways to speak about genre within genre and to accept the western as a component of the "national film," but posing again questions such as: "Are there 'bigger' genres which include other 'smaller' genres?" Moreover, the "socio-cultural modality of biopolitical realism" introduced by Papanikolaou<sup>24</sup> broadens the field of methodological references to extra-cinematic analytical categories, and the turning to a linguistic approach with the introduction of the concept of "textual power" by Tsiplakou and Floros,<sup>25</sup> allows us to interpret the different levels—"bigger"/"more general" to "smaller"/"more targeted"—in the categorisation of genres.

These new categories come as a continuation of older and more recent attempts at a new, cohesive trajectory of genre categorisations in Greek Cinema, with interpretative strength in more than one of its stages. This trajectory in turn leads to a revision not only of the old frames of reading domestic cinema, but also of the evaluative ideologies regarding Greek Cinema in the past and the present. And if something is more appropriate on an anniversary, this is nothing other than the perspective of a liberating gaze, able to unify and celebrate Greek Cinema as a whole!

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Tzioumakis, Vangelis Calotychos (eds), *Contemporary Greek Film Cultures: Weird Wave and Beyond*, special issue of the *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* 2/2 (2016); Maria Chalkou, "A New Cinema of 'Emancipation': Tendencies of Independence in Greek Cinema of the 2000s," *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture* 3/2 (2012), p. 243-261.

21. Sifaki, Stamou, Papadopoulou, *Η ανάδυση ενός νέου κύματος στον σύγχρονο ελληνικό κινηματογράφο*, op. cit. p. 201-262.

22. Nikolaidou, Ρουπου, «Κάποιες post-weird σκέψεις για το νέο κύμα του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου», op. cit. p. 99.

23. Nikolaidou et al., "Editorial Note," op. cit. p. I.

24. Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave*, op. cit. p. I6.

25. Stavroula Tsiplakou, Georgios Floros, "Never Mind the Text Types, Here's Textual Force: Towards a Pragmatic Reconceptualization of Text Type," *Journal of Pragmatics* 45 (2013), p. I19-130.

# 30 November 1968

Aglaia Mitropoulou's *Découverte du cinéma grec*  
is published in France

## Film History and Theory in Greece

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IN 1968, Aglaia Mitropoulou published a history of Greek Cinema in French under the title *Découverte du cinéma grec: Histoire, chronologie, biographies, films, documents, images*.<sup>1</sup> It is a history based on sources and accounts, as well as the author's personal synthesis and aesthetic evaluations. The film history she proposes comes across today as more open and fluid, more keyed into the art cinema and theoretical quests of our era, than it did twenty-five years ago, when historians of Greek film focused on the Old Greek Cinema—which is to say, they were viewing that history, as was only natural, through the prism of the 1990s, a decade in which audiences flocked back to the cinemas, older Greek films were screened *en masse* on private television channels and commercial genres such as comedy enjoyed considerable commercial success.

Revisiting Mitropoulou's history today, one realises the extent to which both the original French and Greek editions (1980) are a palimpsest, a hypertext that communicates with Heraclitus, Euripides and Evgenios Spatharis, the shadow puppeteer;<sup>2</sup> it engages with philosophy, the arts, the visual arts (the 1980 edition even comes with a cover by Nikos Koundouros, which is a work of art in its own right); it raises issues of film technique (cinematography, costumes); it links the his-

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1. Aglaia Mitropoulou was a theatre and film critic, translator and film historian. She founded Greece's first Film Club, the EKKa, in 1950 with a group of enlightened cinema professionals; the club would later evolve into the Greek Film Archive Foundation.

2. Evgenios Spatharis (1924-2009) was the most prominent shadow theatre artist in Greece. He is credited with having brought the traditional Karagiozis plays to mass audiences through television, recordings and the cinema.

tory of cinema with the social sciences (reserving a separate chapter for women filmmakers), clubs and festivals.

As we have all stated on occasion, there can be no doubt that Mitropoulou's perspective aligned very well with the spirit of its times, both in terms of auteur theory (she highlights great directors and outstanding individuals, thereby moulding the canon of Greek Cinema) and the search for a national identity (for example, she links the traditional Karagiozis shadow puppet shows to film projection, bestowing a "national" dimension not only on film production, but also on the history of the medium itself). Still, the "national" perspective that underlies this hypertext and is required to raise awareness of a cinema which had been absent from the historiography until then is bound by its peritext and by Mitropoulou's own personality, both of which have an impact on our perspective. Henri Langlois' preface, which is included in translation in the Greek 1980 edition of the work, speaks of the woman with the "reddish hair and golden amulets" who in the 1960s "made the Athens Film Club the focal point where Koundourous, Kanellopoulos, Grigoriou went to live and breathe cinema."<sup>3</sup>

The text was adapted into French by Guy Braucourt (a critic and actor); among others; Mitropoulou thanks her sources and supporters for the project—artists and intellectuals such as the art theorist and painter Julio Caimi. The publication is included in the Cinema Club series published by Seghers, and the inside back cover lists other publications, such as one on Italian cinema (by Pierre Leprohon) and monographs on Georges Franju and Cecil B. De Mille. The history of Greek Cinema does not emerge as a purely national project in this work; it is also a personal, authorial, curational, national and trans-national process that stands in conversation with others. Both the structure of the book and the peritext show the historian to be an intellectual, a cosmopolitan subject who is part of networks and clubs, who produces history in practice, with a fluid logic which is simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal in relation to the nation.

Mitropoulou's history not only inserts the Greek case into the historiography of the era in which the new national cinemas were growing in strength, but it also opened up the field of film studies in Greece, just as Sotiris Dimitriou's *Μύθος, Κινηματογράφος, Κρίση της Αισθητικής* (*Myth, Cinema, A Crisis of Aesthetics*) would do a little later, when it was published by Alma in 1973.<sup>4</sup> Dimitriou's was the first complete book in Greek to address the issue of theory through extensive bibliographi-

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3. Henri Langlois, «Πρόλογος (Preface)», Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, n. p., Athens 1980, p. 7.

4. Sotiris Dimitriou graduated from the Athens Polytechnic and for several years worked as an engineer in Africa. On his return to Greece, he engaged systematically with—and wrote books relating to—anthropology, cinema and methodology.

cal references that demonstrate a profound knowledge of semiotics, structuralism, deconstruction and, of course, anthropology (since this is the field in which Sotiris Dimitriou blazed trails for many years), while simultaneously calling for a renewal of film theory in Greece. Dimitriou's work goes beyond the focus on the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of the medium, which had dominated theoretical investigations until then, and implies the necessity of a critical interdisciplinarity that sweeps away the silos and demarcations of a "Grand Theory"—that is to say, a theory that wants to belong exclusively to film. It could thus be said that Dimitriou established the field of film theory in Greece, while refusing to see it as a separate field. The film studies he proposes without naming them are an open field that converses with cultural studies, anthropology, theories of reception, psychology and performance studies, pointing out that the question is not *what is cinema* (which is the question Bazin poses), but *what could (and should) cinema do*. The shift from *what is cinema* to viewing film as a total social phenomenon (to refer to Marcel Mauss concept),<sup>5</sup> redirects attention to the functions of cinema and its transformative power. Dimitriou critiques the concept of art as an absolute entity and is thus arguing that cinema ends where it begins to verge on "pure art"—a claim that went against the current of the times then and remains bold to this day. His position, although little discussed in Greece, can be seen as a methodological proposal in favour of a critical and interdisciplinary historiography,<sup>6</sup> which ultimately borders on the latest tendencies in the field, as exemplified by the work of, *inter alia*, Maria Komninou,<sup>7</sup> Christos Dermentzopoulos,<sup>8</sup> Kostis Kornetis<sup>9</sup> or Dimitris Papanikolaou,<sup>10</sup> who do not focus on an aesthetic, formalist, linear historiography, but view cinematic events as transpositions and condensations of social and cultural ones.

5. Sotiris Dimitriou states this explicitly in his last book on film; see Sotiris Dimitriou, *Ο κινηματογράφος σήμερα. Ανθρωπολογικές, πολιτικές και σημειωτικές προσεγγίσεις*, Savvalas, Athens, p. 9.

6. Today, Sotiris Dimitriou's work offers up a series of methodological axes that lend themselves to future study. These axes relate to: (a) cinema as a total social phenomenon and the examination of its position, role and functions in our contemporary socio-cultural formation; (b) studies of reception and the way in which it influences audiences, (c) cinema as a cultural artefact and the analysis of its ideologies; (d) cinema as an anthropological tool for understanding other societies; and finally (e) cinema's ability to transform culture, which is the purely political aspect of film. Dimitriou, *Ο κινηματογράφος σήμερα*, op. cit. p. 13-14.

7. Maria Komninou, *Από την αγορά στο θέαμα: Μελέτη για τη συγκρότηση της δημόσιας σφαίρας και του κινηματογράφου στη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα, 1950-2000*, Papazisis, Athens 2001.

8. Christos Dermentzopoulos, *Η επιπόνηση του τόπου. Νοσταλγία και μνήμη στην Πολιτική Κουζίνα*, Opportuna, Athens 2015.

9. Kostis Kornetis, *Τα παιδιά της Δικτατορίας, Φοιτητική αντίσταση, πολιτισμικές πολιτικές και η μακρά δεκαετία του εξήντα στην Ελλάδα*, Polis, Athens 2015.

10. Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια*, Patakis, Athens 2018.

Why do these two books by Aglaia Mitropoulou and Sotiris Dimitriou remain iconic? They certainly were not the first to raise the issue of a national film history: theoretical and historiographical research into cinema began far earlier in Greece, through journals, reviews and a few books. That these two works are more than mere documentary accounts is clear from their systematic nature, originality and academic clarity and, still more so, from the influence that their authors would have on later generations. This influence is reflected in the interest that met the re-publication of Mitropoulou's book, as late as 2006, in the constant references made to her work by younger researchers and in the cultural and educational role played by the Film Archive of Greece, which she founded and within whose membership budding and distinguished directors "breathed" cinema (and still do). Note should be made here, too, of the large number of researchers and academics who were nurtured in the discussion groups and interdisciplinary research projects that Sotiris Dimitriou maintained over many years, his active presence on the committees of the Drama Short Film Festival, his engagement with younger filmmakers and his texts in both short and long form on cinema and anthropology. All these are events, the impact of which cannot be measured or limited to the words of a text.

The renewal of Greek Cinema Studies in the twenty-first century through publishing projects and film curatorship practices can certainly be seen as a reaction and response to the dynamism shown by Greek Cinema during the years of the Crisis (see the Introduction to this volume). One of the key elements in this Greek film explosion was its "extroversion."<sup>11</sup> Extroversion has always been one of the few ways of surviving in an internationally competitive film market and our new media (and social) conditions. In this context, it is even more crucial today, if we want to write a history of the historiography of Greek Cinema and film studies in Greece, to retrieve those moments from the past when studies of cinema in Greece were not a purely Greek affair, but rather a gesture that was open to dialogue with international trends. Dimitriou and Mitropoulou's books are gestures of this sort, and it is worth evaluating the long lineage to which they belong, once again on their own terms.

Assessed thus more holistically, the historiography of Greek Cinema seems to have taken shape in three phases, although they do not necessarily have to be conceived of as parts of a single evolutionary schema; indeed, they could also be treated as different (and often overlapping) axes of analysis. The first histori-

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11. See Lydia Papadimitriou, "European Co-Productions and Greek Cinema since the Crisis: 'Extroversion' as Survival: Policy and Practice," Julia Hammett-Jamart, Petar Mitric, Eva Novrup Redvall (eds), *European Film and Television Co-Production*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2018, p. 207-222.

ographical phase is shaped by texts that function normatively and establish long and distinct periodisations, laying the foundations for the formation of the field called the history of Greek Cinema and film studies in Greece. Before Mitropoulou's history, Frixos Iliadis (writer, screenwriter and director) published his own history,<sup>12</sup> in which he notes the start of a new period in Greek Cinema *circa* 1950 with the transition from an "artisanal" to a more "industrial" and "commercial" era in film production; he also observes the attention which the Greek Cinema of the 1950s began to attract at international festivals,<sup>13</sup> which is to say that he uses both the change in the production system and the artistic recognition that Greek films received abroad as a criterion for periodisation. His historiographical perspective seeks to highlight the "exceptions," not the "rules," nor, as he notes, the "equalised levels."<sup>14</sup> As far as periodisation is concerned, Mitropoulou's history undoubtedly contributes to the emergence of the era of the New Greek Cinema, whose beginning—taking the dictatorship as a boundary—she places in 1967, as a period of equal (or greater) value. The author, however, clarifies something that would be discussed later almost throughout the entire contemporary historiography: that "the first cracks in the superficially eudemonic structure of Greek Cinema were made shortly before 1967" with films such as Fotos Lambrinos and Dimos Theos' *100 Hours in May/100 ώρες του Μάη* or Roviros Manthoulis' *Face to Face/Πρόσωπο με πρόσωπο*.<sup>15</sup> The third of the "normative" texts that constitute this first phase in the historiography of Greek Cinema is Giannis Soldatos' history.<sup>16</sup> This constitutes a systematic history in that it lists films, names, journalistic texts and institutional changes; it is proposed as a work in progress, since it continues to be supplemented with new volumes as the years pass. In his original *History of Greek Cinema* from 1982, as well as in subsequent editions, Giannis Soldatos reinforced the three-period division, speaking of a "prehistory,"<sup>17</sup> as well as of Old and New Greek Cinema. This division takes into account the change in the production system, the socio-cultural environment of the period and the groupings that can be made by using genre as organising principle (for instance, melodrama and farce are considered the dominant genres of the 1950s and 1960s, rendering the experience of those years a distinct period). In the first edition from 1982,

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12. Frixos Iliadis, *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος 1906-1960*, Fantasia, Athens 1960.

13. *Ibid.* p. 95

14. *Ibid.* p. 77-78.

15. Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, Athens 1980, *op. cit.* p. 277.

16. Giannis Soldatos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, Aigokeros, Athens 1982.

17. Eliza-Anna Delveroudi correctly critiques the characterisation of the period as "prehistory" in Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, "Silent Greek Cinema: In Search of Academic Recognition," Lydia Papadimitriou, Yannis Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities*, Intellect, Bristol/ Chicago 2012, p. 119.

this process is supplemented by texts contemporaneous with the films, meaning that the author provided the material for a history of film criticism and reception. The detailed and exhaustive documentation of all the films, festival screenings and articles, as well as the institutional framework is foundational work onto which the researcher can add future studies. The analytical and documentary material brought to light by Chrysanthi Sotiropoulou in her book *Ελληνική Κινηματογραφία 1965–1975* (*Greek Cinema 1965–1975*, published in 1989) is also foundational and provides the data required to fill in any gaps in the transition from the Old to the New Greek Cinema.<sup>18</sup>

The second historiographical phase, which lasted from the 1990s to the early 2000s, is characterised by the field's consolidation within academia, the strengthening of its methodology and, often, a reflective approach. This phase coincides, as might be expected, with Film Studies establishing itself in Greek universities.<sup>19</sup>

During this phase, Maria Stassinopoulou in her article "What is History Looking for in Film?" raises the issue of the periodisation of Greek Cinema and the criteria used, as well as the examples that scholars used to delimit distinct periods.<sup>20</sup> Stassinopoulou suggests that "the choice of temporal boundaries [...] should correspond both to developments in political and social history and to internal differentiations in the history of post-war cinema."<sup>21</sup> This is done, for example, in *Le Cinéma Grec*, a French work published in 1995, with Michel Dimopoulos as its editor-in-chief,<sup>22</sup> which undoubtedly revises the history of Greek Cinema by framing it within a social history timeline.

In this phase, integrated now into a university context, the historiography negotiates but does not abolish the existing periodisations, although it does add subcategories and turns more to "mid-level" research—that is, attempts to pro-

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18. Chrysanthi Sotiropoulou, *Ελληνική Κινηματογραφία 1965–1975: θεαματικό πλαίσιο, οικονομική κατάσταση*, Themelio, Athens 1982.

19. The first academics to teach the subject were Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, Maria Komninou, Maria Paradeisi, Chrysanthi Sotiropoulou and, somewhat later, Panayiota Mini, Irini Stathi and Eva Stefani. Moreover, the School of Film at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was established in 2004.

20. Maria Stassinopoulou, "What is History Looking for in Film?" *Ta istorika* 23/12 (1995), p. 421–436. Somewhat later, Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, who uses cinema as historical evidence—in the tradition of Sorlin and Ferro—of the views, behaviours and discourses of young people in the comedies of the Old Greek Cinema, would explicitly raise the issue of the periodisation of Greek Cinema into Old and New Greek Cinema in her first chapter: See Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, *Οι νέοι στις κωμωδίες του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου 1948–1974*, Centre for Neohellenic Studies (National Hellenic Research Foundation) and the Historical Archive of Greek Youth (General Secretariat for Youth), Athens 2004.

21. Maria Stassinopoulou, *ibid.* p. 424.

22. Michel Demopoulos (ed.), *Le Cinéma Grec*, Editions du Centre Pompidou, Paris 1995.



duce a comprehensive history of Greek Cinema are avoided. The study of early Greek Cinema through archival research and restoration projects not only brings to light an entire field in step and contemporary with the research conducted from the late 1970s onwards by historians, but it also revisits questions relating to what should be considered cinematic heritage (current, lost or destroyed films we know about from other sources, the creation of star systems).<sup>23</sup>

However, the study of representations in a historiography dominates the following subjects: the diaspora and migration,<sup>24</sup> delinquency<sup>25</sup> and the city. Individual genres such as the musical<sup>26</sup> and comedy, as well as issues related to the ideology of the Old Greek Cinema,<sup>27</sup> or pertaining to individual directors such as Voulgaris,<sup>28</sup> whose work is now subject to holistic and interdisciplinary examination, are analysed and create sub-divisions within the periodisations. This phase introduced the term “Contemporary Greek Cinema” into the historiography—a term that seemed to imply that, henceforth, there would be no more divisions or radical breaks in the historiography.

Despite the wide range of themes explored by scholars into the early 2000s, the questions and methodologies continue to revolve around “texts” and representations, while issues that had already begun to occupy film studies or were already central approaches by the late 1990s—such as the historiography of film as an “archaeology of new media” or “new film history,” or queer approaches

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23. The work of Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, Maria Stassinopoulou and, later, Fotos Lambrinos are crucial, above all else, for establishing the field. For a comprehensive and critical overview of the field, see Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, “Silent Greek Cinema: In Search of Academic Recognition,” Lydia Papadimitriou, Yannis Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities*, Intellect, Bristol, Chicago 2012, p. 117-128; Maria Stassinopoulou, “Definitely Maybe: Possible Narratives of the History of Greek Cinema,” Lydia Papadimitriou, Yannis Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities*, Intellect, Bristol, Chicago 2012, p. 129-143.

24. Chrysanthi Sotiropoulou, *Η διασπορά στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο - επιδράσεις και επιρροές στη θεματολογική εξέλιξη των ταινιών της περιόδου 1945-1986* (*The Diaspora in Greek Cinema: Impacts and Influences on the Thematic Development of Films in the Period 1945-1986*), Themelio, Athens 1995, and the more eclectic Athina Kartalou, Afroditi Nikolaidou, Thanos Anastopoulos (eds), *Σε Ξένο τόπο: Η μετανάστευση στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο 1956-2006* (*In a Foreign Land: Migration in Greek Cinema, 1956-2006*), Aigokeros, Athens 2006.

25. Maria Paradeisi, *Κινηματογραφική αφήγηση και παραβατικότητα στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο 1994-2004* (*Cinematic Narrative and Delinquency in Greek Cinema 1994-2004*), Typothito, Athens 2006.

26. Lydia Papadimitriou, *The Greek Film Musical: A Critical and Cultural History*, McFarland & Co, London 2005.

27. See Gianna Athanasatou, *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος (1950-1967): Λαϊκή Μνήμη και Ιδεολογία*, FINATEC, Athens 2001.

28. Foteini Tomai (ed.), *Ιστορία και πολιτική στο έργο του Παντελή Βούλγαρη*, Papazisis, Athens 2007.

(rather than purely feminist ones)—will figure in the next, third phase in the historiography of Greek film.

Indeed, after 2009, the approaches taken became polyphonic,<sup>29</sup> comparative, inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary, questioning both the “exception model”<sup>30</sup> that had often been adopted in previous periods and the standard corpus of Greek “national cinema,”<sup>31</sup> just as Greek film was starting to look outwards. The audience, exhibition, critical reception and promotion of Greek Cinema<sup>32</sup> became increasingly central to this historiography. The approach taken by film production studies,<sup>33</sup> star/celebrity studies,<sup>34</sup> queer studies,<sup>35</sup> viewing film as an aspect of cultural history,<sup>36</sup> material culture, journalism,<sup>37</sup> the emergence of the “embodied self” and “emotion” as categories that permeate texts, audiences and the researchers themselves stimulate testimony, oral history, the stories that accompany films and directors, and archives.<sup>38</sup> This is how we encounter Mitropoulou and

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29. The book I edited with Maria Paradeisi contains multiple voices, but does not break down the periodisations, proving that the phases discussed here often work in parallel. Maria Paradeisi, Afroditi Nikolaidou (eds), *Από τον πρώιμο στο σύγχρονο ελληνικό κινηματογράφο: Ζητήματα μεθοδολογίας, ιστορίας, θεωρίας*, Gutenberg, Athens 2017.

30. On this basis, Maria Stassinopoulou suggests that Greek Cinema should be seen as a version of European Cinema. Stassinopoulou, “Definitely Maybe,” op. cit.

31. Vrasidas Karalis brings back the linear macro-narrative, but does so while unpacking “National Cinema”: Is the director’s family origin always the key element here? What about productions produced with foreign funds, but treated as part of the national canon? See Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, Bloomsbury, London 2012.

32. For example, in Lydia Papadimitriou, Yannis Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema*, op. cit.

33. Christos Xenos, *Η Ελληνική κινηματογραφική παραγωγή 1942-1990: Πολιτισμικές και παραγωγικές μεταβολές*, unpubl. PhD thesis, Panteion University, Athens 2020.

34. Olga Kourelou, “Reclaiming Greece’s National Star: Aliki Vougiouklaki, from Sex Kitten to Working Girl,” *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* 6/1 (2020), p. 71-90.

35. Dimitris Papanikolaou, “The pensive spectator, the possessive reader and the archive of queer feelings: A reading of Constantine Giannaris’s *Trojans*,” *Journal of Greek Media & Culture*, v.1, n. 2, 1 October 2015, p. 279-297(19); Konstantinos Kyriakos, *Επιθυμίες και πολιτική. Η queer ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, Aigokeros, Athens 2017.

36. See the recent study by Anna Ρουρου, Leonidas Papadopoulos, «Το φιλμ νουάρ στην Ελλάδα. πρόσληψη, αφομοίωση και επίδραση ενός αμερικάνικου είδους από τη μεταπολεμική περίοδο έως σήμερα (Film Noir in Greece: Reception, Assimilation and Influence of an American Genre from the Post-War Period to the Present Day)», post-doctoral research conducted in the context of the EDBM-103 “Support for researchers with an emphasis on young researchers-2bd Cycle” programme, part of the NSRF 2014-2020 and co-funded by the European Union.

37. Afroditi Nikolaidou, “Greek TV Documentary Journalism: Discourses, Forms and Authorship,” *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 5 (2018), p. 44-66.

38. Apart from Dimitris Papanikolaou’s influential *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια*, see the methodologically important book by Panayiota Mini, *Η κινηματογραφική μορφή του πόνου και της οδυνηρής αναπόλησης: Ο μοντερνισμός του Τάκη Κανελλόπουλου* (*The Filmic Form of Pain and*

Dimitriou in these undertakings, returning as we are to their view of cinema and historiography itself as an open, total phenomenon with transformative power.

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*of Aching Recollection: Takis Kanellopoulos's Modernism*), MIET, Athens 2018. See also the different direction taken in the article by Mimina Pateraki, «Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος, χορός και πολιτισμική εγγύτητα: μία ανθρωπολογική ανάλυση με τους “θεατές” στον Κορυδαλλό Αττικής (Greek Cinema, Dance and Cultural Proximity: An Anthropological Analysis with the “Spectators” in Korydallos, Attica)», Maria Paradeisi, Afroditi Nikolaidou (eds), *Από τον πρώιμο στον σύγχρονο ελληνικό κινηματογράφο: ζητήματα μεθοδολογίας, ιστορίας, θεωρίας*, Gutenberg, Athens 2017, p. 104-138.



1968-1972

Pavlos Zannas translates Proust's  
*À la recherche du temps perdu* while in prison

## Dictatorship and Cinema

**Kostis Kornetis**

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THERE IS, perhaps, no better commentary on the Greek Cinema of the first years of the dictatorship than the image of Pavlos Zannas, imprisoned on the island of Aegina for participating in the resistance organisation *Dimokratiki Amyna* (Democratic Defence). Zannas, a bourgeois intellectual imbued with French culture, founder of the Cinema Club of the Cultural Society "Techni" (Art) and of the Thessaloniki Film Festival (as annex to the International Exhibition) found himself behind prison bars for four years. Zannas would translate in a unique way Marcel Proust's monumental work *À la recherche du temps perdu* there. Stratis Tsirkas had encouraged him to do so (or, rather, "ordered" him to do so, as he himself described it). His translation was published by the publishing house Iridanos in a series starting in 1969, using his initials PAZ. The publication, starting with *Un amour de Swann*, made a great impression. "When we are alone, we can ask for Swann's help," wrote George Seferis in a rather cryptic way in one of his last essays in French, published in *Figaro littéraire* in July 1971. Seemingly reflecting on translation issues, Seferis was in essence using PAZ as an example<sup>1</sup> to allude to the fate of political prisoners in Greece.

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1. Georges Séféris, "Quand on est seul, on peut demander l'aide de Swann," *Figaro littéraire* (9 July 1971). On this, see Lucile Arnoux-Farnoux, "'Quand on est seul, on peut demander l'aide de Swann': Lire—et traduire—Proust en Grèce pendant la dictature," p. 255-271, Florence Godeau, Sylvie Humbert-Mougin (eds), *Vivre comme on lit: Hommages à Philippe Chardin*, Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, Tours 2018. PAZ refers with tenderness to Seferis throughout his diary as "Uncle George" and to Maro Seferi as "Aunt Maro." The diary entries are to be found in Pavlos A. Zannas, *Ημερολόγιο Φυλακής*, Al. P. Zannas (ed.), Ermis, Athens 2000.

From the diary entries that PAZ sent to his wife, Mina Zanna, we see that, alongside Proust, he was also interested in the writings of Debray, Marcuse, Reich, Semprún and Solzhenitsyn, Sartre's prologue to Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre*, as well as Taktsis, Hakkas and Ioannou. He was haunted (then and always) by cinematic images, which he only enjoyed occasionally in the infrequent screenings for the detainees, of such films as *Belle de jour* in 1969 ("Who would believe it? *Belle de jour* by Buñuel today in prison").<sup>2</sup> "This week *Les sans espoir*, *Two Men in a Landscape*,<sup>3</sup> and *Woodstock*<sup>4</sup> are shown in Athens," he noted later on about the films by Jancsó, Losey and Wadleigh, respectively, that would cause a sensation in December 1970. Although Zannas had not actually seen the last of these, he recorded it as being an important film, claiming that it heralded something new. "I long for good cinema, to talk about cinema—maybe to teach it," he wrote one evening in the summer of 1971,<sup>5</sup> while invariably reading the French cinema magazines *Positif* and *Cinéma*. Two and a half years earlier, he was excited when a group of film stars, including Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Rex Harrison, Lino Ventura, directors Roger Vadim, Jacques Rivette and Joris Ivens, as well as the director of the French Cinémathèque Henri Langlois, had sent a telegram to the extraordinary court martial held in Thessaloniki during the trial of six members of the Democratic Defence in November 1968, protesting against PAZ's detention and his imminent conviction.<sup>6</sup> It was all in vain, of course.

Over the course of a few years, and while PAZ was following developments in any way he could and was reflecting on existentialist issues, as well as on matters of artistic and political expression, Greek Cinema changed dramatically. His brainchild, the Thessaloniki Film Festival—a major artistic and social occasion at the beginning of the early 1960s, which, by 1966, had become an international event—would transform. The glamorous years were over, and the festival had now been turned into a vehicle for the dictatorship's official propaganda. Films that were in line with the mindset and the aesthetics of the regime—mainly military epics such as *Nol'Οχι* (1969), *The Brave Bunch/Οι γενναίοι του Βορρά* (1970) and *At the Border of Treason/Στα σύνορα της προδοσίας* (1968), most of them produced by James Paris—were openly promoted by the festival's juries, until the

2. Diary entry 16 December 1969 in *Ημερολόγιο*, op. cit. p. 94. The cinema in the prison of Aegina had been built by political prisoners of the Civil War after 1945. See *Ημερολόγιο*, n. 4, p. 94.

3. In fact, the film had a slightly different title: *Figures in a Landscape*.

4. Diary entry 3 December 1970, *Ημερολόγιο*, op. cit. p. 182.

5. Diary entry, 20 July 1970, *ibid.* p. 273.

6. See a later reference to this telegram together with a photograph of the Taylor-Burton couple in the entry for 24 January 1970, *Ημερολόγιο*, op. cit. p. 105.

landmark year of 1970, which signalled the emergence of some new filmmakers. While PAZ was translating Proust—instead of organising screenings and discussions or writing film reviews—the New Greek Cinema was being established. Although the origins of the New Greek Cinema can be traced back to 1966, its actual rise is directly related to the increasing political role of cinema clubs and the feisty spectators of the famous 2nd Balcony of the Festival. The latter eventually became an indicator of political transformations during the 1970s, in spite of the fact that the festival was being held far from the country's capital.

There, in September 1970, at the Society for Macedonian Studies, Angelopoulos' emblematic *Reconstruction/Αναπαράσταση* was screened and received with great enthusiasm. It was this very film that transformed the institution and the venue: from a context for the silent acceptance of cinematic features friendly to the dictatorship to a place of protest and open defiance. The process of decoding and ascribing meanings to films of such kinds was fuelled by the passionate discussions which inevitably followed the screenings; this, too, was a legacy of the Cinema Club founded by PAZ in Thessaloniki in the distant 1955.<sup>7</sup> Cinema rapidly transformed into a means of fostering political awareness. The immediate manifestation of acceptance or rejection of what was happening on screen further constituted an attempt to put an end to the “passivity” of the spectator under conditions of censorship and to create a more direct and active relationship with the work of art. Such screenings, as a shared experience, were in line with the period's broader tendencies towards collectivities. During the dictatorship, the imaginary of the new cinephiles was shaped to a great extent by the images they saw, the reviews they read and even the cinema posters and their captions, which provided an overall system of concepts and instruments for an anti-dictatorship public. The specialised journal *Contemporary Cinema/Σύγχρονος Κινηματογράφος*, influenced by the French *Cahiers du Cinéma*, also focused on socio-political approaches to films and to the art of cinema in general, promoting socio-political sensitivity. PAZ, stunned by Kostas Georgakis's self-immolation in Genoa in 1970 and while reading the journal's contents in prison, was concerned about the state of Greek Cinema (“something like anxiety”), unable to fully grasp the changes that were taking place in a field which, until then, he had known so well. Clearly, PAZ—echoing in part the pessimism of his friend Manolis Anagnostakis whom he mentions frequently in his prison diary—was also expressing the existential angst of his generation as to what would remain after the end of that unpleasant adventure: “Perhaps, I'm no longer the person for this kind of work. Perhaps my age is to blame... What is left? [...] Spyros [Pagiatakis], Alexis [Grivas], Roussos

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7. See *Η Τέχνη στη Θεσσαλονίκη: Η Κινηματογραφική Λέσχη, 1955-1967*, Ermis, Athens 2017.

[Koundouros] are gone... Only Vassilis [Rafailidis] and the younger ones remain. For them, I may be part of history... Will there be anything left for us?"<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it is no coincidence that, a year later, his contribution to the anti-dictatorship volume *New Texts/Νέα Κείμενα*, the sequel to the famous *18 Texts/18 Κείμενα* was entitled "A Bottle in the Sea."<sup>9</sup>

The Balcony was becoming increasingly vocal, expressing clear political, if not dissident, features. In 1971, at the so-called "festival of rage" the films *Papaflessas/Παπαφλέσσας* by Errikos Andreou, featuring Dimitris Papamichail, and *Consumer Society/Καταναλωτική Κοινωνία* by Kostas Karagiannis were deplored. By contrast, *Evdokia/Ευδοκία* by Damianos and *What Did You Do in the War, Thanasis/Τι έκανες στον πόλεμο, Θανάση* by Dinos Katsouridis were received with great enthusiasm. The orientation of the festival itself changed; the audience were becoming feistier, and from 1972 onwards their reactions, including the granting of the awards themselves, were blatantly politically tinged, as was the case, for instance, with *Anna's Engagement/Το προξενió της Άννας* by Pantelis Voulgaris and, of course, *Days of '36/Μέρες του '36* by Angelopoulos. After spending some time at the Korydallos prison, PAZ was freed in 1972, when his sentence was interrupted "in order to avoid irreparable damage to his health." He then had his picture taken in the company of five comrades at Ammouliani beach, where he had been arrested four years earlier.<sup>10</sup> He may have attended the 1973 festival when a police officer entered the projection room to interrupt the screening of *The Matteotti Crime* (Florestano Vancini, 1973) while the spectators were shouting "Shame!"<sup>11</sup> The Polytechnic uprising, Ioanidis' dictatorship, the invasion of Cyprus and the fall of the junta itself unfolded later.

We tend to think of the dictatorship period as "seven lost years" in terms of the cultural life of Greece. But the fact is that the junta itself inadvertently functioned as a turning point for Greek Cinema and its role in politics. The fall of the regime did, however, signify the restoration of freedom of speech. In 1974, at the first free Festival of Thessaloniki in seven years, although PAZ served as the chairman of the jury, the festival was no longer "his." As film critic Grigoris Grigoriou wrote, the first post-dictatorship festival took place in an atmosphere of paranoia:

8. Diary entry 25 September 1970, *Ημερολόγιο*, op. cit. p. 158.

9. «Μποτίλια στο πέλαγο», *Νέα Κείμενα*, Kedros, Athens 1971. On this, see Lefteris Xanthopoulos (ed.), *Παύλος Ζάννας*, Aigokeros, Athens 1999.

10. They are Sotiris Dedes, Argyris Maltsidis, Stelios Nestoras, Kostas Pyrzas and Giorgos Sipitanos.

11. See the detailed reports in the newspaper *Thessaloniki* that accompanied the festival, sometimes written by Giorgos Lianis. See also the timeline in *Why Cinema Now? 50ό Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης*, Oxy, Athens 2009.



"I will never forget the mocking and the jeering that he [PAZ] received from the 'young people' and for no particular reason. As he announced the awards and the name and title of a film, booing would follow, completely paranoiac in nature, not to mention the refusal of the award-winners to accept the awards."<sup>12</sup> In the end, and in line with the post-dictatorship "utopia" in which cinema continued to play a leading role, the Balcony awarded its own prizes, demanding a "festival of the people." PAZ, as he had feared, was considered a pioneer intellectual, but one belonging to the old guard. He would nonetheless continue to be passionate about cinema and to translate Proust until the day he died.

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12. Grigoris Grigoriou, *Μνήμες σε άσπρο και σε μαύρο. Η ιστορία ενός επαγγελματία*, Aigokeros, Athens 1996, p. 126.



# September 1969

The first issue of the journal  
*Contemporary Cinema* is published

## Greek Cinema Criticism

**Maria Paradeisi**

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Greek cinema criticism was, to a large extent, defined by the distinction between art films and commercial films. The films belonging to the latter category were reproached, through newspaper reviews, mainly for what they were not, in comparison to international standards, without any attempt to examine their specificities. The foundations of a more “cinematic” criticism were laid in the mid-1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, as well as throughout the 1980s with the “explosion” of publications about cinema which coincided with or follow the emergence of the New Greek Cinema.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, under different titles, one finds successively the same editors. With left-wing inclinations, especially during the first two decades, they justify their publication by means of the necessity to create a new journal with an approach different from the previous ones, touching upon new subjects. In fact, their contents are identical: the main articles describe the necessity to create or keep on creating non-commercial films, extensively cover the Festival of Thessaloniki, present the work of old and new directors, publish interviews and news related to cinema, as well as reports from festivals abroad, and so on. Most of them also contain feature articles on the theory of cinema, often using important sources that had not been translated into Greek until then.<sup>2</sup> Several of them also touch

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1. In the digital archive of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival ([www.myfestival.gr](http://www.myfestival.gr)), approximately twenty titles of cinema journals are mentioned, but relevant articles were also published in journals such as *Πολίτης* (*Citizen*), *Βαβέλ* (*Babel*), *Αντί* (*Anti*) and the like.

2. See for example, in *Contemporary Cinema* of the first period, Jean Narboni and Louis Comolli, «Κινηματογράφος, Ιδεολογία, Κριτική», issue 14 (1971), p. 42-49; Pascal Bonitzer,

on issues of production and distribution. The fact that there was a large number of journals published, relative to the size of the domestic cinephile readership, also explains why most of them were short-lived. Obviously, this is not the place to offer an exhaustive presentation of these journals. We shall mention three or four of them, which had a longer lifespan and which I consider having been more influential, reflecting the zeitgeist in a better way.

It all began with the historic journal *Greek Cinema* (Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος), which circulated from October 1966 until March 1967, publishing six issues in total (one of them was double). The first issue was dedicated to the 7th Film Festival of Thessaloniki and heralded the emergence of the New Greek Cinema.<sup>3</sup> It was managed by an editorial board composed by F. Alexiou (a pseudonym of the cinematographer A. Grivas), P. Zannas, N.-F. Mikelidis, G. Bakogiannopoulos and V. Rafailidis. However, there were also many reviews of foreign films. *Greek Cinema* started a tradition that was then followed by most cinema journals that came after it. *Contemporary Cinema* (Σύγχρονος Κινηματογράφος) and *Film* [Φιλμ] are two of the oldest and most significant journals. The latter, together with some of the other journals,<sup>4</sup> also touched upon issues of gender, while the former remained concentrated on the genderless theoretical and critical approach of cinema.

*Contemporary Cinema*, the brainchild of Vassilis Rafailidis, one of the most important intellectuals and cinema critics, gathered around it some of the most inquisitive spirits of its time from the broader political area of the Left. In addition to the in-depth analysis of various cinema topics, its editors often tried to use culture as a means of presenting more general issues regarding freedom of expression, opposition to the backward mentality of the dictatorship and the engagement of artists.

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«Κινηματογράφος / θέατρο / ιδεολογία / γραφή», 27-28 (1973), p. 27-35, and, from the second period, J. Baudrillard, «Η ιστορία: ένα σενάριο ρετρό», 19 (1978), p. 69-73, and J.-F. Lyotard, «Κυριότερες επίκαιρες τάσεις στην ψυχαναλυτική μελέτη των καλλιτεχνικών και λογοτεχνικών εκφράσεων», 21-22 (1979), p. 68-79. The journal *Film* was exclusively dedicated to theory; see, for example, Glauber Rocha, «Η αισθητική της βίας», issue 2 (1974), p. 246-250; J.-F. Lyotard, «Ο ακινηματογράφος», 5 (1975), p. 151-156; Christian Metz, «Η ταινία με μύθο και ο θεατής της», 13 (1977), p. 86-129, and Frederic Jameson, «Το μεταμοντέρνο», 31 (1986), p. 85-108.

3. In that year, several (in relation to the rest of the Greek mass production) different films, such as T. Kanellopoulos's *Excursion/ Εκδρομή*, A. Damianos' *Until the Ship Sails/...Μέχρι το πλοίο*, D. Kollatos' *Alexander's Death /Ο Θάνατος του Αλέξανδρου*, R. Manthouli's *Face to Face/Πρόσωπο με πρόσωπο* and P. Voulgaris' *Jimmy the Tiger/Ο Τζίμης ο Τίγρης*. The dictatorship slowed down this development until the 1970s.

4. For example, *Τσόντα* (*Tsonta*), a publication of the Theatre Workshop Club of Thessaloniki. *Film* in particular has a special issue dedicated to women's cinema, issue 17 (1979).

Its development over the fifteen years of its publication is of particular interest since, to a large extent, it reflects the trajectory of a significant part of the Greek intellectual elite which was largely dependent on its French counterpart; it was a trajectory from an “orthodox” Marxist point of view towards modern pursuits based on semiotics, psychoanalysis and other similar trends. In its texts, one can clearly discern the spirit of absoluteness, of messianism and often of looking down on things, an attitude that characterised intellectuals during the last years of the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship era.

The history of *Contemporary Cinema* is divided into two periods: from September 1969 to March 1973, when Vassilis Rafailidis was the editor (28 issues), and from August 1974 to Summer 1984, when Michel Dimopoulos was (with some exceptions) the editor (36 issues).<sup>5</sup> Rafailidis’ review of Theodoros Angelopoulos’ *Reconstruction/Αναπαράσταση* (issue 9-10/1970) belongs to the first period. In his review, Rafailidis welcomed the “first grown-up” film of Greek Cinema, highlighting the fact that space was playing a leading role in it.

Both periods of *Contemporary Cinema* are clearly marked by the conjuncture in which the journal was published (the 1970s and the 1980s). Throughout its publication, the opinions and polemics of the journal were defined by “auteur theory” and the ancillary polarisation between “commercial” and “art films”; the main object of its texts was the latter. It is equally clear that the journal supported “new cinema” and in general modernism and innovation; its tendency to play an interventionist and educational role vis-à-vis Greek filmmakers was also very pronounced.

Finally, both periods are characterised by the “provocative” style of some columnists, their smugness, their sarcasm and their hard-to-read (and sometimes very personal) texts. It is also of great interest to discern the way in which the journal dealt with Greek Cinema, which from a sideline issue became the centre-point.<sup>6</sup> In particular, it is worth noting that, in the last issues of the journal, its

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5. The slight difference in the title, obviously for copyright reasons, is evident.

6. The introductory note, «Ο ήλιος ανατέλλει πάντα», signed by the editors, mentioned that, apart from space restrictions, the rudimentary coverage of Greek Cinema was also due to the fact that “Greek cinema production being suitable only for underdeveloped people [...] only interests us as a historical event.” It seems that this policy statement and the overall style of the journal provoked strong reactions on the part of the readers; in the second issue, in the introductory note titled «Μερικές διευκρινίσεις (Some Clarifications)» there was a relative concession in a toned-down style: “We should stress that we neither ignore nor cross out Greek cinema in its entirety [...] The intended generalisations of the previous article were probably misunderstood. In that article we wanted to overstress some situations and to point out in very general terms the number one problem of our cinema: The quality of Greek films is too low.” The text concluded by saying that, if there was some hope for Greek

attitude towards Old Greek Cinema changed: its rejection from the outset was gradually replaced by its willingness to study it.

*Film* was published by the cinema director Thanassis Rentzis, and it was a very theoretical—sometimes single-subject—journal focusing mainly on the avant-garde. Among its historic feature articles, one can find Cinema in the Third World, Cinema Novo, Russian Cinema, Experimental Cinema and so on. In its theoretical texts, one can find such subjects as Cinema and Semiotics, the relationship between cinema and theatre, Cinema and Psychoanalysis, as well as a discussion about gender and cinema. The journal also published, extremely important for its time, the structuralist analysis of the film *Reconstruction*, written by Giannis Bakogiannopoulos (issue 21/1980).

Issue 3/1974 of the journal was dedicated exclusively to Greek Cinema, but references to it appeared in about ten out of the thirty-two issues published, creating the impression that the journal considered domestic filmmaking to be at the sidelines. In the column «Εφήμερα»/Ephemera (issue 11/1976), the editor clarified the journal's aim. First of all, he explained that *Film* was not a journal in the strict sense of the word (which would follow and comment on the current affairs of the world of cinema), but a “periodical publication” the main object of which was the “systematic study of subjects constituting cycles and sections that revolve around the axis of cinema.” Declaring that reviews were of no interest to its columnists, he expressed the view that the only interesting thing one could read about a film was the issues of interest to the director and not the substitution of the public's opinion through the media. During the first year of the journal's circulation, several directors accepted the journal's invitation to present their work; later, however, several of them stated that they were not competent to do so, explaining that the initial promise that one out of the four issues published annually would be dedicated to Greek Cinema was not kept. Regarding the readers' observation that the journal dealt with subjects and films completely unknown in Greece, the answer relies on the rather weak argument that “it is impossible to deduce from the cinema theatres” what happens in the world of cinema “with regard to criticism and general approach.”<sup>7</sup>

Another journal which should be mentioned is *Screen* (Οθόνη), published by members of the Theatre and Cinema Student Club of the University of Thessaloniki in the period between 1979 and 1993 (46 issues). A large number of articles published in this journal was written by the important cinema critic and later

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Cinema to be reborn, this would come from younger filmmakers. Finally, it observed that the difference between the first and the second period of Greek Cinema is not so substantial as it may have seemed at first, and that this initial feeling was due to the climate of euphoria that accompanied the “New Greek Cinema” in the post-dictatorship period.

7. «Εφήμερα», 11 (1976), p. 3.

equally important distributor Giorgos Tzotzios (who died young), Christos Mitsis and other well-known cinema critics. While Marxist influences were prominent in its early issues, *Screen*, during its long life, adapted to the spirit of the times. More specifically, Tzotzios stands out for the polemic (and sometimes sarcastic) tone of his texts, the personal, austere and often insightful style of several of his reviews, as well as the presentation of great directors from world cinema.<sup>8</sup> Just like most journals of the time, it published extensive feature articles about the language of cinema, psychoanalysis and similar topics.

In recent years, the inevitable gradual decline of the New Greek Cinema and its stagnation, with some exceptions, during the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium, did not create a fertile ground for the new publication of important journals. The explosion of the “weird wave” (which was first “discovered” abroad) coincided with the beginning of the financial crisis which further discouraged any such attempts.

A significant and relatively recent event is the publication of two English-language (the second being bilingual) academic journals about Greek Cinema created by Greek academics who teach or have studied in the UK. These are the print publication *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* and the online journal *Filmicon*, which came as a result of the growth of Greek Film Studies at British universities. These two journals cover very well the gap created by the absence of an academic journal dedicated to Greek Cinema. However, they mainly address and are read by academics; they are no substitute for a journal in Greek that would offer analytical criticism and delve into issues prominent in Greek Cinema with the coverage of international developments, just like the journals mentioned above. Having said that, the very concept of criticism may have changed in the twenty-first century, characterised as it is by the demise of the theoretical pursuits of the second half of the twentieth century.

As for contemporary cinematic production related to new releases in Greece, this is covered by the important webpage *flix.gr*, edited by a group of critics who combine knowledge of cinema history with extensive information about international events and current affairs, with contemporary production also presented by various other webpages.

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8. In 1989, the—contrary to previous journals—rather lavish in appearance and clearly more mainstream journal *Σινεμά* (*Cinema*) was launched. This journal dominated the field of cinema in printed form until 2009. In 1994, it inaugurated with great success the Athens festival «Νύχτες Πρεμιέρας». *Cinema*’s only opponent in the 1990s was Ilias Frangoulis’ black-and-white *Αντι-κινηματογράφος* (*Anti-Cinema*), published first in 1992 and then throughout the 1990s (27 issues). In its first issue, the editorial board made it clear that “we are creating a front of resistance to the American cultural imperialism, and we support without reservations European cinema and the strengthening of Greek quality cinema.”





# 3 December 1973

*The Constellation of the Virgin*  
opens in Greek cinemas

## Form, Narrative, Untruth and Confession: The Movie Star in the Long 1960s

**Vasiliki Lazaridou**

Artist, critic, director

THE NAMES Zoi Laskari and Giannis Dalianidis are sure to call to mind the films *The Decline*/Ο κατήφορος (1961) and *Stefania*/Η Στεφανία στο αναμορφωτήριο (1966) for the reader. These two films moulded Laskari's image as the ideal reflection of the director's ideas, since they mirrored the dramatic archetypes of female experience, as these were imagined in film production circles during the long 1960s and did so while being indisputably successful at the box office by the standards of the day. Heroines of unparalleled beauty who almost without exception end up as targets of sexual assault present a cause for revenge, manifest class and gender inequality and offer a love that brings salvation or death and the essential personal moral compass which clashes with social dictates—these are some of the themes that Greek melodramatic cinema draws from its predecessor, tragedy, through the condition of victimhood. The early narrative forms of this condition, and ancient tragedies in particular, are connected to a sacrifice being made to some deity, or to supplication before some authority, while in modern culture the female victim/protagonist both struggles against hegemonic structures and evolves and gains social legitimacy in parallel with the emergence/arrival of the modern subject.<sup>1</sup> In her introduction to the Greek edition of Butler's *Antigone's Revenge*, Elena Tzelepi exhorts us to render legible the power innate in the act of uttering and

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1. Linda Williams, "When Is Melodrama 'Good'? Mega-Melodrama and Victimhood," *Melodrama After the Tears*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2016, p. 53-80.

in words' potential to shape realities; or to perceive them as such, pure and simple,<sup>2</sup> by adding a performative layer through narrative capable of arousing extreme emotions and of profoundly moving the audience in any given era. And if the defining characteristic of melodrama is the way in which it focuses on the point of view of a character who has the quality of being a victim,<sup>3</sup> its etymology can be traced back to the form adopted by post-Euripidean Hellenistic drama, in which the main narrative is dominated by the monodies of the protagonists; indeed, one could well quip that melodrama, like its predecessor, is primarily about "women singing of their sufferings."<sup>4</sup>

Irrespective of how sincere this representation of melodrama, inscribed as it is within the hyperbole of the form itself, as a necessarily "female" experience may be, the aestheticisation of the drama lived by women was represented—indeed personified—by Laskari in the Greek 1960s and 1970s, while the actor's face and body were iconically and deliberately objectified, taking up virtually no space in the early feminist objections of the era.<sup>5</sup> And if, as Lowenthal argues, cinema and pop culture in general function as a "psychoanalysis in reverse,"<sup>6</sup> the image of Laskari—and of women generally in the cinema—as a passive object of the active male gaze (be it that of the director, the viewer or male nature) adds another performative layer to female representation. Masculinity can choose to respond to the cinematic threat of symbolic castration introduced by the inclusion of the woman in the narrative in one of two ways: by reliving the trauma kept in balance by the analysis of the woman, by her demystification and potential punishment or salvation; or by reducing her figure to a fetish to be voyeuristically enjoyed which, rather than threatening the supposed sexual domination of the male, confirms it. It is this mechanism and the over-valuing of external appearance that produces

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2. Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death* (in Greek), Alexandria, Athens 2014, p. xix.

3. Thomas Elsaesser, "Melodrama and Victimhood: Modern, Political and Militant," *Melodrama After the Tears*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2016, p. 35-52.

4. Marianne McDonald, K. MacKinnon, "Cacoyannis vs. Euripides: From Tragedy to Melodrama," *Intertextualität in der griechisch-römischen Komödie*, J. B. Metzler, Stuttgart 1993, p. 222-234.

5. Greek feminist criticism did not concern itself in a structured and deliberate way with popular culture until the late 1990s, focusing instead on advocating contraception and the legalisation of abortions (scoring a significant win in 1986), which dominated the flurry of demands that drew, in the main, on second-wave feminism. For more, see Eliana Kanaveli, *Χαρτογράφηση του φεμινιστικού κινήματος στην Ελλάδα: Ιδεολογικοπολιτικές αναζητήσεις και η συνεισφορά του στον δημόσιο χώρο και λόγο*, KGME Diotima, Athens 2016.

6. Leo Lowenthal, in Paul Piccone, "Aesthetic Theory and the Critique of Mass Culture," Martin Jay (ed.), *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950*, Heinemann, London 1973, p. 173.

the culture of the female star whose emblem is her beauty and that alone, which feeds into and bolsters her quality as an object, and which turns her into something which *produces* satisfaction.<sup>7</sup>

So Laskari was praised to the heavens for her dramatic performances in the above-mentioned pair of films directed by Dalianidis, which left her talent no room and, one might think, for some, also signalled the last of her achievements, at least as far as “serious post-war cinema” was concerned. With the phrase “serious post-war cinema” I am referring to a combination of critical and cinematic discourse, which sought to consciously distance itself from the commercial cinema of the time and the support it enjoyed from the extant political-social structures. It did so chiefly through the incorporation of a more liberal cinematic idiom inspired and influenced by the dominant global trends of the 1960s.<sup>8</sup> This logic is expressed clearly and bombastically by Nikos Koundouros who says of his *Ogre of Athens/O δράκος*: “This is the Greece I wanted to convey. Vougiouklaki and Finos Films [the star and main studio representing commercial cinema] are welcome to the other one.”<sup>9</sup>

This is how Laskari’s performances in *The Decline* and *Stefania* are considered to this day to be the greatest and “most serious” of her career, since they are the most faithful to Greek Cinema’s dramatic type praised both domestically and abroad: they stand close to the (crypto)colonial audio-visual archetype of Greece/Greeks (presented with films such as *Stella* and *Zorba*), while also providing Greek audiences with an opportunity to come together around the identity of an honourable—and unthreatening—victim and while offering the world the chance to admire from a distance the authenticity of an underdeveloped indigenous people onto which a superficial, ancient Greek ideal could be projected; in other words, an idea of Greece that had been constructed by the West and was kept alive picturesquely by the nation-state following the return to democracy in 1974.<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, deliberately steering clear of the theoretical-political stand-off between the commercial and independent—New—Greek Cinema and recognizing that both sides, consciously or not and independently of the intentions and

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7. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 1989, p. 14–26.

8. Stathis Valoukos, *Ιστορία του κινηματογράφου*, 2nd ed., Aigokeros, Athens 2003, p. 528.

9. Giannis Soldatos, «Νίκος Κούνδουρος, Η Αθήνα το '50», *Σειρά Τονία της Σιωπής ERT*, 2011, available at: <https://www.ert.gr/ert-arxeio/nikos-koundouros-22-fevrouariou-2017/> [31 August 2021].

10. Dimitrios Chaidas, “Are Greeks Desperate for Heroes? A Corpus-Based Investigation of Colonial Discourses,” *Global Histories: A Student Journal* 3/2 (2017), pp. 81–101.

ideologies of their producers and creative artists, shed light, each in their own way, on levels of reality incorporated into the cinematic performance, I will focus on Zoi Laskari's singularly enlightening performance in what I consider to be one of Dalianidis' most multi-layered works, his *Under the Sign of Virgo/Στον αστερισμό της παρθένου*, a colour film from 1973.

With a screenplay by Yorgos Tzavellas, who originally, back in 1966 when he first wrote it, had wanted to cast Alikì Vougiouklaki in the lead role, the film was promoted from the early stages as a provocative film that would be a milestone in the successful career of that actress. According to Tzavellas, this would allow Vougiouklaki, Greece's "national star," to finally grow up on screen and "employ her talent in a role beyond her eternal triumphs as the spoiled 'pussycat' and the 'schoolgirl.'"<sup>11</sup> Having worked studiously on the screenplay for two years, Tzavellas described the story thus in a joint press conference with Vougiouklaki:

Alikì [Vougiouklaki] will play a dreg of society, a streetwalker, who tells three johns (one at a time, naturally) how she wound up in the gutter. But she won't tell the real story because where would the interest be in that. Instead, she'll tell each of the men the story she thinks they want to hear (*To Βήμα*, 12 July 1966).<sup>12</sup>

While there is no clear and unequivocal account of the pressure that the communicational maelstrom put on Vougiouklaki, who was always susceptible to public opinion, I think we can safely assume that the hackles raised by the screenplay and the provocative way in which the project was framed by the screenwriter and the production team, who claimed that they would be making something never before seen in Greek Cinema, proved deterrent enough for Alikì to refuse to take part in the film—which is precisely what had happened a decade or so earlier with *The Decline*.<sup>13</sup> Evidently, the high cost of the ambitious plan also played an important role in the project not going ahead, given that the screenwriter was both adamant that the role should be played by Vougiouklaki, who would receive a generous fee, and unreceptive to the strategic moves suggested by the producers.<sup>14</sup> Shortly afterwards, Tzavellas would suffer a stroke resulting in the loss of his voice, and the project was shelved for six long years.

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11. Babis Aktsoglou, *Γιώργος Τζαβέλλας*, Thessaloniki Film Festival, Thessaloniki 1994, pp. 162-163.

12. Ibid.

13. Iason Triantafyllidis, *Ταινίες για φίλημα. Ένα αφιέρωμα στον Φιλοποίμενα Φίνο και τις ταινίες του*, Exantas, Athens 2000, p. 101.

14. Aktsoglou, *Γιώργος Τζαβέλλας*, op. cit. p. 163-164.

In 1973, a date that roughly coincides not only with popular cinema being released from the constraints of official censorship, but also with the financial collapse of Greek film production, the screenplay found its way to Filopoulin Finos who, having already signed a multi-production deal with the Damaskinos-Michaelidis production company,<sup>15</sup> assigned Giannis Dalianidis to direct it. Dalianidis in turn chose his beloved Laskari who, approaching thirty now, had already been the dream girl/idol of Greek Cinema to embody the unconventional heroine, banking on the role's streetwise quality, which was a perfect match for "Little Zoi (Laskari)"'s talent and cheeky working-class persona. It was this combination that bestowed an authentic class performance on the role, which was important in itself and especially attractive for the cinema of the era; the latter essentially capitalised on the mythic fringe and those who formed the poor underclass on which the newly constructed middle class was built.

Against the backdrop of this drawn-out back story and political and economic upheaval, Dalianidis committed to bring to life a provocative character whose sensual nature and overt sexuality would mark a welcome break from the heavy cultural atmosphere of the time, pulling the hair of the bourgeois serious-seeming irony of Tzavellas' characters, having fun with the impression they made and marking the start of his later camp<sup>16</sup> career, which would culminate in the television series *Penthouse/Πετιπέ* (Mega Channel 1990-1992).

With camp as our tool for reading the streetwalker's performance in *Under the Sign of Virgo*, we clearly have to acknowledge an unprecedented assertive dynamic in the way in which Laskari's character—and her aesthetic, dramatic and interpretive choices—are realised in the film. After the juicy crimson titles with the photograph of Laskari as a prostitute, her handbag slung over her shoulder, in her short white dress, platinum hair, high heels and bracelets, striking a dynamic pose over Mimis Plessas' episodic theme music, the first scene opens with a general night-time shot of the block on which the streetwalkers ply their trade. Koula, the blond sex-bomb sex worker with the heavy make-up and the drawn-on eyebrows is annoyed by the lack of prosperous clients and grumbles about her misery and poverty to her fellow whores, who tell her off for habitually telling their stories as her own to her persistent would-be saviours, who are actually even poorer than she is, as she sarcastically notes. The girls comment on the cars that drive past them that night, in a dialogue that maintains an exhausting level of

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15. Ibid.

16. Camp, which consists of aesthetic choices and a particular *sensibility*, according to Susan Sontag's *Notes on Camp* (1964), rests on innocence, which it ruptures when it gets the chance. A camp work urges the audience to receive it with a seriousness befitting art, while leaving some leeway to poke fun at art itself through dramatic/dramaturgic excess.

cuteness, wondering about the make of the car that is approaching with its lights trained on them, only to realise that it is the police in a Black Maria. In a chase scene every bit a match for those shot in the valleys of California, the girls scatter and hide in the bushes, some successfully, others not. The policemen herd a few into the back of the van and leave. Koula is not one of them, and once the street is calm again, she takes up her customary position under the tall streetlamp that illuminates her like her personal spotlight, predisposing us to accept her singularity. Then a young student with expressive eyes (George Konstantis), a regular client of hers, walks over to her. The next scene plunges us straight into her bedroom, with the young man on top of her, kissing her passionately, telling her over and over that he loves her, begging her to quit the street and be his. Koula, who seems to have heard this same tune played more than a few times beforehand, resists, evidently put out by his pleas; having received a couple of slaps for her “wrong-headedness” from her would-be suitor, she succumbs without enthusiasm to his appetite for drama and tells him the first story about the events that led her to sex work.

Truth be told, what actually happens in the three separate stories and how the characters and situations change from one to the next is of no importance whatsoever; however, admittedly, Dalianidis does frame his heroine in a fresh new way in each of the different contexts in which the narratives play out. Yet, despite the fine cinematography and *mise-en-scène*, Tzavellas' screenplay is unfortunately little more than picturesque in the scenes in question and slips deliberately (and consistently, as was his wont) between the popular genres of an earlier era, making methodical use of the exaggeration and over-simplification inherent in melodrama to bring the film's story lines to a conclusion and to frame the characters through dialogue. He leaps from popular comedy to courtroom drama, bounding with an exceedingly Greek post-war imperturbability amidst the bucolic tales of passion and revenge (which skirt the folkloristic foustanella dramas of the junta years), regurgitating in entirely stereotypical fashion dynamics such as class distinctions, gender roles in the countryside and the tragic aspects of a passionate love struck by fate and everyday survival in the new industrialised era of the capitalism that was so new to Greece.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, it is another central aspect of the film—its willingness to play games with the narrative as defence against Koula the whore's unwanted categorisation as a victim—that ultimately plays a prominent role in a meta-reading based on directorial choices that are more easily described as playful and experimental

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17. For more on the thematic motifs of Tzavellas' films, see Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, «Θεματικά Μοτίβα στις Κωμωδίες του Γιώργου Τζαβέλλα», *Γιώργος Τζαβέλλας*, op. cit. p. 95-107.

than consistent or robust. With its unapologetic glorification of idiosyncrasy, camp implies that what gets said is actually of no importance to anyone, apart from the person who says it. This would mean that Koula is in fact engaged in the repeated construction of new realities which, no matter how serious they seem, are no more than edifices constructed upon the desires of her successive clients—creators—audiences. If nothing else, this situation bears an outrageous similarity to Zoi Laskari's real-life experience, established as she already was in the collective imaginary as the Greek version of a Marilyn-Monroe-type bombshell, with the press examining her life under the microscope at every opportunity. Writing about camp and recalling Mulvey's arguments, Sontag cites the example of Greta Garbo, stating that "Garbo's incompetence (at the least, lack of depth) as an actress enhances her beauty. She is always herself."<sup>18</sup>

Thus, what makes the film such a superlative example of a multi-layered—and, inevitably, somewhat all over the place—intertextual representation is, one might say, the lie as a mechanism for appropriating the narrative. Laskari, who took Alikí's place and plays Koula who becomes Anna and Tina with provocative ease, rejects pseudo-salvation at the hands of her Messiah-client with her fake narratives/evasions, and she successfully exits the psychoanalytic schema in which he entangles her. Like Butler's Antigone, Koula retains her power with this act of disobedience, not only in her own body, which she strenuously and methodically makes available to each new gaze, but also through deception and myth as a mechanism for regaining control of the narrative and retaining the power to write her own story on her own terms, at least to the extent that this is possible. And when all this is done with humour and a camp sensibility in conjunction with a screenplay so laden with melodramatic elements, then we may perhaps posit that Dalianidis has in some way, following his lead actress's example, "stolen" and reconstructed the film, imbuing it with new meanings and releasing it *in toto* from the controlling vision/gaze of its father, Tzavellas. This makes *Under the Sign of Virgo* a film in which his beloved Laskari reconstructs herself schematically, and the two of them—director and lead—have great fun playing with the signifier and the signified.

If nothing else, even if it never occurred to either Tzavellas or Finos—or, in the final analysis, Dalianidis—that this provocative and borderline X-rated film could produce readings of this sort when viewed in the future, even if such meanings were not consciously bestowed, what makes such a reading ultimately possible is the quality of Laskari's performance, combined with her text as a superstar: these are what introduce all the meta signs into the representation and make

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18. Susan Sontag, *Notes on Camp*, Penguin, London 2018, p. 21.

Zoi (Laskari), who plays Koula who becomes Anna and Tina, into such a worthy cross-thematic anti-heroine. She breaks the shackles of her vulnerability and her objectification, as these are proposed by the writing and the image, demolishing the very conditions that brought her into being with her untamed sensibility, re-writing her image in Greek Cinema with dynamism and, in truth, greater honesty.



24 July 1974

Restoration of democracy

## Emotions within the Family and Greek Cinema in the Metapolitefsi Years: A Thesis and Examples

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THE METAPOLITEFSI or return to democracy in 1974 did not change emotions within the family, the structure of the family or its role in Greek society. This predominant social bond depends on other, powerful dynamics which develop in the *longue durée*. We could also say that the family and its structure are scarcely impacted by political changes as they occur. Often, they can even remain unaffected by regime changes. Excepting totalitarian regimes, which can impose specific forms of family, dictate the rate and volume of childbearing and its structure (the most glaring example, historically, being Communist China)<sup>1</sup> and, generally speaking, the experience of total wars and major economic crises, the main groupings of customary behaviour are not directly affected by politics.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, the Metapolitefsi of 1974 would mark both a change of regime and a far-reaching cultural shift—a historical field richer than the one born out of a change of regime in contemporary Western capitalism. The year 1974—and its drawn-out continuation—not only brought demands for political peace and equality to fruition after a two-and-a-half-decade rift in which institutional parameters were imposed on class and ideological divisions, but also simply a recognition of the validity of wide-ranging demands for political expression and emancipation which had been made forcefully and on multiple levels since the 1960s. The

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1. Susan Greenhalgh, Edwin A. Winkler, *Governing China's Population: From Leninist to Neo-liberal Biopolitics*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto 2005; Pascal Rocha da Silva, *La politique de l'enfant unique en république populaire de Chine*, Université de Genève, Geneva 2006.

2. Martine Segalen, Agnès Martial, *Sociologie de la famille*, Armand Collin, Paris 2013.

Metapolitefsi would be marked, especially in its early years, by an apotheosis of the political and would lay the foundations for a culture of militancy at every level of political experience, although its meanings would not be exhausted therein.

Everything that had always left behind something in previous decades and never reached completion, all the things that had been left half-finished to pile up in the Greeks' political imaginary, had now reached the critical mass for a future—THE FUTURE which arrived in the summer of 1974. The fall of the colonels and the emergence of a modern pluralistic democracy gave rise to a mass of demands for social modernisation that was unprecedented in both scale and depth. Everything that had emerged, timidly or imperfectly, from the mass urbanisation and economic growth of the post-war period, everything that had come to fruition amidst the new cultural ways of living and being, the emotional quests and everyday practices of the years that preceded it, found an actual runway from which to take flight after decades of fruitless taxiing. These were the aspects of social modernisation which until then had been expressed almost exclusively in the narrow prelude to the future middle class and its inaugural introduction to the world of consumption. All of this became a societal and individual possibility through the political emancipation of 1974.<sup>3</sup> The leap towards the optimistic and militant politicisation of life that was the Metapolitefsi and the aspirations of social elevation and personal happiness could, according to the established sociological approaches, have imposed rifts and exclusions on both sides, as these were articulated in Greece in the latter half of the 1970s, to some extent following developments in the rebellious and consumeristic young societies of Western Europe in the previous decade.<sup>4</sup>

The formula “revolution and Coca Cola,” used for the generations of rebels and consumers in late post-war Western Europe,<sup>5</sup> seems to capture the climate of multiple access to new goods and the development of new ethical sentiments in the country. Some of these were new for Greece, others were just novel. The family fabric was densely woven, and the durability of the materials had its own specific features. The radical social changes that had taken place since the war, those that remained gathered in the city apartment blocks, as well as those cultural cutting edges that had “pierced” the established order in the 1960s—only to recede once again under the dead weight of the dictatorship—found a powerful resonator in the political celebration of the Metapolitefsi.<sup>6</sup>

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3. Panayis Panagiotopoulos, *Περιπέτειες της μεσαίας τάξης. Κοινωνιολογικές καταγραφές στην Ελλάδα της ύστερης μεταπολίτευσης*, Epikentro, Thessaloniki 2021.

4. Ibid.

5. Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried (eds), *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*, Bergahn, New York 2005.

6. Manos Avgeridis, Efi Gazi, Kostis Kornetis (eds), *Μεταπολίτευση. Η Ελλάδα στο μεταίχμιο*

And while there may indeed be no rule for aligning the processes by which a society becomes more modern socially with the major milestones of a country's political reconstruction and liberalisation, for reasons which are as much to do with the redistribution of income as they are with the Greek state involving itself in the private sphere of its citizens, we can argue that the democratic evolution of 1974 coincides to a marked degree with the democratisation of the family and sexual feelings. The establishment of the love-match, coupled with a sharp decline in arranged marriages, the decline in birth rates and the prevalence of people having children by choice—in short, the gradual freeing of the individual from older ties of solidarity and the detachment of inner sentiment from the rectitude of rural society—will acquire a political and state-institutional shell, if not simultaneously and *en masse* in the initial phase of the Metapolitefsi, then definitely after the country made its decisive shift to the new condition during the 1980s.<sup>7</sup>

As for the artistic portrayal of these changes, which, in line with related analyses, we have no compunction about calling a revolution of love,<sup>8</sup> we have to confess that it remains an open field of research—especially in film. It has been said that the cinema of the Metapolitefsi avoided dealing with the inner, private and family spheres. But that simply is not the case. And any attempt at a sociological restoration of the Greek cinema *d'auteur* of the period in its entirety—that is to say, searching this cultural production for systematic descriptions and depictions of a society in radical flux,<sup>9</sup> let alone identifying instances of attention being paid in some organised way to family and other private emotions—would also be excessive.

A retrospective appraisal of the New Greek Cinema would indeed confirm the dominance of public over private passions and an emphatic relationship between fiction and history. The new democratic and leftist mythology was uncomfortable when confronted by the platitudes of the “existential” and reserved

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δύο αιώνων, Themelio, Athens 2015.

7. Vassilis Vamvakas, Panayis Panagiotopoulos, «Η Ελλάδα στη δεκαετία του '80. Κοινωνικός εκσυγχρονισμός, πολιτικός αρχαϊσμός, πολιτισμικός πλουραλισμός», Vassilis Vamvakas, Panayis Panagiotopoulos (eds), *Η Ελλάδα στη δεκαετία του '80. Κοινωνικό, πολιτικό και πολιτισμικό λεξικό*, Perasma, Athens 2010.

8. Luc Ferry, *La Révolution de l'amour*, J'ai lu, Paris 2011.

9. One can, of course, identify sporadic examples, but more as exceptions to the rule; see, for example, Panayis Panagiotopoulos, «Ατομική ευτυχία και κρίση των πολιτικών ταυτοτήτων. Όψεις των δεκαετιών του '60 και του '70 στο “Ακροπόλ” και την “Φανέλα με το εννέα” του Παντελή Βούλγαρη», Foteini Tomai (ed.), *Ιστορία και πολιτική στο έργο του Παντελή Βούλγαρη*, Papazisis, Athens 2007, p. 193-236. The situation in the theatre seems to have been quite different and on a larger scale; see Dio Kaggelari, «Για τον καθένα χωριστά; Συλλογικότητες και ατομικότητες στους καθρέφτες του θεάτρου», Ourania Kaiafa (ed.), *Περιπέτειες του ιδιωτικού στη μεταπολιτευτική Ελλάδα*, Society for Neohellenic Culture and General Education Studies (Founded by the Moraitis School), Athens 2019, p. 261-372.

before the growing bourgeoisisation of the popular classes. However, this did not prohibit the appearance of certain dense cinematic narratives of the tribulations of the private in contemporary Greece. Infrequent and indirect in the first years after the restitution of democracy, glorious and intense in the 1980s, iconic in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, these concerns were incorporated into creative Greek Cinema. Read again in its entirety from the viewpoint of inner emotions, too, we will see that, in its own terms, Greek Cinema ultimately delimits the field of private experience and that it observes with its own symbolic signs the dynamic of social modernisation and the development of new family emotions in the *longue durée* of the Greek Metapolitefsi.

It would certainly be worth visiting this social tendency in the light of that audio-visual production which, far from the demands of the auteur and indifferent to the ideological processes of the era, produced an imperfect but commercially successful reflection on changing social behaviours. That production is formed from the cinema of moral denunciation and any televisual fictions of private life.<sup>10</sup> Something of this sort is beyond the scope of this brief reflection, and quite possibly the abilities of its author. So let us return to the demanding Greek Cinema of the Metapolitefsi to see, in overview and through an initial sample of works, how it organises the viewing of the new social norm of the period—namely, desirable individualism and its echoes in the sphere of family emotions.<sup>11</sup>

It could be argued that the filmic fiction of the period, if taken as a cultural document attesting to social change—rather than to some independent ideological and aesthetic process—can be divided into three sequential phases coinciding with broader social, cultural and ultimately historical processes which have an impact on the form of Greek society. Furthermore, one may argue that these films also depict through family emotions the changes occurring in that hegemonic section of Greek society: the middle classes.

Thus, we can identify three major cultural representations which communicate with the general social dynamic, in terms of the fictive mediation and load of the powerful questioning identity shouldered by film in post-Metapolitefsi Greece.

The first, a filmic grouping which we shall call “the drama of the end of tradition,” is identified with the “conditional social dynamic” of the first period after the restitution of democracy. The second phase to include the developments in

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10. See Vassilis Vamvakas, «Φάσεις και αντιφάσεις των οικογενειακών σχέσεων στην ελληνική διασφήμιση», Kaiafa (ed.), *Περιπέτειες του ιδιωτικού στη μεταπολιτευτική Ελλάδα*; “Modernizing Tradition: Love, Friendship, Family and De-Urbanization in Greek TV Fiction (1993-2018),” *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 6 (2019), p. 17-39.

11. Panagiotopoulos, *Περιπέτειες της μεσαίας τάξης*, op. cit.

question can also be called a period of “individualistic wandering and the democratic spaciousness of inner emotions.” Lastly, there is a group of films which observes these social dynamics and captures the “colonisation of family ideals by the profoundly cultural and social crisis facing the middle classes.” We then propose certain iconic films from each of these cinematic periods and the related phases in the evolution of the social dynamic.

A foundational film for the Greek Cinema of the last quarter of the twentieth century, Pantelis Voulgaris' film *Anna's Engagement/Το προξενιό της Άννας*, widely released in 1972, deals with the disengagement from traditional family emotions. Without coinciding exactly with the political and cultural developments of the Metapolitefsi of 1974, it presages the dynamics of its immediate future. Still, the film does not stage-manage the new emotional life. It comes along to describe a culture in remission. Urbanisation and the poverty of the people in the provinces cause the task of reproducing intra-family power relations to fail and reveal their inability to support their class reproduction. The dependence of the live-in maid, her traditional attachments and the power that the bourgeois family who “owns” her tries to maintain over her in vain are stripped away by a match that initially seems to be a success. Marriage for love, the gendered self-reliance of women, the idea of an individual life-plan that does not involve familiar dependencies and pre-existing institutional groupings—these all make their appearance through a shadowy backstage narrative, as an inescapable reality of a new social condition that urgently needs to reveal itself.<sup>12</sup> Although the personal happiness programme does not make an explicit appearance, it seems ready, in view of the failure of the established models (both those that define the faltering Greek bourgeoisie of patriarchy and the ineffectual communal conventions of rural culture), to bring a series of new social norms and private emotions out into the light.

These emotions, novel in their scope, will make frequent, intense appearances in the films of the young filmmakers of the 1980s, inaugurating a new cycle of audio-visual narration for inner emotion. Without it having any evaluative load or comparative value, the film that iconically represents the Greek individualist revolution of emotions is Nikos Vergitsis' *Revanche/Ρεβάνς*, released in 1983.<sup>13</sup> Here the change in mores and the new grammar of emotions is revealed unmediated. A young woman transcends traditional roles and gendered obligations to realise

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12. Vassilis Vamvakas, «Το προξενιό της Άννας. Μικροαστική εσωστρέφεια και μεταναστευτική εσωτερικότητα», Tomai (ed.), *Ιστορία και πολιτική στο έργο του Παντελή Βούλγαρη*, op. cit. p. 89-105.

13. Ioanna Athanasatou, «Ρεβάνς. Έμφυλη κινηματογραφική γραφή και πολιτισμική αμφισβήτηση της κομμουνιστικής παράδοσης», Vamvakas, Panagiotopoulos (eds), *Η Ελλάδα στη δεκαετία του '80*, op. cit. p. 504-506.

an emancipatory individual identity which grants her access to a purely erotic relationship.<sup>14</sup> Over and above the female viewpoint narrative, which enters into a conversation with the flourishing of an informal feminist cinema of female filmmakers in the same period, Vergitsis' film creates a heroine and a social environment that integrates alternative culture into the social core of the middle strata. The woman who shares her emotion and sexuality between two men, where love and feelings in general are shaped by personality and individual will rather than pre-existing normative frameworks, was not a revolutionary or alternative figure. She was a type which, although perhaps not dominant in her era, was fully integrated into its social life and historical coming-into-being.

In 1984's *Sudden Love/Ξαφνικός έρωτας*, pure love is explored by Yorgos Tsemberopoulos in parallel with the conventionality of marriage, while the same director will produce variations on the motifs of autonomous female love and the slim chance of their developing within the married household in 1991's *Take Care/Άντε γεια*.

In all three cases, the family circle yields to impulsive and self-reliant love. The family itself, in all its banality, is barely described. The dominant emotion of eros or love seems to have developed an extraordinary dynamic and brought the individual into conflict, no longer with traditional norms, but with their own previous romantic choices, thus creating an existential crisis zone and destabilising the self-sufficient monogamous marriage relationship *per se*: the same relationship which had been portrayed not so long before as a modern vision of emancipation.

We will get to see the Greek family portrayed, in person and at home, with the same precision many years later with the release of Yannis Economides' *Matchbox/Σπιρτόκουτο* (2002). The film will mark the start of a new filmic and sociological era. But we do not get to see a peaceful, happy middle-class family this time, either. The household and the family bond are presented as a place where inflated individualities prone to paroxysms of fury and in a constantly explosive emotional state have no choice but to coexist. Under pressure from the family as an economic and one-time emotional unit, the drama of a social institution<sup>15</sup> that has reached its limits in terms of how much it can handle plays out behind closed doors. The late Metapolitefsi and the decline of the prosperous middle class are clearly foreshadowed in Economides' narrative. Above all, however, it is the family's inability to bring itself up-to-date and play the game of incorporating personal

14. Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Polity, London 1993.

15. Maria Katsounaki, "Why Does Yiannis Economides Shoot the Collapse of One 'Holy Greek Family'?" *Η Καθημερινή* (2 April 2003), available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/culture/13255/why-does-yiannis-economides-shoot-the-collapse-of-one-holy-greek-family/>

expectations into the framework of the traditional institution that is shown.<sup>16</sup> The unhappiness and anger, the hero's existential collapse, the uncoupled relationship between parents and children, along with an evident inability to feel pleasure, seem like the consequences of a slippage towards failure—a refutation rather than a contract undermined from the start. The description of the vast crisis in the Greek family as a mechanism for social reproduction and an instrument for connecting its members to the state and the economy is crystal clear—and, in many respects, prescient.

Sometime later, in 2010, Stratos Tzitzis directed *45 m²/45 τετραγωνικά*, a work with an entirely different form and a lower temperature. The title refers to the small space in which the contemporary tension between the individual and the family plays out and is experienced. A young woman decides to stop living with her mother and, relying on her own labour, moves into a flat of her own. Her financial precarity as a private-sector worker and above all her banishment from the networks of her sociality—due to her “premature and inexpedient” attempt at autonomy—lead to defeat and frustration. Here, in a seemingly contemporary environment of fluid emotions, the protagonist pays the price for the country's incomplete modernisation as this manifests itself in her social circle. This condition allows her to act as an individual unit implementing a specific life-plan, but isolates her socially, as her gendered status does not actually foresee her moving out of the family home before marriage or, in any case, without the family as a whole arranging such a removal. Both approaches inform our cultural imaginary and cinematic fiction itself, not only about a profound crisis in the institution of the family, but also about the impossibility of transcending the family in late Metapolitefsi Greece.

One could extend this argument by considering at least three other important films which focus on family life. Yorgos Lanthimos' iconic *Dogtooth/Κυνόδοντας* (2009), Alexandros Avranas' *Miss Violence* (2013) and Panos Koutras' *Strella. A Woman's Way/Στρέλλα* (2009) all echo the liminal condition of the Greek family in the contemporary era.<sup>17</sup> But they depict it in all its pathological extremity, through unconventional human orientations and the cruelty of life on the fringes of society. *Dogtooth* was an unsuccessful metonymy for the totalitarianism of the

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16. The two opposing—though perhaps complementary—analyses of the modern Greek family can enter into a dialogue as they are represented in Panagiotopoulos, *Περιπέτειες της μεσαίας τάξης. Κοινωνιολογικές καταγραφές στην Ελλάδα της ύστερης μεταπολίτευσης*, op. cit., and Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια. Έθνος, πάθος και συγγένεια την εποχή της κρίσης*, Patakis, Athens 2018.

17. See Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave: A Cinema of Biopolitics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2021.

modern (and, as Lanthimos understands it, patriarchal) family, while *Miss Violence* and *Strella*, although very different, took a more organic look at the plight of the Greek family, whether it conceals nightmares beneath layers of respectability and normality, or because the parental relationship cannot accommodate every form of existence presented by the fragmented world of the late Metapolitefsi,<sup>18</sup> as well as their unconventional manifestations in our era.

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18. Cf. Afroditi Nikolaidou, "Self-Exoticism, the Iconography of Crisis and the Greek Weird Wave," Panayis Panagiotopoulos, Dimitris P. Sotiropoulos (eds), *Political and Cultural Aspects of Greek Exoticism*, Palgrave MacMillan, Cham 2019, p. 139-152.



1975

Roviros Manthoulis becomes programme director of the National Radio and Television Broadcasting Corporation (ERT)

## The Coexistence of Cinema and Television in the Post-Dictatorship Era

Eirini Sifaki

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OUR STORY unfolds in the middle of the political turmoil that followed the fall of the dictatorship, when different political and social forces were playing a central part in the construction of new narratives and identities, which created the sense of a new era. Mass media and particularly television, which was on its way to becoming an established medium, were crucial for the reception of cultural transfers from the West and the shaping of domestic production, causing re-arrangements between cinema and television. The latter was perhaps the most influential medium in the country's political history to promote the various political institutions' cultural values and ideological orientation. Yet, cinema had established itself as the "seventh art" and was integrated into modernism's artistic-aesthetic narrative. With the spread of television and the constant evolution of its form, the two media were conversing with each other for the first time in Greece and became intertwined in unpredictable ways.

Ten years earlier, a cultural, political and economic boom, unprecedented in the post-war years, took place due to democracy. New persons in all art forms and crucial positions in the country's cultural life made their presence felt. Regarding cinema, in particular, a real explosion took place at the Festival of Thessaloniki in 1966. This event occupied an important place in the history of the institution because of the high number of art films that took part in the competition—such as Alexis Damianos' *Until the Ship Sails...* Μέχρι το πλοίο, Pantelis Voulgaris' *Jim-*

my the Tiger/Τζίμης ο Τίγρης, Takis Kanellopoulos' *Excursion/Εκδρομή* and Roviros Manthoulis' *Face to Face/Πρόσωπο με πρόσωπο*—as well as for the strong reactions caused by the awards. In conversation with contemporary European trends, the directors of the New Greek Cinema constructed the historical memory of the new state, creating a trend for political films and a particular aesthetics of the signification that considers that specific political conjuncture.<sup>1</sup>

The imposition of the dictatorship (1967-1974) played a crucial role in social and political developments because of the imposed restrictions and censorship. The emergence of new artists and intellectuals became a trend that characterised the years of the dictatorship.<sup>2</sup> Television<sup>3</sup> entered Greek households during the dictatorship. This period also coincides with what is internationally known as the second period of the “long 1960s” (the so-called high sixties), which is thought to begin around 1967 and end around 1974.<sup>4</sup> More recent studies in cultural criticism agree that the dictatorship formed the context in which the Greek high sixties developed.<sup>5</sup> Strangely, being in tune with the zeitgeist, the dictatorial regime invested from the outset in a policy of popular entertainment, placing television under strict state control, establishing a pattern that was adopted, without significant changes, by all governments in the post-dictatorship era.<sup>6</sup> In fact, in the early

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1. Maria Komninou, *Από την αγορά στο θέαμα: μελέτη για τη συγκρότηση της δημόσιας σφαίρας και του κινηματογράφου στη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα, 1950-2000*, Papazisis, Athens 2001, p. 148.

2. Dimitris Papanikolaou, «Κάνοντας κάτι παράδοξες κινήσεις: Ο πολιτισμός στα χρόνια της Δικτατορίας», Vangelis Karamanolakis (ed.), *Η στρατιωτική δικτατορία 1967-1974*, Ta NEA-Istoria, Athens 2010, p. 186.

3. At the end of February 1966, the Television of the Armed Forces (TED) and the National Radio Institute (EIR) started their experimental television broadcasts. The two stations started broadcasting a daily programme shortly after the imposition of the dictatorship (TED on 1 November 1968 and EIR in April 1969) with a two-hour evening programme which gradually extended to four hours. In fact, in the beginning, only EIR broadcast daily, while TED started to broadcast only three, and later four, days a week, and only after 1 November daily. Grigoris Paschalidis, «Η ελληνική τηλεόραση», Nikolas Vernikos et al. (eds), *Πολιτιστικές βιομηχανίες. Διαδικασίες, Υπηρεσίες, Αγαθά*, Kritiki, Athens 2005, p. 174-175.

4. Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986*. Vol. 2: *The Syntax of History*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1988, p. 178-210.

5. See, for example, Papanikolaou, «Κάνοντας κάτι παράδοξες κινήσεις», p. 196; Dimitris Papanikolaou, “Greece as a Postmodern Example: Boundary 2 and Its Special Issue on Greece,” *Κάμπος: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek* 13 (2005), p. 127-145; Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Singing Poets: Literature and Popular Music in France and Greece*, Routledge, Abingdon 2017; Kostis Kornetis, “‘Everything Links?’ Temporality, Territoriality and Cultural Transfer in the ‘68 Protest Movements,” *Historein* 9 (2009), p. 34-45.

6. Grigoris Paschalidis, «Το χαμένο παράδειγμα της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης», Vassilis

years of Greek television, the two television stations, EIRT (National Radio and Television Institute) and YENED (Information Service of the Armed Forces), had no policy about their broadcasting programmes. The military implemented the system of selling television time directly to producers/sponsors,<sup>7</sup> whose choices depended on the ability of the shows to attract a satisfactory—for the advertisers—number of viewers.<sup>8</sup> This practice resulted in broadcasting almost all American, British and French popular shows screened in the Western world at the time. As Paschalidis asserts in his study on American shows/series broadcast during the seven years of the dictatorship:

[The] broadcasting of 200 series and serials from the countries leading the famous “cultural revolution” of the 1960s blatantly contradicts the dictatorial regime’s fundamental political-ideological and socio-cultural characteristics. So, apart from any intention or sloppiness that could be attributed to the management of EIRT and YENED at the time, the unintentional consequence of the way they managed broadcasting time was that television in Greece acquired an exclusively extrovert cultural profile, dominated by the social roles, values, and mores of the socio-cultural modernism of the “long 1960s.”<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, during that time, the number of television sets doubled,<sup>10</sup> the programme was considerably enriched, and cinema reeled. Greek television series, the production of which was still in its infancy, were very popular because of their familiar themes, reminiscent of commercial films, and because of the novel-

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Vamvakas, Grigoris Paschalidis (eds), *50 χρόνια ελληνική τηλεόραση*, Conference Proceedings, Epikentro, Thessaloniki 2018, p. 20.

7. Television series production companies were created and managed by television screenwriters, directors, actors, advertisers or businesspeople who had acquired some experience from the Greek commercial cinema of the 1960s or studied television abroad. “Some of them had family ties with members of the dictatorship. Consequently, personal relations played a major role in the decision-making process, and the latter was rarely based upon professional criteria.” See Angeliki Koukoutsaki, “Greek Television Drama: Production Policies and Genre Diversification,” *Media, Culture and Society* 25 (2003), p. 723.

8. Grigoris Paschalidis, «Τηλεοπτική ψυχαγωγία 1967-1974: τα αμερικανικά αφηγήματα συνέχειας», Vassilis Vamvakas, Angeliki Gazi (eds), *Αμερικανικές σειρές στην ελληνική τηλεόραση. Δημοφιλής κουλτούρα και ψυχοκοινωνική δυναμική*, Papazisis, Athens 2017, p. 77.

9. Paschalidis, «Τηλεοπτική ψυχαγωγία 1967-1974», op. cit. p. 78.

10. During the seven years of the dictatorship, the number of television sets increased from 24,000 to 800,000 in 1974 alone. See Pavlos Tsimas, *Ο φερετζές και το πηλήκιο. Το πολιτικό μυθιστόρημα της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης*, Metechmio, Athens 2014.

ty appeal of television as a medium. "The streets were empty" when the series *Unknown War/Άγνωστος πόλεμος*<sup>11</sup> was on, says Dimitris Papanikolaou.<sup>12</sup> Television both copied and directly competed against popular cinema as it brought to the small screen the aesthetics and themes of the national war films that appeared under the aegis of the authoritarian regime.<sup>13</sup> Then, the fact that cinema ceased to be the most critical form of entertainment for the Greek public since it was replaced by television induced significant changes in the cultural outlook of the two media.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the fall of the Old Greek Cinema created space for developing a new, non-commercial version. Thus, television is one reason why the New Greek Cinema emerged when it did. In this context, with the fall of the dictatorship in the summer of 1974, the overhaul of Greek television emerged as a crucial issue in the post-dictatorship era.

In 1975, EIRT (National Institute of Radio and Television) changed its name to ERT (Greek Radio and Television) and broadcast as a free station for the first time in the history of Greek television. In this climate, the cinema director Roviros Manthoulis<sup>15</sup> was asked by Karamanlis' government to take on ERT's new

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11. A war/espionage television series, aired by YENED in 1971-1974, based on a screenplay by Nikos Foskolos.

12. Papanikolaou, «Κάνοντας κάτι παράδοξες κινήσεις», op. cit. p. 189.

13. Ibid. See also Κομνηνού, *Από την αγορά στο θέαμα*, op. cit. p. 142.

14. Irini Sifaki, «Τηλεόραση και κινηματογράφος: σύγχρονες οικονομικές, παραγωγικές και πολιτισμικές πρακτικές», Ioanna Vovou (ed.), *Ο κόσμος της τηλεόρασης. Θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις, ανάλυση προγραμμάτων και ελληνική πραγματικότητα*, Irodotos, Athens 2010, p. 541.

15. It is not easy to summarise Roviros Manthoulis' multi-faceted personality and work in a few lines. He studied cinema and theatre at Syracuse University in New York from 1949 to 1953. In 1953, when he returned from the US, he initially collaborated with EIR's programme *Theatre on Wednesday/Θέατρο της Τετάρτης*. He undertook the direction of studies successively in two film schools (Stavrakos' School and Ioannidis' School). Then he turned to documentaries, filming in 1958 his first movie, a documentary about Lefkada. In 1960 he founded the "Group of five" with Iraklis Papadakis, Fotis Mesthenaios, Giannis Bakogiannopoulos and Roussos Koundouros, shooting several films for various organisations. The film *The Acropolis of Athens/Ακρόπολις των Αθηνών* (1961), which he made with Papadakis and Mesthenaios (and the archaeologist Giannis Milidadis), was sold to 3,000 universities in America, while the film *Men and Gods/Ανθρωποι και Θεοί* (1965, with the voice of Kimon Friar, who, among other things, had translated into English Kazantzakis' *Odyssey*) was screened every year for five years by the American television network NBC. In 1959, he started his collaboration with Anzervos company (one of the largest production companies at the time). He turned to commercial cinema when making the comedy *Madam Mayor/Κυρία Δήμαρχος* (1960) and *The Papadopoulos Family/Οικογένεια Παπαδοπούλου* (1961). His film *Hands up, Hitler/Ψηλά τα Χέρια, Χίτλερ* (1962) improved further the quality of commercial cinema and was awarded the prizes for best film and

programme as the deputy general manager. During the dictatorship, Manthoulis had sought refuge in Switzerland because of his left-wing political affiliations and long history of political activism, which had started during the Occupation and the Civil War. He was already distinguished in France for his film *Face to Face/Πρόσωπο με πρόσωπο*, which opened the international Festival du Nouveau Cinéma in Hyères of southern France on 21 April 1967, the same day the coup d'état was taking place in Greece. With the reputation that he had acquired within *free cinema* and his experience in documentaries, he started to collaborate with French television as the manager and principal director of a series of documentaries entitled *À l'affiche du monde* (1968-1969).<sup>16</sup> With his multifaceted experience in both cinema and television,<sup>17</sup> when Manthoulis returned to Greece, he tried to reform ERT's programme with the help of artists and intellectuals (Dimitris Horn, Odysseas Elytis, Pavlos Bakogiannis and Manos Hadjidakis in the radio), as well as experienced BBC advisors such as Hugh Green to devise a strategy for ERT's programming, especially current affairs.<sup>18</sup>

Manthoulis remained in this position for fourteen months, and he collaborated with Giannis Bakogiannopoulos, Petros Markaris and Tonia Marketaki, amongst others. During this period, he created an entire philosophy regarding the station's programme, emphasising internal productions with shows about art and culture. Thus, for the first time, several emblematic programmes and shows which played a significant role in the history of television in Greece were established—for example, *Theatre on Monday/Θέατρο της Δευτέρας*, *Film Night/Κινηματογραφική Βραδιά* and the series of documentaries on cultural issues titled *Backstage/Παρασκήνιο*. In

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screenplay by the Union of Cinema Critics. More information and related material can be found at <https://manthoulis.olympiafestival.gr/> [7 July 2021]. The event "Roviros Manthoulis: A Third Look" was organised online between 27 March and 11 April 2021 by the Festival of Olympia and the Festival of Chania.

16. In 1969, the documentary series *A l'affiche du monde* was awarded by the union of French critics as the best show on French television. As Manthoulis mentions in an interview, this show created a new television style which led him to the making of the beautiful films *One Country, One Music/Μια χώρα, μια μουσική*. Many new French television directors started their careers from this show. A long collaboration between Manthoulis and French television was established, allowing him to travel worldwide to film cultural documentaries. Interview in Aris Skadopoulos' show *Night Visitor/Νυχτερινός Επισκέπτης*, 1998, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHIVJyKcXHw> [7 July 2021].

17. He has made ninety sociological and cultural documentaries for European television, such as the emblematic at the time *En remontant le Mississippi*, filmed in the US, and *Le blues entre les dents* (1973), which received critical acclaim at the time. The adaptation (1985) of Stratis Tsirkas' novel *Drifting Cities/Ακυβέρνητες πολιτείες* was aired fifty times by French television.

18. Stathis Valoukos, *Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Τηλεόρασης*, Aigokeros, Athens 2008, p. 233.

charge of the production of this series was Cinetic, a company that had produced short films, documentaries and advertisements for television and cinema. In the early years, the combination of cinema experience with the medium of television determined the style of the show, which took the form of a cinema documentary.<sup>19</sup> Other shows that revolutionised the television practices of the time were *Music Night/Η μουσική βραδιά* with Giorgos Papastefanou, *A Movie, A Conversation/Μια ταινία, μια συζήτηση*, as well as *At High Noon/Κάθε μεσημέρι*<sup>20</sup> in which the public could participate for the first time in Greek television history—a significant novelty, according to Manthoulis.<sup>21</sup>

ERT's new programme changed the viewership figures recorded by polls. YENED, with its entertainment programme, was at the top with approximately 75 percent, while ERT had only 25 percent. The programme policy implemented by Manthoulis resulted in the increase of ERT's internal productions from 54 percent in 1975 to 71 percent in 1976.<sup>22</sup> However, despite the domestic programmes and the profound changes that occurred due to the fall of the dictatorship, there were very few differences concerning foreign series, if we compare 1974 and 1975. Thus, during the first seven years of the post-dictatorship period, many American television series continued to be aired uninterrupted without changing time slots. Some series continued throughout this period, mainly comedies or family series.<sup>23</sup> Despite the anti-American feelings of the time, it was not an American or domestic show that produced the most intense discussion in the press of the time, but the French historical series *Pain amer/Πικρό ψωμί*.<sup>24</sup> During the first seven

19. The leading directors of *Backstage/Παρασκήνιο* were its producers, Lakis Papastathis and Takis Hatzopoulos. From the beginning, most critics and artists welcomed it as a rejuvenating and influential force in Greek television, creating the infrastructure for cultural development.

20. Sifaki, «Τηλεόραση και κινηματογράφος», op. cit. p. 542.

21. Interview on Elena Maraka's radio show «15.00-16.00 στο Πρώτο», *Πρώτο Πρόγραμμα*, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vtCeDhltNw> [7 July 2021].

22. Roviros Manthoulis, *Το κράτος της τηλεόρασης*, Themelio, Athens 1981, p. 100-101.

23. Filippos Pappas, «Πρώτη μεταπολιτευτική περίοδος (1974-81): Επέλαση της τηλεόρασης, παγίωση της αμερικανικής τηλεοπτικής ψυχαγωγίας και προσπάθεια εγχώριο-ποιοτικού αντισταθμίσματος», Vassilis Vamvakas, Angeliki Gazi (eds), *Αμερικανικές σειρές στην ελληνική τηλεόραση. Δημοφιλής κουλτούρα και ψυχοκοινωνική δυναμική*, Papazisis, Athens 2017, p. III.

24. Left-wing critics, through the pages of the journal *Πολίτης*, expressed their interest and approval of the series *Pain amer*, possibly because of its social content and country of origin. Yet, part of the domestic conservative intellectual elite expressed a negative opinion, most likely because the series referred to the Paris Commune. As a result, some members of EIRT's board of directors resigned. See Pappas, «Πρώτη μεταπολιτευτική περίοδος (1974-81)», *ibid.* p. II5.

years of the post-dictatorship period, a rather conservative choice of domestic shows with a strong Greek element was made as an informal response to the foreign shows.<sup>25</sup>

It is clear that in a small peripheral country such as Greece, which mainly imports audio-visual products, the lack of coordination and strategy, seen over time in the audio-visual sector, resulted in rigidity and dysfunctionality, with a direct impact on the production of cinema and television. Nonetheless, those unfavourable conditions, especially in times of significant socio-political changes,<sup>26</sup> often reinforced the creation of synergies in the audio-visual sector and public relations (sometimes also clientelist relations, when politics intervened). Film professionals, directors, editors and production companies occasionally found an additional but temporary source of income in state television. Thus, many directors and producers often moved between art and commercial cinema and television, influencing different audio-visual genres.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, television promoted Greek productions. In addition to screening the films of the Old Greek Cinema again, television functioned as a means to educate and create a cinephile public through shows, news reports, discussions and the screening of films made by new directors. Regarding the reception of popular culture, the mass migration of the public from cinema and theatre to television which took place between 1972 and 1974, continued at a rapid pace in the post-dictatorship era: "This proves that this shift did not reflect a short-term trend, but rather the acceleration of the radical transformation of everyday cultural practices in Greek society."<sup>28</sup> We can see a longer common thread linking the trajectory and relationship of these two influential media, revealing crucial aspects of institutional and socio-political interrelations in audio-visual matters throughout this brief page of history. Through time, the interaction between them had, in Greece, too, various forms

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25. "These are Greek series, based on modern Greek 'canonised' novels, works of modern Greek prose, suitable for adaptation, without modernist expressions and heavy ideological charge, which cover a period from the years of Greek romanticism to the generation of the '30s; the most popular adapted author was the timeless Grigorios Xenopoulos." See Pappas, «Πρώτη μεταπολιτευτική περίοδος (1974-81)», *ibid.* p. 129.

26. About the theoretical context, see, for example, Irini Sifaki, Anastasia Stamou, Maria Papadopoulou, *Η ανάδυση ενός Νέου Κύματος στον σύγχρονο ελληνικό κινηματογράφο. Διαδικασίες καλλιτεχνικής παραγωγής, καθιέρωσης και επικοινωνίας στον κόσμο της τέχνης*, e-book, National Centre of Social Research, Athens 2020, p. 13-79. Available at: <http://ebooks.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/ekke/catalog/book/47>

27. In addition to Manthoulis' and Papastathis' experience with different cinema and television genres, several filmmakers of the New Greek Cinema, such as Pantelis Voulgaris and Costas Ferris, turned to Greek television. They created series and documentaries that left a significant mark on its history.

28. Paschalidis, «Τηλεοπτική ψυχαγωγία 1967-1974», *op. cit.* p. 80.

and degrees of influence on their function and use until they developed a long and symbiotic relationship. In the twenty-first century, the arrival of the “New Wave in Greek Cinema” or the “Weird Wave,” where heterogeneous stylistic influences from different genres predominate, combining high art with popular elements, confirmed this trend. It is not coincidental that many New Wave directors such as Yorgos Lathimos, screenwriter Efthymis Filippou and many of the new producers started their careers either in television, advertisement or in these “intermediate” audio-visual genres.



# 27 January 1977

## Producer Filipoimin Finos is buried in Athens

### Cinema Productions and Studios

**Anna Poupou**

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“THE funeral took place in a family atmosphere. Many of his collaborators, mostly actors and technicians—Finos’ children as they felt themselves to be—seemed to constitute Filipoimin’s wider family.” These words were part of a report from Finos’ funeral in 1977.<sup>1</sup> Tzeni Karezi in black sunglasses, shocked, said in front of the camera: “Finos was our father. We found ourselves by his side while we were still almost children, at the beginning of our careers. I wish to all young girls starting their careers now to meet people to help them, people who have Finos’ moral values, strength and training.” The concept of the family, the father figure, but also the expression “the Finoses” which alludes to an extended family, return in these testimonies, here and later, but, paradoxically for Greek habits, Finos’ family was not based on blood ties, but rather on professional ones. For those attending this funeral in 1977, it seemed to be sadly obvious that the person being buried was not only the man who identified his name with the cinema of the producer in Greece, but also with the entire commercial, popular, well-loved, or now “old” Greek Cinema. Apart from the sadness, there was a pervasive bitterness about the decline, the end of an era, something that looked like the fall of cinema. Actor Kostas Kazakos looked sternly at the camera: “He lived through, and in fact created, the rise of Greek Cinema; I am only sorry that he got to live the tragedy of the fall of Greek cinema and left sad.” “I have the impression that together with him Greek Cinema, too, is almost finished,” said Klearchos Konitsiotis, while the mournful toll of a bell rather confirmed these last ominous words.

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I. A. L., «Ο θάνατος του Φ. Φίνου. Η έννοια της ‘κηδείας’», *Σύγχρονος Κινηματογράφος* 12 (1976-1977), p. 6-7. “From one point of view, Finos’ funeral reflected with remarkable consistency the end of the profession he had served and which had died, without however having been—formally—buried.”

Narratives about Finos, even when coming from different sides, complement each other, making him a concrete figure of Greek Cinema, perhaps the only producer recognizable by the wider public in Greece. In all these narratives, what comes first is his love for technique and technology, from the cinephile anecdotes about the “screwdriver man” who could repair everything, to the testimonies by directors of photography and technical collaborators about his deep technical knowledge and skill. It was precisely this fact that, in the early 1950s, gave films made by Finos a head-start, as the technical thoroughness, especially with regards to sound and picture, distinguished them from all others shot in Greece at the time. As researchers point out, throughout his career, Finos never hesitated to invest all the profits of his company in technical equipment and the production of new films.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, this constant pursuit of an ever-advanced technological adequacy led to the expansion of production and to the new studios in Spata during the 1970s, soon before the beginning of commercial cinema’s fall in popularity.<sup>3</sup> This bold move was made at the wrong moment, when the game of cinema popularity had moved elsewhere, and certainly not to the technical adequacy of classical narrative. The new players, however, neither forgot that they had had an excellent cinema education working in Finos’ productions—according to what they used to say, it was there that they saw for the first time basic cinema equipment which they had never even seen in film schools—nor that they had the possibility to use the workshops or to borrow equipment to shoot the short and feature-length films that a few years later were to become the hallmark of a new cinematic gaze.<sup>4</sup>

To date, the historiographical narrative regarding Finos Film’s predominance in the Greek cinema market, for at least thirty years, is consistent: a brand name

2. See also the section on Finos in Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος*, Papanastasiou, Athens 2006, p. 93-99.

3. In 1968, ticket sales in Greece reached 137 million; after that year, a rapid decline began, to 47 million in 1975. Chrysanthi Sotiropoulou, *Ελληνική Κινηματογραφία 1965-1975. Θεσμικό πλαίσιο—Οικονομική κατάσταση*, Themelio, Athens 1989, p. 58.

4. See, for example, the interviews in the documentary *Backstage: Finos Film and Filopimin Finos/Παρασκήνιο: Η Φίνος Φιλμ και ο Φιλοποίμην Φίνος*, directed by Periklis Choursoglou ERT S.A. 1983. Choursoglou remembers that, in 1975, Pantelis Voulgaris, a professor at the Stavrakos School at the time, brought his students to the last shootings of Finos Film. Nikos explains how important Finos’ trust was to all technical staff, as their time at the studios led them to solid know-how and self-confidence. Pantelis Voulgaris talks, in the ruined studios, about what he learned from working next to Dinos Dimopoulos from 1960 to 1965, taking the baton from Giorgos Stambouloupolous; the film dedicated to Finos ends on an emotional note. Theodoros Angelopoulos also mentioned in other interviews that for his film *Representation/Αναπαράσταση* Finos’ equipment was used, borrowed by some of the crew that worked for Finos Film.

which is recognizable even today, the identification of the double F with the Greek version of classic narrative popular cinema and clear expectations on the part of the public.<sup>5</sup> The films never went beyond the limits, were never provocative, never contestable, shocking only for today's younger public that is understandably puzzled by the gender representations and the manifest misogyny of the time. Finos' rivalry with television was also proverbial: in the 1970s, while it was clear that these films could find their public through the ideal medium of television—as if they were originally made for television, one could argue—Finos refused proposals to expand to television productions, something that could have secured the viability of his company in the following years.

The history of Finos Film spans three periods: by all accounts, the first period, from the end of the war until 1958, is the most interesting one on an artistic level. The period starts with a loss, the precious newsreels shot by Finos himself during the Occupation, which were requisitioned and destroyed by the German police;<sup>6</sup> if this had not happened, we might have known him today as an important documentarist. His first films as a producer won over the public, as he trusted directors such as Giorgos Tzavellas and Alekos Sakellarios who knew well the rhythm of comedies, but also art contributors such as Joseph Hepp, Aristidis Karydis-Fuchs, Dinos Katsouridis, Markos Zervas, Nikos Dimopoulos and later Nikos Kavoukidis, Giorgos Arvanitis and many others who secured high-quality photography, sound and montage. In this first period, we find films that shaped the standards of a really popular cinema, with emphasis mostly on comedies and leading roles played by members of an older generation of actors.<sup>7</sup> Filmed in real locations and placed in a popular setting, based on actors with experience in vaudeville and with really minimal equipment, it would not be an exaggeration to draw a parallel between these films and Italian post-war popular comedies. In the first post-war decade, more than a hundred production companies appeared circumstantially, sixty of which produced only one film, while only four companies made more than ten productions: Finos Film, Novak Film, Anzervos and Tzal.<sup>8</sup> As

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5. Finos in his interviews kept repeating that his attempt to fund Koundouros' films ended in a commercial failure, and thus he abandoned any intention to experiment further with art films. "They are parentheses, dearly paid," he answered during an interview to the question whether these "parentheses" constitute his vindication. He also often mentioned the absolute necessity of state subsidies for art films to exist and develop. Triantafyllidis, *Ταινίες για φίλημα, ένα αφιέρωμα στον Φιλοποίμηνα Φίνο και τις ταινίες του*, Exantas, Athens 2000, p. 31.

6. Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, Papazisis, Athens 2006, p. 93.

7. On this subject, see Ioanna Athanasatou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος. Λαϊκή μνήμη και ιδεολογία (1950-1967)*, Finatéc, Athens 2001.

8. Christos Dermentzopoulos, «Ταινίες για όλη την ελληνική οικογένεια. Ο λαϊκός κινηματογράφος στην Ελλάδα (1950-1975)», Christos Dermentzopoulos & Giannis Papatheo-

Eliza-Anna Delveroudi infers based on testimonies, “Finos shapes the standards for cinema works and others follow, copy, imitate. [...] Directors and screen writers, when working with Finos, have better results. The same happens with actors.”<sup>9</sup>

From the mid-1950s onwards, what later rather condescendingly was called Old Greek Cinema became established—this was the Greek version of classical narrative cinema. Finos Film productions—but also others—of the period, although created inside the narrow genre moulds of commercial cinema, within a context of absolutely restrained political expression under a feeble democracy, managed, through refractions and distortions, to express with a degree of sincerity forms of popular memory and social imaginaries, despite their conventional character or even backward-looking themes.<sup>10</sup> Even though often criticised for their (misunderstood, anti-cinematic) theatricality, very often the directors of Old Greek Cinema showed a solid understanding of—and skills in—the classic *mise-en-scène*, and this is demonstrated in Finos Film’s very meticulous productions, when compared to the productions of other companies. Dinos Dimopoulos is the filmmaker who, having directed more than thirty films at Finos Film from 1953 until 1975, ideally represents this cinema of classical narrative which relied on great leading actresses, not only in its artistically most perfect moments—with films such as *Madalena/Mανταλένα* (1960) or *The Journey/Το ταξίδι* (1962)—but also in more commercial ones—such as *Miss Director/Δεσποινίς Διευθυντής* (1964), *A Crazy Crazy Family/Μια τρελή τρελή οικογένεια* (1965) or *The Fairy and the Young Lad/Η νεράιδα και το παλικάρι* (1969).

Finos Film’s second period started around 1958. Under pressure, because of the brand new and technically perfectly-equipped Studio Alpha which was inaugurated that year, dynamically starting new productions and international co-operations, Finos applied a new system different from the looser practices of the previous period: in contrast to the more improvisational or ostensible screenplay which was enriched during filming, now regular readings of complete screenplays were performed in front of the producer, the director of production and the person in charge of the commercial exploitation office, in which Finos had the last word. A more organised financial programme was applied, with

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dorou (eds), *Συνηθισμένοι άνθρωποι. Μελέτες για τη λαϊκή και τη δημοφιλή κουλτούρα*, Orpourtuna, Athens 2021, p. 433-480.

9. Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, *Οι νέοι στις κωμωδίες του Ελληνικού κινηματογράφου 1948-1974*, National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens 2004, p. 35-36.

10. Athanasatou has interpreted the popularity of these films based on the Gramscian concept of the “substratum of popular culture”; *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος. Λαϊκή μνήμη και ιδεολογία (1950-1967)*, p. 43-45.

strict budgets; thus, the company took the form of a more systematic industrial affair. At the same time, in the 1960s there was an opening up to new genres, such as musicals, social dramas of adolescent delinquency and adventures, and to a younger audience. Already established leading actresses from Finos Film's previous period, such as Aliki Vougiouklaki and Tzeni Karezi, found themselves at the centre of popular mass media's attention, while the whole promotion strategy for every film relied entirely on them. Meanwhile, the environment around Finos functioned as a breeding ground for a younger generation of actors who did not come from the theatre stage, but from dance, music or fashion catwalks: new stars, such as Kostas Voutsas, Zoi Laskari and Martha Karagianni, were Finos' response to the ever-growing financial demands of established divas who in the mid-1960s started to jump ship, going to rival companies. This period was a "golden age" in terms of popularity and rising ticket sales, while for a whole decade Finos Film's musicals were at the top of the domestic box office charts.<sup>11</sup>

Finos, in addition to the importance that he attached to investments in technical infrastructure, was also the first to realise the significance of the verticalisation of production. From the mid-1960s onwards, some transitional processes for the creation of a rudimentary domestic "studio system" began to appear, a system with three big companies (Finos Film, Damaskinos-Michailidis and Roussopoulos Bros-Lazaridis-Sarris-Psarras) and eight smaller ones, bordering on a dual system of artisanal and industrial production.<sup>12</sup> From 1945 onwards, Finos' two big rival companies merged, creating a small "trust" in Greek Cinema. Thus, Finos created his own distribution branch and was the first to introduce the block booking system, not only defending himself against the dominance of American films, but also applying a lot of pressure on small independent production companies.<sup>13</sup> Thus, at the end of the decade, Finos Film, followed by Karagiannis-Karantzopoulos, acquired cinema theatres and imposed its terms on the cinema market; in this way,

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11. For details on the musicals, see Lydia Papadimitriou, *Το Ελληνικό Κινηματογραφικό Μιούζικαλ. Κριτική-Πολιτισμική Θεώρηση*, Papazisis, Athens 2009.

12. As Nikos Kolovos explains, although these three companies produced 25 percent of films, there were no studios of European, let alone Hollywood, standards. On the one hand, there was no considerable capital accumulation, while the form of vertical unification was rudimentary and barely had to do with the production and distribution of films, while commercial exploitation to an extent remained in the hands of the big foreign film distribution agencies. According to Kolovos, these companies never went beyond "small competing commercial businesses" so cannot be compared to a developed cinema industry; neither can we say that there were monopolies. Nikos Kolovos, *Κινηματογράφος, η τέχνη της βιομηχανίας*, Kastaniotis, Athens 2000, p. 340-341.

13. Papadimitriou, *Το Ελληνικό Κινηματογραφικό Μιούζικαλ*, op. cit. p. 40-41.

these two companies managed to control 50 percent of the market.<sup>14</sup> Growing competition led the company to greater intensification of production: while in the 1950s Finos produced three films a year, in 1968-1969 it produced fifteen films.<sup>15</sup>

During the years of the dictatorship, Finos Film expanded even more, constructing new studios at Spata, which were enviable but also “jinxed,”<sup>16</sup> as it became known: the 1970 commercial success *Lieutenant Natassa/Υπολοχαγός Νατάσσα* sold more than 750,000 tickets and gave the misleading impression of an upturn, while commercial cinema was collapsing financially, revealing the lack of boldness and the incorrect strategies that prevented its necessary renewal. It was at that time that Finos’ films were established as “old” cinema. In this less glorious phase, dominant genres were war adventures and the “incomplete” genre, as Athena Kartalou has named it, namely social critique films in which Nikos Foskolos was a pioneer.<sup>17</sup> Dramatic adventures made by Stavros Tsiolis, such as *Panic/Πανικός* (1969), *The City Jungle/Η ζούγκλα των πόλεων* (1970) and *Abuse of Power/Κατάχρηση εξουσίας* (1971) perhaps constitute the best moments of the company during this last period. In the last years before Finos’ death, production fell to two films per year, and even these were made with great effort, at a time when cinema theatres remained empty, closing down one after the other.<sup>18</sup> The view expressed in the television show *Backstage/Παρασκήνιο* (1996)<sup>19</sup> effectively summarises an essential flaw in Finos Film’s structure, which may have been the cause of its inability to keep pace with its time: “His [Finos’] view on the company was paternalistic. He concentrated everything around himself, he did not leave room for initiatives to his close collaborators, and as a result after his death there was no one to replace him. Filopimin Finos’ story seems to have inexorably followed the conventions of a screenplay of the type *the-rise-and-fall-of-a-great-producer*.

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14. Kolonos, *Κινηματογράφος, η τέχνη της βιομηχανίας*, op. cit. p. 341; Lydia Papadimitriou, “In the Shadow of the Studios, the State, and the Multiplexes: Independent Filmmaking in Greece,” Doris Baltruschat, Mary P. Erikson (eds), *Independent Filmmaking Around the Globe*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2015, p. 113-130; Delveroudi, *Οι νέοι στις κωμωδίες του Ελληνικού κινηματογράφου 1948-1974*, op. cit. p. 47-48.

15. Numbers based on the film catalogue in Triantafyllidis’ monograph, *Ταινίες για φιλμ*, op. cit.

16. Triantafyllidis, *ibid.* p. 35.

17. Athena Kartalou, *Το ανεκπλήρωτο είδος: Οι ταινίες κοινωνικής καταγγελίας της «Φίνος Φιλμ»*, unpubl. PhD thesis, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens 2005, available at: <https://phdtheses.ekt.gr/eadd/handle/10442/15592> [25 September 2021].

18. Markos Zervas, one of the producer’s main long-term collaborators described from his point of view the situation of the company during these last years: Markos Zervas, *Finos Film 1939-1977, Ο μύθος και η πραγματικότητα*, Ankyra, Athens 2003.

19. «Φιλοποίμην Φίνος, Μαρτυρίες-Ντοκουμέντα»; *Backstage/Παρασκήνιο*, directed by Lakis Papastathis, ERT S.A. 1996.

However, at the same time it confirms once again the extent to which he and his company were interwoven with what we call old, popular, well-loved or commercial cinema in Greece. He was the only producer whose name is so recognizable even by today's audiences who *en masse* watch his films on the internet, and it is perhaps the best reason to start an investigation into how commercial cinema and the profession of the producer was shaped in Greece.





25 April 1977

Betty Vakalidou reads from the stage of Lusitania Theatre a public announcement of trans sex workers against homophobic legislation

## Sexual and Gender Identity in Greek Cinema

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THE FOLLOWING IMAGE has remained historic for the Greek movement of sexual and gender identity. On 25 April 1977, participating in the gathering organised by the Liberation Movement of Homosexuals in Greece (AKOE), Betty Vakalidou appeared on the stage of Lusitania Theatre and read a statement by trans sex workers against the deeply homophobic bill of law on STDs put forward by the government of the time.<sup>1</sup> Let us first focus on the venue where this scene took place. In the same theatre the Athenian public had already been regularly watching theatre shows on sexual difference: not only revues, where the laughable faggot had been a feature for a long time, but also Dimitris Kollatos' modular play *A Greek Today/Ένας Έλληνας σήμερα* (1975) of the post-dictatorship era, which openly dramatises homosexual episodes, *Lesbian/Λεσβιακό* and *A Very Old Love Story/Μια πολύ παλιά ερωτική ιστορία*. A year earlier, Giannis Dalianidis had directed Jean Poiret's high-profile comedy *Bird Cage/Το κλουβί με τις τρελές* (*La cage aux folles*, 1973) at Minos Theatre in a central area of Athens, while at the end of the 1970s theatre-goers seemed to become familiar with the "taboo subject" of homosexuality when they went to the performances of four plays of different genres: Giorgos Maniotis's *The Pit of Sin/Ο λάκκος της αμαρτίας* (1979), Mino Bellei's *Blond Strawberry/Ξανθιά φράουλα* (*Bionda fragola*, 1980), Martin Sherman's *Bent* (1980) and Giuseppe

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1. See Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια. Έθνος, πόθος και συγγένεια την εποχή της κρίσης*, Patakis, Athens 2018, p. 358-360, where also further bibliography.

Patroni Griffi's *Natural and Arrogant People/Πρόσωπα φυσικά και αλλόκοτα* (*Personae naturali e strafottenti*, 1981).<sup>2</sup> In the latter, Betty Vakalidou had the leading role, soon after the publication of her two biographical best-selling books *Betty* (Μπέττυ) and *How much?* (Πόσο πάει;), published by Exantas and Nefeli, respectively, and her appearance as herself in Dimitris Stavrakas' short documentary *Betty/Μπέττυ* (1979).

In this specific context, the foundation of the Liberation Movement of Homosexuals in Greece and the (re)actions and mobilisations provoked by the bill of law titled "On the protection from STDs and related matters"<sup>3</sup> not only constitute landmarks in the social and legal history of homosexuality<sup>4</sup> during the first post-dictatorship years, but it is also in the same period that transvestites/trans/transsexuals as an organised social group appeared in Greek Cinema,<sup>5</sup> soon after their trade union had been established in Greece, and in the context of recriminations and constant attacks in the daily press of the time. With three crucial films for the representations of homosexuality in Greek Cinema being related to the trans world—*Betty* (1979), Giorgos Katakouzinos' *Angel/Άγγελος* (1982) and Panos Koutras's *Strella. A Woman's Way/Στρέλλα* (2009)—this world and its codes became the subject of films of different styles (documentary and fiction films, avant-garde attempts, porn), memorialising locations (night-time Syngrou Avenue, bars in the neighbourhood of Plaka, the trans bar Koukles/Dolls), persons (biographical stories), language codes and views of queer history—examples of the latter include *Kaliarda: The Greek Polari/Ta καλιαρντά* (2014) and *Oleanders/Πικροδάφνες* (2021), directed by Paola Revenioti. More specifically, in *Angel* (1982), the transvestite man is transformed into an exterminating angel, and in *Strella*, drawing fictional elements from ancient tragedy, the leading character, initially a punishing angel, becomes a bearer of forgiveness and solidarity, while in *Betty* the documentary dynamic is built through autobiographical experience (persecutions, humiliations, entertainment places for homosexuals, codes, beauty stand-

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2. On these performances, see the chapter «Εποχές καμπίς και παραστάσεις με σημασία», Konstantinos Kyriakos, *Ομοερωτισμός και ελληνική σκηνή. Από το «αιρετικόν πάθος» στην «ορατότητα.» Η πρόσληψη του παγκόσμιου θεάτρου*, Papazisis, Athens 2021, p. 351-452 and 965-992.

3. See Loukas Theodorakopoulos, «Μικρή ιστορία του Απελευθερωτικού Κινήματος Ομοφυλόφιλων Ελλάδας (ΑΚΟΕ)», «Αμφί» και Απελευθέρωση, Polychromos Planitis, Athens 2005, p. 13-80.

4. See David M. Halperin, "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," re-published in Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, Susan Potter (eds), *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, Routledge, London, New York 2013, p. 262-286.

5. For details, see Konstantinos Kyriakos, *Επιθυμίες και πολιτική. Η queer ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου (1924-2016)*, Aigokeros, Athens 2017, p. 348-370.

ards and Syngrou Avenue). In these films, the power of testimony and the feeling of happiness and sorrow intersect with the codes of camp and the staging of the self through the carnivalesque.

In Greek Cinema, representation of gender identity went through phases, models, variations and ruptures.<sup>6</sup> In particular, homosexual characters were introduced to fiction films with a delay and hesitance at the beginning of the 1960s. It was the image of a pretentious and effeminate gay man who appeared mainly in secondary roles, and this was contrasted in the narrative of the films with the exponents of “traditional Greek manhood” (for instance, in films by Nikos Tsiforos and Orestis Laskos). The consolidation and reproduction of this comical image in Greek farce, even if it expressed non-realist camp aesthetics (jokes, acting codes, iconography and workspace), confirmed the established views of the public which was attracted by familiar stereotypical representations. This popular, widely distributed and clearly contemptuous image was influential for a long period of time, offering palatable entertainment to the public and shaping social ideas and moral values.

At the same time, in melodramas and social adventures of that period, the mechanisms of contempt, stigmatisation and demonisation seemed to prevail: homosexuals appeared melancholic and self-destructive, salacious and dangerous for social cohesion (“pansies,” “faggots,” salacious “poofers”).<sup>7</sup> These images of guilt and ridicule were sporadic in the 1960s—see, for example, *Nightmare/Εφιάλτης* (1961) by Errikos Andreou and *Sellout/Ο πουλημένος* (1967) by Panagiotis Konstantinou, *Frenzy/Αμόκ* (1963) by Dinos Dimopoulos and *Stephania/Στεφανία* (1966) by Giannis Dalianidis—but multiplied later: let us just mention as examples the (lesbian) exploitation films by Omiros Efstratiadis and Ilias Mylonakos, the “social critique” films *Request/Παραγγελιά* (1980) by Pavlos Tasios, and *Boys in Prostitution/Αγόρια στην πορνεία* (1985) by Omiros Efstratiadis, as well as the social melodramas *Oxygen/Οξυγόνο* (2003, dir. Michalis Reppas and Thanasis Papathanasiou) and *Blue Dress/Γαλάζιο φόρεμα* (2006, dir. Giannis Diamantopoulos).

The change of point of view in viewing the homosexual condition seems to take place in two phases: during the first five years after the fall of the dictatorship, and in the 1990s with the emergence of the Greek version of New Queer Cinema. Images and narratives no longer reflected homophobic aggressiveness, caricature and derision, but they recorded homosexual experiences unapologetically and through a gay perspective and focus. The variety of presentations

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6. See Konstantinos Kyriakos, “My Soul Was on My Lips: Queer Greek Cinema”, *Non-Catalogue*, 59th Thessaloniki International Film Festival (I-II November 2018), p. 122-153.

7. For details, see Konstantinos Kyriakos, *Επιθυμίες και πολιτική*, op. cit. p. 134-153.

was related to the conventions of filmic genres (thematic patterns and narrative structures), the typology of fictional characters (dress-code, gestures, speech, behaviour), identification and deviation from social and moral norms (focus and points of view), homosociality, depictions of male beauty, camp aesthetics and the star-system.

However, if we want to be precise, we should underline that during the years of internalisation and silencing in the 1950s and 1960s, important Greek filmmakers such as Michael Cacoyannis, Nikos Koundouros and Giannis Dalianidis captured the living social experience, activating the mechanisms of (homosexual) concealment and exclusion through allegoric and synecdochic depictions of the “shady other.”<sup>8</sup> Reference to non-heteronormative preferences and choices was extremely rare, connected, in fact, to ancient Greek myths, as in *Orestes/Ορέστης* (1969, dir. Vasilis Fotopoulos), *Vortex: The Face of Medusa/Vortex: Το πρόσωπο της Μέδουσας* (1971, dir. Nikos Koundouros), *Symposium/Συμπόσιο* (1974, dir. Dimitris Kollatos), while in important films of the 1970s, where politics prevailed—such as *Days of '36/Μέρες του '36* (1972, dir. Theo Angelopoulos) and *Happy Day* (1976, dir. Pantelis Voulgaris)—we find metonymical sightings of “monsters and outcasts.”

This first phase of Greek Queer Cinema which spans the time until the fall of the dictatorship is determined by the existence of pre-emptive censorship and self-censorship on class and sex matters, while the untrained and conservative, middle- and lower-class public, which filled cinema theatres during the period of mass production of films, sought familiar and recognizable elements in the popular film genres, including comedies, melodramas and musicals. Thus, it is confirmed that in periods of open homosexual repression in which the possibility to conceive and process a “homosexual consideration of homosexuality” is absent, a heteronormative viewing of homosexuals is imposed on representations.

After the fall of the colonels' dictatorship, demands for sexual liberation started to gain shape: the Liberation Movement of Homosexuals in Greece, the publication of the journal *Amphi* (Αμφί) (the journal *To Kraximo* [Slating] was also published later), the translation of fundamental texts from a gay culture, conferences on sexual difference and sexual minorities, the denunciation of human rights violations and mobilisations against the bill of law “On the protection from STDs and the regulation of related matters.”<sup>9</sup> In the same context, we find coercive

8. See Vrasidas Karalis, *Realism in Greek Cinema: From the Post-War Period to the Present*, I. B. Tauris, London, New York 2016, p. 60-97 and 129-156; Konstantinos Kyriakos, *Επιθυμίες και πολιτική*, p. 44-60 and 63-79.

9. For a recording, across a larger time span, of related documents in the field of the arts and letters in Greece, see Konstantinos Kyriakos, *Μια queer νεοελληνική ιστορία. Τα τεκμήρια (1900-2020). Τέχνες και Γράμματα. Χρονολόγιο και κριτικός βιβλιογραφικός οδηγός*,

state mechanisms relying on pre-emptive censorship, public prosecution interventions (“safeguarding of morality and good taste”), the role of the bourgeois “progressive” press, the prohibition of screening in cinema theatres of some films and their “exile” in the ghetto of “art theatres” with limited audiences, especially when films adopted the revolutionary thinking of homosexual and feminist movements, attempting a radical critique of established forms.

Influences from those works of French and German Cinema that destabilised heterosexual identities in European Cinema after 1968 are found in short, medium- and feature-length productions of the first post-dictatorship period. Overlooked, but important avant-garde films were first met with derision by some of the critics and the impetuous disapproval of the (festival) public, when it was called upon to decode a series of unfamiliar representational methods in order to receive the (homosexual) content of the narrative through de-familiarisations and intertextual associations. These were films made by a younger generation of directors: Andreas Velissaropoulos, Takis Spetsiotis, Antouanetta Angelidi, Iris Zachmanidi, Giorgos Kalogiannis, Maria Gavala, Nikos Lyngouris, Dimitris Stavrakas and Dimitris Mavrikios. That was the moment when Greek Cinema took a critical stance expressing new sensibilities: the deconstruction of sexuality and homosexual visibility became politicised.<sup>10</sup>

When pre-emptive censorship was abolished (in the 1980s) at a difficult conjuncture characterised internationally by the outbreak of the HIV/AIDS panic and the demonisation of the homosexual community, Greek cinema turned a pensive gaze on specific characters (personal behaviour, public ritual, custom law). In the humanistically enlightening *Angel*, homosexuality may have been presented melodramatically as a “clinical case,” but the theme of homophobia and violence reached the wider public, as the film was an enormous commercial success. The award-winning heritage film *Meteor and Shadow/Μετέωρο και σκιά* (1985, dir. Takis Spetsiotis) described the homosexual continuum, its historicity and visibility. In the multi-character and polyphonic ...*Deserter or The Kingdom of Doves/...λιποτάκτης ή Το βασίλειο των περιστερών* (1988, dir. Giorgos Korras and Christos Voupouras), the gay narrator-observer’s self-commentary (voice-over) and the de-dramatised realistic tones served the penetrating description of homoerotic desire in the Greek countryside which was demythologised and presented as a “place of melancholy” and xenophobia.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the film (and television)<sup>12</sup> recordings

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Aigokeros, Athens 2020.

10. See Kyriakos, *Επιθυμίες και πολιτική*, op. cit. p. 211-214 and 232-236.

11. For details on the film, see Kyriakos, *Επιθυμίες και πολιτική*, op. cit. p. 156-159.

12. See the chapter «Με λογοτεχνική και σκηνική καταγωγή», in Konstantinos Kyriakos, *Ελληνική τηλεόραση και ομοερωτισμός. Οι σειρές μυθοπλασίας (1975-2019)*, Aigokeros, Athens

of a queer history—which is considered to have not only a very long time span, but also a clearly fragmented presentation of homosexual art structures and their reception—were systematised: themes, patterns and portraits of great Greek homosexual artists, such as Konstantinos Kavafis, Napoleon Lapathiotis, Giannis Tsarouchis and Manos Hadjidakis.

At the beginning of the 1990s, when in Europe and America one could recognize the “militant” years of a (New) Queer Cinema in which homosexuality was revolutionary and the demand “to be yourself” at the forefront, in Greek Cinema a similar dynamic trend was created with such representative as Alexis Bistikas, Constantine Giannaris, Panos Koutras, Christos Dimas, Angelos Frantzis and Pantelis Pagoulatos. In the narratives of their films, we recognize political sharpness, cosmopolitanism, an admiration for Greek popular culture, autobiographical elements, and a certain irony against the malaise and prejudice that characterize Greek society.

In the subsequent phase, in the twenty-first century, we recognize versions and additions to queer themes and aesthetic structures in films made by Yorgos Lanthimos, Kostas Zappas, Panagiotis Evangelidis, Telemachos Alexiou, Thanassis Neofotistos and Vassilis Kekatos, while women’s homosociality and homosexuality now moves beyond the scopophilic desire that had driven earlier films by Nikos Kourndouros and Nikos Nikolaidis. Now, it is a feminine gaze, homosexual or not, which comments on the female continuum: Tonia Marketaki, Antouanetta Angelidi, Frieda Liappa, Athena Rachel Tsangari and Evangelia Kranioti.

This new spirit favoured the passing from derision, the condition of suffering and the obsession with acceptance (*Betty*, *Angelos*), to descriptions of the homosexual experience unmediated by the scornful gaze of the community (Alexis Bistikas, P. Koutras), to intersections of sexual deviance with the sensibilities of migration (Constantine Giannaris). Let us also not forget the filmic strategies used for a constant updating of ancient Greek myths and their queer manifestations, in combination with the clear “demand for appropriation” of significant personalities whose sexuality was kept “hidden from History”. In Constantine Giannaris’s *Trojans/Τρώες* (1990) and *Diptych: The Love That Dares Not Say Its Name/Δίπτυχο: Η αγάπη που δεν λέει το όνομά της* (2011) and in Panagiotis Evangelidis’s *Afternoon Nap/Απογευματινός ύπνος* (2013), the style and the spirit of Kavafis and Tsarouchis respectively, were transposed in the queer worlds of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century through intertextual references, while transcriptions of the myth of the Lavdakides are found in Karolos Zonaras’ B-movie *Charlie’s Son/O γιος του Τσάρλυ* (2009) and in Telemachos Alexiou’s *Queen Antigone/Βασίλισσα Αντιγόνη* (2014).

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2019, p. 33-94.

In the multi-cultural context of fluid, individual and collective identities of the twenty-first century and during the years of the 2010 crisis, when the political arena was inexorably linked with the personal (identity crisis), the renewed representations of the queer subject were related to the metonymic representation of otherness, the transformations of national identity, the environment in the years of the “financial crisis” and the internationally influential “Weird Wave”.<sup>13</sup> Yet, many of the queer and post-queer films, having a high production and aesthetic profile, and provocative but interesting themes (national identity, migration, families<sup>14</sup> and revisions of ancient myth) addressed a broad and international audience, even in the case of short films, such as *The Distance Between Us and the Sky/Η απόσταση ανάμεσα στον ουρανό κι εμάς* (2019) by Vassilis Kekatos.

A non-negligible group of important films of the last forty years which, due to their themes and aesthetics can be collectively described by the term Greek Queer Cinema, have attracted the interest of institutional cinema bodies and academic scholars, in combination with the demands and achievements of the LGBT community. It is important that these films are no longer considered a marginal form of cultural production and Greek Cinema understands the deconstruction of sexuality and “homosexual visibility” as part of a significant moment in Greek society's debates on the politics of identity.

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13. See the relevant monographs by Marios Psaras, *The Queer Greek Weird Wave: Ethics, Politics and the Crisis of Meaning*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2016; Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave: A Cinema of Biopolitics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2021.

14. See Papanikolaou, *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια*, op. cit. p. 336-367.





# 3-8 October 1977

## The Festival of Greek Film '77 takes place

### The Filmmakers' Counter-Festival: Variations on a Heavy Melon

Rea Walldén  
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#### The Facts<sup>1</sup>

In October 1977, for six days, Thessaloniki experienced its own Filmmakers' Counter-Festival—as Cannes had done nine years earlier.

It all started on 19 July 1977, two months before the opening of the 18th Thessaloniki Film Festival, when the Ministry of Industry and Energy, which was responsible for cinema at the time, arbitrarily changed the festival's regulations, which had been agreed upon two years earlier by the ministry and representatives from the film community. With the directors leading the way, the film unions denounced the move, one after the other. On 29 July, seventy-two directors and the creative and technical contributors to that year's completed films (ten feature films, and twenty-eight shorts) signed a “pledge of honour that they will not attend the festival if the agreed regulations are not reinstated. On 3 August, six film unions,<sup>2</sup> along

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1. I would like to thank Antoinetta Angelidi for making her archive available and for sharing her memories with me. I used the programme and other printed sources published by the Coordinating Committee of the Festival of Greek Film 1977, clippings from the contemporary press, as well as the texts republished in *Η υπόθεση του φεστιβάλ ελληνικού κινηματογράφου '77* (*To χρονικό του τύπου μέρα με τη μέρα*) (*The Case of the Festival of Greek Film of '77* [*The Press Chronicle Day by Day*]), Athens, November 1977. I also consulted *Φίλμ* (*Film*) 14 (1977), *Σύγχρονος Κινηματογράφος* (*Contemporary Cinema*) 15/16 (1977) and 17/18 (1978), and the Greek Association of Film Critics (PEKK) publication *25 χρόνια ΠΕΚΚ, 1976-2000: Οι επιλογές των κριτικών* (*25 years of the PEKK, 1976-2000: The Critics' Choices*).

2. The participating collectives were the Greek Film and Television Directors' Guild, the Greek Union of Film and Television Technicians, the Hellenic Actors Union, the Greek

with the secondary-level Panhellenic Federation of Vision and Sound Professionals decided to stage their own festival and elected a Coordinating Committee. The filmmakers were embraced by the intellectual and artistic community in a wave of solidarity, as well as by the opposition press and the public. The government, along with the Thessaloniki International Fair, which was the official organiser of the festival, and the pro-government press launched a campaign to defame and cow the filmmakers. The official festival was staged without films or audience between 26 September and 2 October, in the Theatre of the Society for Macedonian Studies. Immediately afterwards, from 3 to 8 October, the “Festival of Greek Film '77” was held with great success in the Radio City Cinema; the event has gone down in history as the “Filmmakers’ Festival,” “The Festival of Auteurs,” the “Festival of the Unions,” or simply as the “Counter-Festival.”

## The Future Starts Now

The Counter-Festival of '77 was a pivotal moment in multiple senses. It embodied the dynamics of its era—not only a brief period of radicalism, but also a time when the historical narratives that would determine the decades to follow were reconfigured. It expressed the deeper political and cultural conflicts that characterised Greek society at the time and are not unknown to us even today. It articulated professional demands from the film industry, which were not only characteristic of the time but are also worryingly timeless. It dramatised the most important rift in the history of Greek Cinema, the shift from the Old to the New Greek Cinema, as well as fundamental questions about cinema’s role and definition.

Both the protagonists and their contemporaries were aware of the historic nature of their actions. Just one month after the end of the Counter-Festival, the Coordinating Committee issued all the related press publications in a single volume.<sup>3</sup> It is indicative that supporters from both sides of the conflict<sup>4</sup> organised their narratives about the history of Greek Cinema up to that point and about how that

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Association of Film Critics, the Union of Composers and Lyricists of Greece, the Greek Film Producers’ Association and the secondary-level (that is, an industrial/occupational federation of unions) Panhellenic Federation of Vision and Sound Professionals.

3. *Η υπόθεση του φεστιβάλ ελληνικού κινηματογράφου '77* (*The Case of the Festival of Greek Film of '77*).

4. See the “How to Save the Film Festival” interviews with the following persons, published by Vangelis Psyrakis in *Ελευθεροτυπία*: Theo Angelopoulos and Nikos Zakopoulos (18 October); Michael Cacoyannis and Aglaia Mitropoulou (19 October); Ninos Feneck-Mikelidis and Apostolos Manganaris (20 October); and Thanassis Rentzis (21 October 1977).

history related to the history of Greece around the event. The famous French film critic Louis Marcorelles<sup>5</sup> presented the Counter-Festival in relation to the colonels' dictatorship, which had ended only four years earlier, and in the context of the formation of post-dictatorial Greece. In the words of Thanassis Rentzis, "[t]hings are here and now, and the future is just an extension of the present."<sup>6</sup>

## A Revolutionary Moment

The Counter-Festival of '77 encapsulated the spirit of the Metapolitefsi period for Greek Cinema. In a strict sense, the Metapolitefsi is defined as the period from the fall of the dictatorship to the adoption of the 1975 Constitution. However, both in the consciousness of those who lived through it and in the work of historians, it means a good deal more: at one and the same time, it marks the end of post-civil war Greece, the transitional phase of the democratisation of institutions and society, and the new condition of the third Greek republic. It covers a broad period whose end point is vague.<sup>7</sup> And, as an event, the Counter-Festival was intertwined with these multiple conceptualisations.

Echoing May '68, youthful calling-into-question, sexual liberation, the civil rights and feminist movements and Third World revolutions, the mood at the Counter-Festival was revolutionary, mobilised by a thirst for democracy, justice and vindication. However, in a country where the wounds of the post-civil war period were still open, there also necessarily existed an element of post-historical melancholy. In Angelopoulos' *The Hunters/Οι κυνηγοί*, the partisan who thawed out to judge the present day in the courtroom of History would be buried again, to be forgotten in the snow. In Angelidi's *Idées Fixes / Dies Irae (Variations on the Same Subject)* [*Idées Fixes / Dies Irae (Παραλλαγές στο ίδιο θέμα)*], the revolution assassinated in Marat's bathtub is laid out to an out-of-tune *Internationale* before it opens its eyes again. An armed Chinese woman slips out of the kitchen...

Art was understood as revolution: "Cinema [...] sets fire to the foundations of the state."<sup>8</sup> The Counter-Festival engaged with the second avant-gardes<sup>9</sup> in

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5. Louis Marcorelles, "Un défi du cinéma grec au pouvoir conservateur (Greek Cinema Challenges Conservative Authorities)," *Le Monde* (3 November 1977).

6. Thanassis Rentzis, chairman of the Coordinating Committee, introductory note in *The Case of the Festival of Greek Film of '77*.

7. See also Antonis Liakos, «Το πανηγύρι της Δημοκρατίας (The Festival of Democracy)», *Ο ελληνικός 20ός αιώνας (The Greek 20th Century)*, Polis, Athens 2019, p. 409-466.

8. Vassilis Rafailidis, president of the PEKK at the time, explaining the position of the unions, 13 August 1977.

9. See Rea Waldén, "The Spatio-Temporality of the Avant-Gardes: Feminist Avant-Garde

the arts, mainly through the prism of the French Nouvelle Vague, its second politicised phase and the various New Cinemas internationally. It placed centre stage the articulation of art with the political, which transcended the thematic and related to form and practices. In selecting its films, the Counter-Festival included the whole spectrum from classic politicised art to multiple types of formal radicalism. Consciously or not, it maintained a fruitful indecisiveness which led to a remarkable polyphony. In its screenings, fiction and documentary coexisted, ethnography and experimentation, the raw and the refined, observation and commentary, tragedy and detachment, the burdensome and the light, subtle irony and carnivalesque sarcasm. Its themes were dominated by contemporary social conditions and social struggles with an emphasis on class, but with feminism also powerfully present. It is worth noting that the shorts included both a film about a Muslim community in Thrace,<sup>10</sup> as well as one of the first drag shows portrayed in Greek Cinema.<sup>11</sup>

The practices of the Counter-Festival vindicated its principles. It was organised by the filmmakers themselves, not only through their unions, but also with their personal participation—decisions were taken by assemblies and four elected committees.<sup>12</sup> It activated the solidarity of society-at-large. It was funded by acts of solidarity, including a major concert,<sup>13</sup> and the sale of works by more than seventy visual artists.<sup>14</sup> It stood out for its diversity and inclusiveness at every level. As the contemporary press noted,<sup>15</sup> female directors were a catalytic presence: one in three films screened had been directed by a woman,<sup>16</sup> which was certainly unprec-

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U-Topoi in Greek Cinema from Transition to Crisis," Tonia Kazakopoulou, Mikela Fotiou (eds), *Contemporary Greek Film Cultures from 1990 to the Present*, Peter Lang, Oxford 2017, p. 71-99.

10. Apostolos Kryonas, *Within the Walls/Εντός των τειχών*.

11. Takis Spetsiotis, *Beauty/Καλλονή*.

12. Coordinating Committee (G. Danalis, T. Rentzis, T. Zografos, A. Alexandraki, N. Feneck-Mikelidis, G. Kakoulidis, I. Pergantis); Organising Committee (P. Zannas, D. Katsouridis, G. Petropoulakis, A. Kryonas, G. Kambanellis), Selection Committee (R. Manthoulis, N. Petanidis, I. Kambanellis, N. Avrameas, G. Mortzos, Ch. Leontis, M. Dimopoulos, M. Aravatinou, K. Vrettakos); Jury (M. Papadopoulou, G. Arvanitis, L. Kallergis, S. Xarchakos, A. Sakellarios, D. Athanasiadis, P. Voulgaris, V. Drakaki, S. Karas).

13. The following participated, *inter alia*: Theodorakis, Kilaidonis, Leontis, Loizos, Xarchakos, Savvopoulos and Hadjidakis.

14. These included Akriothakis, Argyrakis, Gaitis, Katraki, Kessanlis, Bost, Mytaras, Romanou, Tsarouchis and Fassianos.

15. Kostas Parlas, «Ερευνες, σαρκασμοί, φαντασία γυναικών», *Το Βήμα* (7 October 1977); Babis Komninos, «Επιτέλους κινηματογράφος!», *Ταχυδρόμος* (7 October 1977); Kostas Stamatou, «Γυναίκες-δημιουργοί: το αληθινό πρόσωπο της φεινής παραγωγής», *Τα Νέα*, 7 October (7 October 1977); Marcotelles, "Un défi du cinéma grec au pouvoir conservateur," *op. cit.*

16. Feature length: A. Angelidi, M. Hatzimihali-Papaliou, P. Alkoulis; shorts: V. Iliopoulou,

edented and would not be matched for decades. It awarded a range of styles and approaches,<sup>17</sup> and those who were awarded resolved to share the prize money with all the films in competition. The public was invited to participate. Contradictions and weaknesses were transformed through dialogue and collective action.

## Testimony

Antoinetta Angelidi remembers, forty-four years on:

During the screening [of the film *Variations*], the audience yelled rhythmically, in time with the pulse of the film's elided lexicon. They were furious, but I was enthused. When the screening was over, I stood up and thanked them for their participation. They began to close in around me threateningly. An elderly cameraman stepped in front of me and saved me. Then we began a passionate and endless conversation with the audience about the relationship between art and politics. They called me an elitist. I explained to them that film writing is a political act. They cleared us out of the room, and we continued our discussion in the street until three in the morning. We made an appointment to meet the next day at the Architects' Association. They came. And we continued.

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M. Gavala, L. Kontothodorou, F. Liappa, A. Dimitriou; shorts (not in competition): A. Anastasiadou, G. Floutsakou, K. Iatrou.

17. The Awards of the Festival Jury were given as follows: First Prize to *The Heavy Melon/Το Βαρύ...πεπόνι* (P. Tasios); Second Prize to *Evoia-Mandoudi '76/Ευβοια-Μαντούδι '76* (Y. Antonopoulos) and *Struggle of the Blind/Ο αγώνας των τυφλών* (M. Hatzimihali-Papaliou); Third Prize to *Women Today/Οι γυναίκες σήμερα* (P. Alkouli) and *Education/Παιδεία* (Y. Typaldos); Direction to *The Heavy Melon*; First-time director to *Idées Fixes / Dies Irae (Variations on the Same Subject)* (A. Angelidi); Screenplay to *The Heavy Melon*; Female Performance to K. Gogou (*The Heavy Melon*); Male performance to M. Chrysomallis (*The Heavy Melon*); Photography to *Evoia-Mandoudi '76*; Editing to *Evoia-Mandoudi '76*; Sound editing to *The Wall/Ο τοίχος* (S. Pavlidis); First Short Film to *The Tragic Death of Grandfather/Ο τραγικός θάνατος του παππού* (V. Eliopoulou) and *Celebration in Drapetsona/Γιορτή στη Δραπετσώνα* (T. Papagiannidis); Second Short Film to *Within the Walls/Οι εντός των τειχών* (A. Kryonas) and *I Remember You Leaving All the Time/Μια ζωή σε θυμάμαι να φεύγεις* (F. Liappa); Third Short Film to *A Useless Short Film/ Μια άχρηστη ταινία μικρού μήκους* (F. Konstantinidis) and *Goodnight/ Καληνύχτα* (F. Konstantinidis); Fourth Short Film to *Οι Karvouniarides/Οι καρβουνιάρηδες* (A. Dimitriou) and *Epea/Έπεα* (A. Tsafas). The Critics' Choice Awards (PEKK) went to the following films: Feature-length fiction film to *Idées Fixes / Dies Irae (Variations on the Same Subject)* and *The Heavy Melon*; Feature-length documentary to *Women Today*; Short fiction film to *I Remember You Leaving All the Time*; and Short documentary to *Celebration in Drapetsona*.

## Ideological and Cultural Conflict

“One of the strangest and most decisive battles ever fought in Greece” took place between the official Festival and the Counter-Festival.<sup>18</sup> This was a political and ideological battle, but even more so, a cultural battle between the two worlds of post-civil war Greece: on the one hand, there were the government, the institutions and the pro-government press; on the other hand, there were the filmmakers and their unions, the intellectuals and artists, arm-in-arm with the opposition, the opposition press and the film-going public.

Reading about the events in retrospect, the authorities' undemocratic practices were shocking. It is clear that the democratisation of the country still had some way to go. One of the terms in the amended regulation to which the filmmakers were opposed consisted of the decision whether to screen a film was the producer's and their's alone. It was in line with this provision that two feature films and two shorts—among them Cacoyannis' *Iphigenia/Iphigénieia*—were screened in the official festival “in chains,” despite the objection of their directors.<sup>19</sup> The programme of the official festival was padded out with the spliced-together episodes of a television series, a promotional film for a French holiday company, films that had not been accepted for inclusion in previous festivals and non-Greek productions. Over and above the tragi-comic nature of these additions, they also failed to meet the selection criteria specified in the regulations. In the meantime, the new regulations allowed the festival's juries to be appointed by the ministry, unfettered by prerequisites. The new procedure descended into farce when members were appointed in absentia and several others resigned one after the other. The ministry banned the screening of some of the films of the Counter-Festival, using the law on censorship, which dated back to the German Occupation. A campaign to intimidate the organisers was also launched, with a series of prosecutions and constant police harassment. The newspaper group owned by the president of the Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF) banished the Counter-Festival from its pages, going so far as to remove Radio City from their cinema column. The board of the TIF tried to play down the conflict, attributing it to the stereotypical rivalry between Thessaloniki and Athens—an ill-fated argument, given that both the local authorities and the local cultural organisations of Thessaloniki supported the Counter-Festival. Finally, they accused the organisers of furthering party-political

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18. Kostas Parlas, *To Βήμα* (15 October 1977).

19. See «Διαμαρτυρία Κακογιάννη (Cacoyannis Protests)», *Ελευθεροτυπία* (26 September 1977), and «Αλυσοδεμένη η *Iphigénieia* στο Φεστιβάλ—Αυστηρή δήλωση του Μιχάλη Κακογιάννη (Iphigenia in Chains at the Festival: Michael Cacoyannis Makes a Hard-Hitting Statement)», *Ta Nέα* (27 September 1977).

aims, calling the Counter-Festival the “festival of the extremist Left.”<sup>20</sup> However, the filmmakers’ battle was “a political battle, but one characterised not by narrow party interests, [...] but rather by social and cultural criteria.”<sup>21</sup>

In the first days of the conflict, the Minister for Industry, Konstantinos Konofagos, responded arrogantly to the filmmakers’ protests, saying that he could do as he wished because he (his party) had won 54 percent of the votes in the elections. To this, the set designer Tasos Zografos replied: “But we, Mr Minister, have 100 percent of the films.”<sup>22</sup> The subject-matter of the films competing in the two festivals was indicative of the conflict’s political background, with the social struggles of the Counter-Festival juxtaposed to the nationalism of the official event. However, the contrast was also shaped at the level of everyday culture. A right-wing newspaper columnist with no sense of irony wrote about the battle between “formal wear” and “blue jeans.”<sup>23</sup>

## Professional Demands and Fundamental Questions

Apart from the demand for the reinstatement of the agreed-upon festival regulations, the narrow, immediate context included professional film industry demands related to the taxation on Greek films, protection from foreign productions and television, copyright and intellectual rights for film, and cinema’s affiliation to the Ministry of Culture.<sup>24</sup> The Counter-Festival was a milestone in the ferment that in 1986 led to “Melina’s Law,”<sup>25</sup> which would regulate Greek Cinema in the decades to follow. It is indicative that the chairman of the Organising Committee and a leading figure in the Counter-Festival, Pavlos Zannas,<sup>26</sup> would later play a key role in shaping the country’s film policy from his position as president of the Greek Film Centre (1981-1986). It is interesting that the next cinema law, in 2010, was the result of negotiations which began with a second boycott of the festival by another filmmakers’ movement.<sup>27</sup>

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20. Announcement by the Board of Directors of the TIF, 1 October 1977.

21. F. L., «Το πρόβλημα του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου (Greek Cinema’s Problem)», *Αυγή* (9 October 1977).

22. The exchange was reproduced in the press many times.

23. Viktoria Dagounaki, «Έναρξη χωρίς... βόμβες Μολότωφ (The Festival Begins... without Molotov Cocktails)», *Η Βραδυνή* (29 September 1977).

24. Cinema was ultimately placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture in 1981.

25. Law 1597/1986 (Government Gazette 68/A/21-5-1986) on “Protecting and developing cinema, strengthening Greek filmmaking and other provisions.”

26. Zannas was the original initiator of the Thessaloniki Film Festival in 1960, as well as its last pre-dictatorship director.

27. The “Filmmakers of Greece (FoG)” and the “Geroulanos Law,” Law 3905/2010 (Gov-

The Counter-Festival of '77 opened up a broader quest that “include[d] films, their content and form, their functionality for the audience, but also the entire production-distribution process, plus the related state policy.”<sup>28</sup> It raised crucial questions about the definition of cinema as an “art form and a medium for meaningful reflection,”<sup>29</sup> rather than as a commodity, and about why—and on the basis of what criteria—it should be supported by the state.<sup>30</sup> It also raised the fundamental issues of artists’ intellectual property rights over their work, which had yet to be established, and of freedom of expression against censorship, which had yet to be abolished.

## The Great Rift in Greek Cinema

The clash between the two festivals dramatised the conflict between the New Greek Cinema (NGC) and the Old (OGC), as well as the ultimate victory of the former over the latter. With roots in the “lost spring” of the 1960s and the last Thessaloniki Film Festival before the colonels’ coup,<sup>31</sup> born in the early 1970s from the pages of the journal *Synchronos Kinimatografos* (*Contemporary Cinema*, published 1969-1973, 1974-1984),<sup>32</sup> the NGC made its triumphant public appearance at the first post-dictatorship Thessaloniki Film Festival, with Angelopoulos’ *The Travelling Players/O θίασος* as its flagship. For the first time in Greece, filmmakers were tackling the question of cinematic form, articulating a theoretical discourse and asserting with self-awareness their relationship to their art and to History. They understood that their way was “new” and defined the “old” in contradistinction to it.

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ernment Gazette 219/A/23-12-2010) on “Supporting and developing cinema and other provisions.” A whole research project would be needed to compare the events, including the continuities and discontinuities, symmetries and reflections.

28. Giannis Bakogiannopoulos, *Η Καθημερινή* (25-26 September 1977); see also the Coordinating Committee of the 1977 Festival of Greek Film, «Ο ελληνικός κινηματογράφος δεν χρειάζεται ‘νονούς’ (Greek Cinema Does Not Need ‘Godfathers’)), *Ελευθεροτυπία* (16 October 1977).

29. Katerina Anastasopoulou, *Σοσιαλιστική πορεία* (October 1977).

30. Kostas Stamatiou, «Να ενισχυθεί ο κινηματογράφος με πολιτιστικά κριτήρια», *Τα Νέα* (8 October 1977).

31. At the 7th Thessaloniki Film Festival (1966), several films by filmmakers who did not conform with the OGC norms were screened, including *Until the Ship Sails!...Μέχρι το πλοίο*, directed by A. Damianos, and *The Excursion/Η εκδρομή* by T. Kanellopoulos, as well as short films by young exponents of the NGC, most notably *Jimmy the Tiger/Τζίμης ο Τίγρης* by P. Voulgaris.

32. *Reconstruction/Αναπαράσταση*, Th. Angelopoulos (1970); *Evdokia/Eυδοκία*, A. Damianos (1971); *Days of '36/Μέρες του '36*, Th. Angelopoulos (1972); *Anna's Engagement/Το προξενίο της Άννας*, P. Voulgaris (1972).



In a schematisation of the history of Greek Cinema, one may call it “Early” until the end of the 1940s, the films of the 1950s and 1960s “Old”, and the work of the 1970s and 1980s “New,” while “Contemporary” can be applied to films made since 1990. This is a simplified schema, mainly because the periods are not so much chronological as defined, rather, by different approaches to the cinematic medium. And the 1970s, in particular, were a period in which the Old and New Greek Cinemas coexisted and competed. Still, the rift dividing the two is absolutely real and meaningful.

The OGC is a cinema of studios and producers,<sup>33</sup> who view film as a financial investment. And since it seeks to maximise the “saleability” of its products, the OGC invests in stereotypes. With few exceptions, ideologically the Old Greek Cinema ranges from conservative to reactionary. Under the censored conditions of post-civil war Greece, it supported the dominant narrative, leaving out of the picture class tensions and the traces of recent and present history. Regarding its form, we usually and euphemistically call the OGC “theatrical” to denote its total ignorance of the cinematic medium’s potential. It was the main form of popular entertainment for two decades, before being replaced by television.

In contrast, the NGC prioritises the search for a cinematic language, along with cinema’s political dimension. It recognizes the link between form and content and accepts the challenge posed by the possibilities of the cinematic medium. Ideologically progressive, it introduces not only new subject-matter, such as political history and class struggle, but also existential quests and the self-referentiality of the cinema. It declares its independence from the producer. It is a cinema of directors, of “auteurs”, in the parlance of the time. The term’s main point of reference is the French “politique des auteurs.”<sup>34</sup> The films belong to their directors, and the rationale for that is semiotic and Marxist, not romantic and metaphysical. On the one hand, cinema is a language through which one can express oneself; thus, it is the film’s function as a text, as potential art and not as commodity, that is paramount. On the other hand, a film belongs to those who make and use it,

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33. It is not coincidental that we remember the names of the studios—for instance, Finos Film and Karagiannis-Karatzopoulos—and not the names of the OGC directors. We remember by name only those directors who emphatically deviated from the OGC norms, such as Koundouros or Cacoyannis.

34. The key reference text is by Alexandre Astruc, “Naissance d’une nouvelle avant-garde: La caméra-stylo (Birth of a New Avant-Garde: The Pen-Camera),” *L’écran Français* 144 (30 March 1948). The “politics of authors (*la politique des auteurs*)” is a key parameter of the French Nouvelle vague. The American critic Andrew Sarris interprets this as “auteur theory” in his text “Notes on the Auteur Theory,” *Film Culture* (1962). It was introduced to the English-speaking world in this form and formed the basis for the newly established university departments of film studies.

not to those who treat it as a route to enrichment. We can see how pertinent these arguments were to the staging of the Counter-Festival.

The rift between the Old and New Greek Cinemas both brings together and transcends individual differences in terms of ideology, form, subject-matter, modes of production and distribution. To some degree, it embodies a distorted reflection of the perceptual gap internationally between “European/art” and “American/commercial” cinema. The two are not opposed and complementary categories which, taken together, cover cinema’s full potential. Rather, they are different definitions of cinema, which normalise one perspective and treat every other as an exception. They are categories that belong to different categorisations. The gap between them is epistemological and, I think, the most fundamental in the history of Greek Cinema.

## Promise

There is something moving about the Counter-Festival of ’77 and its uniqueness. What other festival could have opened with Angelopoulos’ *The Hunters* and ended with Koundouros’ *Vortex*, while simultaneously awarding Tasios’ *Heavy Melon/To Barú pepóni* and Angelidi’s *Variations* for their directing? But it is perhaps more of a concentration—a distillation—than an exception. Because what, in essence, is the New Greek Cinema, if not this, with its expectations and disappointments, its rarity and its tawdriness, theory and craftsmanship, unconventionality and compromises? Trapped in the vortex, hunters of a perpetually dashed hope, struggling blind, tough-guy heavy melons, obsessive variations on the same subject. And then, unfulfilled promises that remain open-ended. The Counter-Festival is unique and representative, of its time and timeless, a trace of the past and a clarion call to the future.

“Nothing belongs to anyone—or if not,  
Then it definitely belongs to the one who takes joy in it,  
And loves it and knows it.”

Berthold Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*<sup>35</sup>

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35. The verses figure as an epigraph to the article by Kostas Stamatiou, «Το Υπουργείο με παράνομες ενέργειες προσπαθεί να προσελκύσει ταινίες—Ανατομία της κρίσεως του Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου (The Ministry Tries to Attract Films with Illegal Actions: An Anatomy of the Crisis at the Film Festival)», *Ta Nέα* (5 September 1977).

# 2 July 1978

## Author Aris Alexandrou dies in Paris

### Literature and Greek Cinema<sup>1</sup>

Dimitris Papanikolaou

University of Oxford

IN 1967, immediately after the imposition of the Colonels' dictatorship, after years of exile, imprisonment, relentless state (and party) violence against him, the writer Aris Alexandrou found himself self-exiled in Paris. There he lived with his partner Katy Drossou, in small apartments between the 10th and 11th districts, in constant search of work, forced to do menial labour, to work as a concierge, department store clerk, night watchman and cinema movie extra. On July 1978, when he suffered a fatal heart attack, it took very long before the paramedics could move him out of his rooftop apartment, in a building without an elevator. He was eventually transferred to hospital, where he died after ten dramatic hours. One of the most moving poems dedicated to this event mentions: "It is also worth remembering that Aris Alexandrou died at the age of 56, / from a heart attack, in a Parisian attic so poor / that the First Aid defibrillator / could not climb the narrow staircase to get to him."<sup>2</sup>

There has been no film on the life of Aris Alexandrou—even though it was, one could say, a life utterly "cinematic." Neither was his classic Kafkaesque novel, *The Mission Box*, ever transferred to the big screen, even though a number of directors tried to make it happen. In 1981, Cypriot director Christos Siopahas, having just graduated in Moscow, came very close to securing the rights. Yet,

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1. Even though mainly discussing literary adaptations, this chapter is also equally influenced by new work that is moving beyond the "fidelity complex." See Susan Hayward, "Adaptation," *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, Routledge, London 1996, p. 12-17, and, of course, Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, London 2006.

2. Thanassis Triaridis, "Putting on Our Nice Uniform," published online. On Alexandrou's life and final days, see Dimitris Raftopoulos, *Άρης Αλεξάνδρου, Ο εξόριστος*, Sokolis, Athens 2004, esp. p. 278.

as Katy Drossou writes in a personal note kept in Alexandrou's archive, in the end she refrained from giving permission, as she was anxious about the political recontextualisation of the novel that an adaptation would have triggered.<sup>3</sup>

One of the reasons why I begin with this detail from the margins of twentieth-century Greek literary and film history is because it fits very well with a widely shared commonplace: we tend to think in Greece of literature and cinema as two completely distinct cultural spheres. They are considered two artforms the trajectories of which do not cross (or, at least, are not as interwoven as those of poetry and music)—much like a *Mission Box* that constantly fails to be made into a movie.

To be sure, when looking at it in more detail, one often realises that the situation is much more complicated. Even in Alexandrou's own story, upon checking the author's biography once again, one can see that cinematic narration, as a form, preoccupied him deeply and for a long period. For instance, one of his most interesting political essays on totalitarianism, "Professor Wahrheit" (1961), is written as a film script, divided into shots and scenes.<sup>4</sup> Later in his career, Alexandrou would also write, together with director Kostas Manoussakis, the script for the film *Betrayal/Προδοσία*, an official selection for the Cannes Film Festival in 1965. A gem of 1960s Greek Cinema, *Betrayal* was unique for the way in which it presented the fate of Greek Jews during World War II, while pointing at the surreptitious survival of Nazism in the 1960s, as well as reflecting on the workings of trauma, memory, responsibility and the cinematic archive. One of the aspects of the film still dividing critics is the way in which it incorporated archival material (stock) from World War II, showing Germany under Nazi party rule and scenes from the front.<sup>5</sup>

Alexandrou continued working on film scripts while he was in Paris in the 1970s. Among them was the adaptation of a play by Yannis Ritsos, *The Hill with the Fountain/Ο λόφος με το συντριβάνι*, another script that was never optioned, but only published in book form in 1977.<sup>6</sup> The author's relation to film production in the last years of his life seems to have been limited to a brief appearance, as an extra, in Fred Zinnemann's *Julia* (1977). Interested viewers still believe that they

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3. Letter from Tzina Konidou to Christos Siopahas, 2 September 1984, in the Alexandrou Archive, ELIA, Athens.

4. First published in *Καινούρια Εποχή* (1962), and then in Aris Alexandrou, *Έξω από τα δόντια: Δοκίμια 1937-1975*, Patakis, Athens 2018, p. 159-210.

5. See Eleftheria Thanouli, "A Nazi Hero in Greek Cinema: History and Parapraxis in Kostas Manoussakis's *Prodosia*," *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* 1/1 (2015), p. 63-77.

6. Aris Alexandrou, *Ο λόφος με το συντριβάνι: Σενάριο βασισμένο στο ομώνυμο θεατρικό έργο του Γ.Ρίτσου*, Vergos, Athens 1977.

can single him out in the scenes at the railway station, where he may be the man who enters and exits the train alongside Jane Fonda (!).<sup>7</sup>

A decade later, one of the most famous Greek novels of the twentieth century, begins just like this: with its two main characters being in exile during the junta years in Paris and participating in a big cinematic production of a historical film, in scenes taking place in a train station. I am not sure whether Alki Zei, a close friend of Alexandrou while also an exile herself in Paris in the late 1960s, was inspired by Aris' personal history when writing her influential novel, *Achilles' Fiancée* (1987), about the travails of the Greek Left after World War II. But the main device of this autobiographical novel is that the "now" of the story takes place during filming, with the narration being punctuated by the rhythm of shooting. The two characters talk between takes about their contemporary life, while the main narrator starts long flashbacks on her previous life every time shooting restarts and they—as extras—have to stand silent and still. It is during these flashbacks, in the dead time of the repeated takes, that she would remember scenes from the Greek Civil War; her self-exile in the Soviet Union, her return to Greece. This is an attempt to construct a grand narrative of the life of the Greek Left; and it is proposed here as inherently cinematic (and overflowing from what-could-be-cinematic), reconstructed, as it is, in the margins of a film set.

A considerable portion of the post-war generation of Greek authors, to which both Zei and Alexandrou belong, never took cinema off their radar. For them it was a form of art to grapple with—precisely because of its potential for the dynamic articulation of a national historical language. This is well evidenced in the examples I have mentioned so far: in the form, say, of the film *Betrayal*, in the main narrative device of Zei's *Achilles' Fiancée*, in the anxiety that Katy Drossou felt about allowing a cinematic adaptation of *The Mission Box*. This is also well evidenced by the readiness of so many of that generation's authors to work on film scripts when asked, and to make them an integral part of their oeuvre.<sup>8</sup> Left-wing authors Tassos Livaditis and Kostas Kotzias, for instance, wrote the script for the classic *A Neighbourhood Called "The Dream"*/Συνοικία «Το Όνειρο» (1961); novelist and playwright Margarita Lymberaki wrote the script for the clearest example of Greek neorealism *Enchanted City*/Μαγική πόλις (1954) and ten years later co-authored the script for Jules Dassin's *Phaedra* with Melina Mercouri and Anthony Perkins; director and playwright Giorgos Sevakoglou (Alki Zei's partner) collaborated for decades with filmmaker Manos Zacharias. The latter's significant

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7. I owe this piece of information to Thanassis Triaridis. Raftopoulos describes it differently in his *Άρης Αλεξάνδρου, Ο εξόριστος*, p. 247-248.

8. The list of authors who worked in cinema is much longer, and the examples here are only meant to be indicative.

career, especially in the Soviet Union (1949-1979)—with films such as *Morning Ride/Πρωινό Δρομολόγιο* (1959) and the extremely popular *Lovtsi Gubot/The Sponge Fishermen/Σφουγγαράδες* (1960), based on a short story by Nikos Kasdaglis—is paradigmatic of how, for this generation, literature, national/political history and cinema are not just intertwined; they are categories that cannot be thought of as completely distinct. Something similar can be argued for the career of maverick director Takis Kanellopoulos.<sup>9</sup>

Seen from this angle, one realises that Greek literature and cinema stand much closer than initially thought: their intertwinement is significant and goes as far back as the first films in the history of Greek Cinema. Since the early 1920s, in other words, there is a synergy of cinema with Greek literature and theatre that seems to be ubiquitous, as long as you know how to look for it.<sup>10</sup> It intensifies in the decades of the 1950s and 1960s:<sup>11</sup> some of the most influential figures of Greek Cinema of the studio era are literary authors. The celebrated trio of Dimitris Psathas, Alekos Sakellarios and Nikos Tsiforos are not only responsible for some of the biggest box-office hits of the period, but they are also, in many ways, among those who made this popular turn of Greek Cinema possible, by shaping its audience with their writing in the first place. Before working for cinema, all three had been prolific writers whose theatre comedies, newspaper vignettes, short stories and novels were followed by the massive audiences who would eventually swarm the Greek cinema theatres of the studio era.

Greek Cinema's most popular moment would thus grow on the very ground prepared by locally popular genres of literature and theatre, such as the social novel, melodrama and folkloric realism (ηθογραφία). Accordingly, Greek noir would come on the heels of (and, more often than not, adapting) the crime novels of popular author Giannis Maris.<sup>12</sup> Reference and agenda-setting films—such

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9. See Panayiota Mini, *Η κινηματογραφική μορφή του πόνου και της οδυνηρής αναπόλησης: Ο μοντερνισμός του Τάκη Κανελλόπουλου*, MIET, Athens 2018, esp. p. 128-133.

10. In his contribution to this volume, Frank Hess reminds us that the first Greek movies were based on popular literary works, such as the idyll *Golfo*, by Spyridon Peresiadis (1914), and the novel *Wax Doll*, by Constantine Christomanos (1916). For a list of Greek films based on literary works, see *Βιβλία για τον κινηματογράφο*, EKEVI, Athens 2009, p. 100-109.

11. Pace Vrassidas Karalis, whose view is that until the 1960s “most members of the literary intelligentsia remained suspicious towards cinema and saw its popularity as a sign of decline and decadence, as a concession to the vulgar culture of uneducated proletarian masses,” *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. 49. A different picture is offered by Thanassis Agathos in a series of publications, including *Η εποχή του μυθιστορήματος: Αναγνώσεις της πεζογραφίας της Γενιάς του '30*, Govostis, Athens 2014; *Η κινηματογραφική όψη του Γρηγόριου Ξενόπουλου*, Govostis, Athens 2016; *Ο Άγγελος Τερζάκης και ο κινηματογράφος*, Guthenberg, Athens 2020.

12. Anna Poupou, «Η περίπτωση του ελληνικού φιλμ νουάρ στη δεκαετία του '60», *Modern Greek Studies (Australia and New Zealand)* 19 (2018), p. 167-187.

as *Stella*/Στέλλα (dir. Cacoyannis, 1955), *The Ogre of Athens*/Ο Δράκος (dir. Koundouros, 1956) and *Girls in the Sun*/Κορίτσια στον ήλιο (dir. Georgiadis, 1968)—would be based on scripts and/or plays by Iakovos Kampbellis, the playwright who during the same period was modernising Modern Greek Theatre. Last, but not least, the two bigger international successes of Greek Cinema in the 1960s would both be based on novels: the first was *Zorba the Greek*/Ζορμπάς (1964), Michael Cacoyannis' film which ended up creating a transnational myth, itself based on Nikos Kazantzakis's novel *Life and Times of Alexis Zorbas*.<sup>13</sup> The second was *Z* (1969), Costa-Gavras' adaptation (on a script co-written with Jorge Semprun) of Vassilis Vassilikos' docu-novel on the assassination of left-wing parliamentarian Grigoris Lambrakis.

This tradition of synthesis would be continued, yet also re-signified, by the younger generation of filmmakers who appeared in the late 1960s. They would sometimes work closely with younger authors (for example, Theo Angelopoulos with Thanassis Valtinos and Petros Markaris; Pantelis Voulgaris with Menis Koumantareas and Ioanna Karystiani; Giorgos Tsemperopoulos with Vassilis Alexakis). They would make certain emblematic, even though not numerous, literary adaptations—such as *Happy Day* (dir. Voulgaris, 1976), *The Murderess*/Η φόνισσα (dir. Feris, 1974), *The Striker with Number 9*/Η φανέλλα με το νούμερο 9 (dir. Voulgaris, 1976), *Η τιμή της αγάπης*/*The Price of Love* (dir. Marketaki, 1984) and *Sudden Love*/Ξαφνικός έρωτας (dir. Tsemperopoulos, 1984). They themselves would publish literary texts (Frieda Liappa, Christos Voupouras, Nikos Nikolaidis, Lakis Papastathis) and, even more successfully, essays (Dimos Theos, Antoinetta Angelidi, Takis Spetsiotis, Christos Vakalopoulos).

Most crucially, however, they would treat literature not as a field with which to open a dialogue, but as a model. For Theo Angelopoulos and most of the other directors of the New Greek Cinema since the late 1960s, literature became the main yardstick of comparison, a gold standard. Literature was seen as the main framework for the development of a national high-cultural canon in which filmmakers now also wanted to participate. It is worth reassessing in this context, for instance, the modernist attitude of director Lakis Papastathis towards folk and popular culture, as demonstrated in *In the Time of the Greeks*/Τον καιρό των

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13. On Kazantzakis and cinema, see Panayiota Mini, "A Red Handkerchief Made with Soviet Threads: Kazantzakis's (and Istrati's) Screenplay on the Greek Revolution of 1821," *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* 2 (2016), p. 49-65, as well as Thanassis Agathos' *Ο Νίκος Καζαντζάκης στον κινηματογράφο*, Gutenberg, Athens 2017. The irony is that Kazantzakis himself was writing scripts for the cinema in the 1920s and 1930s, and in 1956 he even tried to work on a script commissioned by 20th Century Fox, by the title *A Greek Family*. Neither the latter, nor any other of Kazantzakis' scripts were ever produced.

Ελλήνων (1981) and *Theofilos* (1987). Equally so, Theo Angelopoulos' use of ancient Greek myth—for example, the myth of the Atreides in *The Travelling Players/O θίασος* (1974)—and the recurring image of the writer/director in existential crisis perambulating from one film to the other—as in *The Suspended Step of the Stork/Το μετέωρο βήμα του πελαργού* (1992), *Ulysses' Gaze/Το βλέμμα του Οδυσσέα* (1995) and *Eternity and a Day/Μια αιωνιότητα και μια μέρα* (1998). Even if one does not recognize the direct references to poet George Seferis in most of these films, one cannot underestimate the ever-present and quite expository affinity with the literary poetics of the modernist generation of the so-called “Generation of the 1930s.”

Angelopoulos was thus elevated to the status of a “national cinema auteur;” in the same way in which Seferis had been recognized as the national modern author par excellence three decades earlier. Similarly, Angelopoulos' generation, the generation of the New Greek Cinema (NGC), eventually took on the key role in the full organisation of a national cinematic canon.<sup>14</sup> The literary generation of the 1930s, to which Seferis belonged, had operated in the same way: they had also ended up proposing a new national literary canon. It is for this reason all the more telling that the members of this new generation of filmmakers (such as Papastathis, Psarras and Spetsiotis) in the 1970s and 1980s became the most recognized directors and producers of documentaries on Greek literature and its authors.<sup>15</sup>

Strangely enough (or, perhaps, not so strangely), the elevation of the cinema director to the status of a “national auteur” after the 1960s—and, thus, of the cultural field of “serious national cinema” to a level equal to that of the literary field—stalled, instead of intensifying, the creative osmosis between literature and cinema. I would even argue that the general feeling that “Greek literature does not intersect much with cinema,” which I shared at the beginning of this essay, emanates from precisely that period, as direct result of the cultural taxonomisation introduced with New Greek Cinema. If Greek Cinema was now at last an autonomous national cultural field, the more fluid experimentation on the porous boundaries between literature, theatre and cinema was felt as less cinematic, and it often ended up marginalised or disavowed.

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14. In practice, this meant that specific understandings of cinematic modernism were promoted over others in the formation of a national cinematic canon. This is what Pan-ayiota Mini has argued in a series of insightful publications, including “Reflections on Pain, Loss, and Memory: Takis Kanellopoulos's Fiction Films of the 1960s,” Lydia Papadimitriou, Yannis Tzioumakis (eds), *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities*, Intellect, Bristol 2011, p. 239-254. See also Rea Walldén's contribution in this volume.

15. Eva Stefani, «Η λογοτεχνία στην τηλεόραση: Η περίπτωση της εκπομπής Παρασκήνιο», Dimitris Angelatos, Eiripidis Garantoudis (eds), *Η λογοτεχνία και οι τέχνες της εικόνας. Ζωγραφική και κινηματογράφος*, Kalligrafos, Athens 2013, p. 33-41.



What followed in the 1970s and 1980s is telling: during that period, the most popular screen adaptations of Greek literary texts were made not for the cinema but for television. Some of these became enormously successful television serials with an immense and long-lasting impact on the audience's relationship with a particular author, or with a theme. The 1980 serial *Loxandra* (dir. Grigoris Grigoriou) is a case in point. Based on a novel by Constantinopolitan author Maria Iordanidou and aired repeatedly on Greek state television channels after its premiere, *Loxandra* ended up distinctly shaping the representations of (and nostalgia for) the life of the Greeks in Constantinople and Asia Minor for decades.<sup>16</sup>

No matter their deep cultural impact, however, many of these television adaptations survived truncated, or did not survive at all, having been inadequately archived—perhaps as a result of them not being considered a “serious cinematic work of art.” This attitude started slowly changing in the 1990s, with a renewed interest in the ways in which cinema participates in wider cultural trends and a new focus on cultural genres and their circulation between cinema, theatre and literature.<sup>17</sup> It was a time for the relationship between literature and cinema to be seen, once again, as fluid. A number of important films of the 1990s were now based on non-canonical, unknown novels—for instance, *Take Care/Αντε γεια* (dir. Tsemperopoulos, 1991), *Valkanizater* (dir. Goritsas, 1997), *Life on Sale/Ζωή ενάμιση χιλιάριο* (dir. Siskopoulou, 1995) and *From the Snow/Απ’ το χιόνι* (dir. Goritsas, 1993)—and maintained a subtle dialogue with contemporary literary genres—as did *Lefteris/Λευτέρης Δημακόπουλος* (dir. Choursoglou, 1993). Other films introduced a new thematic or formal novelty that would be picked up by the field of literature at a later stage. For instance, the films by Dimos Avdeliodis, *The Tree We Hurt/Το δέντρο που πληγώναμε* (1986) and *The Four Seasons of the Law/Η εαρινή σύναξη των αγροφυλάκων* (1999), paved the way for the emphasis on micro-histories from Greek rural areas that characterised Greek literature after 2008 (especially in the literature of Yannis Makridakis). Similarly, Elissavet Chronopoulou's film *A Song is not Enough/Ένα τραγούδι δεν φτάνει* (2003), on the trauma of torture at the hands of the dictatorship's notorious police forces, seems to be in dialogue with Elias Maglinis's influential novella *The Interrogation* (2008) on the same topic.

The limited scope of this essay does not allow me to keep adding to this line of examples. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning a moment from 2009 as a

16. It directly influenced, for instance, one of the biggest box office hits in the history of Greek Cinema, *A Touch of Spice/Πολιτική Κουζίνα* (dir. Boulmetis, 2003).

17. This is also evident in new research projects; see, for instance, Erato Basea, *Literature and the Greek Auteur*, unpubl. DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2009, and Nantia Fragouli, *Η σχέση της ελληνικής μεταπολεμικής και μεταπολιτευτικής πεζογραφίας (1949-2009) με τον κινηματογράφο*, unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Athens, 2019.

concluding remark. The films that signalled a turn in the history of Greek Cinema that year—namely, *Dogtooth/Kυνόδοντας* (dir. Lanthimos) and *Strella. A Woman's Way* [Στρέλλα] (dir. Koutras)—were both based on the longstanding collaboration between their directors and two literary figures: Lanthimos worked with Efthymis Filippou, until then known for his idiosyncratic journalism, short stories and work in advertising. Koutras wrote *Strella's* script with long-standing collaborator Panagiotis Evangelidis, an influential queer author, translator and documentary filmmaker.

The “new” or “weird” wave, which arrived after 2009, became known abroad as a film movement. But inside Greece, it was from the outset seen as an arts movement equally distributed between cinema, theatre, performance, literature, song-writing and the arts, with various of the movement's main representatives crossing between genres and artforms.<sup>18</sup> The question about the relationship between Greek cinema and literature now seemed a thing of the past. Or, rather, New Greek Cinema had found ways to finally concoct its full deconstruction.

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18. See Afroditi Nikolaidou, “The Performative Aesthetics of the ‘Greek New Wave,’” *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 2 (2013), p. 20-44, and Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave: A Cinema of Biopolitics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2021.

# 13 November 1978

## Opening of the first Short Film Festival in the city of Drama

### The “Moment” of the Greek Short Film

**Manolis Kranakis**

Film Critic

**A** YOUNG married woman, Sofia, leaves her husband and daughter at home for a while to shop for something to eat and calls in on the plumber to ask him to drop by and check the damaged water heater in their house, even though it is Saturday. And what a Saturday! With a sun hot enough to scorch everything, Sofia reaches the old Athenian house of the plumber; she does not find him there, but she follows his assistant to the inner courtyard at the back. He is sweating and wants to splash some water onto his face; it is getting hotter, so he takes off his shirt, drinks some ouzo and offers it to Sofia; they laugh, they drink a little more, they laugh even harder, they have sex, they are burning hot. Sofia leaves, returns home, does not know what to do, does not know what happened to her, wants to talk to her husband, her daughter, her best friend. But what should she say, and how should she say it? How could she admit that suddenly, in the shortest of moments, it was as if the whole world had stopped; she was emptied of memories, relationships, families and neighbourhoods and became an anonymous girl in the crowd, a body surrendering to desire, emptied of whatever had been there until then, risking never again being the same woman who had woken up that Saturday morning.

The above story comes from one of the best Greek short films<sup>1</sup> that encapsulates in unexpected, yet perfectly understated ways exactly and without any ambiguity the history of Greek short film over the last decades.

Everything is contained in this “moment.” A decision you make unconsciously, a “wrong” word that comes out of your mouth without asking, an oblique look

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1. Katerina Filiotou, *Listen.../Έλα να σου Πω* (2000).

toward the camera, a detour from the straight line of your daily path, identical from day to day. A tiny, almost invisible point in space and time as insignificant as anything in this life that aspires to steal from somewhere all the magic of the world and to become, albeit for a few seconds, the most important moment in life.

A “moment,” with a duration no longer than that of a “short film,” a film that for years, since its official cinematic premiere, when every film was short, has been seeking a definition (“What is a short film after all?”) that comes with a “positive” denominator rather than the various negatives that are widely used to describe it—for example, “it is not a cinematic genre,” “it is not a form,” “it is not like a short story” and so on.

So let our positive definition of short film be precisely this “moment.” After all, this is the only opportunity that a short film has to remain in the viewer’s memory, because otherwise there are very few opportunities to meet it again sometime or to share their “experience” with someone else (the chance that two people might have seen the same short film is minimal) before forgetting it forever.

But this has been the fate of Greek short films that were not fortunate enough to be archived, except rarely or in fragments, so that they can be returned to, studied and understood. They are doomed to be screened only at festivals, in scattered movie tributes, in television screenings (long) after midnight and only irregularly, without a concrete legal framework regulating their streaming. Greek short films, one feels, live more in the memory of their viewers than anywhere else. In this, they are similar to Greek feature films which, for the time being, are also rescued not so much by the state, but by their fanatical fans. These films wait patiently over the years that somewhere, somehow, younger generations will discover them, give them a second chance (or even a first chance in some/several cases), hoping they will become at some point part of (pop) culture, as they deserve (or at least those that deserve it).

Until then, Greek short films will be seeking and, if they are lucky, find legal and illegal refuges; they will be mostly shown in very poor quality versions, and if they are archived at all, it will only be individually and always as result of great personal effort.<sup>2</sup> Moving in concentric circles that have to do with the seasons and fashions of Greek Cinema, some short films are lost forever even before encountering their first viewer; the luckier ones appear with the same momentum as they disappear, tested for cult status and endurance, and before they become

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2. Reference to t-short (t-short.gr), perhaps the only source/database/cinémathèque in Greece from which one can draw collected information about the history of Greek short films. Particularly in the section shortfromthepast.gr, dedicated to the historical development of Greek short films, one can find texts, excerpts from the annual accounts of the Drama Festival, documents on selected films and so on.

again a topic of discussion, they lie forgotten again and wait patiently for the next occasion when people might need them—either as reference point for a director, or as part of a research topic, or as data in some incomplete statistical analysis regarding Greek Cinema.

In fact, with the sole exception of professionals in the film community, no one ever needs a short film, except—in more recent years—for strengthening the “viral morale” of social networks. No one will ever spend time looking for a short film, since, despite their gradually increasing visibility and the existence of countless (and often unnecessary) short film festivals across the country and worldwide, short films “are just phrases in cinema books,” remaining children of a lesser god in a system that favours feature films as the only ones relevant to the commercial circuit and therefore to the viewer, something which is reasonable but frightening at the same time. After all, no one will even come across a short film by chance, unless, in an unexpected turn in a person’s own predetermined trajectory, s/he becomes a privileged spectator, because what else can the viewers of a short film be (few as they are) except eyewitnesses of a misunderstanding that, after so much theory and so much analysis, continues to envelop the genre.

Despite all the clichés attributed to short films, they are neither “works of youth,” nor “early attempts,” nor “prerequisites for a feature film,” nor “revolutionary acts,” nor “a cinematic genre in themselves.” A short film is simply a film. Free from the commercial agonies that afflict a feature film, short films present the clarity of an artistic form that, from the beginning of cinematic history, has crossed genres, defined narrative techniques, delivered masterpieces and even flirted with the commercial circuit. Especially in Greece with its discontinuity (of institutions, policies, historical consistency and so on), short films overcame, thanks to the determination of their creators and their need to make films “here and now,” often and in unexpected ways, many of the shortcomings of a production system that continues to be problematic even today. At the same time, owing to political conditions in the country, “national cinema” and an influential “cinematic current” in the post-war era never built a protective wall against the mode of film production used by the circuits and never constituted the basis for a new era in the way we make and watch films, as was the case in the rest of Europe—as, for example, with Neorealism in Italy, the Nouvelle Vague in France, Free Cinema in the United Kingdom, Cinema Novo in Brazil and the like.

It is enough to follow with a clear eye the lines that unite a short film about King George I’s<sup>3</sup> nameday celebration with the unexpected love story of two

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3. *The Feast of King George II* *εορτή του Βασιλέως Γεωργίου Α΄* (1907). The documentary-journal (newsreel) records the king’s nameday celebration and his guests. It is sometimes attributed to the cinematographer Joseph Hepp, a photographer of the royal family who tem-

boys who meet by chance one night at a gas station on the motorway,<sup>4</sup> or a documentary about the International Exhibition of Thessaloniki<sup>5</sup> with the video diary of a woman who sends a letter from Athens to her husband in the Soviet Union during the last year of the Cold War.<sup>6</sup> These lines are not straight; they intersect in historical periods over at least a century—a little more, if we consider the first Greek short film to be a “journal” of the intercalated Olympic Games of 1906 in Athens,<sup>7</sup> or a little less if we consider the key date for Greek short films to be the first Festival—then called “Greek Cinema Week”—in Thessaloniki in 1960.<sup>8</sup>

There are many more dates that make up the not so anarchic chronology of the history of Greek short films:<sup>9</sup> the first professional “journal” in 1909;<sup>10</sup> the first comedy in 1911,<sup>11</sup> the first commercial success in 1920,<sup>12</sup> the first documentaries in

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porarily went from Paris to Athens for the purposes of filming, and by others to the cameraman Léon (or Léonce). See Giannis Soldatos, *Συνοπτική ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, Aigokeros, Athens 2015, and Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, Continuum, New York 2012.

4. Vassilis Kekatos, *The Distance Between Us and the Sky/Η Απόσταση Ανάμεσα στον Ουρανό κι Εμάς* (2019).

5. Roussos Koundouros, *Thessaloniki International Trade Fair/Διεθνής Έκθεση Θεσσαλονίκης* (1960).

6. Thelyia Petraki, *Bella* (2020).

7. In theory, the first short film shot in Greece by the French cameraman Léon (or Léonce) was about the intercalated Olympic Games that took place in Athens in 1906, commissioned by the Olympic Games Committee. See Argyris Tsiapos, *Οι πρώτες ταινίες του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου (Η ιστορία του προπολεμικού ελληνικού σινεμά)*, 2nd ed., n. publ., Serres 2018, p. 19.

8. In the first Greek Cinema Week, ten short films were screened alongside feature films. It was in the same year that Takis Kanellopoulos won first prize with *Macedonian Wedding/Μακεδονικός Γάμος*, overturning everything that Greek Cinema had known until then about documentary films, poetic cinema and short films in general. See *50 Χρόνια Φεστιβάλ Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης, 1960-2009*, Ianos, Thessaloniki 2009.

9. On pre-war Greek Cinema, see, for example, Frixos Iliadis, *Ο Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος 1906-1960*, Fantasia, Athens 1960; Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ελληνικός κινηματογράφος*, Papazisis, Athens 2006; Giannis Soldatos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, vol. I (1900-1967), Aigokeros, Athens 2020; Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, «1900-1922 Κινηματογράφος», Christos Chatziiosif (ed.), *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ού αιώνα. οι απαρχές 1900-1922*, Vivliorama, Athens 1999; Argyris Tsiapos, *Οι πρώτες ταινίες του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου. (Η ιστορία του προπολεμικού ελληνικού σινεμά)*, op. cit.

10. Special mention should be made of Joseph Hepp from Budapest, one of the first cinematographers who, with his ideas and the equipment he made, contributed greatly to the screening of films in Greece and who today is considered the founder of Greek Cinema.

11. A pioneer in the popular genre of comedy, Spyros Dimitrakopoulos, a variety actor, founded the first production company in Greece, the Athens-Film, and shot four comedies.

12. Villar, a successful theatre actor, directed the film *Villar at the Women's Baths in Faliro/O*

1928,<sup>13</sup> the first Greek colour film in 1949-1950,<sup>14</sup> the first science films in 1953,<sup>15</sup> the first state award for Greek short films in 1960,<sup>16</sup> the first political documentary in 1963<sup>17</sup> and the first Panhellenic Short Film Festival in 1970.<sup>18</sup>

Special mention should be made here of the most important international Short Film Festival in Greece, the Drama Festival. It was first organised as an initiative of the Drama Film Club in 1978. In 1987, after years of rivalry with the Thessaloniki Festival, it gained state recognition. In 1995 it became international in scope, and then followed the (forced) explosion of its extroversion during the financial crisis years, from 2009 until today. Its transition to an (imperative) new era occurred in 2020. It has a timeless momentum as a breeding ground, not only for the contextually New Greek Cinema, but also—for years in a parallel universe—its attachment to something more local and consequently “smaller” than what, ironically, corresponds to its content.<sup>19</sup>

And, of course, one cannot but count entries in the great diary of international distinctions for Greek short films: from the first films to cross the borders of the country, those which reached festivals the world over and were awarded first prizes in Cannes, Venice, Clermont-Ferrand, Oberhausen, Berlin, Locarno, San Sebastian, Sundance, Toronto and so on, or which participated in the European and the Academy Awards. As a result, today Greek Cinema is on an equal footing with other national cinemas and regarded as a force to be reckoned with in the international community of short films.

At home, the pendulum of Greek short films swings back and forth. Sometimes they take the lead over feature films with more adventurous proposals, new political agendas well ahead of their time and new sweeping revolutionary scope. At other times, they enact with characteristic servitude the introversion that spreads like a black shadow from time to time over Greek Cinema, marked

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Βιλλάρ στα γυναικεία λουτρά του Φαλήρου, which has been lost, but was a great success.

13. Dimitris Meravidis shot two short films, the first samples of the evolution of the journal into a documentary, namely *South Evia-Karystos/Νότιος Εύβοια-Κάρυστος* and *Tinos/Τήνος*.

14. Prodromos Meravidis, *Kos/Κως*.

15. In 1953, Roussos Koundouros founded the Institute of Educational and Scientific Cinema with the aim of spreading the use of cinema for educational purposes.

16. First prize for *Macedonian Wedding* by Takis Kanellopoulos and an honourable mention for Roussos Koundouros' work.

17. Dimos Theos, Fotos Lambrinos, *100 Hours in May/Εκατό Ώρες του Μάη* (1963).

18. Organised by the journal *Σύγχρονος Κινηματογράφος* (*Contemporary Cinema*) in November 1970.

19. On the history of the Drama Festival, see the section “Archive” of the Festival's official site, available at [dramafilmfestival.gr](http://dramafilmfestival.gr). Of archival interest is also the tribute «20 Χρόνια Φεστιβάλ Δράμας», *Αντι-Κινηματογράφος* 19 (December 1997).

by festivals and “anti-festivals,” by “balconies” and “basements,” by “small” and “big” associations, by self-appointed “saviours” and “liberators,” by “localists” and “internationalists.” Thanks to the global digital revolution, the quantity, but not necessarily the quality, of Greek short films has greatly increased. These films have left behind moments doomed to be forgotten forever, as well as moments that define in a deterministic way the genre’s fascinating history.

It is more than characteristic that documentaries were one of the biggest sources of inspiration for the directors of short films; in the beginning, animation films were short because of the cost; hybrid films and some of the most prominent specimens of the Greek avant-garde also found fertile ground in short films; queer cinematic language was articulated with force over a few metres of film; and women directors produced more short films than feature films, with great consistency in terms of their artistic achievements.

The gaze stares into the eyes of the inhabitants of Santorini;<sup>20</sup> the emblematic “24 hours of a transvestite”;<sup>21</sup> a man walking on a street;<sup>22</sup> the life of Greek immigrants in Belgium;<sup>23</sup> a wrestler spectacle in touristy Monastiraki;<sup>24</sup> a show about the ideal man;<sup>25</sup> the uncharted love of two men, one Greek and one Albanian, in the centre of Athens;<sup>26</sup> the inmate of a nursing home talking to her television set;<sup>27</sup> a ninety-year-old woman who will claim her “homeland” in every possible way;<sup>28</sup> another woman who will “cross all the winters in the world” to accompany her husband to his last dwelling;<sup>29</sup> the cinephile sexual awakening of a girl;<sup>30</sup> two boys who will test their limits in the micro-society of a school;<sup>31</sup> an immigrant who will taste the “American dream”;<sup>32</sup> a lost child who finds a family in a neo-Nazi organisation;<sup>33</sup> a boy who is not like other boys;<sup>34</sup> and a girl who will spend the

20. Kostas Sfikas, Stavros Tornos, *Theraic Dawn/Θηραϊκός όρθρος* (1967).

21. Dimitris Stavrakas, *Betty/Μπέττυ* (1979).

22. Tonia Marketaki, *John and the Road/Ο Γιάννης και ο δρόμος* (1967).

23. Lambros Liaropoulos, *Letter from Charleroi/Γράμμα από το Σαρλερουά* (1965).

24. Pantelis Voulgaris, *Jimmy the Tiger/Τζιμης ο Τίγρης* (1966).

25. Theo Angelopoulos, *The Broadcast/Η εκπομπή* (1968).

26. Constantine Giannaris, *A Place in the Sun/Μια θέση στον ήλιο* (1995).

27. Eva Stefani, *The Box/Το κουτί* (2004).

28. Dimitris Koutsibasakos, *Hercules, Acheloos and my Granny/Ο Ηρακλής, ο Αχελώος και η γιαγιά μου* (1997).

29. Neritan Zinxhiria, *Chamomile/Χαμομήλι* (2012).

30. Frieda Liappa, *Apetaxamin/Απεταξάμην* (1980).

31. Thanassis Neofotistos, *Greek School Prayer/Προσευχή* (2014).

32. Christos Dimas, *Amerikanos/Αμερικάνος* (1999).

33. Asimina Proedrou, *Red Hulk* (2013).

34. Konstantina Kotzamani, *Limbo* (2016).



last day of the year alone.<sup>35</sup>

These are only indicative moments of a society (of the world) in constant motion, in a perpetual revision of identity, in constant renegotiation with tradition, in continuous new narrations of ancient stories, in a game with form and style that never ends. There are many more Greek short films that did not think twice before following the assistant plumber to that inner Athenian courtyard, on that hot Saturday morning—which, like Sofia, forgot and risked everything for a moment.

The (still unpublished) history of Greek short films is that “moment.”

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35. Jacqueline Lentzou, *Hector Malot: The Last Day of the Year*/Εκτορας Μαλό: Η τελευταία μέρα της χρονιάς (2018).



# 18 February 1983

## Family law changes voted in Parliament

### Archiving the Aesthetics of *The Price of Love*

Ioulia Mermigka

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**A**T THE beginning of the post-dictatorship era, in the wake of feminist movements that, in 1983, had led to the revision of the existing patriarchal family law in force since 1946,<sup>1</sup> and in the context of so-called

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1. The first Greek constitutions of 1844 and 1864 enacted male dominance over female bodies and persons—women could not vote, sign documents, or study, they had no occupations, they were legally inactive subjects, but they should strive to reproduce the nation and to handle the everyday affairs of the household. From the end of the nineteenth century until the interwar years, the first wave of feminist assertions shifted attitudes to the law and, in 1930, a small number of literate women voted and ran in the municipal elections. In April 1944, women voted for and were elected to the resistance government in the mountains. After the civil war, under pressure from the international recognition of women's rights and the domestic attempts to show that the country was in the process of democratisation, Greek women finally acquired full political rights in 1952. However, in the family law of 1940, which was ratified in 1946 and remained in force until 1983, the law stipulated *inter alia* that “the man [is] the leader of the household,” “the man is the head of the family and decides on everything concerning marital life, as long as his decision does not constitute an abuse of rights,” and “the father exercises paternal authority over underage children,” while “the woman has the management of the marital house”; regarding property, “dowry is property given to the man by the woman or by someone else in her favour in order to relieve the burdens of marriage.” The post-dictatorship feminist movement under the banner of PASOK's slogan for “Change” succeeded in revising family law, introducing, among other things, partnership and the autonomy of persons constituting a couple as the legal basis for marriage, joint parental care and the recognition of children born outside marriage; it also abolished dowries and betrothals, decriminalised adultery and de-demonised divorce. It should be noted that in 1986 feminist movements achieved full self-determination with regard to abortions. For the trends in the development of Greek feminism, see, for example, Efi Avdela, Angelika Psara (eds), *Ο φεμινισμός στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου. Μία ανθολογία*, Gnosi, Athens 1985; Eleni Varika, *Με*

“identity politics,” Greek Cinema sought to develop a women’s cinema.<sup>2</sup> In the canon of auteur theory and the “great Greek auteurs” which has dominated Greek film studies, Tonia Marketaki is recognized as one of the most important women directors in Greek Cinema. However, it is interesting that in a 1983 interview she said: “Suddenly, ten years later, I stopped being a director and I became a ‘woman director.’ No! I deny it. Yes, I am a woman. [...] But not a ‘woman director’!”<sup>3</sup> Since Marketaki would not want to allow her gender identity to define her work—and in using today’s queer feminist theory,<sup>4</sup> which helps us determine the limits of identity politics and to seek ways in which gender, body, desire and the archive can be signified both politically and from an interdisciplinary point of view against the rampant (local and global) neoliberal barbarisation—I shall retrieve from the archive Marketaki’s *The Price of Love/Η τιμή της αγάπης* (1984) and shall attempt to shed light on the sensorial and aesthetic underpinnings of the film.

Marketaki, while distancing herself from the more introverted formalist quests of the New Greek Cinema, wished to make a “people’s film”<sup>5</sup> and thus adapted Konstantinos Theotokis’ novella *Honour and Money* (*Η τιμή και το χρήμα*, 1914) to a period film. In Corfu, at the beginning of the twentieth century, poor Rini (Annie Loulou) falls in love with Andreas (Stratis Tsopanelis), a fallen aristocrat who, with the backing of certain members of parliament, is involved in smuggling. Andreas, although he also desires Rini, asks siora (short for signora) Epistimi (Toula Stathopoulou)—her mother and the pillar of the household, since her father is a drunkard—for a bigger dowry in order to pay off his debts. In the end, Rini gets a job in a factory, refuses to marry and migrates to the city to bring up the child she is carrying.

*The Price of Love* was hailed as a feminist film, possibly because, when it was released in 1984, the representation of the emancipated Rini echoed the feminist assertions of the time. I believe, however, that emphasising either the narrational symbolism of the female character’s agency or the gender of the director limits a

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διαφορετικό πρόσωπο. Φύλο, διαφορά και οικουμενικότητα, Katarti, Athens 2005; Maria Repousi, Angelika Psara, Anna Michailidou (eds), *Ο φεμινισμός στα χρόνια της μεταπολίτευσης 1974-1990. Ιδέες, συλλογικότητες, διεκδικήσεις*, The Hellenic Parliament Foundation, Athens 2017.

2. See, for example, Gai Angeli (ed.), «Κινηματογράφος και Γυναίκες. Γυναίκες και Κινηματογράφος», Φιλμ 17 (1979).

3. Achilleas Kyriakidis (ed.), *Τώνια Μαρκετάκη*. 35th Thessaloniki International Film Festival—Greek Directors Guild Thessaloniki 1994, p. 43.

4. See, for example, Athena Athanasiou (ed.), *Φεμινιστική θεωρία και πολιτισμική κριτική*, Nisos, Athens 2005; Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια. Έθνος, πόθος, συγγένεια*, Patakis, Athens 2018.

5. Kyriakidis, *Τώνια Μαρκετάκη*, op. cit. p. a49.

feminist reading of the film.<sup>6</sup> From a cultural point of view, the film refers to the transition towards the predominance of a money economy with the subordination of love and marital practices to money. It also refers to the anthropological code of honour and shame,<sup>7</sup> with the venality of honour and the washing away of shame through money—or wage labour—and eventually to the marriage of Greek patriarchy and late capitalism. Dowry as a legal concept was abolished in Greece only as late as 1983; until then it had been a key component of what we now call “heteronormativity.”<sup>8</sup> Dowry in Greece was not just a pre-modern anthropological survival, but also a way of rationalising tradition and modernising Greek patriarchal capitalism. In the post-war era, the practice of dowry in the form of an apartment emerged as a privileged tool of urbanisation and was linked to the entry of women into the labour market that took place under unequal terms.<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that in Marketaki’s film *John the Violent/Ιωάννης ο Βίαιος* (1973),<sup>10</sup> the murder victim Eleni worked as a clerk in order to save money for her dowry while her fiancé had to first make sure that his sister was provided with a dowry.

While the discussion about dowry is of interest, I would prefer to concentrate here on the cinematic means—realistic, sensorial and aesthetic—by which Marketaki in *The Price of Love* composes audio-visually the image of the dominance of money and how she manages to transcend it, expressively and aesthetically.

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6. See Ioanna Athanasatou, «Οι γυναίκες από τις δύο πλευρές της κάμερας. Προσεγγίσεις στην αναζήτηση γυναικείας ταυτότητας», Diamantis Leventakos (ed.), *Όψεις του νέου ελληνικού κινηματογράφου*, Greek Directors Guild and Centre of Audio-Visual Studies, Athens 2002, p. 159-170.

7. For the anthropological code of honour and shame, see the synopsis given in Efi Avdela, *Διά λόγους τιμής. Βία, συναισθήματα και αξίες στη μετεμφυλιακή Ελλάδα*, Nefeli, Athens, 2002, p. 196-230.

8. For heteronormativity, see, for example, Judith Butler, *Αναταραχή φύλου. Ο φεμινισμός και η ανατροπή της ταυτότητας* (transl. Giorgos Karampelas), Venetia Kantsa (ed.), Alexandria, Athens 2009.

9. On dowry, see Nora Skouteri-Didaskalou, *Ανθρωπολογικά για το γυναικείο ζήτημα*, Politis, Athens 1984; Roberta Shapiro, «Γαμηλιακή ανταλλαγή και γυναικεία εργασία: τα παράδοξα της νεωτερικότητας», Collete Pault (ed.), *Οικογένεια και περιουσία στην Ελλάδα και την Κύπρο* (transl. Marina Maropoulou, Leda Istikopoulou), Estia, Athens 1994; Vassilis Karapostolis, *Η καταναλωτική συμπεριφορά στην ελληνική κοινωνία, 1960-1975*, EKKΕ, Athens 1993, p. 105-108.

10. See Ioulia Mermigka, «Ιωάννης ο Βίαιος και η κινηματογραφική μηχανή της Τώνιας Μαρκετάκη», Maria Kominou, Myrto Rigou (eds), *Οι πολιτικές της εικόνας. Μεταξύ εικονολατρίας και εικονομαχίας*, Papazisis, Athens 2014, p. 109-128. Dowry is often at the heart of the plot of popular 1960s films, especially comedies. This is particularly the case with *Nancy Has Gone Cuckoo/Η Νάνσυ την ψώνισε* (1960), *The Clever Bird/Το έξυπνο πουλί* (1961) and *The Barber’s Beauty/Η ωραία του κουρέα* (1969). See Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, *Οι νέοι στις κωμωδίες του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου, 1948-1974*, National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens 2004, p. 221-226.

My argument posits that, while the filmic space-time develops gradually with sequences of actions and situations showing in a realistic way the oscillation between love and money, Marketaki reifies this realism through sensorial schemata of attractions in editing.<sup>11</sup> Through their rhythmic audio-visual make-up—that is, through the relationship between image, language and music<sup>12</sup>—these eventually reveal an *aesthetic dimension* for the ever elusive and persistent *becoming* of love.<sup>13</sup>

This becoming of love is signalled as early as in the opening credits, when we hear a song by the same title, sung by Dimitra Galani, with lyrics by Marketaki. The song's music is by Eleni Karaindrou, who also composed the soundtrack for the whole film:

Love has no price,  
life has no price.  
Who sells it, who buys it,  
who puts it under the hammer?

Love has no price,  
life has no price.  
Whoever has it gives it  
with a glance, with a kiss.

If you have a little love, give it to me  
to sweeten my life.

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11. I draw here on the montage of attractions and the sensory thinking of Sergei Eisenstein. In short, in parallel with the mental montage of conflicts, the montage of attractions concerns the assembly of expressive images with theatrical, scenographic, visual or audio-plastic features that address the sensory thinking or the emotional intellect of the spectators: "The dialectic of works of art is based on a strange 'double unity.' The emotional power of a work of art is based on the fact that it is reified in a double process: a majestic progressive exaltation along the line drawn by the highest steps of consciousness and, at the same time, a penetration, through the formal structure, into the deeper layers of sensory thinking. The political separation of these two flow lines creates the tension between form and content that characterises real works of art." Sergei Eisenstein, *Η Μορφή του Φιλμ*, Aigokeros, Athens 2003, p. 147. For a discussion of the montage of attractions, see also Gilles Deleuze, *Κινηματογράφος 1. Η Εικόνα-Κίνηση* (transl. Michalis Matsas), Nisos, Athens 2004, p. 217-218.

12. I also draw on Deleuze's points about the relationship between image and sound in cinema—between language and music, in particular. See Gilles Deleuze, *Κινηματογράφος 2. Η Χρονοεικόνα* (transl. Michalis Matsas), Nisos, Athens 2004, p. 251-292.

13. On the philosophical concept of becoming as assemblages of desire and the senses and as a characteristic of music, see Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Καπιταλισμός και Σχιζοφρένεια. 2. Χίλια Πλατώματα* (transl. Vassilis Patsogannis), Plethron, Athens 2017, p. 287-430.

Love has no price,  
honour too has no price.

The first scene of the film shows the police chasing Andreas; he hides smuggled sugar in the house of the working-class siora Epistimi, who is busy counting her savings. It is there that the two young people see each other for the first time and immediately fall in love. However, the song and the close-up on siora Epistimi's savings has already sensorially prepared us for the ambiguous relationship between love and money that will go on to develop.

Class differences are demonstrated not only through the actions and conversations of the characters, but also sensorially; in the shots that follow, Andreas asks a woman of the aristocracy for a favour at a mansion where a classical music concert is in progress. The audio-visual set of the concert at the mansion is an attraction editing schema which, in relation to the previous and following shots, achieves a sensorial differentiation in depicting class antagonism. This occurs because we are then transported to the factory where siora Epistimi works, and the narrator's voice informs us of the hard work performed by the proletarian mother. In fact, these shots allude to the first cinematic images of the Lumière brothers, showing workers exiting a factory.

With Karaindrou's "The Passage of Time" as musical background, we wander around the streets of the market as Epistimi returns home. In her humble abode, she once again counts the money that she will make from the baskets that Rini is weaving. As Marketaki gradually composes the different space-times of the film, the anthropological communal space of the taverna in the shots that follow is important for the sensorial composition of the whole. The drunkard father spends his time in the taverna, and it is there where Andreas asks him every now and then about the dowry which siora Epistimi will give to Rini. But in the taverna, where men discuss politics and the economy, they also sing ariettas, short Ionian quatrains that praise (what else but) love. These musical insertions in the anthropological landscape of the taverna constitute attraction schemata *par excellence* that strengthen the film sensorially and aesthetically. It is also in the taverna where the phrase "damn the thalers [money]! (ανάθεμα στα τάλαρα!)" is uttered by Andreas for the first time, an exclamation that, as it is repeated verbally, comes to encapsulate the meaning of the film.

Then, in the setting of a sunny Corfiot landscape during Sunday leisure, serenaders sing in frame the song of the film's titles, while working-class women gossip about dowries and weddings. In a parallel montage we are then transported to Rini's house, where Andreas has violated the code of honour and shame and crossed the threshold of the house. When this transgression reaches the ears of siora Epistimi, she rushes to save the reputation of her poor, but honest home.

Inside the house, under the watchful eyes of gossiping neighbours, Andreas will ask for a thousand thalers instead of three hundred and Rini will characteristically retort: "We are workers, we need no one."

Then, Andreas will "steal" Rini and her virginity, leaving her "unwed," pregnant and thus dishonoured, confined to his mortgaged mansion. To emphasise Rini's moral confinement, Marketaki inserts two more attraction schemata. The Corfiot carnival visits the neighbourhood, and the images of Rini's moral fall and social exclusion are underlined implicitly by the songs, the dances and the sarcastic comments of the mummerys, anticipating sensorially the reversal that will follow, when Andreas' "masquerades" will no longer be tolerated. The carnival crowd sings: "Long live the carnival, tonight he will die!" Another night, while Rini is lying awake confined within the mansion and looking at her pregnant body in the mirror, through the window she hears the anthem of the *Internationale* being sung by *popolari* (working-class people). From this off-frame music we are transported to a landscape by the sea with the image of the proletarians singing at dawn the *Wretched of the Earth*. Neither the time, nor the song about workers' emancipation that has been chosen by Marketaki are accidental in the context of the reversal with which the film ends.

Finally, at the market, we see the fallen Andreas who has become a fishmonger and is attacked by the shamed mother siora Epistimi. When she is arrested by the gendarmerie, she gives in and agrees to give him a thousand thalers to wash away the shame, crying out, once again: "Damn the thalers!" Rini, however, refuses to marry Andreas and decides to go to the big city to work in a factory and raise her child by herself. "Damn the thalers!", Andreas exclaims again. During the closing credits, the song which bears the title of the film is repeated once again, "Love has no price, life has no price ..."—a song in which the pre-modern concept of honour, modern monetary value, as well as the call for a romantic re-enchantment of the world are all conjoined.

With this brief (and necessarily limited) reading, I am trying to show, at a basic level, that the narrative realism of the film is developed in conjunction with a sensory approach to narrative. Marketaki tells the story through audio-visual sensory relationships, which govern the development of the characters: the mansion and the classical music in contrast to the factory and the humble house; the communal space of the taverna, with the conversations about politics, wedding practices and also the Ionian love ariettas; the sunny Corfiot landscape of leisure and gossip, filmed with the aesthetics of the modern painter Nikolaos Lytras,<sup>14</sup> and the song

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14. Marketaki has said: "The film is in the aesthetics of Lytras." Kyriakidis, *Tonia Marketaki*, op. cit. p. 49. Nikolaos Lytras, with the fleshy colours in the rendering of Greek light, is one of the most important painters of Greek-style modernism of the early twentieth century. It



of the film sung by the serenaders; the subversive Corfiot carnival; the emancipatory *Internationale* at dawn and, finally, the transmutation of the film's political and aesthetic meaning through the repeated exclamation "Damn the thalers!"

"Damn the thalers!" is a reflective figure of speech, which, in addition, is opposed by and transformed in the refrain of the song: "Love has no price, life has no price...." In the audio-visual continuum of the film, the song is heard in the opening as well as the closing titles, and also as diegetic music in the Ionian serenade; it is a key component of the sensory composition of the film. I believe, however, that the song, while being an integral part of the audio-visual composition, acquires an autonomous dimension that transcends the events and thus gives a higher *ethico-aesthetic* meaning to the film. I am not saying that it can stand on its own, but that the music directly encapsulates the meaning of love that goes beyond its divestment and thus, accompanying as it does the realistic, sensory and poetic narrative of the film, opens it up musically to the aesthetic expression of the power of love. In other words, the song does not make the film talk more about love than about money and does not refer a-historically and romantically just to emotion. The song, composed by three dynamic women artists, as the musical component of the film becomes part of its whole and, therefore, is linked to the semantic and sensory unfolding of the concepts of honour, monetary value and gender difference. Given its place in the film, however, the song in its relative musical autonomy at the same time re-historicises the romantic concept of love and sounds a clarion for the re-enchantment of the world, as a way of escaping the history of gender domination.

The above is aimed not only at vindicating Marketaki as a director (and not exclusively as a "woman director"), but also at developing a cinematic pedagogy and method of archiving, which, without a doubt, needs to remain in dialogue with feminist theories and cultural criticism. The argument aims to bring together not only issues of cultural representation and narrative symbolism, but also the formalist, genre, sensory and aesthetic interpretative policies of the Greek film archive. I believe that, in dialogue with the "affective turn," the "archival turn" and "archive trouble"<sup>15</sup> in the humanities, all of which attempt to redefine corporeality,

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should be noted here that the cinematographer is Stavros Chassapis.

15. The concept of 'affect' does not refer to private and internal emotions, but to what lives in bodies sensorially as desire and mediates the relationship between the social, the individual and the collective; see, for example, Athena Athanasiou, Pothiti Hantzaroula, Kostas Yannakopoulos, "Towards a New Epistemology: The 'Affective Turn,'" *Historein* 8 (2008), p. 5-16; Irini Avramopoulou (ed.), *Το συν-αίσθημα στο πολιτικό. Υποκειμενικότητες, εξουσίες και ανισότητες στο σύγχρονο κόσμο* (transl. Ourania Tsiakalou), Nisos, Athens 2017. On the "archival turn" and "archive trouble," see Papanikolaou, *Κάτι τρέχει με την οικογένεια*, op. cit.

we can now better approach films from the angle of materialistic and corporeal semiotics. In this way, we will no longer overlook the fact that a characteristic of cinematic images is a sensory performativity that corporeally stimulates the perception and the feeling, or cine-feeling,<sup>16</sup> of spectators.

In the context of the first mapping of a queer Greek archive of cine-feelings, it might be interesting to ask the following questions: how do the cinematic triggerings (and not just the representations) of desire in Maria Plyta's popular melodramas derive from changes in gender and family relations during the 1960s and 1970s? How does Frieda Liappa in her work utilise cinematic framing, darkness and light to fit in with the genre of melodrama, and not only desire but also the gaps in desire that are filled with mourning, guilt and loneliness? How does she hold up the promise of escaping them? Or, in the experimental work of Antouanetta Angelidi, how is the uncanny as affect achieved audio-visually and intertextually, and how does it work in an emancipatory way for cinematic and female corporeal writing? Should we, moreover, avoid confining ourselves exclusively to women directors and dwell on the 1980s, exploring, for example, how Pavlos Tassios' *Stigma*/Το στίγμα (1982) lends itself to reading affect at the intersection of sexuality, reproduction and heteronormativity; how Nikos Vergitsis' *Revanche*/Η ρεβάνς (1983), in addition to showing liberated female sexuality, also incorporates cinephilia and the archive into the narrative; and, finally, how Giorgos Panousopoulos' bacchic frenzy in *Mania*/Μαρία (1985) arises from his passionate use of cinematic techniques and refers to a modern resistance ceremony?

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16. For more corporeal and affective approaches to cinema, see Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1993; Patricia MacCormack, *Cinesexuality*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2008; Gregory Flaxman, "Once More, with Feeling: Cinema and Cinesthesia," *SubStance* 45/3 (2016), p. 174-189.

1985

The first Greek fiction film made-for-VHS  
is commercially released

## The World Could Have Started in 1985, Had We Captured It on Video Together: The Short Lifespan of Greek VHS Films in the 1980s

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**A**T THE DAWN of the 1980s, seemingly respectable Greek society bore little resemblance to its counterpart during the grim years of the junta. Especially after a series of institutional adjustments and key political reforms ushered in by the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, better known as PASOK, under the blanket term *Allagi* (Greek for “change”) in 1981, the socio-political climate appeared to enter a period of stability, which allowed more space for the occasional grand gesture. In terms of local cultural production, public television struggled to maintain top ratings amidst all this change. Stunted by the enforced wave of socialist Americanisation,<sup>1</sup> it tried to win over as much of the audience as possible with awkward daily programming, mostly based on intuition. The previous twenty years had been a good indicator of audience preferences: its rather circumstantial and transient relationship to Greek Cinema would dictate its approach to other media and devices, irrespective of size, which would gradually shrink over the years.

All pretence aside, television would soon acknowledge the audience's need for programming of similar standards, cobbled together from the faded glories of

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1. Ursula-Helen Kassaveti, «Ο σοσιαλιστικός εξαμερικανισμός της ελληνικής κρατικής τηλεόρασης κατά την περίοδο της Αλλαγής: η εποχή της σαπουνόπερας και της κωμωδίας-παρωδίας (1981-1989)», V. Vamvakas, A. Gazi (eds), *Αμερικανικές τηλεοπτικές σειρές στην Ελλάδα (1966-2015). Δημοφιλής κουλτούρα και ψυχοκοινωνική δυναμική*, Papazisis, Athens 2017, p. 141-180.

the once flourishing local film industry, which temporarily won favour with a large percentage of the public. Cinema—either choosing the difficult task of raising political awareness, or exercising critical thinking, or treading the familiar path of commercialisation—was unable to capture the discomfort that went hand-in-hand with the political and substantive changes at the turn of the decade. After an incidental box office renaissance, notably in the comedy genre<sup>2</sup> and the short-lived transgressive youth trend,<sup>3</sup> cinema returned to its cut-price formulaic self.

As the years went by, nebulous rumours and vague opinions would start to circulate about entertainment being convenient, staggeringly provocative and fully prepared to accept viewer intervention without the slightest hint of criticism or disgruntlement. News about the VCR (Video Cassette Recorder)<sup>4</sup> and VHS (Video Home System) tapes, which prevailed over other systems, such as Sony's Betamax, were sporadic at the beginning of the 1980s and intricately entwined with the lives of Greek seafarers returning home; they would bestow these incredible technological wonders on their families and often the rest of the neighbourhood, like strange explorers: an electronic device that played cassettes, whose magnetic tape was inscribed with audio-visual material. For a moment or even a few hours, the viewers—whether they spoke the language or not—would feel somewhat in command of this machinery that finally released them from the eternal shackles of television programmes.

This technological advancement had played out in the US ten years earlier;<sup>5</sup> with very different repercussions, leading to the establishment of the first production companies that secured the screening rights for classic American films. Earlier still, video had played an important part in enriching television programming with pre-recorded shows, proffered the ability to use a simple video camera to capture family moments and was instrumental in the emergence of video art. At the

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2. *Cunning female... evil woman!*/Πονηρό θηλυκό... κατεργάρα γυναίκα! by Kostas Katagiannis (1980), *Virgin-hunter*/Ο παρθενοκυνηγός by Omiros Efstratiadis (1980), *This is your chance*/Πένα... να η ευκαιρία by Kostas Katagiannis (1981) and more.

3. *The Jackals*/Τα τσακάλια by Giannis Dalianidis (1981), *Wild Youth*/Άγρια νειάτα by Nikos Foskolos (1982), *Turning Point*/Η στροφή by Giannis Dalianidis (1982) and more.

4. Siegfried Zielinski, *Zur Geschichte des Videorecorders*, Volker Spiess, Berlin 1985; Eugene Marlow, Eugene Secunda, *Shifting Time and Space: The Story of Videotape*, Praeger, New York, London 1991.

5. See Gladys D. Ganley, Oswald H. Ganley, *Global Political Fallout: The First Decade of the VCR, 1976-1985*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, New Jersey 1987; Roy Armes, *On Video*, Routledge, London, New York 1988; Mark R. Levy (ed.), *The VCR Age: Home Video and Mass Communication*, Sage, London, New Delhi 1989; Julia R. Dobrow (ed.), *Social and Cultural Aspects of VCR Use*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, Hove, London 1990; Sean Cubitt, *Timeshift: On Video Culture*, Routledge, London, New York 1991.

same time, the video store—an inexhaustible lending library of spectacles—was taking its first uncertain steps towards becoming a booming family business model.<sup>6</sup> In Europe, the same developments initially caused extremely sanctimonious reactions, like the campaign against *video nasties* in the UK—a series of popular movie genres (gore, giallo, erotica and the like) released on VHS—which were suspected of corrupting the British youth with their radical content.<sup>7</sup>

However, Greece was wholly unprepared for such a tectonic shift.<sup>8</sup> The rumours and isolated incidents were not enough to alter the audio-visual landscape. However, older established producers, such as Giorgos Karagiannis and Apostolos Tegopoulos, had glimpsed the vast potential of this new medium and soon welcomed new additions, such as Nikos Goudevenos and Tasos Kotzamanis, to the producers' club, which was anything but exclusive. To all of these industry professionals, 1985 was the starting line of a questionable race with many obstacles, a sketchy, short-lived route to what would prove to be debatable audience engagement. Not counting the occasional releases of badly subtitled Turkish or Indian productions and taped game shows, Greek VHS films, born out of circumstance and pure opportunism, originally called *tiletainies* (from the French telefilm), were reserved for home use only and followed the tried-and-tested recipes of popular Greek Cinema from days gone by. According to oral testimony, the first Greek VHS comedy, *Where There's a Willie, There's a Way* / *O απατών Έλλη... νικά*, produced by Kostas Bakodimos in 1985, created an affective response to many a Greek viewer, who could relate to this work first in terms of genre, and then also in terms of everyday, topical experience. Infidelity, a potent narrative disruptor, was the centripetal force behind a series of comic complications that served to remind audiences that the new and (technologically) improved version cannot but follow in the path of old conventions.

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6. Joshua M. Greenberg, *From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, London 2008; Daniel Herbert, *Videoland: Movie Culture at the American Video Store*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2014.

7. Martin Barker, *The Video Nasties: Freedom and Censorship in the Media*, Pluto, London 1984.

8. On matters pertaining to production, distribution and cultural context in Greece, see Ursula-Helen Kassaveti, *Η ελληνική βιντεοταινία (1985-1990). Ειδολογικές, κοινωνικές και πολιτισμικές διαστάσεις*, Asini Athens 2014; Ursula-Helen Kassaveti, *Audio-Visual Consumption in the Greek VHS Era: Social Mobility, Privatisation and the VCR Audiences in the 1980s*, K. Kor-netis, E. Kotsoyili, N. Papadogiannis (eds), *Consumption and Gender in Southern Europe since the Long 1960s*, Bloomsbury, London, New Delhi, New York 2016, p. 241-256; Ursula-Helen Kassaveti, «Από την κινητικότητα στο 'κραχ': έργα και ημέραι των ελλήνων ιδιοκτητών βιντεο-λεσχών στη δεκαετία του 1980», in E.-A. Delveroudi and N. Potamianos (eds), *Δουλεύοντας στον χώρο του θεάματος*, Crete University Press, Heraklion 2020, p.163-178.

The year 1985 would change everything about the audio-visual landscape for the next five years and would later become a minefield for television and, most importantly, for Greek Cinema. These dizzying developments would leave nothing unscathed, much less its artistry and popularity. Poor box office numbers were a definite indicator, along with the slapdash approach adopted by most commercial productions and the introversion of the films d'auteur. Greek audiences of all descriptions universally embraced the VCR, giving it a place of honour in their living rooms. In no time at all, it would offer it class connotations, too. It was, after all, an expensive home appliance, linked by some to ostentatious consumption. At the same time, the audiences who now embraced the VCR, confirmed in that way their opportunist connection to showbusiness in a decade when even politics were not immune to sensationalistic statements and iconological strategies.<sup>9</sup>

Over the next five years, home entertainment would mostly consist of about 1,100 Greek films made-for-VHS, not including the Greek and foreign cinema movies additionally released on tape after their theatre run. The Greek made-for-VHS films were shot on camcorders and edited on a video control unit. Although they stuck to film genres established since the 1960s, comedy certainly prevailed, becoming a scriptwriter and producer favourite, while melodrama experienced a video revival. The old acting guard (Kostas Hatzichristos, Nikos Xanthopoulos, Giannis Gionakis, Rena Vlahopoulou and others) was now collaborating with a new generation that had mostly emerged from popular 1980s cinema (Stathis Psaltis, Panos Michalopoulos, Stamatis Gardelis, Christos Callow, Kaiti Finou and others). Yet, familiar behavioural patterns, such as infidelity, and stereotypical characters, such as the middle-aged womaniser, were widely reproduced, making the previous decades seem all the more closer. At the same time, narratives were imbued with details from current affairs, often taking on political hues in the context of easily digestible socio-political criticism.

As VHS films were not theatrically released, which meant that they were excluded from the official distribution circuit, video stores became the necessary link between the producer and the audience, delivering Greek VHS films to the consumer. Video stores became prevalent all over Greece as a quintessentially family business, especially in larger cities. In addition to the coffee shop and the convenience store, no neighbourhood was complete without this third component that successfully combined commercial activity with socialising and that cultivated friendly ties between the business owner and the clientele.<sup>10</sup>

9. Vassilis Vamvakas, *Εκλογές και επικοινωνία στη Μεταπολίτευση. Πολιτικότητα και θέαμα*, Savalas Publishers, Athens 2006.

10. Ursula-Helen Kassaveti, «Από τη γωνία της βιντεο-λέσχης έως και το μικρό σαλόνι

The Greek five-year-long “video hubris” was committed without any clear indication of how transient this phenomenon would prove for all involved. The unfounded faith in the success of the Greek VHS film was temporary and would soon reach the end of a road riddled with tremendous obstacles that would cause the Greek video industry to disintegrate a few months into 1990. The opportunism, the slapdash approach and the lack of experience captured on video, as well as the oversaturation of the market with films, production, distribution and video rental companies, in combination with the deregulation of broadcasting and the arrival of private television, were the decisive factors behind the disappearance of Greek VHS films from video store selves. However, the same could not be said of public and private television: in the early 1990s, Greek VHS films—especially those not protected by copyright—were incorporated into television programming, tasked with entertaining local audiences, alongside classics from the “Golden Era of Greek Cinema.”

What is especially interesting is the current re-evaluation of Greek VHS films, not for their content or characteristics, but rather for their contribution to an overall understanding of the transformation of showbusiness, which goes around the same, safe concentric circles. The audience reception of the material during the decade when it was produced is critical to how the latter acts symbolically. This could also be said of the present day: despite the rather arbitrary characterisation of the entirety of the Greek VHS production as *cult*, the space it takes up in popular culture and the attempts to comprehend it help us value the special place it holds in the collective Greek consciousness. Because, despite the fact that the representation system proposed through the VHS ends up creating fictional worlds, it is also a representation system first invented to document reality. Perhaps we were all together, then, far back in 1985, capturing its first steps.

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μας: Το ιδιωτικό βασίλειο της βιντεοκασέτας στη δεκαετία του 1980», *Οι περιπέτειες του ιδιωτικού στη μεταπολιτευτική Ελλάδα*, Society of Modern Greek Studies / Moraitis School, Athens 2019, p. 193-203.





# 13 October 1988

## Protests in movie theatres and riots in Athens against the screening of *The Last Temptation of Christ*

### West of Celluloid: The Passion for Censorship and the Audience in the Role of the Mob

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Film Critic

“THE PEOPLE demand this film be burned!” At 4:10pm on Thursday, 13 October 1988, the first day when *The Last Temptation of Christ* was theatrically released in Greece, a disgruntled mob invaded the shopping arcade that housed the Opera movie theatre. They did not manage to burn the actual film, but they did tear the projection screen. This incident marked the beginning of a series of riots, on the streets and inside the courtroom, that accompanied the release of Martin Scorsese’s film in Greece, well-documented by both press and television. The titular Nikos Kazantzakis novel had been a red flag for Christian organisations and para-religious groups for decades now. Lest we forget, the Greek Orthodox Church had been demanding since 1953 that the author be prosecuted, before the book was even published, while the Pope himself added it to the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in 1955. Rather than an impulsive crowd reaction, the censorious and rather invasive campaign against the film was a joint effort by a number of institutional and non-institutional forces.

Denouncing the film as blasphemous, the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church addressed the ruling Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) party, via Archbishop Seraphim of Athens, demanding that the film be banned. At the same time, clergymen called on their flocks to start organising the activist arm of the church’s censorship campaign, mainly led by the future Archbishop Christodoulos, who declared that *The Last Temptation of Christ*’s hubris would attract divine retribution and public outcry.<sup>1</sup> The protests culminated on 13 Oc-

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1. Dimitris Dimoulis, «Τελευταίος πειρασμός, Ο», Penelope Petsini, Dimitris Chris-

tober 1988, when the raging mob, organised around religious and right-wing extremist groups, attacked movie theatres screening the film. The riots died down over the next few days, mostly because the lawful institutionalisation of the censorious crowd's de facto non-institutional power was already in motion. On 15 November, the Court of First Instance of Athens banned any further screenings of the film and ordered it to be confiscated on the grounds that it constituted malicious blasphemy (articles 198-200 of the penal code) and attacked Christian ethics (article 57 of the civil code).<sup>2</sup> No one appealed the decision, which appears to still be in effect, invoking the right to special protection for religion as "the foundation of the state." For the record, until the afternoon of 15 November, when screenings of *The Last Temptation of Christ* were officially banned, the film had sold 165,000 tickets.

So, what was it exactly that caused so much aggravation? Where did this passion for censorship spring from? What was the specific theological content of the film—a film about the life of Jesus Christ—that was considered blasphemous? It would be a mistake to assume that the objection to Scorsese's film was exclusively or even primarily limited to Greece. The court-issued film ban might have been an isolated incident among Greek post-junta censorship practices, but similar campaigns (resulting in bans and/or violence) took place in most of countries where the Christian Church held social and political power, from boycotting movie theatres in the US and aggressive censorship in Latin America to burning theatres in France and riots at the Venice Biennale.<sup>3</sup>

The bastardised religiosity and anticlerical approach of Kazantzakis' book was bound to provoke the predominant orthodox sentiment, deep-rooted in conservative Greek society. Haphazardly drawing on such diverse writings and schools of thought as historical materialism, Nietzschean philosophy, psychoanalysis, Bergsonism, theosophy, Darwinism and Freemasonry, Kazantzakis depicts Jesus as an ambivalent, struggling mortal, stripped of any wonder, wading through a temporary existence whose ultimate goal is to achieve immortality through martyrdom. The writer himself was the first to draw his sword, clearly stressing the confrontational content of the work, talking about "a sacred creative effort

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toroulos (eds), *Λεξικό λογοκρισίας στην Ελλάδα: Καχεκτική δημοκρατία, δικτατορία, μεταπολίτευση*, Kastaniotis, Athens 2018, p. 503.

2. Ibid p. 504.

3. Stelios Kymionis, «Τελευταίος πειρασμός: Λογοκρισία και παραεκκλησιαστικός ακτιβισμός», Vassilis Vamvakas, Panayis Panagiotopoulos (eds), *Η Ελλάδα στη δεκαετία του '80: Κοινωνικό, πολιτικό και πολιτισμικό λεξικό*, Epikentro, Thessaloniki 2014, p. 580. See also Darren J. N. Middleton (ed.), *Scandalizing Jesus? Kazantzakis's The Last Temptation of Christ Fifty Years On*, Continuum, New York 2005.

to incarnate the essence of Jesus, pushing aside the rust, the disfiguring lies and pettiness heaped upon him by church and clergy.”<sup>4</sup>

The depiction of Jesus as a modern, neurotic and contradictory hero does not wholly stem from Kazantzakis' book. Martin Scorsese and his screenwriter, Paul Schrader, approached Christ through a schizo-metropolitan<sup>5</sup> theological approach which they had already explored in the previous two films that they had made together (*Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*), as well as in films Schrader had written and directed himself (*Hardcore*, *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*). Having honed his skills on film theory before transitioning to screenwriting and directing, he was very concerned with transcendence in cinema, writing in 1972 that “[h]ow to portray that person must be the crucial question of religious art.”<sup>6</sup>

Depicted as hero, Jesus repositions ethics to the forefront of theological thought through the medium of art. Where censorious religious speech demoralises Christianity by proclaiming the mob to be a measure of theological, ideological and political truth, Jesus-as-a-hero constantly places himself before the eyes of God—that is, in uncertainty—agonising over ethics at every step.<sup>7</sup> Jesus Christ, as seen in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, robs the Christian Orthodox community, which looks upon faith as a measure of truth, of any enjoyment. Jesus is weak but confessing this weakness is not a measure of truth. According to Michel Foucault's definition, it is an act of truth-telling (*parrhesia*), producing and manifesting the truth that revolves around the self. Beware the difference: divine truth-telling preaches, assures, commands, judges and asserts itself all at once. Mortal truth-telling, however—the truth-telling of Jesus-as-the-hero—confesses. It admits to what has happened, and one cannot fail to submit to the law of what has already happened.<sup>8</sup>

If we assume that censorious practices are first and foremost discursive—that is, they do not just limit and suppress, but they essentially produce meaning within a historical context—then we ought to look upon the “blasphemy scandal” sur-

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4. Eleni Kazantzaki, *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, ο ασυμβίβαστος*, Kazantzakis, Athens 1977, p. 591.

5. I refer to the term used by Renato Curcio and Alberto Franceschini to describe the schizoid subjectivity produced within contemporary metropolitan flows and ways of life; see Renato Curcio, Alberto Franceschini, *Σταγόνες ήλιου στην στοιχειωμένη πόλη* (transl. Christos Nasios), Convoys, Athens 1990, p. 21.

6. Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*, Da Capo Press, Boston 1988, p. 104.

7. Stavros Zoumboulakis, *Χριστιανοί στον δημόσιο χώρο: Πίστη ή πολιτιστική ταυτότητα*, Hestia, Athens 2020, p. 61.

8. Michel Foucault, *Du Gouvernement des vivants: Cours au Collège de France (1979-1980)*, Gallimard Seuil. Collection Hautes Etudes, Paris 2012.

rounding *The Last Temptation of Christ* as a historical product of the contradictory 1980s, a rupture in the public sphere, a political initiative on behalf of the Greek Orthodox Church and the alt-right to change correlations in their favour. As the mature PASOK-led, post-junta period had caused a series of fractures in the traditionally unbreakable bond between church and state—what with the legalisation of civil weddings, the instigation of a dialogue on ecclesiastical property and the uncovering of a slew of ecclesiastical scandals—one would rightly assume that the church's choice to generate major conflict over the “purely cultural” issue of the fictional depiction of Jesus Christ in Scorsese's film was a pivotal moment in the process of reclaiming its prestige and revalidating its power, a process that would take place over the next few years.<sup>9</sup>

In the late 1980s, the notion of Greekness aggressively reclaimed the spotlight, shaping a public sphere colonised by the dialectics of the “contemporary” and the “dated,” very often used as simple metaphors for East and West, European and Greek, and so on. While it was a period where the Greek social formation was organically incorporated into the Western capitalist paradigm (and its supranational power structures), a mytho-nostalgic neo-romantic Hellenocentrism appeared to be flourishing at the same time, revisiting the past and reinstating national traditions. This new trend of romantic nationalism mostly served as opposition to the established modernisation,<sup>10</sup> in both popular political and religious practices, as well as cultural and intellectual matters. It was spearheaded by thinkers (such as Christos Yannaras, Theodoros I. Ziakas, Sotiris Gounelas and Giorgos Karabelias) and artists (such as Dionysis Savvopoulos, Hristos Vakalopoulos and Apostolos Doxiadis), many of whom originated in leftist post-junta circles.

If the scandal surrounding *The Last Temptation of Christ* constituted an early victory for the neo-Orthodox romantic nationalist movement—both on the streets and in the courthouse—it was also a win for the newly emerging conservative sentiment targeting “the cultural reign of the left.” They now had a taste for it. Over the next few years there would be more and more political and cultural confrontations. In 1991, a blasphemy case was brought against director Theo Angelopoulos, who went head-to-head with Metropolitan Augoustinos Kantiotes of Florina and a large section of the local population during the shooting of *The Suspended Step of the Stork*/*Το μετέωρο βήμα του πελαργού*. In 1992, the Archbishop Seraphim, who had previously led the case concerning *The Last Temptation of Christ*, spearheaded large nationalist rallies all over Macedonia. That same year, Apostolos Doxiadis orchestrated the moral panic and censorship

9. Kymionis, *ibid* p. 581.

10. Nikolas Sevastakis, *Κοινότοπη χώρα: Όψεις του δημόσιου χώρου και αντινομίες αξιών στη σημερινή Ελλάδα*, Savvalas, Athens 2004, p. 121.

scandal over Frieda Liappa's film *The Years of the Big Heat/Ta χρόνια της μεγάλης ζέσης* from his position as audio-visual consultant to the Ministry of Culture. And then, of course, in the year 2000, Archbishop Christodoulos, another old acquaintance from *The Last Temptation of Christ*'s smear campaign, openly politicised issues of religious beliefs by organising rallies in favour of police-issued identity cards displaying the holder's religion. It would not be an exaggeration to say that *The Last Temptation of Christ* riots paved the way for an entire decade of conservative anti-rebellion, spearheaded by the Greek Orthodox Church, whether institutionally or organically.

The fact that this historical timeline, briefly described above, began with the (non-)screening of a film is, of course, a coincidence to a certain extent. But that does not mean that we should not attempt to follow another, more slanted line that requires us to closely examine how a potential film audience was transformed into a censorious mob. In reality, neo-orthodox censors had not even watched the film before effectively deciding to criticise it, although there were some isolated cases of angry Christians entering movie theatres as spectators in order to sabotage the screening, which is what happened at Tropical on 14 October 1988. In a sense, the mob that wanted the film destroyed represented a very marginal type of audience: the disillusioned spectator who would go to any lengths to be part of the film experience.

Weaponising the potential identity of the spectator who physically congregated in and around the movie theatre *en masse*, the censorious crowd of raging Christians and far-right extremists was transformed into a mob, acting *against* the film. If, according to Jacques Rancière, we move beyond the persistent stereotype of passive consumption of imagery, in order to examine the spectator as an active participant in the film experience,<sup>11</sup> then the spectator-mob transforms the arrangement of positionings to such an extent that the experience becomes openly polemic. And the physical organisation of the confrontational experience, as seen in *The Last Temptation of Christ* and other confrontational events of the same ilk, is similar to a right-wing conservative distortion of the leftist-liberal folk militancy, the dominant means by which the masses would assertively protest on the streets in previous decades, fuelled by democratic-controversial sentiment and ideas.

In other words, it was another way for the masses to invade the forefront of history, a warped desire for total participation that took on the shape of a zealous and potentially violent religious mobilisation.<sup>12</sup> In recent years, the results of this

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11. Jacques Rancière, *Le Spectateur émancipé*, La fabrique, Paris, 2008.

12. Peter Sloterdijk, *In the Shadow of Mount Sinai* (transl. Nikos Soueltzis), Nissos, Athens 2020, p. 27.

type of borderline non-viewing can be traced in such different spectator-mass forms as the Golden Dawn's opposition to the play *Corpus Christi* presented at The Foundry Theatre in 2012 and the online review bombing launched against *Adults in the Room/Ενήλικοι στο δωμάτιο* by Costa-Gavras in 2019, a contemporary Greek version of culture wars and digital mob practices connected to alt-right communities.

If, of course, the passionate censors had actually taken the time to watch *The Last Temptation of Christ*, they would have been faced with an ironic twist of fate: in the film's last shot, when Willem Dafoe as Jesus whispers "it is accomplished," the celluloid burns. *The celluloid burns*. And it is not an artistic choice, but pure, ingenious human error. Oh, you impatient mob, you need not have demanded anything. The film burned for itself.

# November 1988

Andreas Pagoulatos creates *Cinema and Reality*,  
the first event in Greece dedicated  
exclusively to documentary film

## From Documentary in Greece to Greek Documentary

**Konstantinos Aivaliotis**

Director of Ethnofest, University of the Aegean

IN 2018, the documentary filmmaker and academic Eva Stefani noted that documentary “is akin to poetry and play, which is to say to the fantasy of reality.”<sup>1</sup> Talking in more detail about documentary filmmaking in 2007, she said that in Greece the term “documentary” is often used somewhat arbitrarily in relation to an enormous range of films including travelogues, reportage, programmes with a folkloric theme and archival material. The documentary, she claims, “is cinema before all else, therefore art. In this sense, it is closer to fiction than it is to journalism, more closely related to literature and painting than to reportage and television. There is no didacticism and pseudo-objectivity, and what matters is the director’s personal view, just like in fiction films.”<sup>2</sup>

Stefani is not alone in holding this view. More than a few voices have sought to introduce this dimension into our perception of documentary filmmaking. But this has proven hard to do, and the undertaking is made harder still by the terms we use to describe this cinematic genre, remaining directly linked to the words “truth,” “documentation” and “fact.” It may well be that no other art form has such a powerful impact on knowledge of an event, situation, or object. And not without reason. Documentary’s harnessing of cinema’s dynamic nature (the

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1. Eva Stefani, «Το Ντοκιμαντέρ και το Παιχνίδι: Το είδος της εκστατικής αλήθειας (Documentary and Play: The Genre of Ecstatic Truth)», *1st Catalogue*, 20th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 2018, p. 56-64.

2. Eva Stefani, *10 Κείμενα για το Ντοκιμαντέρ (10 Texts About Documentary Filmmaking)*, Pataki, Athens 2007, p. 13.

moving image) combined with its evocation of the “document” or “fact” is so powerful, it makes it hard to find another art form with the same timeless impact.

And this, over and above any theoretical discourse, may have proven to be the key reason for the delayed arrival in Greece of the many and varied cinematic approaches to the genre. The several notable exceptions which ultimately confirm the rule are insufficient to cancel out the conclusion that documentary filmmaking in Greece did not find a route to lead it systematically towards a free, more creative, more experimental and ultimately more cinematic form until the end of the twentieth century. It is no coincidence that, among a good deal else, the documentary was treated as a special case, even within the Greek Film Centre's funding regulations, where no provision was made for supporting documentaries financially in the early stages of their development, leading to documentary films' exclusion from the initial creative stages of production.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, this changed a few months before this text was written.

But what happens when two cultural events, two essentially institutional initiatives, affect the course of a film genre? Why should we choose this particular point in time? The answer lies in the fact that these two dates, and these two events, in essence mark a paradigm shift, a change in what we mean when we refer to the documentary genre in the broader Greek context.

In November 1988, the multi-faceted film theorist Andreas Pagoulatos created the first distinct, festival-style event in Greece to focus exclusively on documentary film. Held as a parallel event at that year's Thessaloniki Film Festival, *Cinema and Reality* set out to highlight the genre, to showcase it systematically and to familiarise audiences with contemporary trends in documentary film as much as its history. With a greater emphasis on special sections and promoting young professionals, the event from the very beginning sought to up-end the stereotypical image of the documentary genre, which had had very little exposure in cinemas or non-specialised distribution until then. For Pagoulatos, the documentary had always been closer to the “poetic cinema of the auteur, far from televisual models and undemanding regurgitations of reality which prefer to provide answers than ask questions.”<sup>4</sup>

Eleven years later, in March 1999, the Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival was held for the first time; the first event in Greece exclusively focusing

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3. Until recently, the Greek Film Centre did not accept funding applications for the Writing and Development stages of documentary films. Since May 2021, the new funding regulations have included documentaries at every stage of production and in all funding programmes, for the first time.

4. Manolis Kranakis, «Κινηματογράφος και Πραγματικότητα: Αναμνήσεις από ένα μέλλον! (Cinema and Reality: Memories from a Future!)», *Flix* (21 November 2012), available at: <https://flix.gr/news/kinematografos-kai-pragmatikothta-anamnhseis-apo-t.html> [15 September 2021].



on documentary film, it also acquired an international aspect through the activities of the Thessaloniki Film Festival, which include the Agora doc market. This broadened the horizons of documentary filmmaking in Greece even further, for the audience who could acquaint themselves with documentaries from around the world, which differ from what they are familiar with, as well as for the participating film professionals who lacked the wherewithal to travel to other film markets, to expose themselves to new stimuli and to make new contacts for future projects.

The festival quickly became one of the most important, if not *the* most important factor in raising the profile of documentary film production in Greece; essentially, it served as a focal point for the evolution of a genre that until then had not been popular at all. A key figure in this effort was Dimitris Eipidis: having grown aware of both the general lack of promotion for documentary film and the public's one-dimensional perception of what documentary exactly is, he decided to create what he described as "an institution in the service of Greek documentary filmmakers, to keep audiences up-to-date with the latest developments, new technologies, and changes at the level of film production, creation and promotion; [...] a body to distribute these films to television and cinemas, thereby helping to support filmmakers at this stage, too."<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, in just a short time, the festival not only managed to ensure a place for itself (and for Greece) on the international map of festivals where documentary films are screened, promoted and purchased; it also managed to become a competitive player at the international level, seeking to build itself up both in Greece and abroad, as well as to create a context that would guarantee the event's future. As Brown says, channelling Roland Barthes, this is the process that every festival follows to construct a myth and thus to mean more than it actually implies.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, these two dates marked the change that was needed in Greece. Audiences were exposed to documentaries which, for the first time, reflected a range of tendencies and cinematic forms, while up-and-coming filmmakers gained a better understanding of what documentary film actually means. Moreover, these two points in time provided a suitable channel for dialogue, information and inspiration so that, on the one hand, other similar events and festivals could come into being and set off in pursuit of even less well-known, creative aspects of the

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5. Excerpt from an interview published in the festival's newspaper, *Πρώτο Πλάνο*, in March 2001, vol. I.

6. William Brown, "The Festival Syndrome: Report on the International Film Festival, Workshop, University of St Andrews, 4 April 2009," in Dina Iordanova, Ragan Rhyne (eds), *Film Festival Yearbook I: The Festival Circuit*, St Andrews Film Studies, St Andrews 2009, p. 216-225.

genre, while on the other hand there could be put in place an infrastructure from which a next generation of documentary filmmakers may emerge in Greece.

But can events of this sort really have such a significant impact on a country's film community? The answer is yes, they can. Festivals have grown so rapidly that their trajectory cannot easily be compared to other types of cultural events. Although much has changed since the 1930s, when the first official film festival made its appearance, as a phenomenon, film festivals never entered a period of decline. Rather, there are more and more festivals every year, some of which now figure among the most important cinematic events of any given year. This we could describe as somewhat counter-intuitive: while the number of people who regularly go to the cinema has dropped dramatically, film festivals are the exception and continue to attract an enviable number of viewers over their short duration.

Perhaps the most important element that will help us understand the importance of film festivals of a comparable size are the many parallel forms that they can take over the few days on which they are held. They impact in multiple ways on the cinematic reality, and over the decades in which they have been a constant presence in the cultural landscape, they have succeeded in playing a more or less decisive role in the positioning and content of the films that they screen. They are essentially a platform, a place where visitors can become acquainted with films that they otherwise would not have the opportunity to see; but, as many theorists have argued, festivals have also become an alternative distribution network.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, festivals also draw attention to other important dimensions—education, for one—mainly through the presence of a special “market” section and through the way in which film professionals (directors and producers) engage with it. Ultimately, being active and formative, film festivals can transcend the bounds of a one-dimensional cultural event. More specifically, as a cinematic genre, documentary in Greece has long been identified with its “academic television version,” while one of the first and primary achievements of the efforts documented here was opening audiences and filmmakers up to different paradigms that located the genre in its “normal” cinematic dimension. At the same time, this made it possible for film professionals to come into direct contact with the industry and, thus, with new production possibilities.

Finally, it is interesting to note that, while the Documentary Festival in Thessaloniki has promoted creative documentary filmmaking as an art form from the very beginning, along with the idea of the filmmaker's personal viewpoint, it never excluded any of the genre's other creative strands from its programming (even those “stereotypical” documentary forms with which Greek audiences were al-

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7. Marijke De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2007.

ready familiar), while simultaneously leaving room for other, more neglected, approaches. Indicatively, the cinematic dimension of television documentary journalism was boosted for the first time, removing any stigma from that approach and setting it free from the narrow confines of the small screen.<sup>8</sup> Bringing these disparate tendencies together serves, ultimately, to highlight still more clearly the differences in their form and cinematic language.

Of course, Greek documentary did not appear for the first time in 1988. The beginnings of the art of cinema were closely interwoven with the genre, and it would only take a few years before Greece discovered it for itself. Fortunately, examples of free-form documentary films with a tendency towards experimentation had appeared very early on. Purely by way of example, the pioneering filmmaker Alinda Dimitriou bequeathed on Greek Cinema a legacy of documentary films<sup>9</sup> as far back as the late 1970s, works in which the characters and stories were allowed to position themselves as they wanted before the camera, rather than where form dictated. Lefteris Xanthopoulos<sup>10</sup> chose a range of creative ways in which to narrate political and historical events; their stories travelled beyond Greece to important festivals around the world. The reflective approach that Jules Dassin took in *The Rehearsal/Η Δοκιμή* (1974) and the ecological sensitivity displayed by Yorgos Tsemberopoulos and Sakis Maniatis in *Megara/Μέγαρα* (1974)—works that continue to inspire new generations of filmmakers to this day—belong to the genre of political documentary, which flourished in the years after the restitution of democracy in 1974. Even the historic television show *Backstage/Paraskinio* conceived by Lakis Papastathis and Takis Hatzopoulos was an inspiration, giving filmmakers space and broadening the conversation about a different approach to documentary production.

However, it is the energy generated by the systematic nature of festivals and intensified over time that makes them places where an entire generation—and future generations to come—are set on firm foundations, inspired and legitimised. Eva Stefani's iconic *Athene/Αθήναι* (1995) is not just an experimental anthropological documentary and a typical example of observational cinema, but also a formally innovative, aesthetic work which is representative of a quest that is epis-

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8. Afroditi Nikolaidou, "Greek TV Documentary Journalism: Discourses, Forms and Authorship," *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 5 (2018), p. 41-66.

9. For instance, *Oi karvouniarides/ Οι καρβουνιάρηδες* (1977), *Spata, to stifado tou Agiou Petrou/ Σπάτα, το στιφάδο του Αγίου Πέτρου* (1978), *Fournoi: A Female Society/ Φούρνοι μια γυναικεία κοινωνία* (1982).

10. For instance, *Greek Community in Heidelberg/ Ελληνική κοινότητα Χαϊδελβέργης* (1976), *Yorgos from Sotirianika/Γιώργος από τα Σωτηριάνικα* (1978), *In Athens Today/Στα Τουρκοβούνια* (1982), *Happy Homecoming, Comrade/Καλή Πατρίδα, Σύντροφε* (1986).

temological, ethical and aesthetic in equal measure.<sup>11</sup> Filippos Koutsaftis' *Mourning Rock/Αγέλαστος Πέτρα* (2000) is no longer just an essay documentary that records the changes and consequences which industrialisation brings to an historic site like Eleusina; it is also the documentary that drew audiences to cinemas *en masse*, thereby sealing the shift in how documentary was perceived.

But other films—such as Dimitris Koutsiabasakos' *Heracles, Acheloos and my Granny/Ο Ηρακλής, ο Αχελώος και η γιαγιά μου* (1997), Nikos Grammatikos' *Night Flowers/Nuxτολούλουδα* (1998) and Stratos Stasinou' *Epiros/Ηπειρος* (1998)—also broadened the scope of the documentary by taking a fresh approach to familiar themes such as memory, place and identity. By using new forms, they ultimately started a new filmmaking tradition in Greece. Along with Filippos Koutsaftis' *Mourning Rock*, the first year of the new millennium also brought us the documentaries *The Man Who Disturbed the Universe/Ο άνθρωπος που ενόχλησε το σύμπαν* by Stavros Psyllakis, *Mediterranean Stories/Είδαν τα μάτια μας γιορτές* by Stelios Charalampopoulos and *The House of Cain/Το σπίτι του Κάιν* by Hristos Karakepelis, marking the onset of a new period in the Greek audience's relationship to the documentary genre.

Six whole decades separate 1960 and *Macedonian Wedding/Μακεδονικός Γάμος* from 2019, when Greece submitted a documentary as its official Oscar entry. Takis Kanellopoulos' oeuvre is not just an early example of Jean-Rouch-inspired ethnographic cinema transcending the narrow bounds of the genre; it is also a precursor of the New Greek Cinema. Marianna Economou's *When Tomatoes met Wagner/Όταν ο Βάγκνερ συνάντησε τις ντομάτες* (2019), which explores the financial crisis from a human perspective, broke a tradition in Greece's Oscar nominations, which is not something we ever envisaged a documentary doing. In these sixty years, two ideas dedicated to documentary filmmaking brought more initiatives, events and festivals into being, but, still more importantly, they provided the basis for a Greek documentary filmmaking identity.

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11. Anna Grimshaw, Amanda Ravetz, *Ο Κινηματογράφος της Παρατήρησης: Ανθρωπολογία, κινηματογράφος και η εξερεύνηση της κοινωνικής ζωής (The Cinema of Observation: Anthropology, Cinema and the Exploration of Social Life)*, Polis, Athens 2012.

# 20 February 1991

## Protesters topple the giant bronze statue of Communist Albania's founder, Enver Hoxha

### The Albanian Migrant/"Other" in Greek Cinema

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THE COLLAPSE of the Soviet Union and communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989 triggered tremendous demographic shifts in Europe. The opening of borders in tandem with the signing of the Schengen Agreement ushered in a new age of transnational flows and greater movement within the EU. It simultaneously mandated fortification against migrants from poorer and socially unstable countries that were seen as a threat to public security, health and local economies.<sup>1</sup> By 1994, roughly four million people had migrated across the shifting borders of a changing Europe, instigating an age of migration and globalisation.<sup>2</sup> Foreign migration is an ongoing challenge met reluctantly by European host nations which insist on erecting and fortifying existing borders, geographical or other. This fact is manifest strongly among Southern European countries that transformed from once senders to current hosts of foreign migrants; these countries form the axis of so-called "Fortress Europe." The term indicates a fortress mentality, exemplified by strict border control, exclusionary citizenship policies and nationalistic public sentiments which underlie mass discrimination against newcomers. Migrants and asylum-seekers are additionally met with a bureaucratic nightmare in countries such as Greece, which entirely lack in infrastructure and appropriate integration policies. The Greek state has routinely resorted to strict exclusionary measures, while mass media outlets present migrants as a threat to the Greek nation's moral fibre. Public anxieties

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1. Sarah Collinson, "Migration and Security in the Mediterranean: A Complex Relationship," Russell King, Gabriella Lazaridis, Charalambos Tsardanidis (eds), *Eldorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe*, Macmillan Press, London 2000, p. 301-302.

2. Michael Gott, Todd Herzog, "Introduction: East, West and Centre: 'Mapping Post-1989 European Cinema,'" Michael Gott, Todd Herzog (eds), *East, West and Centre: Reframing Post-1989 European Cinema*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2015, p. 1.

about declining birth rates and identity started emerging as well, with Greeks feeling estranged at the dawn of a “new world order.” With this term, Vangelis Calotychos also refers to the Greek state’s fierce modernisation agenda following its EU membership in 1981, which dictated that Greece “repositions and reforms itself in a new international environment.”<sup>3</sup>

Following the collapse of Albania’s communist regime in 1991, over 100,000 Albanians migrated over a very short period to Greece, becoming its biggest migrant population. For a country accustomed to emigration and without any policies or state mechanisms in place,<sup>4</sup> foreign migration at such a scale was an unprecedented turn of events. By 1996, 300,000 undocumented Albanian citizens lived in Greece and, by 1999, one in ten persons in Greece was a foreign migrant of Albanian descent; one ought to contest the numbers given by the Ministry of Public Order, which expose its questionable intentions to give a facile impression of security to a public terrified of “illegal” immigrants.<sup>5</sup>

The first Greek film to deal with the new world order of migration was Theo Angelopoulos’s *The Suspended Step of the Stork*/*Το μετέωρο βήμα του πελαργού* (1991), which mourns the tragic displacement of entire populations trapped in a refugee camp near the Albanian border. Angelopoulos’s film signals a *fin de siècle* melancholy marked by the tragedy of displacement. It simultaneously mirrors the shifting socio-political landscapes of Europe and contours of mobility in post-Schengen Europe, serving as a site for the renegotiation and reconstitution of European identity. *The Suspended Step of the Stork* brings into relief the actual borders that separate Greece from Albania and highlights their absurdity and multiplication in the Balkans, as though to illustrate the protagonist’s key phrase: “We’ve passed the borders but we’re still here. How many frontiers do we have to pass to get home?”

*The Suspended Step of the Stork* was the first instalment of an unofficial trilogy on borders and Balkan journeys, culminating in *Ulysses’ Gaze*/*Το βλέμμα του Οδυσσέα* (1995) and *Eternity and a Day*/*Μια Αιώνιότητα και μια μέρα* (1998), which also reminded audiences of Greece’s Balkan affiliations, as Angelopoulos insisted on selecting filming locations in the unglamorous northern border regions where Greece’s Balkan neighbours are, literally, one step away. Besides Angelopoulos, other filmmakers dealt with migration, through a hybrid blend of documentary

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3. Vangelis Calotychos, *The Balkan Prospect: Identity, Culture and Politics in Greece after 1989*, Palgrave, London 2013, p. 2.

4. In fact, the only existing policy at the time dated back to 1922 in regard to the repatriated Greeks of Smyrna.

5. Rossetos Fakiolas, “Migration and Unregistered Labour in the Greek Economy”, King, Lazaridis, Tsardanidis (eds), *Eldorado or Fortress?* op. cit. p. 58.

and genre, showing migrant characters caught between borders or on the margins of metropolitan cities, such as Athens, where they fall victim to police brutality. Greek filmmakers aimed to redeem migrants from xenophobic discourse, especially talk of “Albanian criminals”, providing an antidote to intolerance.

What is more, Greek migration cinema challenges the category of national cinema as cultural difference and hybridity become overriding themes. This fact enriches the register, not only in terms of the films’ content *per se*, but through its hybrid creative background which is implicitly transnational. The very concept of national cinema has for a long time rested on Benedict Anderson’s famous definition of the nation as an inherently sovereign and limited “imagined community.”<sup>6</sup> Migration cinema encompasses border-crossing as a defining concept in the artistic and creative context of films. In this respect, art-house norms blend with mainstream genres, multiple languages and cultural and ideological landscapes; several foreign stakeholders determine a creative context that cannot be easily pigeon-holed as purely “national”—a fact that makes identity fluid.<sup>7</sup>

Through their intense fascination with Albanian migration, Greek filmmakers reimagine and allegorise the tense encounter of the Greek nation with the Albanian “Other.” In the process, they renegotiate identity and cultural belonging, often assaulting unreservedly Greek values (family, nation, Orthodox Christianity).

The first Greek/European coproduction to reimagine this encounter was Yorgos Korras and Christos Voupouras’s *Mirupafshim* (1997). The film opens in a bus where the protagonist, Christos, becomes acquainted with Fuad, Victor and Omer. At first, a Greek passenger forces them off the bus with a racist slur to which other passengers remain unresponsive, a fact that renders public indifference quite palpable. Christos joins the Albanians and, three minutes in, the migrants are in Christos’s apartment.

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6. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London 2006.

7. A fine example is Constantine Giannaris’ *From the Edge of the City/Από την άκρη της πόλης* (1998), which marks the director’s major attempt to domesticate the tenets of New Queer Cinema and the teachings of his mentor Derek Jarman who spearheaded British Queer Cinema in the 1980s. Through his groundbreaking preoccupation with queer identity and belonging, Giannaris challenges the very core of national identity, as his protagonists, Greek returnees from the Black Sea region, who are also known as Russopontians, eschew any essential understanding of what it requires to be Greek and, above all, a prototypical Greek man. Another example of a film that blends genres and forms is Kyriakos Katzourakis’ *The Way to the West/Ο δρόμος προς τη Δύση* (2000) which combines theatre, documentary, docudrama, video essay and fiction as a means of illustrating the plight of trafficking victims and strangers from all corners of life. Director Stavros Ioannou is also known for blending documentary and fiction in *Roadblocks/Κλειστοί δρόμοι* (2000), which examines the quotidian struggles of Kurdish refugees in modern-day Athens. Thanks to his masterful application of documentary tactics, Ioannou visualises the longing and visceral pain of exilic life and pays tribute to the Kurdish nation in exile.

What chain of events and intentions lead to the gesture of hospitality?—this was a burning question in 1990s Greece. The abrupt editing, shifting from the opening scene directly to the interior of Christos' home, produces the impression of the "invasion" about which mainstream media outlets consistently warned, presenting Albanians as a threat to the household and, by extension, the nation. By avoiding, however, a linear action-based narrative, hospitality manifests as an automatic response to the presence of the Albanians, as Korras elucidates: do we need to wonder if there is a reason for this? Is it not enough that these people force him to reconsider his relationship to himself and his people?<sup>8</sup> Christos' reaction is furthermore foreshadowing the popular mantra "refugees welcome" which was disseminated in the 2010s, making *Mirupafshim* yet again a timely example of openness to the "Other."

Christos lives as an internal exile, disillusioned by his own country and compatriots. It is no wonder, then, that he proudly declares: "I have only Albanian friends." Christos sides with Greece's most vilified pariahs and sees in them a reflection of his own pariah status. In other words, the migrant "Other" reflects the otherness of Greeks in the age of globalisation and migration. Vrasidas Karalis aptly notes how migrants are the "cultural heroes" of Greek Cinema in the 1990s and additionally highlights their role as constitutive of national identity:

It is almost as though the Greek experience has lost its right to be represented; or even as though contemporary Greek directors refuse to deal with the Greek experience and use the mirror of the immigrant in order to depict the crisis of meaning, authority and purpose that seems to dominate social life, without ever admitting that they themselves *are* the immigrants we see on screen, strangers in their own land.<sup>9</sup>

Korras and Voupouras go a step further to redeem Albanians from prejudice, as their protagonist travels to Albania, further investing in his intense fascination with the "Other." His journey reverses the linear trajectory of migration and breaks with its Eurocentric reasoning which deems sending nations impoverished no man's lands and Europe as a promised land that migrants perpetually orbit.<sup>10</sup> In Albania, Christos does in fact discover the sheer harshness of life in post-communist Albania. At the same time, he meets men and women who share a sense and code of togetherness that make up the Albanian people. Beyond nation

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8. Philip E. Phillis, *Greek Cinema and Migration (1991-2016)*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2020, p. 129.

9. Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, Continuum, London 2012, p. 241.

10. Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Routledge, London 1994.



or ethnicity, Christos encounters and embraces a people. Christos' journey to Albania and back is also indicative of a wider fascination of European filmmakers with the road movie, which gained renewed currency especially in the Balkans, as borders opened, currencies flowed and human trafficking marked the transition from communism to a market economy.

Rather than affirm the fixity of borders, Balkan road movies, such as Sotiris Goritsas' *Balkanizateur/Balkavizitép* (1997), which sees a duo of Greek opportunists travel to Bulgaria for a financial scam, highlight their porosity, bringing into relief the supranational links of Greek culture which make Greece simultaneously European and Balkan, as well as making Greek Cinema Balkan, transnational and hybrid. All these films are European coproductions. They bend genre conventions and break with the norms of the so-called Old Greek Cinema which often featured films about Greek émigré returnees. The latter unreservedly reaffirmed the bonds of the imagined community and mainstream expectations on cultural differences, often with racist undertones.<sup>11</sup>

Goritsas, in fact, was the first to deal with the return migration of the Greek diaspora of Southern Albania, known in Greece as Northern Epirus. His seminal film *From the Snow/Απ' το χιόνι*, released in 1993, at the dawn of the "new world order," deals with the uneven integration of the co-ethnic Greeks of Albania, who were summoned in order to strengthen the "imagined community" in a time of demographic challenges, including a significant drop in the population. Northern Epirus was one of the irredenta included in the agenda of the "Megali Idea," the Great Idea. The irredenta were territories outside of Greece, inhabited by ethnic Greeks. Irredentism commands that ethnicity is co-terminous with nationality and defined in terms of religion, language and culture. "Megali Idea" expressed the goal of establishing a Greek state that would encompass Greek populations from regions that were still under Ottoman rule following the War of Independence and all the regions that traditionally belonged to Greeks in antiquity. According to Anna Triantafyllidou, the Great Idea "represented the political expression of the ethnically, religiously and culturally-linguistically defined Greek nation."<sup>12</sup> The deeper meaning therefore of repatriation was to transform an internally divided

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11. See, for example, the popular comedy *The Man Who Returned from the Heat/O άνθρωπος που γύρισε από τη ζέστη* (Karagiannis, 1972), in which a Greek émigré, who had migrated to South Africa, returns to Greece a wealthy man but estranged from his family. He is accompanied by an African servant, played by popular actor Dimos Moutsios in blackface (a common tactic in popular comedies of the time).

12. Anna Triantafyllidou, "Racists? Us? Are you Joking? The Discourse of Social Exclusion of Immigrants in Greece and Italy", King, Lazaridis, Tsardanidis (eds), *Eldorado or Fortress?*, op. cit. p. 190.

country into a homogenised nation-state. On the value of narratives involving co-ethnics, Dimitris Papanikolaou aptly notes that “stories of repatriation and ‘return’ may be appealing in today’s national [...] contexts. They are easily readable, as they confirm (rather than challenge) stereotypes (*the Greek hero*), symbolic narratives (*the return of Odysseus*) and more stable accounts of collective identity (*the originary homeland*).”<sup>13</sup> These stable notions, however, do not apply so readily in Greek migration cinema.

*From the Snow* tracks the journey of Achilles, Thomas and the orphan boy Nikos. The opening sequence features a tow-truck piled with men heading to the Greek-Albanian border. Through the voice-over, Achilles narrates the sudden decision to return to the “fatherland” (“*patrida*”), making this a home-coming journey. They cross the border at night, through barbed wire fences. At the border, they are apprehended by Greek soldiers and transferred to a makeshift refugee camp that resembles more an abandoned army barracks from where they escape and head off to Athens. There, they encounter the xenophobia of the Greek people and are exploited by opportunistic employers—an emerging Greek urban population that has embraced the pleasures of flexible migrant labour. By the end, audiences have followed a trajectory that transforms homecoming into homelessness. Goritsas challenges the modern Greek ethos and highlights the incompatibility of Northern Epirotes who were ultimately deemed as outsiders, since the strict tenets of belonging that the Greeks supposedly held at the time—namely, *jus sanguinis* (right of blood), *jus soli* (right of soil) and *jus domicile* (right of residence)—did not find any correspondence with the newcomers.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the 2000s, Greek filmmakers continued to target the stereotype of the “Albanian criminal” with Constantine Giannaris’s *Hostage/Ομηρος* (2005) and Angeliki Antoniou’s *Eduart* (2006) standing out as the first films to feature Albanian criminals in central roles. They are shown initially as “illegal” migrants who fulfil mainstream fears toward Albanian migrants. Ultimately, however, they re-emerge as victims of endemic xenophobia, as they become scapegoated by the Greek state which pushes migrants to illegality. Their criminal recalcitrance is moreover shown as a rebellious reaction to Greco-Albanian nationalisms which deem Albanian men as pillars of the Albanian household and nation, or as a slave workforce and potential threats in Greece, respectively. The filmmakers thus shed light on the under-represented elements of criminality, and the Albanian protagonist is redeemed in the eyes of the audience.

13. Dimitris Papanikolaou, “Repatriation on Screen: National Culture and the Immigrant Other Since the 1990s”, Dimitris Tziouvas (ed.), *Greek Diaspora and Migration Since 1700*, Ashgate Publishing, Surrey 2009, p. 255-269.

14. Phillis, *Greek Cinema and Migration*, op. cit. p. 180.

In the 2010s, with an encroaching refugee crisis, the new “cultural heroes” of Greek Cinema came from other destinations, as Albanians became better integrated. Migration, however, remains an ever-pertinent topic, and Greek filmmakers continuously deal with the question of hospitality, in a country caught between European reform, globalisation and national assertion.



January 1992

Frieda Liappa and her film are excluded from  
the Greek State Cinema Awards

## The Suppressed Female Gaze in Greek Cinema

**Nikos Vassilopoulos**

Film critic and researcher

IN 2017, Daphne Matziaraki's short documentary *4.1 Miles* was short-listed for an American Film Academy award in the Short Documentary category. The film was, in fact, her first completed work; at the time, she was a student at Berkeley. And yet, despite a few somewhat clichéd articles in the Greek Press, there was no frenzied public discourse or sense that the nation was "proud" of Matziaraki's achievement. An initial hypothesis is that this was due to her documentary's subject-matter: the story of Kyriakos Papadopoulos, a lieutenant in the Greek Coast Guard who rescued refugees during the most acute phase of the 2015 refugee crisis was anything but commercial. One could also justifiably suppose that cinema, like every other male-dominated zone in the spheres of society and culture, has constantly reproduced throughout its history a struggle to privilege the figure of the important male artist, in this case the auteur who creates memorable works with his lens. Women directors simply do not seem to have received plaudits of this sort, since they first have to overcome the obstacle of their works, as well as the importance of their works, being suppressed. This process of confirming the privileged position of the male auteur is a constant reminder that women can increase the space that they occupy in the cinema, as reported, with data, in the *Guardian*,<sup>1</sup> but unfortunately men retain a symbolic advantage to this day.

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1. André Wheeler, "More Women Than Ever Working in Film—But Men Still Dominate Key Roles," *The Guardian*, 2 January 2020, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/jan/02/women-film-industry-hollywood-2019> [12 January 2022].

## Before the Movie Camera, Movie Criticism

The history of the singular and often suppressed female gaze in Greek Cinema begins in another cinematic sphere—the sphere where the filmic gaze is shaped by the critic's viewpoint. The first official critic in the history of Greek Cinema was Elli or Kalliopi Igglesi,<sup>2</sup> who signed her reviews in the first independent film magazine, *Kinimatografō*, in 1924, as “Iris Skaravaïou.” She was also responsible for the introduction of several important elements into Greek film. Skaravaïou, who was *au fait* with both French Cinema and French literature, would make a significant impact on Greek film criticism and journalism in general. She introduced cinematic terminology and slang from the French, systematised an entire style of criticism with the inclusion of intertextual references as well as facts related to the lives of actors and directors, and was a member of the Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers from 1936 onwards. In fact, Karalis mentions that, among Greek critics and people professionally involved in cinema in any capacity, Skaravaïou was one of the first to discuss the problem of lighting in Greek films, suggesting in her articles how directors might deal with the bright Mediterranean sun and its reflection off the Greek landscape.<sup>3</sup>

## After the Reviews, the Camera

Following the argument made by both Delveroudi<sup>4</sup> and Karalis,<sup>5</sup> Skaravaïou's presence on the Greek film scene symbolises the social dynamism and vigour of the still-young medium of cinema. Many years would have to pass, however, before we would see a woman achieve recognition behind the camera, even though we can reasonably suspect that she was preceded by others. Thus, the first woman we know of, for certain, to break through the barriers and make films that were accepted by the general public—and a large number of films, at that—was Maria Plyta. Although her best-known film remains *The Shoe-Shine Boy* *Ο Λουστράκος*

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2. That both names are used indicates that, important as she was, she is now almost entirely absent from historical sources. More in Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, «Όταν η Ίρις Σκαρβαΐου συνάντησε την Iris Barry, την Colette και τη Germaine Dulac», *Θέατρο και κινηματογράφος, θεωρία και κριτική*, Society for Neohellenic Culture and General Education Studies, Athens 2012, p. 341-370.

3. For more on Skaravaïou, see Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, Continuum, London 2012, p. 28-29.

4. Delveroudi, «Όταν η Ίρις Σκαρβαΐου συνάντησε την Iris Barry, την Colette και τη Germaine Dulac», p. 342.

5. Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. 29.

(1962), she began portraying women in a manner that departed entirely from the dominant model of her era several years prior to that.

Post-war Greek Cinema was still digesting the models that had been dominant internationally in the preceding cinematic decade, as it had to deal with the difficulties of the Civil War and post-World War II Marshall Plan reconstruction. Women in the movies of this era were stars in line with the model provided by the early American musical. In the films made after the Civil War, the protagonist is usually a man who serves as vehicle for ideals and values and is sometimes a representative, and at other times a victim, of an oppressive society. This is even true of films whose political frame of reference is entirely Marxist, like Grigoris Grigoriou's *Bitter Bread/Πικρό ψωμί* (1952), the first film to depict the persecution of Greek Jews by the Nazis, as well as in iconic social films like Nikos Koundouros' *The Ogre of Athens/O δράκος* (1956).

This was the cinematic landscape in which Maria Plyta would direct *The She-Wolf/Η λύκαινα* (1951). *The She-Wolf* is the story of a woman, Loukia, who is entangled in a vendetta that has already cost her her father and that will ultimately deprive her of her lover, Alexis, too, when he refuses to continue the cycle of murder. Loukia is the first female protagonist in a melodrama who has a social role, and she performs actions and behaviours that transcend the accepted gender roles of the time.

Maria Plyta was undoubtedly a key figure in Greek film. She was not only a writer and director, but she also played a coordinating role, knew about lighting and editing, and supervised every stage in a film's production process.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the most famous Greek producer, Filopomin Finos, never tired of proclaiming in every possible tone that women simply could not be directors.<sup>7</sup> Plyta was forced to work on a minimal budget until the mid-1960s and the tremendous commercial success of *The Prodigal Son*, and she often faced enormous difficulties completing her films.

This is more or less how she directed *Eve/Εύα* in 1953. *Eve* is the story of a woman who has a middle-aged husband and a young lover. Apart from the obvious biblical reference to original sin, *Eve* is a penetrating study of how the patriarchy constructs a man through guilt and rejection of responsibility. The weak lover and the powerful husband are both aspects of male power, which seems to be shouting to God/the male archetype through the film's characters: "It was the woman You gave me for a companion who gave me the forbidden fruit." Tremendously daring for her time, Plyta explores female sexuality and desire as a reality which, entirely bound up with social relationships, is independent of men. And just like the next

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6. Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. 60.

7. Ibid.

important film with comparable subject-matter; Michael Cacoyannis' *Stella*/Στέλλα (1955), Eve came under fire from both the conservative Right and the Left.<sup>8</sup>

Lila Kourkoulakou's *The Island of Silence*/Το νησί της σιωπής (1959) marks another important milestone in Greek Cinema. Kourkoulakou was, in fact, the first female Greek director to participate in an international festival, at Venice. At a time when social neo-realism was prevalent in cinema with films such as *A Neighbourhood Named "The Dream"*/Συνοικία το όνειρο (1961) by Alekos Alexandrakis which centre on male working-class heroes, or films which normalise social relations through romantic comedy, such as *Maiden's Cheek*/Το ξύλο βγήκε από τον παράδεισο (Alekos Sakellarios, 1959), Lila Kourkoulakou chose to look at real bodies that remained invisible because they were a poor fit for the new concept of "Greekness" emerging at the time. The lepers of Spinalonga, hidden from the Greek sun, Greek tourism and representations of "Greek *leventia*,"<sup>9</sup> emerged from obscurity. In fact, as Karalis notes,<sup>10</sup> Kourkoulakou directed real lepers in real situations, paving the way for ethnographic documentaries and even contributing to the ultimate closure of the leper colony on the island.

### **The Camera as a Means of Transforming the Female Body into a Symbol**

When the history of Greek Cinema began to be written in the 1960s, it systematically shaped a highly specific narrative that silenced women and their pioneering contributions. As Anna Poupou mentions, this was also the period in which the new idealised Greek landscape was being built, dominated as it was by reconstruction and prosperity, and we are transported from the neighbourhoods and enclosed spaces of earlier Greek Cinema, which also made use of the traditional sights/symbols of Athens, to large-scale exterior shots, the Attic sun, Omonia Square and Athens' airport and avenues.<sup>11</sup> In this context, the new petit bourgeoisie and middle class became the dominant themes portrayed, and women,

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8. Gianna Athanasatou, *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος (1950-1967): Λαϊκή Μνήμη και Ιδεολογία*, FINATEC AE., Athens 2001, p. 192-193. Specifically, Athanasatou refers to the journal *Επιθεώρηση Τέχνης* (Art Review), which described *Stella* as the "most vulgar defamation of modern Greek reality." The presentation of the social construction of women in *Eve* as a "problem" for audiences and critics is also mentioned in Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. 61.

9. Translator's note: "Leventia" is the quality of being brave, direct, honest, and generous.

10. Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. 85.

11. Anna Poupou, «Η ρητορική της ανοικοδόμησης στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο του '60», available at: <https://enthemata.wordpress.com/2011/06/19/poupou/> [12 January 2022].



as well as female sexuality and the female body, were depicted very differently from how they had been in the previous decade. Most of the stereotypes about woman perpetuated by contemporary Greek society would be incorporated into the persona and roles of Alikì Vougiouklaki.

This same model of femininity would also be expressed in films that supposedly negated it, such as the comedy *The Lady and the Tramp*/*Η αρχόντισσα κι ο αλήτης* (Dinos Dimopoulos, 1968), starring Alikì Vougiouklaki, and *Miss Director/ Δεσποινίς Διευθυντής* (Dinos Dimopoulos, 1964), starring Tzeni Karezi. While these films focus on women who are pushing back against social norms (Vougiouklaki runs away from home to avoid a marriage, and Karezi tries to impose herself in a male-dominated workspace), their plots are driven by, and culminate in, the reassertion of traditional gender models and male and female social roles.

On *Miss Director*, in particular, Yvonne-Alexia Kosma writes: "Not only does she [the protagonist, Lila] not view the recognition and admiration she receives for her education, dynamism and professional success as flattering to her as an individual, and specifically as a woman, she actually feels that it undermines her role as 'a desirable woman,' insofar as they are traits which, in the context of such a classification, are traditionally attributed to men."<sup>12</sup>

The "golden decade of Greek Cinema" would have to end before we would see the female gaze re-emerge in film direction. The most important director of the era was Tonia Marketaki. The key feature of the era in which Marketaki was active, the 1970s and 1980s, was cinema's replacement by television as a medium of mass culture. Marketaki spoke both creative languages through her films and her work for television. Her work consolidated the paradigm shift that we define as the New Greek Cinema, whose main exponent was Theodoros Angelopoulos. If *Reconstruction/Αναπαράσταση* (1970) was the film that marked the shift to a new way of looking at the Greek landscape, far from the sun and contrasting white and blue, with its introduction of darker motifs and its focus on the protagonists' inner struggle, then this same game of shadows and interiority of characters would be expressed even more dramatically in Marketaki's work.

Marketaki's masterpiece, a film that is generally suppressed, is *John the Violent/ Ιωάννης ο Βίαιος* (1973). The film deals with the life of women and with femicide, at a time when even the term was unthinkable. Divided into two parts, the film tells the story of the murder of a woman, Eleni, by a man, John. No reasons are given at first; these come in the second part, in which we watch his subsequent

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12. Yvonne-Alexia Kosma, *Εικόνες για το φύλο μέσα από τον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο στην δεκαετία του '60: Φύλο και σεξουαλικότητα στο είδος της αισθηματικής κομεντί (1959-1967)*, unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Athens, 2007, p. III, available at: <http://repository.edulll.gr/I382> [12 January 2022].

interrogation and trial. The film's themes are many and multi-faceted: patriarchy, law and its enforcement, mental illness.

As Sofia Xygekaki has written, it is indicative that until recently the majority of film critics and historians have silenced the first half of the film.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the first half of the film, which groundbreakingly combines flashbacks with testimony from the victim's "social environment," outlines the image of Eleni: a woman, a worker, poor, perhaps a little "easy," as her fiancé seems to be worried she might not be a virgin. In an hour's screen time, the feminist discourse of the era emerges condensed, not in the form of an explicitly political combination of discourse and image, but as a meaningful representation of the men who make women oppressed.

Marketaki's feminist cinema has the sincere sensitivity that allows it to speak about the victim and the perpetrator simultaneously in the context of social coercion and the exercise of power through the Law, overcoming the dichotomy between good and evil and aligning itself with the victim. This difficult cinematic language and dialectic is made possible by the way in which Marketaki sees the oppression that women in general experience, since she manages to transcend the possible class divisions: the women in Marketaki's films exist and live in an oppressive world with very few ways out. The Eleni of the film is Woman; she is turned into a symbol, which is why over the course of the film we never actually learn anything about the victim through the "testimonies," just about the components from which the era's grid of patriarchal oppression and obligations is built.

Marketaki's other films comprise an ongoing cinematic "ni santas, ni putas";<sup>14</sup> they were a poor fit for the era in which they were made, which is why they had been forgotten until recently. She would shoot her most celebrated film, *The Price of Love/H τιμή της αγάπης* (1984) in the 1980s. As Achilleas Kyriakidis aptly notes, in *The Price of Love*, Marketaki managed to have realism coexist harmoniously with the poetry of symbols.<sup>15</sup> *The Price of Love* is an adaptation of Konstantinos Theotokis' novel *Honour and Money/H τιμή και το χρήμα* (1914). Marketaki made Theotokis' political writing her own and added elements that tormented her as questions. In a continuation of the quest reflected in the scenes of *John the Violent*, Marketaki persisted in pondering how marriage and dowry function as social mechanisms of oppression. Unlike Eleni in *John the Violent*, who is portrayed as a perpetually oppressed subject, in *The Price of Love* Rini (the protagonist) is more

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13. Sofia Xygekaki, «Το βλέμμα της Τόνιας Μαρκετάκη», *Η εποχή*, 14 January 2018, available at: [shorturl.at/rEFU5](https://shorturl.at/rEFU5) [12 January 2022].

14. "Neither saints, nor whores." A key slogan from the modern struggle for female emancipation in the Spanish-speaking world.

15. Achilleas Kyriakidis (ed.), «Τώνια Μαρκετάκη», 35th Thessaloniki Film Festival—Greek Directors' Guild, Thessaloniki 1994, p. 26.

assertive and sticks to her guns until the very end.

A second great female director who would divide audiences and critics alike is Frieda Liappa. Her oeuvre, internal and psychoanalytic in every sense of the word, had its beginnings in the 1980s and ended with her death in 1994. The two films that define her cinematic outlook are *Love Wanders in the Night/Οι δρόμοι της αγάπης είναι νυχτερινοί* (1981) and *The Years of the Big Heat/Τα χρόνια της μεγάλης ζέσης* (1991). Thirty years—and a return to democracy—on from Maria Plyta, Liappa focused on erotic desire from the woman's point of view.

In her first film, she explored women's loneliness, the female mentality that results from social-family relationships and from the restrictions placed on love for women and internalised by them. It is not a feminist film in the narrow sense of the word, but it is the most important attempt to convey the multiple roles (wife, sister, mistress) that women inhabit and the multiple oppressions they suffer within the economic, social and cultural system of the time.

Her second important film, *The Years of the Big Heat*, is known primarily for the scandal of its being indirectly censored due to a scene in which Liappa was accused of abusing an infant—an accusation that was rejected by the court. As Evangelia Themeli notes, Liappa's film experienced suppression because it broached issues still taboo in Greek society.<sup>16</sup> An important example is a scene depicting female masturbation, and there is also an erotic scene purportedly experienced when the protagonists were still in their childhood (the shooting of which became the centre of a huge debate).

Liappa and this important film complete a study of the female take on love, which was ignored and consciously suppressed. Although those well-disposed to the film read into the attack the neoliberal offensive and private capital's attempts to force its way into artistic production, they missed an important element: the submission of the female gaze on women and female eroticism to mainstream, dominant (read male) reception/perception—which, in this case, also applied censorship. We also find this mainstream take on female eroticism somewhat later in Olga Malea's *The Cow's Orgasm/Ο οργασμός της αγελάδας* (1996) and *The Mating Game/Η διακριτική γοητεία των αρσενικών* (1999), along with other works from the same period. Evidence of this shift can be seen in the portrayal of female masturbation in *The Years of the Big Heat* and *The Mating Game*, respectively. Although both directors are women, Malea's choice clearly leans, I think, towards the male perception, as this is portrayed in the products of the porn industry.<sup>17</sup>

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16. Evangelia Themeli, «Φρίντα Λιάππα: η δημιουργός αντιμέτωπη με την λογοκρισία», paper presented at the 30th Panhellenic Conference of the Federation of Greek Film Clubs, which addressed *The Female Artists in Greek Cinema*, Heraklion, 2-4 June 2017.

17. Antonia Kazakopoulou de Senna believes that the main tools that Malea uses to decon-

## The Female Gaze Observes: The Modern Documentary

Part of the ongoing conversation on “whether women can direct” also includes the (explicit or implicit) assumption that, since the space of the director/creator of great narratives is strictly male-dominated, this leaves room for women in the cinema of observation—that is, in documentaries.

The 1990s and 2000s saw a number of important women documentary filmmakers at work in Greece, including Alinda Dimitriou and Eva Stefani. With more than fifty documentaries to her credit, Alinda Dimitriou is considered the foremost exponent of the genre. Apart from her well-known and much-loved trilogy *Birds in the Mire*/Πουλιά στο βάλτο, *Among the Rocks*/Η ζωή στους βράχους and *The Girls of the Rain*/Τα κορίτσια της βροχής, which show the important role of women in the modern socio-political struggles of the twentieth century, many of her documentaries focus on highlighting the female temperament and mindset, as well as its impact on society. An illustrative example is the ethnographic documentary *Fournoi: A Female Society*/Φούρνοι: μια γυναικεία κοινωνία, which uses a dense cinematic idiom to convey the position of Fournoi’s women through the centuries and to explain why the island differs from the rest of Greece.

Another important female figure in Greek documentary filmmaking is Eva Stefani. Since her very first work, *Athene*/Αθήναι (1995), she has been demonstrating how the female gaze can offer a different take on a film’s central theme. In *Athene*, the everyday heroes are captured in their natural environment in and around Athens’ main railway station. Using tight framing, the film shows poor devils, the homeless, beggars, flâneurs, as well as people who are “stuck” in the station and the security it provides. Stefani’s gaze is tender but also penetrating and does not become intrusive, even when she is filming a homeless woman preparing to bed down for the night.

## The Female Gaze in the Greek Weird Wave

The last significant suppression of the female gaze in Greek Cinema is taking place now in relation to the ongoing Weird Wave. When looking through the catalogues produced for the major Greek film festivals over the past twenty years,

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struct the patriarchal discourse are humour and comedy. But I will insist that this scene (and others) incorporates the male gaze. For more on the topic, see Antonia Kazakopoulou de Senna, *Women’s Popular Cinema in Greece: The Case of Olga Malea*, unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Reading, 2014, p. 67, available at: [https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/40460/1/12022272\\_Kazakopoulou\\_De\\_Senna\\_thesis.pdf](https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/40460/1/12022272_Kazakopoulou_De_Senna_thesis.pdf) [12 January 2022].

one will see that female directors have multiplied and are now represented in almost every genre. In fact, if we take Benjamin's interpretation of Brecht's epic theatre literally, we will understand that the production process plays an important role in every new trend that emerges in the performing arts, not only in regard to its content.<sup>18</sup> The Greek Weird Wave is not, therefore, the result of one or more directors who have become successful enough to compete for Oscars in recent years. It has been around since 1997, when Athina Rachel Tsangari's Haos Film production company was born.<sup>19</sup> Tsangari's contributions to contemporary Greek Cinema as a producer, director and writer—indeed, in almost every role in the cinema industry—has not received the visibility it deserves. An important moment in her artistic career is the film *Attenberg* (2010). If Lanthimos' *Dogtooth/Κυνόδοντας* (2009) is a film that views the family and the turmoil that stems from the imposition of the norm of psychosexual development from the male point of view, then *Attenberg* is its lyrical female counterpart.<sup>20</sup>

There is no comparable coincidence in the history of Greek Cinema: virtually side by side chronologically, too, and under the same roof, we find the male and female gaze on the same issue: family, relationships, sexuality. Unfortunately, the “winner” thus far (in the minds of audiences and critics) has been the male view which spotlights the Names of the Father and their symbolic power.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, the female gaze with its radical psychosocial dynamic still has to find its rightful place, since it still is subject to suppression.

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18. Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, Verso, London 1998, p. 2-15.

19. Haos Film is the production company that provided the primary support for Yorgos Lanthimos' Greek films (*Kinetta/Κινέττα*, *Dogtooth* and *Alps/Άλπεις*), important documentaries such as *Palestine Blues* (2006) by Nida Sinnokrot, and many other works within the broader performing arts.

20. See also Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave: A Cinema of Biopolitics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2021, p. 117-123.

21. Tonia Kazakopoulou, “The Mother Accomplice: Questions of Representation in *Dogtooth* and *Miss Violence*,” *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* 2/2 (2016), p. 187-200.



# 20 November 1994

## Alexis Bistikas on stage at the 35th Thessaloniki International Film Festival's Award Ceremony

### HIV/AIDS: The Lost Representation

**Giorgos Sampatakakis**

University of Patras

LET US commemorate three instances of the presence of Alexis Bistikas in the first half of the 1990s and the historical wound of all the untimely deaths caused by a disease of proud struggles and endless phobic stigmatisation.

I. *The Dawn/Το χάραμα*, Alexis Bistikas' first feature film, premiered in Greek theatres in the winter of 1994. The director was scheduled to make an appearance on the evening news as part of the film's promotional campaign. The segment was delayed but, despite technical issues with sound, he appeared live from his hospital bed. After bidding the chirpy director goodnight, the news anchor—having made sure he could no longer hear her—went off on a tangent about Greek backward thinking, banging her desk out of sheer frustration. She had just been told that the crew refused to approach the director to hook up his microphone. Alexis Bistikas died of AIDS-related complications in September 1995, almost nine months later. For what is worth, the news anchor was Liana Kanelli, and all of the above is based on hopefully accurate personal memories.

In terms of Bistikas' film credo and aesthetics, *The Dawn* was a bizarre return to the trappings of classic Greek Cinema, a popular film able to promote a more “normative” side of its director. The nosophobic and vilifying climate of the era<sup>1</sup>

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I. For a cultural history of HIV/AIDS in Greece, see Dimitris Papanikolaou, Giorgos Sampatakakis, «Η λογοκρισία ως πολιτισμική ιστορία: Το HIV/AIDS στην Ελλάδα (1982-2000)», *Αρχειοτάξιο* 22 (2020), p. 163-182. Also see Giorgos Sampatakakis, *HIV/AIDS, Θέατρο και Τραύμα στην Ελλάδα*, Sokolis, Athens 2021. On HIV/AIDS in Greek Cinema, see Konstantinos Kyriakos,

had already defined HIV/AIDS as a shameful (that is, homosexual) infectious disease, and Bistikas' HIV-positive visibility disrupted the regular flow of moral panic and denial. *The Dawn* was certainly not the director's most daring work. It had nothing of his earlier short and medium-length films *The Marbles*/*Τα μάρμαρα* (1989), *The Tie*/*Η γραβάτα* (1991), or *The Clearing*/*Το ξέφωτο* (1993), where Derek Jarman, visibly weakened by the disease, walks alone in the park of Hampstead Heath. One could, of course, juxtapose the openly queer *The Clearing* and *The Dawn*, only to realise the irony with which Bistikas was proposing a reversal of the urban landscape: from the green expanses of London's cruising sites to daybreak in Athens. *The Dawn*, however, was also a return to the form and the comfort of 1960s cinema with its larger-than-life female leads, and to a homosexual sensibility hidden behind camp routines, coloured lights and wild bouzouki nights. I do not mean to say that towards the end of his life Bistikas became a born-again Dalianidis. On the contrary, *The Dawn* was a carefully laid trap: it spoke to the origins of his own poetic sensibilities using a tried-and-true recipe in order to deliver the ideological prequel to his own filmic self, *like a well-printed script*. This verse, lifted from the closing poem in Bistikas' emblematic collection *Ευαγγελισμός* [*Annunciation*],<sup>2</sup> was nailed on a last prayer before the order of a final acceptance was restored, hoping against hope for annunciation, just before *The Dawn*:

I woke up like a well-printed script.  
The night outside asked  
for nothing, the city was alright. All it needed  
was the end of the prayer: "In the name of  
the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Ironically, *The Dawn* dissects the small hours of the morning, when in reality it awakens us to the sunset of the director's own life. Bistikas was already foreshadowing the twilight of his existence, reporting his illness from London in 1987. "The red stains on your skin",<sup>3</sup> the devastating piece he published in the journal *Odos Panos*, was not just the first poetic testimonial of living with HIV in Greek literature, it was also a defence of the new homosexual bio-politics and sexual practices. In this text,

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Επιθυμίες και πολιτική. *Η queer ιστορία του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου (1924-2016)*, Aigokeros, Athens 2017, p. 243 ff.

2. Alexis Bistikas, *Ευαγγελισμός*, Patakis, Athens 1994. The collection did not have numbered pages, rejecting all formal methods of measuring the torture imparted by the disease, both literally and metaphorically.

3. Alexis Bistikas, «Οι κόκκινες κηλίδες στο δέρμα σου (The Red Stains on Your Skin)», *Οδός Πανός* 30 (1987), p. 88-89.



Kaposi's sarcoma, a socially reviled skin cancer, is aesthetically transformed into a *cigarette burn* in the poem, signalling the death of his blood brothers, now marked with an expiration date. It provided a visual representation of the cultural wound that was AIDS, which interrupted any sense of continuity for homosexual life.

2. The “problem” with the people who lost their lives to AIDS is that they remain annoyingly present and that their absence becomes a dangerous presence that haunts us and redefines the past. Kostas Asimakopoulos in his apologetic review in *Nea Estia* admits that he deliberately delayed writing about the “condensed lyrical experience of his sensibilities, his affliction and his singularity”<sup>4</sup> after *The Dawn* premiered in theatres. The terrifying use of the possessive “his,” as if Bistikas was a foreign entity that should not belong to the critical responsibility of the reviewer's era—hence the delay in dealing with his “singularity”—divested the critic of the obligation to deliver a timely review and allowed him to point a finger, transferring the responsibility to the sick and ailing, who would die morally assassinated by societal AIDS, having to listen to the same assertions about “singularity.” When we wonder why there were virtually no films about HIV/AIDS in Greek Cinema, it is worth taking into account the critical response to a (seemingly) innocent film like *The Dawn* and the critics' inability to connect it with the lived experience and poetic sensibilities of the director:

My informant, who attended the 35th Thessaloniki International Film Festival in November 1994, where Stavros Zalmas won the Best Actor Award for *The Dawn*, recalls Zalmas spinning a delirious Alexis Bistikas around on the rear wheels of his wheelchair. Many years later, Eleni Bistika recalls the palpable spirit of equality between the director and the audience attending the festival. “My son was confined to a wheelchair at the time, but he demanded to be treated as an equal.”<sup>5</sup> The same spirit of equality was broadcast on television from the official opening of *The Dawn* at Ideal Cinema on Panepistimiou Street on 15 February 1995, which marked Bistikas' last public appearance. “I hope you had fun! I didn't mean to burden you!” said the director that night, although I remember we all cried in the movie theatre, aware of how precarious these people's lives were compared to the safety of our own. We cried because we also understood that homosexual lives had always hovered on the edge of precarity. Bistikas' *ante mortem* appear-

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4. Kostas Asimakopoulos, “The Alexis Bistikas Case”, *Νέα Εστία* 1628 (1 May 1995), p. 197.

5. Eleni Bistika, «Αντάμωμα ξανά με το Χάραμα την Κυριακή στον Αλέξανδρο (Re-Encountering *The Dawn* on Sunday at Alexandros cinema)», *Η Καθημερινή* (21 November 2008), available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/711878/antamoma-xana-me-to-charama-tin-kyriaki-ston-alexandro/>

ances, it is much easier to see this now, were ways to represent this precarity clearly and candidly and to record it in a national martyrology.

3. Historically, the AIDS film archive of the crisis of the 1980s and 1990s is associated with specific moments and “undeniably with human beings, in the plural.”<sup>6</sup> The diverse and manifold plural of AIDS—perceived as a soon-to-be dead crowd in a hostile, singular world—was tonally uniform, depicting the pain of the disease in epic proportions, meaning that AIDS was an “ecumenical disease.”<sup>7</sup> It was undoubtedly a “sentimental pedagogy,”<sup>8</sup> a discordant nationalising attempt to denounce the stigma and contempt in different ways, in different countries. The formation of an anti-country of solidarity was transformed into a plea for social advocacy, which did not always have the reach of a Hollywood film like *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993) and often remained within the periphery of certain communities and dedicated cinephiles. In terms of Greece, for example, I wonder how many people actually watched Christos Dimas’ 20-minute short *A Sky Full of Stars/Ένας ουρανός γεμάτος αστέρια* (1995)—that is, a sky full of dead people’s constellations. It was probably limited to the audience of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival and a handful of film lovers. In Dimas’ beautiful film, the eleven short scenes in the life of a young HIV-positive man (his dialogue with the doctor, a former lover, his birthday party, the lonely nights, a conversation with his mother) are organised “with emotional intensity and a mournful spirit as ante mortem and post mortem snapshots of a life.”<sup>9</sup> The melodramatic tone in all Greek film depictions of AIDS was consolidated in the 1990s, determined by a host of farewells that artists felt the need to record, as seen in Christos Dimas’ black-and-white short *Breath/Ανάσα* (Thessaloniki International Film Festival, Ministry of Culture Distinction Audience Award, 1998):

Sweetheart! [...] What silence wraps around you? You left without a final goodbye. [...] Wrapped in your sheets, your breath coming out in rasps. The book on your bedside table waiting for our next encounter: [...] I’ll go out on the balcony and welcome you back...<sup>10</sup>

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6. Paula A. Treichler, “Preface: Faces, Meanings, Archives”, Elisabet Björklund, Mariah Larsson (eds), *A Visual History of HIV/AIDS: Exploring the Face of AIDS Film Archive*, Routledge, London, New York 2019, p. xiv.

7. Ibid. p. xv.

8. Robert J. Corber, “Nationalizing the Gay Body: AIDS and Sentimental Pedagogy in *Philadelphia*”, *American Literary History* 15/1 (2003), p. 107-133.

9. Kyriakos, *Επιθυμίες και πολιτική*, op. cit. p. 247.

10. Christos Dimas, *Ανάσα*, Colourful Planet, Athens 2008, p. 53-54.

Thanks to the long-suffering mothers and their militant laments, HIV/AIDS became part of a specific social consciousness and sensibility, exactly because “AIDS transformed gay writing by confronting it with death on a scale hitherto unknown.”<sup>11</sup> Contrary to theatre and dance, where some seminal works had met with wide reach and critical acclaim, Greek Cinema only had the chance to reconstruct AIDS through very specific filmic gestures, which nonetheless managed to convey the atmosphere of mourning and anger of an entire era. The poetry, the symbolic nature and the indirect manner of these Greek “representations” of AIDS shrouded the subject in a veil of lyrical vagueness, although they did establish those who died of HIV/AIDS as victims of a social disease of fear and stigmatisation. *Trojans/Τρώες* by Constantine Giannaris could clearly be considered the starting point, depicting love as a journey to martyrdom back in the historic year of 1989.

As far as the post-crisis era is concerned, HIV/AIDS continued to be productively and almost pedagogically linked to bullying and nosophobia—notably in *Men Don't Cry/Οι άντρες δεν κλαίνε* (2001) by Kyriakos Hatzimichailidis and *Greek School Prayer/Προσευχή* (2012) by Thanassis Neofotistos<sup>12</sup>—and was never forgotten or lost its draw as subject of a long-lost “infectious” time. As for those who once missed the opportunity to take a stand: there is an ethical and historical perspective which still keeps, for all of us, this opportunity open.

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11. Tim Dean, Steven Ruszczycky, “AIDS Literatures,” Mikko Tuhkanen, E. L. McCallum (eds), *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2014, p. 712.

12. Kyriakos, *Επιθυμίες και πολιτική*, op. cit. p. 271.



# 27 October 1995

First public screening of a film  
with DTS sound in Greece

## The Shift to Digital Audio in Greece

**Electra Venaki**

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THE OFFICIAL Athenian premiere of the film *Water World* (dir. Kevin Reynolds, 1995) took place on 27 October 1995 at the Aello Cinema, with DTS digital sound. A year earlier, in the winter of 1994, the Attikon Cinema had installed the Dolby Digital sound system for the screening of the film *The Hudsucker Proxy* (dir. Coen Brothers). Numb from the continuous developments in cinematic sound over the previous two decades, the Greek and European film community (production, distribution and cinemas) waited to see which digital system would triumph before investing anew. Relatively recently, they had invested in Dolby's four-channel analogue sound, Dolby SR, which drastically changed the cinema audio landscape almost forty years after the definitive transition from silent film to the talkies.

The second sound revolution, which is what the introduction of four-channel audio into cinemas is called, is as theoretical as it is technological. In the early 1980s, texts by Rick Altman,<sup>1</sup> Michel Chion<sup>2</sup> and many others sparked what is now known as the contemporary era in cinema sound theory, which challenges the widespread perception of cinema as an essentially visual medium, as "moving images." Back in 1992,<sup>3</sup> Rick Altman had proposed the term *film "event"* in lieu of *film "text"* on the grounds that film has to be analysed and read in the light of the economic, technological and cultural parameters of its era. Analysing the voice

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1. Rick Altman (ed.), *Cinema/Sound*, special issue of *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980).

2. Michel Chion, *La voix au cinéma*, Editions de l'Etoile, Paris 1982.

3. Rick Altman, "General Introduction: Cinema as Event," Rick Altman (ed.), *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*, Routledge, New York 1992, p. 1.

first, then sound, music and multi-channel sound, Michel Chion introduced a new vocabulary for describing and analysing cinematic sound, delimiting the theoretical framework of its study for many years.

This new focus on cinematic sound was not solely based on technological advances, although these were crucial; it was also founded in a newly heightened awareness of soundscapes as a result of the sudden increase in noise, due in part to new technologies. As early as the late 1960s, the Canadian composer Raymond Murray Schafer had begun the study of sound environments in *The World Sound-scape Project*,<sup>4</sup> in the process defining a new field: acoustic ecology. Scientists, technicians and artists began to concern themselves with sound in everyday life, to study and create soundscapes.<sup>5</sup> Cinema rose to the challenge, too, armed initially with technology that was now mature enough to provide the equivalent of stereo sound in the auditorium, through the Dolby system.

Dolby introduced encoded four-channel audio (4:2:4 channels),<sup>6</sup> Dolby Stereo, in 1977. From the first talkie in 1927 until then, cinematic sound had remained optical, analogue and monophonic. To project a film with Dolby Stereo, two conditions had to be met: first, the final mix of the film had to have been done with the Dolby encoder, meaning that the four channels were encoded into two, so that they could be printed onto the film in place of the optical monophonic audio. Second, the movie theatre needed to be equipped with the Dolby decoder, which could read the two encoded channels and split them into four. The landmark film that had established the new four-channel Dolby Stereo audio system was *Star Wars* in 1977. Although a good deal was written back then, and continues to be written,<sup>7</sup> about the exceptional sound in the *Star Wars* films, since no auditoria in Greece were equipped with a four-channel Dolby Stereo sound system at the time, our first encounter with the film was monophonic.

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4. <https://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio-webdav/WSP/index.html> [25 September 2021].

5. The Acoustic Ecology Organisation was founded in Greece in 2005; see <http://www.akouse.gr/>

6. There were four channels: left, centre, right and one monophonic channel for all the surround speakers. These four channels could be encoded into two channels, allowing them to be optically recorded on the print in place of the monophonic audio. The auditorium had to be equipped with the appropriate decoder to convert the two channels back into four; hence the abbreviation 4:2:4.

7. See, for example, James Buhler, "Star Wars, Music and Myth", James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, David Neumeyer (eds), *Music and Film*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, London 2000, p. 33-57; William Whittington, *Sound Design and Science Fiction*, University of Texas Press, Austin 2007, mainly p. 93-126; James Buhler, David Neumeyer, Rob Deemer, *Hearing the Movies: Music and Sound in Film History*, Oxford University Press, New York 2010, mainly p. 366-391; Jay Beck, *Designing Sound: Audiovisual Aesthetics in 1970s American Cinema*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 2016, mainly p. 191-220.

The beginning of the end for monophonic cinema in Greece came almost a decade later, in 1986, when the Opera Cinema installed the first Dolby Stereo system; a number of other theatres around the country would also install the system over the next two years. However, the new advanced Dolby Spectral Recording (Dolby SR) noise reduction system would appear on the world market as early as July 1987, with Paul Verhoeven's film *Robocop*. Large-scale film industries in Europe and America adopted it immediately. Smaller film industries did not, however. Only those auditoria which had not already installed Dolby Stereo systems began to invest in the new Dolby SR system in Greece in 1991-1992. By 1993, almost all Greek cinemas had at least a rudimentary system in place for playing four-channel analogue Dolby SR or Dolby Stereo optical audio. Some cinemas which were not yet in a position to invest in these systems built their own one-off systems to decode the signal relatively satisfactorily. In the meantime, Athens' second modern cinema sound studio,<sup>8</sup> Cinemagic, the first in the country to be Dolby-certified, had opened in 1989. The first Dolby SR mix in Greece was made for *Two Suns in the Sky/Δυο ήλιοι στον ουρανό* (1991), directed by Giorgos Stampouloupoulos.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the decade, most Greek productions had adopted a final mix in Dolby SR. It is worth noting that, until 1996, a Greek film's sound material would already be worn by the time it reached the final mixing stage, making for poor results. The final mix in Dolby SR did not sound like it should have. Only with the widespread adoption of the AVID Media Composer, the digital editing software, after 1996, did the situation change for the better. The digital audio from the shoot was no longer transcribed onto analogue magnetic material but converted directly into a digital file. This meant that every stage in the processing of a film's sound, from shooting to mixing, was now done digitally. The sound was clearer, because it had not deteriorated as a result of conversions and natural wear and tear of the magnetic material. From now on, four-channel analogue Dolby SR mixing, with the clear improvements to the sound that this brought, was the automatic choice in Greece, too.

However, there would now come a veritable tsunami of developments in cinema sound worldwide. Just as Greek productions—and cinema-goers—had begun to grasp the significance of these developments and were able to cover the cost of a four-channel analogue mix, digital sound made its appearance in the form of Dolby Digital in 1992. The film industry had been confronted by better sound at home than in the cinema due to the proliferation of CDs, which arrived in 1982. Several digital systems made their appearance at this time, but two of the three most prevalent, Dolby Digital and DTS, would gradually appear in Greek

8. The first sound studio purely for film use was Sound Studio, followed by ERA studio.

9. The first Greek movie with a final mix in Dolby Stereo A is *Oh Babylon* (dir. Costas Ferris, 1989), although it was mixed in Italy.

auditoria; much later, Greek producers would start to mix their films in these systems. Films with a final mix in any other system were played on the analogue four-channel Dolby SR.

Dolby Digital made its first appearance in 1992, in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*. It easily achieved dominance in the international market because many cinemas and sound studios already had the Dolby analogue system and were able to upgrade it to the new digital system with only minimal modifications. But DTS (Digital Theater Systems), an unknown system until then, won over Steven Spielberg, who used it in his *Jurassic Park* in 1993; Universal also adopted DTS as its sole sound system for several years.

The two systems are similar. Generally, they try to fit onto the film itself, while offering at least five distinct non-encoded channels (left, central, right and two surrounds), plus a separate channel for low frequencies, the subwoofer—hence their name: 5.1. They are dual systems since they provide both five-channel analogue optical sound and six-channel digital sound. The four-channel analogue sound was required for projecting films in auditoria which had not yet been equipped with a digital sound system, or as a backup for when there was a problem with digital sound reproduction. Dolby Digital takes advantage of the space between the perforation on the film, while DTS delivers the sound separately. Every film comes accompanied by CD-ROMs containing the digital soundtrack. A time code printed on the film itself between the analogue sound and the image guides the CD-ROMs. Should a problem present itself during the screening, the sound switches to the optical analogue four-channel Dolby (A or SR), or any other compatible system, which is also printed, as noted earlier, on the copy itself.

By 1996, the situation in Greece was as follows: only the Attikon and Ideal cinemas were equipped with Dolby Digital, while the Aello, Glyfada, Nana, Athinaion, Danaos and Apollon had DTS systems. All other movie theatres in the country were still playing four-channel analogue sound. Between 1992 and 1996, every film with digital sound was screened with its analogue sound, unless it was released in these cinemas. Thus, in Greece, we heard both *Batman Returns* and *Jurassic Park* from their analogue, four-channel soundtrack.

Around the beginning of the new millennium, the digital format war was essentially over. It had been shown in practice that the quality of the sound produced by the three systems was roughly the same. The big companies now started printing their release copies with all three digital formats. This meant that cinema owners could finally decide which system to invest in, since every film would be capable of being projected digitally on whatever system they opted to install in their auditoria.

But things were very different for producers working in small national cinemas, such as that of Greece, who were not in a position to adopt the solution



of printing their films with multiple digital mixes. Greek production companies simply could not afford to release their films with a dual digital mix in both Dolby Digital and DTS. They had to choose. And they did so on the basis of cost, and in line with their distribution: to how many auditoria equipped with DTS or Dolby Digital would they be able to distribute? Was the cost of the digital mix justified if a film would be screened in just one auditorium equipped with a digital format? We should note that the cost of the final mix and the digital sound print was substantial in the early years. However, the more international productions adopted the digital forms, the lower the cost of the analogue Dolby SR mix, making it affordable for even very-low-budget films of the sort produced by the Greek film industry. Hence, the decision taken by Greek producers to stick with Dolby SR mixes until they could see which way the land lay was both wise and necessary. Greek films began using DTS mixes first, in the late 1990s, and embraced Dolby Digital later, in the early 2000s. The first DTS mix was made in 1998, for Menelaos Karamaghiolis' film *Black Out*.

The digital sound revolution in cinema bears numerous similarities to the first sound revolution and the battle for supremacy between Vitaphone and Movietone. The first system, Vitaphone, premiered in the film *The Jazz Singer* in 1927 and had the sound recorded on phonograph records, an arrangement similar to that adopted by DTS almost a century later, while Fox's Movietone printed the sound on the film itself, in the same way as Dolby Digital 5.1. The two systems coexisted from 1927 until 1933. Movietone gradually won out, since the Vitaphone system suffered from major synchronisation problems between the records and the film.<sup>10</sup> As related in the Greek movie magazine *Κινηματογραφικός Ασκήρ*,<sup>11</sup> between October 1929 and July 1930 nineteen cinemas in Greece equipped themselves with sound reproduction equipment, a number that would rise to thirty-five by the end of the year, although only fifteen had invested in officially recognized systems from America or Europe.<sup>12</sup> The rest (as was also the case in the Dolby SR era) operated with equipment which they had put together themselves, or with local Greek-produced solutions, until a decision was reached internationally on which specifications and systems were to be adopted.

10. For more information (in Greek) on the technologies of the era, see Electra Venaiki, "Vitaphone or Movietone", *Sound in the Cinema*, available at: <https://altcine.wordpress.com/2008/02/03/34/> [4 September 2021].

11. Anonymous, «Οι Εν Ελλάδι ηχητικοί κινηματογράφοι», *Κινηματογραφικός Ασκήρ* 7/21 (1930), p. 10.

12. Ralph B. Curren, Acting Commercial Attaché in Athens, "European Motion-Picture Industry in 1930: Greece", *U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, The Trade Information Bulletin* 751-780 (1931), p. 67-70.

For small countries such as Greece, all these developments in cinematic sound seemed like “technological gadgets,” since for years no one could say for sure what they were listening to. If, from 2000 on, big-budget productions sounded like their filmmakers had made them in most auditoria, which is to say with the available digital sound format, most Greek cinema-goers still experienced the film soundtrack from the analogue, four-channel sound mix. This included productions by large European film industries, since even they could not afford to provide digital mixes for different systems. This means that even those who were aware of the major changes that digital sound had brought to the cinema did not get to experience those changes for themselves. What is more, they did not know that they were missing out. The cinema-owners displayed the logos of the digital systems that they had installed in prominent locations around the auditoria, but the audience had no idea on which sound system the film that they were watching was being played. As result, audiences very often thought they were listening to digital sound when it was actually analogue—the exact same sound that they would have heard in a cinema with no digital sound system in place at all. In any case, films had sounded better at home for some time. Consequently, Greek cinema-goers were almost indifferent to the quality of digital sound and often made negative and derogatory comments about it—a stark contrast to the articles published internationally at this time in support of its all-new capabilities.<sup>13</sup> It should be noted, however, that the majority of texts about digital cinema sound still uses examples taken primarily from Hollywood productions, and only very rarely from European films by noted auteurs. This implicitly creates a risk of imposing a restrictive framework of rules and international canons governing the correct usage of sounds based on specific narrative form and style, as well as auditory culture. Namely, the widely accepted assumption is that the qualities of multi-channel digital sound—regarding narrative, aesthetics, rhythm and so on—are only relevant and fully explored in high-budget action movies. By extension, everything extolled as impressive in the literature on digital film sound was entirely absent from Greek movie theatres. Since the cinema-goer did not know if they were listening to monophonic, stereo or 5.1 digital audio, they could not grasp the importance of the new cinematographic sound, or experience for themselves a more refined, rich soundtrack.

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13. See, for instance, Michel Chion, *Un art sonore, le cinéma: Histoire, esthétique, poétique*, Cahiers du Cinéma/Jessais, Paris 2003, p. 137-138. Here, Chion argues that major aesthetic changes were brought about by multichannel audio, analogue or digital, but attributes two important developments to digital: a) silence, and b) micromontage. He would be followed by James Buhler, Kevin J. Donnelly, Claudia Gorman, Mark Kerins, David Neumeyer, Gianlouca Sergi, William Whittington and many others, all of whom took interesting approaches to multi-channel sound.

Nonetheless, during this long period of transition to digital multi-channel audio, which lasted at least twenty-five years, the quality of sound and image in Greek cinemas did improve significantly. The auditoria, most of which had old-fashioned architecture, did not meet the new standards for properly listening to digital audio. Specialised acoustic studies were needed, the speakers had to be positioned around the perimeter of the theatre, and the cinema staff required specialist training. Thus, in conjunction with the clearer digital sound, to which digital editing also made a major contribution, the audience (including the filmmakers themselves) could now perceive—and feel—the difference, hearing better even when circumstances meant that the sound world of the cinema or its surroundings (especially in the case of those open-air cinemas that persisted in screening recent productions) encroached on the sound world of the film. All of this has given rise over the last quarter century to the belief that “digital” sound simply means a clear, distinct, imposing and often loud sound laden with special effects. It is no coincidence that even today—certainly in Greece, but worldwide, too—the digital files of the films submitted to festivals or to juries, even when a film is nominated for the sound award, are encoded in stereo.

Considering that in Greece we have been able to hear a film’s digital sound correctly only since late 2014, with the proliferation of DCP<sup>14</sup> projection, the acoustic cinematic experience remains poor and creative experimentation limited. Gradually, over the last decade or so, the Greek industry and audience have begun to recognize that digital film sound does not mean clearer, high-definition sounds, but that it also offers the opportunity to create a *sound world* by incorporating unique soundscapes into the narrative—that is, into the film event. As new areas of specialisation are created and become more clearly defined over time, so that they can better meet the needs of production, the international literature can expand its references to include different trends in film sound and different soundscapes—which is to say, the different sound cultures embodied in the sound world of the movies.

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14. The worldwide dominance of digital projection and DCP since the early 2000s mean that film sound is now always digital, unencoded and uncompressed. In 2007, Nikolas Dimitropoulos’ *Alter Ego* (starring Sakis Rouvas) was released in dual distribution, with Dolby Digital on a print and as a DCP with six separate channels; most Greek cinemas have been equipped with digital projection systems since late 2014.



# 23 November 1998

Walking off the stage at the Thessaloniki Film Festival awards ceremony, Constantine Giannaris gives the finger to critics and members of the audience. The first prize is awarded to Theodoros Angelopoulos.

## The Generation Gap in Greek Cinema

**Kostas Peroulis**

Writer, screenwriter

IN 1998, at the Thessaloniki Film Festival, where Greek Cinema had been judging itself for decades, the first prize was awarded to Theodoros Angelopoulos' *Eternity and a Day*/Μια αιωνιότητα και μια μέρα, which had already won the Palme d'Or at Cannes that year; second prize went to Constantine Giannaris' *From the Edge of the City*/Από την άκρη της πόλης. In the first, a celebrated poet in the final stages of a terminal illness is preparing to enter hospital to die. A chance encounter with a "traffic-light kid,"<sup>1</sup> a child who arrived in Greece as part of the first contemporary migrant flow from Albania to Greece, convinces the Greek poet to postpone his "departure" for eternity and relive his whole life in a day, in a retrospective that is both personal and historical. In the second film, a group of youngsters from the same wave of immigrants, "Rossopontioi";<sup>2</sup> this

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1. The child is actually a "Northern Epirote," meaning an Albanian of Greek national heritage. These children are exploited *en masse* by their compatriots, who force them to approach cars stopped at traffic lights to beg. This was an everyday scene on Greek streets in the 1990s and gave rise to the phrase "traffic-light kids" who, as Liakos notes, included gypsy children as well as immigrants. See Antonis Liakos, «Παιδιά στον δρόμο», *Ο Ελληνικός 20ός Αιώνας*, Polis, Athens 2019, p. 549-552.

2. Literally "Russian-Black Sea Greeks." The term refers to descendants of ethnic Greeks who fled eastwards into the Soviet Union from their ancestral home on the Black Sea's southern coast to escape Turkish reprisals in 1923, following the defeat and retreat of the

time from Kazakhstan, set out from the edge of the city and run-down Menidi with dreams, only to be swallowed up by prostitution and drugs in downtown Athens. What happened at the awards ceremony that night is well-known: walking off the stage with his second prize, Giannaris would show his displeasure by gesturing before the cameras.

Irrespective of the events on the night they were awarded, through their strangely common subject-matter, the two films condense a difference in style which at the same time constitutes a generational difference. Giannaris' film is a study of life led on the fringes of society by immigrants, with sex, exploitation and violence, fluid identities, a camera that never stops moving, close-ups of bodies and faces and rapid editing. Employing a documentary-like realism that oscillates between naturalistic snapshots that recall a style of photography already made popular in Greece by the magazine *Oi³* and oneiric scenes of the boys' childhood back in Kazakhstan, which is now lost to them forever, *From the Edge of the City* looks at the here and now of the Athens of the era, placing it in direct contrast to Angelopoulos' eternity.<sup>4</sup> In *Eternity and a Day*, the familiar Angelopoulos lengthy shots that track our bourgeois hero render immigrants timeless and symbolic, like the dummies scaling the border fence in the film's most iconic scene. Compared with the sweaty bodies of the Rossopontioi kickboxing, pumping iron and having sex in clubs, it is all very beautiful and "fake." Angelopoulos' on-camera poet, Bruno Ganz, who draws the immigrant into his memories to the strains of Karaindrou's wonderful classicising melody, gives way to the voice of Giannaris

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Greek expeditionary force in Turkey. They were uprooted a second time, to Kazakhstan this time, by Stalin after World War II.

3. A short-lived magazine (30 issues in total) published by Stathis Tsagarousianos in 1994. Its aggressive urban aesthetic and subject-matter represented the Greek Generation X of the mid-1990s, in contradistinction to the increasingly artificial cosmopolitanism of Petros Kostopoulos' lifestyle magazines. It is considered the—far more underground—forerunner of the newspaper/internet platform *Lifo*.

4. As the English-educated Giannaris would say, referencing the raw and brutal British in-her-face theatre then dominant on the world theatrical scene, which turned to the invisible classes who lived under London's glamorous shop windows for its subject-matter: "Athens is in your face." But he did not want to treat the subject in the usual way, "with a highly specific left-wing viewpoint and humanist mentality". See the publication dedicated to the director at the 52nd Thessaloniki Festival in 2011, p. 58, available at: <http://www.myfestival.gr/default.aspx?lang=el-GR&page=19&id=70215>. As for Angelopoulos, welcomed back from Cannes, where he had won the Palme d'Or, by the "State" at Athens airport, he would note that "Greece is primarily a concept, a history with a timeless gravity that far surpasses its geographical borders." From a newspaper article quoted by Soldatos in *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος. Ένας Αιώνας Ντοκουμέντα 1970-2000*, op. cit. vol. 2. These different ideological approaches to the same subject lead to different aesthetic approaches, too.

who, to the “chain saws” of techno, interviews his hero, who was a go-go boy at the Factory club when he met him, off camera. It is ironic that Angelopoulos’ imposing film, which can be seen “as an elegy to a lost sensitivity and a nostalgic reworking of a humanistic tradition”,<sup>5</sup> in hindsight seems to be bidding farewell to an entire era, sensing that it is coming to an end.<sup>6</sup> But in Giannaris’ film, too, the oneiric scenes of the “paradise lost” of Kazakhstan which call to mind a modernism closer to that of Tarkovsky or Parajanov, as Dimitris Papanikolaou also notes,<sup>7</sup> meld into the raw and realistic scenes of contemporary Athens, like a farewell to lost innocence.

Giannaris himself perceives Angelopoulos as belonging to a different generation (very early on labelled New Greek Cinema) which, in his opinion, lost its way at some point when it could only continue along the route leading to a “pseudoculture”.<sup>8</sup> Giannaris could be considered the forerunner of a younger generation to appear in the following decade and to become known as New Wave and/or the Greek Weird Wave.<sup>9</sup> Three decades earlier, the filmmakers of the New Greek Cinema had formed themselves into a generation when they contrasted their work with that of their older colleagues who belonged to the so-called Old Greek Cinema, rejecting them as “commercial” and declaring a cinema of the auteur.

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5. Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, Continuum, New York 2012, p. 253.

6. Roughly halfway through the film, the protagonist’s doctor bumps into him in the street and, having confirmed that he is close to death, tells him: “My generation grew up with your books and your poems.” The concept of the generation is particularly present in Angelopoulos’ film, which at many points resembles a personal recollection.

7. Dimitris Papanikolaou notes the director-constructed nature of these scenes (meaning that, even in the film’s narrative, they are not supposed to represent scenes from the earlier lives of his protagonists). This indicates, perhaps, that Giannaris is aware of the aesthetic contrast at the heart of his film, as well as of its meaning. See Dimitris Papanikolaou, “Repatriation on Screen: National Culture and the Immigrant Other since the 1990s”, Dimitris Tziovas (ed.), *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700: Society, Politics and Culture*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2009, p. 265.

8. See Katia Arfara’s interview with Giannaris in *To Bríjia*, available at: <https://www.tovima.gr/2008/11/24/culture/kwnstantinos-giannaris-2/>

9. See, for example, Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. ix, xiii, xv. Cf. Poupou and Nikolaidou, who also use the term New Wave rather than Weird Wave, focusing on the post-2009 production associated with the internationalisation of the cinema of young filmmakers, several of whom had however first appeared earlier in the decade. Afroditi Nikolaidou, Anna Poupou, “Post-Weird Notes on the New Wave of Greek Cinema”, *Non-Catalogue*, 58th Thessaloniki Film Festival, Thessaloniki 2017, p. 88-105. See also the broader use of the term “Greek Weird Wave” in Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave: A Cinema of Biopolitics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2021.

Generations are the oldest and most practical periodisation tool in art.<sup>10</sup> And like every form of periodisation, they divide the continuum of historical time into periods by doing just that: assigning a desired meaning to each, by contrasting them “dramatically.”<sup>11</sup> The concept of a generation as a periodisation tool has always been especially problematic. In its effort to identify an era on the basis of the individuals that are typical of it, the concept of the “generation” always finds itself in the embarrassing position of having to include figures of differing ages and, above all, having to make individuals working along entirely different ideological and aesthetic lines fit to a common denominator, which often requires distortions and amputations; this is as true of the directors lumped together as the New Greek Cinema (NGC) as it is of those of the New Wave. Still, since it does provide chronological clarity and contrasts pairs of consecutive eras as dramatically and stridently as possible, the generation concept always serves as a marker of change and transition. But what is it that validates this contrast, assigning people as members of a particular generation and, ultimately, of a given “era”?

At the start of Angelopoulos’ film, in a scene in which the director’s mortal hero/alter ego bids his daughter farewell without her knowing it, he gives her some letters written by her mother, who has been dead for some time. In one of the games that Angelopoulos was so fond of playing with time, the director starts the scene with the daughter opening one of the letters and the hero’s beloved reading the confession of love she penned him off camera, only to end it with the couple on the veranda, without the use of flashbacks. The letter was written just after the birth of the fruit of their love: the daughter to whom the letter has now been given. As we hear, it is dated 20 September 1960— “my day!” the daughter says. It may not be coincidental that this was also the first day of the 1st Thessaloniki Film Festival.

As an institution, the Thessaloniki Film Festival was part and parcel of the NGC, since its young filmmakers found in it a venue to screen their films and an award to verify their artistry as an antidote to the money that the commercial cinema of the Old Greek Cinema (OGC) was still making at the box office, shortly before it was snuffed out by the new medium: television. Although this

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10. For a brief overview of the concept, see Pierre Brunel, Claude Pichois, André-Michel Rousseau, *Qu’est-ce que la littérature comparée?* (in Greek, transl. Dimitris Angelatos), Patakis, Athens 1998, p. 147-140. Historically, some scholars consider there to be a new generation every fifteen years, others every thirty. In Greece, we often see artists (rather narcissistically) declaring themselves to be members of a new generation every decade.

11. Ted Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered: Historical Contrast and the Prestige of English Studies*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto 2013, p. 1-16. According to the author, when artists declare themselves to belong to a given period, or critics assign them to one, it is linked to a need to stand out as much as to a desire for immortality.



relationship was robbed of its momentum early on by the onset of the colonels' dictatorship,<sup>12</sup> the NGC directors' possessive stance towards the institution would be made clear immediately after the junta's fall in 1974, with films from Finos, the OGC production studio *par excellence*, being cut from the programme or booed when shown,<sup>13</sup> while the young filmmakers screened every film that had been "banned" during the seven-year dictatorship, demanded changes to the juries and refrained from accepting the prizes awarded to them (even if it was only for a day).<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the young directors of the NGC became synonymous with the festival to such an extent that a law of 1977 sought to break their hold on the institution, for primarily political reasons, seeing as they were mostly left-wing; in response, they refused to show their films there and staged what would go down in history as the Anti-Festival.<sup>15</sup> This led to the state (and the filmmakers) backing down the following year and "proceeding

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12. Soldatos refers to the "opening volleys" of the young filmmakers at the 1966 Festival, where many made their first appearance. Giannis Soldatos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, vol. 2, 15<sup>th</sup> ed., Aigokeros, Athens 2010, p. 7-8. For more detail on the clash between "old" and "new" at the 7th Thessaloniki Festival, its eventful awards ceremony (first prize went to James Paris, whom the audience booed, cheering for Kollatos-Kanelopoulos instead) and its aftermath, see Nikos Grosdanis, *Θυμάμαι... 32 Χρόνια Φεστιβάλ Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης*, Epikentro, Thessaloniki 2017, p. 96-107. Karalis also sees the period from the mid-1960s on as leading up to what would be called the NGC. See Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema*, op. cit. p. 107.

13. See Grosdanis, *Θυμάμαι... 32 Χρόνια Φεστιβάλ Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης*, op. cit. p. 198, 202.

14. The young filmmakers "demanded revolutionary changes in every direction: in the way in which the festival was run, its juries, the laws regulating the Greek cinema, the awards..." Soldatos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, op. cit. p. 64. Soldatos also discusses the most eventful festival in the institution's history. The young filmmakers were already coming out against the Greek state's cinema policy that year, and their protests culminated in the stance that they took at the festival. The Guild of Greek Directors, founded in 1973, was "turned into a trade union for the young directors"; *ibid.* p. 63. And the renaming of the state funding body for film (from General Cinema Enterprises SA to the Greek Film Centre, as it is still called today), which had until then made a point of ignoring the young filmmakers and of funding commercial productions, would mark an immediate change of direction, with funding for films by Kanellopoulos and Ferris. See Chrysanthi Sotiropoulou, *Ελληνική Κινηματογραφία, 1965-1975: θεσμικό πλαίσιο – οικονομική κατάσταση*, Themelio, Athens 1989, p. 87-89.

15. The law changed the rules governing how the festival selected the members of its juries, who would henceforth be chosen in agreement with the film collectives, which largely consisted of representatives of this younger generation. The same would not apply to the selection of the Greek Film Centre's Board of Directors. See Giannis Soldatos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, op. cit. p. 83-84. See also, for a detailed treatment of the Anti-Festival, Grosdanis, *Θυμάμαι... 32 Χρόνια Φεστιβάλ Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου Θεσσαλονίκης*, p. 236.

onwards together to the 19th Festival, which showcased once again the total dominance of the NGC.”<sup>16</sup>

It took a decade or so for these filmmakers to achieve institutional dominance over Greek Cinema, and for this to be reflected in its most important institution, the Thessaloniki Film Festival; the next generation would repeat this progress some two and a half decades later. Giannaris’ gesture in 1998, which was aimed not at Angelopoulos but at the festival itself,<sup>17</sup> signals the coming of this new “generation” of filmmakers who would appear gradually over the next ten years and find themselves suffocated by the old institutions of Greek Cinema, in terms of funding, awards and representation.<sup>18</sup> In 2009, they would join forces<sup>19</sup> to found

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16. Soldatos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κινηματογράφου*, op. cit. p. 92.

17. At the public, the jury and the journalists. See Soldatos, *Ελληνικός Κινηματογράφος. Ένας Αιώνας Ντοκουμέντα*, op. cit. p. 484. Giannaris would later attack not Angelopoulos but the festival and the ministry-run system of state funding connected to it. See his interview to Arfara, op. cit.. It should be clarified that from that year on, 1998, in accordance with Article 4 on “Cinema Policy Issues” of Law 2557/97, the awards were detached from the festival and formally handed over to the Ministry of Culture as “State Quality Awards,” although their awarding, as the Law’s Preamble states, had to be “related to the activities of the Film Festival.” Specifically, a film had to be screened at the festival to be eligible for a Ministry award (which came with a cash prize), in order to “institutionalise an incentive for all the films produced in that year to participate in the festival’s Greek Section, which is not currently the case.” This reference in the Law’s Preamble also highlights a problem that had already begun to overshadow the festival. The ministerial awards committee consisted, in accordance with the new law, largely of individuals nominated by the various industry bodies (directors’, technicians’ and actors’ guilds and the like) in which the young filmmakers were not represented or lacked influence (35 of the 50, with the remaining 15 to be people “of recognized status” who were appointed by the minister, as they had been under the previous system, plus people from the festivals in Thessaloniki and Drama). That is to say, the festival remained the primary space for screening and awarding Greek films and became the ‘theatre’ for recriminations, protests and backstage machinations as a result—not only in the case of Giannaris, who was the first to “experience” the new law, but also, later, by the entire 2000s generation. The problem with the juries had also existed under the previous regime (hence, perhaps, the directors’ refusal to show their films at the festival, which is also mentioned in the Preamble), but with the new law and the hegemony of the industry collectives to which it led, the awards fell into yet further decline as an institution, dragging the Thessaloniki Festival, with which they were unavoidably linked, down with them; to this day, the institution has a black mark against its name in the minds of Greek filmmakers.

18. Directors such as Economides, Koutras, Lanthimos and many others were never deigned worthy of an award.

19. With the only supporters from the NGC being Pantelis Voulgaris, who—not coincidentally—has two children who belong to the young filmmakers’ movement, and Yorgos Tsemberopoulos, the current president of the Hellenic Film Academy. See the list of the “64,” available at [https://camerastyloonline.wordpress.com/2009/07/15/kinimatografistes\\_stin\\_](https://camerastyloonline.wordpress.com/2009/07/15/kinimatografistes_stin_)

the “Filmmakers in the Mist” and decide not to submit their films to the 50th anniversary iteration of the Thessaloniki Festival, at which Angelopoulos presided over the International Section.<sup>20</sup> The same year, as Greek Cinema began to earn recognition through international festivals as well as the domestic arts scene, a new institution would be created, the Hellenic Film Academy, which has awarded Greece’s cinema awards ever since, replacing the State Prizes.<sup>21</sup> The young filmmakers’ progress towards their self-formation into a generation was now complete.

One could just as easily argue for the presence of ruptures, continuities or dialectical movements in Greek Cinema of, *inter alia*, an aesthetic, ideological or generic nature. What is certain is that one cannot talk of “generations” without assessing their institutional impact on the field of cinema.<sup>22</sup> Giannaris’ gesture a decade before the Filmmakers in the Mist was not intended to (and knew it could not) reject his predecessors—after all, the New Wave directors could hardly deny that they had been influenced by the filmmakers of the NGC, nor could Giannaris deny that his filming in Menidi called to mind Damianos’ *Evdokia*/ *Ευδοκία*. Rather, it sought through its insolence simply to show them that the new would not be deprived of air for long by the old, and that whatever the old did, the new would eventually win a place of its own in the canon of Greek Cinema.

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omixli-alternative \_network\_of\_artists/. The response of the Greek Directors’ Guild was immediate. As mentioned above (see n. 14), the guild was founded in 1973 and constituted the main trade union body for the directors of the NGC, while its members from among the New Wave directors could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Its statement of 11 November 2010 attacked the “hidden core” of the Filmmakers in the Mist, which had “declared a civil war with the ulterior motive of monopolising and controlling Cinema across its entire spectrum.” The statement went on to remind some turncoat directors of the sums they had received in funding from the GFC in previous years; see <https://www.greekdirectorsguild.gr/new.asp?lang=&id=51> [12 July 2021]. In fact, many of the Filmmakers in the Mist had been unable to secure funding from the GFC during this period.

20. “I only came to the festival because everyone else snubbed it. A whole group of Greek artists has stayed away. I consider this a mistake, and that is why I am here,” Angelopoulos would say at the press conference; see [https://www.cinemamagazine.gr/nealarthro/boles\\_aggelopoulos\\_kata\\_omixliston-6420144/](https://www.cinemamagazine.gr/nealarthro/boles_aggelopoulos_kata_omixliston-6420144/). “Everyone is in for their own reasons, but mainly because we all have a lot of scores to settle with the film establishment. In fact, I’m not even one of those who believe we should protect the Thessaloniki Festival. We have to take an honest look at what the festival is, how much it has helped Greek Cinema over the last twenty years, and what purposes it serves,” Yannis Economides would say. See [https://www.athinorama.gr/cinema/article/kinfistes\\_stin\\_omixli\\_-7762.html](https://www.athinorama.gr/cinema/article/kinfistes_stin_omixli_-7762.html) [12 July 2021].

21. Thanks to new procedures, the awards are no longer awarded via industry collectives, but rather by members of the Hellenic Film Academy.

22. And by this, we mean, of course, the entire field: funding, distribution, festivals and awards, a place in film criticism and history, *hommages*, public statements and so on.



# 27 March 2001

## The last flight departs from Elliniko Airport

### Narratives of “Modernisation” of the Greek City and Greek Cinema

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IN A SCENE from Nikos Panagiotopoulos' film *The Final Night/Aυτή η νύχτα μένει* (1999), Andreas (Nikos Kouris) and Stella (Athena Maximou) are standing outside the State Airport of Athens (known as Elliniko), looking at the airplanes taking off, while they are dreaming of a new life. Panagiotopoulos' film not only emphasised the role of Elliniko as a gateway to the rest of the world, just before it disappeared from the map together with the twentieth century, but it also underlined how accessible it used to be, even to those who were not travelling. Two years later, Elliniko closed down, and its services moved to the new “Eleftherios Venizelos” International Airport of Athens in Spata. In the following years, the “old airport” remained in limbo, constituting a place that encapsulated the Greek version of world narratives of “modernisation” and “invigoration” of urban areas that emerged at the end of the twentieth century<sup>1</sup> and prevailed in the twenty-first century. Athens changed, and its new face constituted the country's image, at a juncture when “the imaginary about ‘what kind of City Centre do we want’ lacks cohesion.”<sup>2</sup> Greek Cinema, like world cinema, merged different points of view of these changes, and recorded spaces and itineraries in the Greek city, either by promoting a national imaginary, longing for the old, or contesting and debunking narratives, revealing the “other city” or the “city of the others.”<sup>3</sup>

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1. Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization*, Columbia University Press, New York 1996.

2. Loukas Triantis, «Το θεσμικό πλαίσιο του χωρικού σχεδιασμού για το Κέντρο της Αθήνας: Όψεις του στρατηγικού και του κανονιστικού σχεδιασμού», *Athens Social Atlas* (June 2017), available at: <https://www.athenssocialatlas.gr/άρθρο/χωρικός-σχεδιασμός/> [30 July 2021].

3. Since 1990 there is an extensive bibliography regarding the relation of architecture

The closing of Elliniko Airport was part of a number of big and small public works that determined the development of Athens and Greece on an international level, centred around the Olympic Games of 2004—works that had significant consequences on social developments and the future of towns and the country.<sup>4</sup> Public discourse on modernisation visualised 2004 as the “symbolic gateway for the renewal of the symbolic iconography of modern Athens.”<sup>5</sup> Despite reactions from the opposition at the time,<sup>6</sup> the new airport forced the “old” one to close down, offering an enormous area of land that was going to be promoted as the “biggest development project in Greece.”<sup>7</sup> However, following international standards, plans for Elliniko and Greek cities were silenced, to the extent that international pursuits led to urban landscapes of extreme wealth enclaves interrupted by islands of poverty, concealed social exclusions and corroded the social make-up and cohesion of the city.<sup>8</sup> The new face of Athens was born through an aggressive neoliberal discourse on the city, which came to contest the domestic production of space through international trends regarding urban rebirth, refinement and enclosures.<sup>9</sup>

Although the need for a new airport emerged in the 1970s, the Greek Cinema of the time reflected a completely different view of the international airport of

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to space and cinema: David B. Clarke (ed.), *The Cinematic City*, Routledge, New York 1997; Mark Shiel, Tony Fitzmaurice (eds), *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in an Urban Context*, Blackwell, Oxford 2001; Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film*, Verso, New York 2002; Stephen Barber, *Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space*, Reaktion Books, London 2002. The Greek bibliography includes Irini Sifaki, Anna Poupou, Afroditi Nikolaidou (eds), *Πόλη και Κινηματογράφος*, Nisos, Athens 2011; Chrysanthi Sotiropoulou, *Κινούμενα Τοπία: Κινηματογραφικές αποτυπώσεις του ελληνικού χώρου*, Metaichmio, Athens 2001. Also, Giannis Skopeteas's documentary, with the collaboration of the architect Dimitris Filippidis, *For Five Apartments and a Shop/Για πέντε διαμερίσματα και ένα μαγαζί* (Benaki Museum, 2004) is an attempt to capture the relation between the city and cinema.

4. Maria Mantounalou, Evangelia Balla, «Μεταλλαγές στο σύστημα γης και οικοδομής και διακυβεύματα του σχεδιασμού στην Ελλάδα», *Πόλη και Χώρος από τον 20ό στον 21ο αιώνα*, τιμητικός τόμος για τον καθηγητή Α. Αραβαντινό, NTUA, University of Thessaly, SEPOX, Athens 2004, p. 313-330.

5. Nikos Vatoropoulos, «Η νέα αίγλη της Αθήνας», *Η Καθημερινή* (1 January 2002), available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/686810/h-nea-aigli-tis-athinas/> [30 July 2021].

6. Anastasis Papaligouras, “Λάθος η καταστροφή του παλαιού αεροδρομίου”, *Η Καθημερινή* (3 February 2002), available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/110291/lathos-i-katastrofi-toy-palaiou-aerodromiou/> [30 July 2021].

7. A statement that is constantly reproduced; it was repeated by prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in 2020, when the demolition of the buildings at the old airport began.

8. Giorgos Stathakis, Kostis Chatzimichalis, «Αθήνα διεθνής πόλη: από την επιθυμία των ολίγων στην πραγματικότητα των πολλών», *Γεωγραφίες* 7 (2004), p. 26-47.

9. Mantounalou, Balla, «Μεταλλαγές στο σύστημα γης και οικοδομής και διακυβεύματα του σχεδιασμού στην Ελλάδα», op. cit.

Athens. Classic scenes of arrival, with loud voices and greetings as passengers were getting off the airplane, and the appearance of the modern professions of the airhostess and the pilot in films were not random choices. The airplane and the “international”<sup>10</sup> underlined the role played by Elliniko, especially after the end of World War II, as a cosmopolitan and modern image of the country, from films with an international cast, such as *An Italian in Athens*/*Μια Ιταλίδα στην Αθήνα* (Dinos Dimopoulos, 1958), to domestic productions with the welcoming (at the airport!) of the *Aunt from Chicago*/*Η θεία από το Σικάγο* (Alekos Sakellarios, 1957), and the airport scenes in *A Pitiful Don Juan*/*Ένας Δον Ζουάν για κλάματα* (Dimis Dadiras, 1960), *Ship-Owner Without Wanting*/*Με το ζόρι εφοπλιστής* (Giorgos Papakostas, 1971) and *That Summer*/*Εκείνο το καλοκαίρι* (Vassilis Georgiadis, 1971).<sup>11</sup> In 2001, a few months after the closing down of the airport, the most commercial film of the year, *Crying... Silicon Tears*/*Το κλάμα βγήκε απ' τον Παράδεισο* (Michalis Reppas and Thanasis Papathanasiou), deconstructed, among the clichés of the Old Greek Cinema, welcoming scenes of passengers arriving at the airport, with the recurring voices from the characteristic balcony from which the public could watch arrivals. In the film, the wealthy lady Tzela Delafranga, together with her future son-in-law, welcome her daughter who is returning from London, shouting “Tzeni, Tzeni, ooh, ooh”. The repeated shouts and exaggerated acting placed the spatial proximity of Elliniko in the context of nostalgia for the old. When the spectators saw the film, of course, they could recall that the new airport at Spata did not have a similar balcony, and there was a separating glass that no longer allowed voices to be heard. The depiction of the Elliniko Airport in 2001 was then part of a “national cultural past” together with the Old Greek Cinema.<sup>12</sup>

The presence of the new airport at Spata, in combination with traffic infrastructure works (Attica Tollway, Motorway 62, Suburban Railway, metro) and the works for the Olympic Games, inscribed on space the political discourse of “modernisation”; for the first time, it connected Thriasio directly with the Attica Basin and Mesogeia, gradually expanding outside Attica. Greece was not just the

10. Fontas Toursas, «Οι εμβληματικές ελληνικές ταινίες των '70s που γυρίστηκαν στα νότια προάστια», *Lifo* (26 June 2019), available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/culture/cinema/oi-embli-matikes-ellinikes-tainies-ton-70s-poy-gyristikan-sta-notia-proastia> [29 July 2021].

11. For a wider analysis of urban space, which focuses on residences in the Old Greek Cinema, see the doctoral thesis by Angeliki Mylonaki, «Αναπαραστάσεις του αστικού χώρου στον ελληνικό δημοφιλή κινηματογράφο (1950-1970)», unpubl. PhD thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2004.

12. Maria Chalkou, «Μνήμη, νοσταλγία και κοσμοπολιτισμός: ταινίες πολιτισμικής και ιστορικής κληρονομιάς (heritage films) στον ελληνικό κινηματογράφο», Maria Paradeisi, Afroditi Nikolaidou (eds), *Από τον πρώιμο στο σύγχρονο Ελληνικό κινηματογράφο. Ζητήματα μεθοδολογίας, θεωρίας, ιστορίας*, Gutenberg, Athens 2017, p. 261-280.

country of sun and sea, of the Acropolis and myths, but, in a new place-marketing approach, it was a modern country with good infrastructure where touring history became easier; access to the islands was simplified, the new works allowed the diffusion of functions outside the city centre, and opportunities for big changes in the way in which space was managed and planned were offered. The construction boom, which had already started at the beginning of the 1990s, intensified because of the works for the Olympic Games; it attracted and benefited from the mass supply of a workforce made up of immigrants, integrating the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic face of the Greek city in everyday reality.

Greek Cinema recorded arrival and survival difficulties—as in *From the Snow/Απ' το χιόνι* (1993), dir. Sotiris Gkoritsas, and *Eduart* (2006), dir. Angeliki Antoniou—as well as clashes with local society and the complexity of co-existence—as in *Correction/Διόρθωση* (2007), dir. Thanos Anastopoulos; *The Enemy Within/Ο εχθρός μου* (2013), dir. Yorgos Tsemberopoulos; and *Hostage/Όμηρος* (2005), dir. Constantine Giannaris. Giannaris, in his first domestic film, *From the Edge of the City/Από την άκρη της πόλης* (1998), emphasised spatial divisions in the capital of Greece between immigrants who worked as occasional sex-workers and their wealthy clients. The former live in the western suburbs, in incomplete buildings, while the wealthy Nikos who composes music for popular singers lives in a penthouse with a sea view in the southern suburbs. At the same time, Giannaris' film gave prominence to the centre of Athens as a place where these different groups co-existed,<sup>13</sup> bringing to the fore a particularity of the Greek city. As Vaiou, Mavridou and Mantouvalou describe, the prevailing modes of construction (exchange of land for a flat, unauthorised building) and the typology of the block of flats created an “amorphous urban continuum” which “functioned as a ‘sponge’”.<sup>14</sup> The social coexistence of the members of a heterogeneous community in *False Alarm/Όρες κοινής ησυχίας* (2006) was created under such conditions. Katerina Evangelakou's film recorded the social osmosis resulting from the way in which the city developed, where social divisions occurred through internal differentiations, from the lower ground floors to the penthouses and from the street view to the view onto an empty space.<sup>15</sup>

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13. For an extensive analysis of Giannaris' film as a city film and its connection with Greek cinema and subject areas, see Afroditi Nikolaidou, *Πόλη και κινηματογραφική μορφή: οι ταινίες πόλης του ελληνικού κινηματογράφου (1994-2004)*, unpubl. PhD thesis, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens 2012, p. 351-378.

14. Dina Vaiou, Maria Mantouvalou, Maria Mavridou, «Αθήνα 2004. Στα μονοπάτια της παγκοσμιοποίησης;», *Γεωγραφίες* 7 (2004), p. 13-15.

15. Vaiou, Mantouvalou, Mavridou, «Αθήνα 2004. Στα μονοπάτια της παγκοσμιοποίησης;», op. cit.



This unusual development in a sense reduced the social divisions that could be seen in other cities of the Global North.<sup>16</sup>

The Greek challenge at the beginning of the twenty-first century was the “day after” the Olympic Games which had promised to bring new activities and radical changes in the production of space. Various policies aiming at attracting investments tried to promote the new age that was about to come and contest the foregoing production of space and development of the Greek city. And while in 2004 Athens was getting ready to “put on her best clothes,” Greek Cinema brought to the fore the islets of poverty which were being created. In 2004, Panagiotopoulos, leaving behind the Greek low-quality nightclubs (*I Am Tired of Killing Your Lovers/Βαρέθηκα να σκοτώνω τους αγαπητικούς σου*, 2002) and cosmopolitan Mykonos (*Beautiful People*, 2001), returned with one of his best films. In *Delivery*, the main character arrives at the capital and quietly gets to know its cruel face, far from tourist images. Panagiotopoulos brought to the fore the capital's decline, at a moment when Athens was preparing to welcome the biggest sports event in the world.<sup>17</sup> In 2006, after the end of the Olympics, Giannis Economides in *Soul Kicking/Η ψυχή στο στόμα*, brought to the fore the claustrophobic aspect of the Greek city, a bourgeoisie under pressure and the gradual slip into fascist practices. Fascist practices and the decline that had started much earlier than the financial crisis and the MoUs (memoranda of understanding) with the EU and the IMF gradually overturned the conditions of coexistence in the urban block of flats, as recorded by Giannis Sakaridis in *Amerika Square/Πλατεία Αμερικής* (2016), a decade after *False Alarm*.

The modernisation signalled by the closing of Elliniko, the inauguration of the new airport “Eleftherios Venizelos,” the Attica Tollway and the pending 2004 Olympic Games were not only an improvement on the infrastructure, but also an opportunity to change the management of space and property ownership.<sup>18</sup> The gap between local wishes and global expectations had been an issue since the beginning of the twenty-first century, and it was depicted with a lot of humour in Sotiris Gkoritsas' *Brasileiro/Μπραζιλέρο* (2001) which followed the interventions of an EU troika in a provincial town. The locals invested in a Brazilian football player, thinking that this would do wonders for the local football team, putting the town

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16. Maria Mantouvalou, Maria Mavridou, “Processes of Social Integration and Urban Development in Greece: Southern Challenges to European Unification,” *European Planning Studies* 3/2 (1995), p. 189-205.

17. Betty Kaklamanidou, “Filmed Cities: Eden or Purgatory? From Los Angeles to Athens,” *Offscreen* 11/2 (2007), available at: [https://offscreen.com/view/filmed\\_cities](https://offscreen.com/view/filmed_cities) [30 August 2021].

18. Mantouvalou, Balla, «Μεταλλαγές στο σύστημα γης και οικοδομής και διακυβεύματα του σχεδιασμού στην Ελλάδα», op. cit.

on the global and local map. However, the money came from European funding for the creation of a cultural centre. Benefits for the inhabitants were collateral profits, as the main goal was to increase the competitiveness of Greek towns and to attract international investments.

In this context, it is interesting that, while its inhabitants were excluded from the city to facilitate the movement of athletes, Athens during the Olympic Games offered suitable conditions for shooting part of the first Greek zombie apocalypse film, Giorgos Nousias' *Evil/Το κακό* (2005). On the contrary, films which excelled abroad in the following years, presenting Greece's malaise "without necessarily making reference either to the past or even to the social context" tended to "unfold in confined spaces," according to Dimitris Papanikolaou.<sup>19</sup> In Yorgos Lathimos's *Dogtooth/Κυνόδοντας* (2009), the parents impose a confinement on their children against a country racing to connect with the global flows of capital and culture.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the group of men in Rachel Tsangari's *Chevalier* (2015), in order to be able to perform their competitive masculinity, were isolated on a boat. In a different version of isolation, the middle-class architect in Alexis Alexiou's *Story 52/Ιστορία 52* (2008) lives in a flat in which elements from modern interior design magazines are found. The city does not appear in any of the film's shots, but the new conditions of urban living are emphasised, with the lofts and flat renovations having already created enclaves of isolation.<sup>21</sup> Contrary to the spontaneous interaction in the urban block of flats, Greece's new age was afraid of meeting the "Other," and transformations in the production of space reinforced divisionary tendencies.<sup>22</sup> Recent plans for the development of Elliniko aim at scenarios of exclusion and enclosure.<sup>23</sup> The legal framework and visual representations that have become public<sup>24</sup> reveal a stereotypical approach to Greekness and a levelling globalising view.

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19. Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Κάτι Τρέχει με την Οικογένεια*, Patakis, Athens 2018, p. 152.

20. For an extensive analysis of the Greek Weird Wave and the poetics of space, see Anna Poupou, "The Poetics of Space in the New Wave of Contemporary Greek Cinema," *Parabasis* 16/1 (2018), p. 295-313.

21. Phevos Kallitsis, "Fear, City, Cinema: Urban Regeneration as a Mental Trap in Alexis Alexiou's film *Istoria 52* (Tale 52)", *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* 6/1 (2020), p. 51-69.

22. Maria Kalantzopoulou, Penny Koutrolikou, Katerina Polychroniadi, «Ο κυρίαρχος λόγος για το Κέντρο της Αθήνας», *Encounter Athens*, 15 May 2011, available at: <https://encounterathens.wordpress.com/2011/05/15/o-κυρίαρχος-λόγος-για-το-κέντρο-της-αθην/> [16 July 2021].

23. Loukas Triantis, «Το "Ελληνικό" ως πολιορκητικός κριός για τις διαδικασίες ανάπτυξης του αστικού χώρου», *Γεωγραφίες* 37 (2021), p. 81-87.

24. Giannis Chorianopoulos, Thanos Pagonis, *Στα Ίχνη της Μεσογειακής πόλης: Αστικότητα, σχεδιασμός και διακυβέρνηση στην αθηναϊκή μητρόπολη*, Kritiki, Athens 2020.

Despite the financial crises that brought out the weaknesses of the neo-liberal model, twenty years after the last flight departed from Elliniko Airport, public discourse maintains the dream of Europeanisation as a solution for the country's problems. One aspect of the dominant discourse seems to prefer another tendency of Greek Cinema which internationalises Greece and attracts the Greek public. One can discern it in several productions with commercial aspirations, such as *Numbered/Oi αριθμημένοι* (Tasos Psarras, 1998), *The Mating Game/H διακριτική γοητεία των αρσενικών* (Olga Malea, 1999), *Dancing Soul/ Συμφωνία χαρακτήρων* (Loukia Rikaki, 1999), *Risotto/Πιζότο* (Olga Malea, 2000) and *My Best Friend/O καλύτερός μου φίλος* (Lakis Lazopoulos, Yorgos Lanthimos, 2001). In these films, professions belong to the tertiary sector of the economy and show-business, and spaces are taken out of interior design magazines, irrespective of whether they fall within the financial reach of their leading characters.<sup>25</sup> Thus, contrary to cinematic depictions of the malaise of Greek society, in the city and the periphery, and the deconstruction of national depictions, the official discourse that now welcomes the transformation of Elliniko into an enormous park of skyscrapers and casinos seems to treat Greece like Markos Holevas' *Email* (2000): his heroes eat takeaway sushi and constantly exchange emails, at a time when such habits are not part of everyday life in Greek society; the spaces through which they move are obviously settings, copying the lifestyle seen in American films. In addition, Holevas constantly makes sure to include the Acropolis in his shots—these work as index-plans which suffice to link the narrative to Greece.<sup>26</sup> Thus, government and investment aspirations for Greece and the Elliniko project in the year 2021 continue to promise skyscrapers inspired by the Caryatids,<sup>27</sup> as well as land uses that will attract foreign capital.<sup>28</sup> Anything between “Development” and “History” constitutes a backyard which, following international standards of

25. Afroditi Nikolaidou, “Cinematic Athens 1993-2013: From the City in Transition to the City in Crisis”, A. Brenas, T. El-Khoury (eds), *La ville méditerranéenne au cinéma*, Orizons, Paris 2015, p. III-129.

26. Nikolaidou, “Cinematic Athens 1993-2013,” op. cit.

27. Thanassis Charamis, «Καζίνο στο Ελληνικό: Αυτή είναι η πρόταση της Mohegan-Επιβλητικό κτίριο εμπνευσμένο από τη μορφή Καρυάτιδας», *Lifo* (8 October 2019), available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/now/economy/kazino-sto-elliniko-ayti-einai-i-protasi-tis-mohegan-epiblitiko-ktirio-empneysmeno-apo> [29 July 2021].

28. The Greek press constantly reproduces the idea of Ellinikon as a great opportunity for investment, while the way in which “Hellinikon” (anglicised) is presented in international media is emphasised. See Ilias Bellos, «Ελληνικό: Ξεκινάει η επένδυση-Ολοκληρώνεται η μεταβίβαση στη Lamda», *Η Καθημερινή* (17 June 2021), available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/economy/561402643/elliniko-xekinai-i-ependysi-oloklironetai-i-metavivasi-sti-lamda/> [30 July 2021].

urban refinement, prospective investors are trying to conceal by using design and legal means.

However, one should contrast this picture with a series of films shot in the deserted Elliniko Airport during the period from 2000 to 2020, as the financial crisis of 2010 and the political debate around the old airport “delayed investment plans.” In this twenty-year period, a big part of creative Greek Cinema tended to return “to the backyard”, to anonymous architecture, to talk about Athens and Greece,<sup>29</sup> and several filmmakers saw in Elliniko a metonymy for contemporary Greece. Thus, they recorded different aspects, bringing to the fore issues that contradict the mythology of “development” opportunities which will benefit the whole country. Even Christoforos Papakaliatis’s commercial cinema in *Worlds Apart/Ένας άλλος κόσμος* (2015) recorded the social role that the former airport played in the immigration issue, as a place of refugee concentration, in an increasingly racist Greece. Elliniko, twenty years after the last flight, remains a space of claims, sporadic action and temporary uses. Olivia Dehez and Anna Psaroudaki’s *The Airport of Disillusions/Το αεροδρόμιο των απογοητεύσεων* (2017) and Afroditi Katerinopoulou’s *Post-Cards from Elliniko/Καρτ-ποστάλ από το Ελληνικό* (2020), through modular stories, record how the former airport has continued to play a role in the lives of the capital’s inhabitants and the surrounding municipalities, not only as a focus for nostalgia, but as a latent space that will soon be lost. Konstantinos Prepis in *Ellinikon/Ελληνικόν* (2019) records the former airport as the temporary refuge of a homeless person who does not live, however, in fear of being chased away once the space becomes “alive” again—as happens when the bulldozers come in to demolish the buildings. Finally, Yorgos Zois in *Third Kind* (2018) creates a science fiction film using the images of the old airport after the expulsion of the immigrants and refugees.<sup>30</sup>

Sofia Exarchou’s *Park* (2016) encapsulates the downfall of the development vision from the beginning of the twenty-first century. This film contrasts the Olympic village in the northwest of the capital with scenes from the abandoned Elliniko and the Athens Riviera of the southern suburbs. *Park* was filmed and screened at a time when Greek society was experiencing the financial crisis and when the Olympic village became a tactile cinematic trajectory of the fall after

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29. See Afroditi Nikolaidou, «Η “προσοικειωμένη” πόλη: Μια νεοφορμαλιστική προσέγγιση για την Αθήνα στον Σύγχρονο Ελληνικό Κινηματογράφο», Maria Paradeisi, Afroditi Nikolaidou (eds), *Από τον πρώιμο στον σύγχρονο Ελληνικό κινηματογράφο: Ζητήματα μεθοδολογίας, θεωρίας, ιστορίας*, Gutenberg, Athens 2017, p. 170-200.

30. On how Elliniko is interwoven with the concept of the refugee camp and the national management of the refugee question in Zois’s film, see Dimitris Papanikolaou, *Greek Weird Wave: A Cinema of Biopolitics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2021, p. 70-75.

the years of development. When the teenagers manage to escape and reach the southern suburbs, see entertainment and opulence, and come into contact with North European tourists, Exarchou's film records another cruel reality: the young people from the backyard of development will not benefit from it; the salvation through investment that is promoted through Elliniko underlines an Athens—and, in fact, a Greece—of divisions and different speeds. Therein lies the cruelty of the film: even if the crisis is over, the urban landscape has radically changed from the urban block of flats where people would interact; we have entered an era of urban divisions etched on official, mental and cinematic maps.



THE FILMS OF THE INITIATIVE  
*MOTHERLAND, I SEE YOU*





# Motherland, I see you

Elina Psykou, Syllas Tzoumerkas

If we place the point at which efforts to preserve the heritage of Greek film should have begun somewhere in the mid-1990s, then thirty years have now gone by with little to nothing by way of results. “Motherland, I see you. The 20th Century of Greek Cinema” is an initiative of the Hellenic Film Academy that sets out to counter this inaction and carelessness. It is a programme to preserve, study and raise awareness of the intellectual and culture heritage that is twentieth-century Greek cinema, the image, sound and narrative of a country over seven decades as recorded through the gaze of Greek filmmakers—a gaze that is caustic, brutal, anarchic, tender, inexorable, and penetrates deep into the doings of individuals, communities and patriarchs of every sort; through a collective narrative which ranges through a broad spectrum of genres from horror to musicals, drama to screwball comedy, and studio cinema to documentary film; through films short and long which stare the drama and farce of human existence in the face and re-work them—films political, dramatic, funny, queer, genre-bending, familiar or uncanny, quiet or vocal, solitary or swept along by broader-reaching currents; films which impacted as a body of work on the young Greek filmmakers of the last two decades—the generation that flourished in parallel with the birth and presence of the Hellenic Film Academy—by routes both obvious and unexpected.

Alongside *Evdokia*, *A Matter of Dignity*, *The Shepherds of Disorder*, *Z* and *The Travelling Players*, up there with *Betty*, *The Roundup*, *John the Violent*, *The Struggle of the Blind*, and *From the Edge of the City*, we would like to have seen Kostas Manoussakis' *The Fear*, Roussos Koundouros' *Aluminium in Greece*, or Alexis Bistikas' *The Marbles/Ta mármará*, but this proved impossible due to rights issues or other reasons, reasonable or otherwise. How the state can protect films whose creators are no longer alive and whose heirs are either unable or uninterested in defending their moral right to the works remains a mystery. The current legal framework protects the principle of ownership and nothing else—and only when that happens to be clear, free of legal uncertainties. Legally, in fact, there is nothing to stop someone destroying, losing, damaging or tampering with a film, irrespective of the express instructions or wishes of its creators.

Thanks to the initiative and work of the Hellenic Film Academy and its partners under the Auspices of the “Greece 2021” Committee, the National Centre of Audiovisual Media and Communication (EKOME), which is the main sponsor of the event, the Greek Film Centre, the Athens Epidaurus Festival, the Thessaloniki Film Festival, and with the support of the Greek Film Archive and Finos Film, 27 of the 41 films in this tribute have been digitised and digitally restored for the first time. In addition, all or part of the programme is to travel to 21 cities, and the present edition, published simultaneously in Greek and English, has been created.

But the question remains: how can what has been set in motion here retain its momentum and be carried forward in a systematic way? We would like to hope that the question will not be left unanswered for another thirty years. Because only thus will the outstanding work of Greek filmmakers be saved, kept alive and accessible so it can continue to inspire, enrich and even define the experience of all of us who are alive today and will be alive tomorrow.

## **MOTHERLAND, I SEE YOU – THE 20th CENTURY OF GREEK CINEMA /**

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**ASTERO** by Dimitris Gaziadis | 1929 | 57' | Production: DAG Film | Screenplay: Orestis Laskos (based on scripts by Pavlos Nirvanas) | Cinematography: Mihalis Gaziadis.

Cast: Alikì Theodoridou, Kostas Mousouris, Aimilios Veakis, Dimitris Tsakiris.

At the bottom of Mount Helmos, far away from the city and the remains of past urban glory, somewhere in the heart of the Greek countryside, Astero and Thymios vow each other eternal love. Thymios' father believes that Astero is not the right person for his son, threatening to disinherit him if he marries Astero. Destiny and prejudice seem to keep the lovers apart. Will they ever meet again? Loosely based on the novel *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson (which narrates the story of a forbidden love in the US), this historically important film takes place in the Greek countryside, where many of the popular productions of that period were set. The country, from the urban centre to the countryside, was steeped in a socio-political crisis (in the film, Astero's uncle is a political prisoner in Athens, and his fortune determines the fate of the characters); therefore, the "Foustanella" sub-genre became a popular means of escape. Gaziadis composed a small pastoral epic tale in three acts, where social class and erotic passion set the tone for a melodrama with heroes who seem determined to go against their own destiny. Elements of timeless value which are fundamental to the narrative cross borders and eras—just like the shift from *Ramona* to "Foustanella". The film, lost for decades, had a successful box office remake in 1959, directed by Dinos Dimopoulos and starring Alikì Vougiouklaki, until a copy of the film with French intertitles was found in the Cinémathèque Française in 2003. Now the film is also available accompanied by Nalyssa Green's music, composed for the screenings of the *Motherland, I See You* event.

The film was restored in 2003 by The Greek Film Archive in collaboration with the French Film Archive.

**FORGOTTEN FACES** by Yorgos Tzavellas | 1946 | 86' | Production: Finos Film, Orion Film | Screenplay: Yorgos Tzavellas | Cinematography: Prodromos Mera-vidis | Editing: Filopoimin Finos | Music: Yorgos Mallidis | Sound: Filopoimin Finos | Make-up: Stavros Kelesidis.

Cast: Stella Gkreka, Aimilios Veakis, Miranta Myrat, Yorgos Pappas, Zinet Lakaz, Lambros Konstandaras, Athanasia Moustaka, Dimos Starenios, Marika Filippidou, Tzoly Garmpi, Koulis Storigkas, Nasos Kedrakas, Alekos Gkonis, Yorgos Kokoulis, Sotos Arvanis, Takis Saliaris, G. Longos.

Tony, a man of the underworld, returns to Greece after many years in America. In a nightclub in the Trouba district, he finds his old mistress, Maria, who has abandoned her husband and daughter and become a prostitute for his sake. Her daughter, Alki, is getting ready to marry Pavlos, a rich young man. All these years she believed her mother to be dead, but now her world is in danger of collapsing. This is because Tony calls Alki's father, asking him for money to keep quiet about her mother. But Maria will do everything to protect her daughter and not allow her own mistakes to destroy her happiness.

Two years after the epoch-defining *Applause*, his debut film, master director of Greek Cinema Yorgos Tzavellas returned and divided audiences with *Forgotten Faces*, his first collaboration with Filopoimin Finos. With the film having been lost for a long time and the creator himself having denounced it upon its release (when it faced commercial failure), the intervening decades have restored its place as a representative example of post-war cinema. Many well-known actors of the time appear on screen (for example, Lambros Konstandaras in his youth), while Tzavellas immerses us in a world of pure melodrama filled with sinister gangsters and fallen aristocrats. Using a backdrop of Athenian iconography, with heroes at the mercy of their morals and fate, the director was inspired by the popular literature of newspaper serials. He won over the critics of the time who hailed his work as equal to that of his most significant contemporaries internationally, at a time when, in fact, the ranks of Greek Cinema remained decimated by World War II.

The film was digitally restored by Finos Film.

**THE OGRE OF ATHENS** by Nikos Koundouros | 1956 | 105' | Screenplay: Iakovos Kambanellis | Cinematography: Costas Theodoridis | Editing: Nikos Koundouros | Music: Manos Hadjidakis | Sets: Tassos Zografos, P. Papadopoulos | Costumes: Denni Vachlioti | Sound: Mikes Damalas | Make-up: Nikos Varveris | Production: Athens Film Company.

Cast: Dinos Iliopoulos, Margarita Papageorgiou, Yiannis Argiris, Thanassis Veggos, Theodoros Andriakopoulos, Marika Lekaki, Manolis Vlachakis, Andreas Douzos, Anestis Vlahos, Zizi Viopoulou, Kassi Janet, Nikos Tsachiridis, Alekos Tzanetakos, Kostas Spagopoulos.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Special Mention, Venice Film Festival 1956.

A bank employee, while preparing to spend a lonely New Year's Eve in Athens, discovers that he resembles a wanted criminal, the so-called "Ogre". Trying to escape from the police he finds refuge in a cabaret, where apart from a dancer with whom he develops an intense relationship, he associates with people of the criminal underworld, who also mistake him for the Ogre. The employee starts seeing this dangerous game of switching identities as some kind of escape and gradually adopts the role assigned to him by fate—or is it perhaps more than a role? The settling of scores—and roles—will be tough anyway.

Drawing on Iakovos Kambanellis' text and Manos Hadjidakis' music, Nikos Koundouros rewrites the rules of Noir by looking at them through the distorting mirror of post-civil war Athens. The spine-chilling Dinos Iliopoulos portrays a man who embodies a repulsive anti-hero, in an allegory for a country in search of identity, in the throes of poverty and social paralysis. Here, heroes and institutions appear to be non-existent, archetypes are corrupted, while utter and complete alienation is what emerges through an expressionist-toned ancient Greek tragedy disguised as the story of a modern society in a labyrinthine deadlock. After participating in the Venice Film Festival, the film was a box-office failure in its time, however in the decades that followed it found its place among the most defining films of the history of Greek cinema.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**A MATTER OF DIGNITY** by Michael Cacoyannis | 1958 | 105' | Screenplay: Michael Cacoyannis | Cinematography: Walter Lassaly | Editing: Yorgos Tsaoulis | Music: Manos Hadjidakis | Sets: Yannis Tsarouchis | Sound: Markos Zervas | Make-up: Stavros Kelesidis, Nikos Xepapadakos | Production: Finos Films.

Cast: Elli Lambeti, Yorgos Pappas, Michalis Nikolinakos, Athena Michaelidou, Eleni Zafeiriou, Dimitris Papamichail, Despo Diamantidou, Vassilis Kailas, Minas Christidis, Zorz Sarri, Nikos Femas, Mary Chronopoulou, Nikos Kourkoulos, Despina Nikolaidou.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Official selection, Competition Section, Cannes Film Festival 1958. Best Foreign Actress BAFTA nomination (Elli Lambeti) 1960.

Having won critical acclaim with *Windfall in Athens* and *Stella*, Michael Cacoyannis returned to the Cannes Film Festival with a social melodrama on the fall of traditional Athenian aristocracy, seen through the eyes of a young woman, a symbol for an entire generation trapped by the mistakes of its predecessors. The Pellas family are former magnates on their way to bankruptcy. Considering poverty a fate worse than death, the family desperately tries to hide their situation from their social circle. Young Chloe finds out the truth and, in an effort to rescue her parents, attempts to reel in a millionaire who claims to have been in love with her for a while now. Tedious Mr. Dritsas' money will salvage the family's pride but, in the meantime, no one must know what is really going on. Trapped between a lie and the disastrous truth, Chloe loses control over her own life.

Cacoyannis framed the shame and desperation of the asphyxiating class system with an expert eye, revolving around a luminous Elli Lambeti as the tragic young woman who is trying to take control of her own personhood in a dead-end situation. A melodrama full of contrasting characters and existential angst, it starts off in the high-end neighbourhoods of old Athens, only to culminate in a miracle, surprisingly shot documentary-style, on the island of Tinos during the grand religious festival there. *A Matter of Dignity* is one of Cacoyannis' most influential films, leaving an indelible mark on 21st Century Greek Cinema.

The film was digitally restored by the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation in 2016.



**MACEDONIAN WEDDING** by Takis Kanellopoulos | 1960 | 24' | Production: Panayiotis Charatsaris | Screenplay: Takis Kanellopoulos | Cinematography: Iakovos Pairidis.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Short Film, 1st Greek Film Week 1960. 1st Prize, Belgrade Film Festival 1961.

This was Takis Kanellopoulos' directorial debut, one of the precursors of New Greek Cinema, which earned rave reviews after it premiered at the 1st Greek Film Week—later to become the Thessaloniki International Film Festival—where it won Best Short Film and garnered critical acclaim. The film centres on an upcoming wedding in Velvedo, Kozani, a village in Western Macedonia. The bride is dolled up and ready to go, but she is standing still: “Oh mother, why did you have to marry me off so young?” She spreads out her dowry in the yard, “handmade by her and her mother,” as if her value depended on it. Around them, the entire village is dancing and celebrating. As soon as the groom is done shaving, the ceremony begins. The gaze of the camera is attentive and unusually poetic, as the voice-over introduces us to the wedding customs of Western Macedonia. In less than half an hour, Kanellopoulos elevates a classic piece of ethnographic cinema into something that reaches above and beyond its genre, evolving into a lyrical poem about roots, traditions and, ultimately, Greece itself.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**MADALENA** by Dinos Dimopoulos | 1960 | 88' | Screenplay: Giorgos Roussos | Cinematography: Walter Lassally | Editing: Giorgos Tsaoulis | Music: Manos Hadjidakis | Sets: Markos Zervas | Make-up: Stavros Kelesidis | Production: Finos Film.

Cast: Alikì Vougiouklaki, Dimitris Papamichail, Pantelis Zervos, Thanassis Veggos, Thodoros Moridis, Yorgos Damasiotis, Despo Diamantidou, Smaro Stefanidou, Kaiti Lambropoulou, Lavrentis Dianellos, Pericles Christoforidis, Spiros Kalogirou, Maria Giannakopoulou, Thanassis Generalis, Mary Metaxa, Panagiotis Karavousianos, Nikos Flokas, Eleana Apergi, Vassilis Kailas.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Screenplay Award, Best Leading Actress (Alikì Vougiouklaki), Best Supporting Actor (Pantelis Zervos), 1st Thessaloniki Film Festival 1960. Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival 1961.

The hatred between two captains of a Cycladic Island divides its people. After Captain Kosmas' death, his daughter Madalena faces despair, as she now has to raise her six siblings on her own. To pay her family's debts, she decides to take over her father's small boat business, but everyone turns to her father's competitor as no one trusts a woman to be a captain. The village priest comes up with a plan to help her: on Epiphany Day, he helps Madalena catch the holy cross, telling the villagers that this was the will of God. When, finally, everyone chooses her boat, Madalena starts finding roses from an unknown sender. If love travels on her boat, what does it look like? The screenwriter Yorgos Roussos received inspiration from a true story and wrote one of the biggest hits of the era, which is both ethnography of a close-knit community and folk love story, placing at its centre a heroine who tries to overcome the prejudices of her conservative, male-dominated milieu.

Dinos Dimopoulos' film, which entered the 1961 Cannes Film Festival, looked behind the beautiful facade of the Greek island landscape, revealing its people's deeply rooted ideologies and attitudes, while also weaving a fine romantic tale around a vivid social mosaic. The great Greek actress of the period, Alikì Vougiouklaki, takes up one of the most emblematic roles of her career. The director of photography, Walter Lassally, drew inspiration from the sea and the landscape of Antiparos, while Manos Hadjidakis wrote some of his best-known songs for the film. This is a film full of flair and youthful simplicity, directed by one of the most significant directors of the Greek industry, who showed a unique versatility between genres.

The film was digitally restored by Finos Film.

**ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS** by Roviros Manthoulis | 1960 | 28' | Producers: Roviros Manthoulis, Fotis Mesthenaios, Iraklis Papadakis | Screenplay: Roviros Manthoulis in collaboration with the archaeologist Yiannis Miliadis | Cinematography: Fotis Mesthenaios.

Narrator: Yiannis Miliadis.

*Acropolis of Athens* is an educational documentary by Roviros Manthoulis, Fotis Mesthenaios and Iraklis Papadakis, filmed under the archaeological guidance of Yiannis Miliadis, Director of the Acropolis Museum, who is also the narrator. The film is a wonderfully consistent mapping of the Acropolis site, its objects, spaces, iconography and connection with history and tradition. From the opening moments and the presentation of the complexity and uniqueness of its location, through the highlighting of every striking detail within a wider artistic context, the film takes us on a journey through time, connecting centuries of Athenian history to the present day, with the monument framed not only as a glowing testament to an old civilisation, but also in relation to its current position above a great, modern city. At a time when the works of Robert Manthoulis were already winning awards and traveling abroad, and when he, as member of the Group of 5, was passionately promoting the art of documentary filmmaking and public education, *Acropolis* found distribution in a memorable way, through a screening at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which led to its sale to a number of universities in America and around the world.

**100 HOURS IN MAY** by Dimos Theos and Fotos Lambrinos | 1964 | 20' | Producers: Dimos Theos and Fotos Lambrinos | Screenplay: Dimos Theos and Fotos Lambrinos | Cinematography: Takis Kalatzis, Giannis Kalovyrynas | Editing: Dimos Theos, Vangelis Serdaris | Music: Nikiforos Rotas.

Narrator: Thodoros Malikiosis.

The story of the left-wing MP Grigoris Lambrakis' assassination, which was orchestrated by paramilitary groups along with the Karamanlis government, with the complicity and guidance of the Royal Gendarmerie, is told through authentic images and previously unknown evidence. For the very first time, irrefutable evidence comes to light to elucidate the horror of this political assassination and capture the surroundings and the socio-economic status of the para-state organisation's members, whose main goal was to organise attacks against members of left-wing parties. One of the highlights is the left-wing parliamentarian's grand funeral.

*100 Hours in May* is a legendary documentary that paved the way for a new, purely political genre and lay at the heart of the 1970s film scene. It heralded *Kierion* by Dimos Theos, who, alongside Fotos Lambrinos, was among the leading political film creators of his time. Paying attention to the atmosphere of political turmoil, filmmakers began to shoot and capture the reactions of the parties involved, from the Lambrakis attack to his burial, which was attended, seemingly, by the entire nation. Furthermore, through extensive research, Theos and Lambrinos examined the conditions and the reality of the political assassination that was to change the face of Greece. The film, which was completed in 1964 but faced a screening ban by the government of Giorgos Papandreou's Centre Union, was never broadcast on state television and not shown publicly in Greece until 1974.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**KISS THE GIRLS** by Giannis Dalianidis | 1965 | 104' | Screenplay: Giannis Dalianidis | Cinematography: Nikos Kavoukidis | Editing: Petros Lykas | Music: Mimis Plessas | Sets: Markos Zervas | Costumes: A. Stavropoulou | Sound: Thanassis Georgiadis | Make-up: Nikos Xepapadakos | Production: Finos Film.

Cast: Zoi Laskari, Rena Vlachopoulou, Martha Karagianni, Kostas Voutsas, Andreas Douzos, Chloi Liaskou, Yannis Vogiatzis, Alekos Tzanetakos, Yorgos Gavrilidis, Yorgos Vrasivanopoulos, Angelos Mavropoulos, Periklis Christoforidis, Nikos Papanastasiou, Eirini Koumarianou, Maria Gkeka, Kity Nafpliotou, Elen Romanou, Maria Mavridoglou, Aleka Christidi, Magda Kiourkou.

When it comes to Greek commercial musicals, there are few films that can stand next to this classic success of Giannis Dalianidis, with an absolute all-star cast. Based on the classic structure of misunderstandings and mistaken identities, a frantic spectacle is set up, where characters and situations are delightfully intertwined amidst music and classical choreography, in a recipe so perfectly executed that it has justifiably acquired a firm place in the TV repeat broadcasts and preferences of the Greek audience. Of historical importance, given that a Greek colour film was shot in cinemascope format for the first time, Dalianidis' film became a commercial phenomenon in its time, topping the box office among the 93 Greek films of that year. The film follows Rena, the director of a travel agency in New York, who comes to Greece to vacation with her niece, Jenny. Rena's brother needs money for a job, so Rena travels to Rhodes to help him meet businessman Petros Ramoglou. Ramoglou's son, Andreas, and his friend Kostas are interested in entering the art scene and fall in love with Jenny. They decide to contend for her while following a silly plan to change roles: Andreas, pretending to be poor Kostas, will charm Jenny, while at the same time Kostas, pretending to be rich Andreas, will meet Efi Ramoglou who has arrived on the island with her father. This exchange of roles will create a domino effect of trouble and misunderstandings.

The film was digitally restored by Finos Film.

**THE ROUNDUP** by Adonis Kyrrou | 1965 | 90' | Screenplay: Gerasimos Stavrou  
| Cinematography: Giorgos Panousopoulos, Grigoris Danalis | Music: Mikis Theodorakis | Production: Grift Films

Cast: Kostas Kazakos, Manos Katrakis, Kostas Bakas, Alexandra Ladikou, Giannis Fertis, Xenia Kalogeropoulou.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Director's Honorary Award, 6th Thessaloniki Film Festival 1965. Official Selection, Critics' Week, Cannes Film Festival 1965.

On a summer night in 1944 in Kokkinia, Kosmas, a black marketeer, is out with his friends before he is arrested by a German patrol. The Germans push him to turn in people from the Resistance, or they will execute him. The next day, Kosmas wears a black hood and points at the Resistance fighters who have been forced to gather at the main square of the neighbourhood. The film of surrealist filmmaker and writer Adonis Kyrrou recreated the terrifying conditions of the blockade of Kokkinia, when, in the last period of the German occupation, the populous neighbourhoods of Athens resisted at any cost.

Employing as starting point an event that marked the country's history, the film "attempts to serve as a collage of occupied Greece, going beyond several political differentiations," according to the filmmaker. It shows "the objective inability of modern man to stay aloof during seismic events," such as the events that took place in July of that year. Guided by the truth and accompanied by facts, Kyros, who was artistically in conversation with filmmakers such as Buñuel and Breton during his self-exile in Paris, created one of the first and most vital depictions of the Greek resistance during World War II, in a Brechtian piece of work. It does not come as a surprise that the film sparked many reactions at its premiere at the Cannes Semaine de la Critique. The film is considered to be a true cinematic landmark, a relic of the "Lost Spring" of the 1960s.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THE SEVENTH DAY OF CREATION** by Vassilis Georgiadis | 1966 | 117' | Producers: Roussopoulos Bros, G. Lazaridis, D. Sarris, K. Psarras | Screenplay: Iakovos Kambanellis | Cinematography: Aristeidis Karydis-Fuchs, Nikos Gardelis, Grigoris Danalis, Syrakos Danalis | Music: Yannis Markopoulos | Sets: Nikos Nikolaidis.

Cast: Elli Fotiou, Yorgos Tzortzis, Dimos Starenios, Kostas Bakas, Betty Arvaniti.

Having been discharged from the military and in an effort to rise above the limitations of his social class, the newlywed Alekos Stathakis comes up with a grandiose plan and submits it to a big company, wilfully ignoring his lack of privileges and resources. He believes that his dream will come true and passes on this delusional idea to his wife and father who think that a new chapter of success will open up in their lives. But when his plan is rejected by the company, Alekos finds himself at a dead end. To keep this a secret from his family, he takes on a fake routine. Every morning, he pretends to leave for work while, in reality, he wanders aimlessly around Athens, watching the world around him as if he were hypnotised.

The film is based on a theatrical play by Iakovos Kambanellis, the first play from the trilogy also including *The Courtyard of Miracles* and *The Age of Night*. The film, one of Vassilis Georgiadis' most influential creations in the 1960s, came on the heels of his two Oscar nominations for Best Foreign Language Film (*The Red Lanterns* and *Blood on the Land*) and preceded Golden Globe-nominated *Girls in the Sun*. His body of work explored class issues and their social impasses through electrifying character portrayals and timeless tales of passion and survival; it exceeded genre boundaries. The protagonist's pervasive feeling of suffocation intensifies throughout the movie's socio-politically-rooted dramatic scenes that are filled with desperation and shame. Being at the mercy of a convention that forbids him to bridge the gap between ambition and action, fantasy and reality, Georgiadis' hero is eventually crushed, creating a maelstrom that sweeps everyone with it.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THE SHEPHERDS OF DISORDER** by Nico Papatakis | 1967 | 117' | Screenplay: Nico Papatakis | Direction of Photography: Jean Boffety, Christian Gouillouet | Editing: Souzanne Cabon, Geneviève Vaury, Panos Papakyriakopoulos | Music: Pierre Barbaud | Costumes: Rita Sfika | Sound: Antonis Bairaktaris, Alex Pront | Production: Lenox films.

Cast: Olga Karlatos, Yorgos Dialeghmenos, Ellie Xanthaki, Lambros Tsagas, Karousos Tzavalas, Dimos Starenios, Yannis Argyris, Nikiforos Naneris.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Official Selection, International Competition, Venice Film Festival 1967.

Thanos, a poor shepherd, falls in love with the fair Despina, the daughter of local landowner Vlachopoulos. As is to be expected, her father categorically refuses to bless their union and tries to arrange a marriage to Yangos, the son of a wealthy sheep owner. The night before Easter, when the entire village is at church, Thanos and Despina elope, escaping to the mountains in desperation. The couple is pursued by the police, as well as Yangos himself, who—deeply offended—wants to take revenge.

“Cinéaste provocateur” according to the French paper *Libération* and “an iconoclast with one of the most radical and neglected bodies of work in all of European cinema” according to *Criterion*, Nico Papatakis poured his entire personal philosophy into his films and throughout his entire life never stopped fighting against all forms of fascism and social dominance. The themes that permeate his oeuvre, such as oppression and exile, are plainly documented in the deliriously expressionist *Shepherds of Disorder*, where traditional pastoral film meets tragic love story. A provocative, surrealist portrait of a society mired in poverty and oppression, highly stylised without ever losing sight of the narrative, it is one of the films that influenced 21st Century Greek Cinema the most.

The film was digitally restored by Gaumont in 2015.



**KIERION** by Dimos Theos | 1974 | 90' | Producers: Giorgos Papalios, Dimos Theos | Screenplay: Dimos Theos, Kostas Sfikas | Cinematography: Giorgos Panousopoulos | Editing: Vangelis Serdaris | Music: Vangelis Maniatis | Sound: Tasos Metallinos, Thanassis Georgiadis, Giannis Tsitsopoulos.

Cast: Anestis Vlahos, Kyriakos Katzourakis, Eleni Theofilou, Dimos Starenios, Elli Xanthaki, Stavros Tornos, Kostas Sfikas, Theo Angelopoulos.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Honorary Distinction, Venice Film Festival 1968. Best Artistic Film, Best Newcomer Director, Honorary Distinction for the actor Anestis Vlahos, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1974.

A journalist is accused of murdering an American colleague who has been investigating the political role of a Middle Eastern oil cartel. Another colleague, a Jewish person who is later murdered, just like the girl who serves as the main witness, also gets arrested by the authorities. The journalist is temporarily released and begins his own investigation into the case, gradually realising that the government aims to cover up the truth and mislead public opinion. He tries to convince the main witness to testify, but she is then found murdered, while the noose is tightening around him and the truth.

A film inspired by the well-known Polk murder—American journalist George Polk was found murdered while visiting Greece to interview Markos Vafeiadis—*Kierion*, the first feature film by Dimos Theos following *100 Hours in May*, not only marked the birth of New Greek Cinema, but also of a new genre of deep, fearless political art, which was preoccupied the director throughout his career. Winning an award in Venice years before it was screened in Greece, the film captured on the big screen social conditions that no one dared to bring to the cinema: from transgressive, authoritarian police violence to the spreading of the students' movement. Taking advantage of the noir form and the help of many well-known filmmakers and friends from that period, Theos presents Athens as a hypnotising and enchanted city, without beautifying it or diverging from his ultimate goal—that is, to reveal the truth.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THIREAN MATINS** by Kostas Sfikas, Stavros Tornes | 1968 | 22' | Producers: Stavros Tornes, Giorgis Samiotis | Screenplay: Kostas Sfikas | Cinematography: Giorgos Panousopoulos | Editing: Panos Papakyriakopoulos | Sound: Kostas Sfikas | Production: Greek Film Centre.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Short Documentary Film, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1968.

This is a “visual social research” film on Santorini, at a time when the primitive agricultural economy gradually gave way to the emerging tourist industry. Its impoverished and malnourished inhabitants are juxtaposed with the evocative beauty of the island, accompanied by the sounds of Orthodox psalms. Filmed on the island in the summer of 1967, at the beginning of the dictatorship period, this short film uses the powerful counterpoint between images and music to surpass the boundaries of a simple folklore documentary and presents itself as a haunting portrait of a two-tiered society, an ominous vision of a future that has already begun.

“Elements of drama, satire, epic and lyricism had to be fused within a music frame that lacks any kind of naturalistic approach, to create anti-metaphysical melodies that stem from tradition while also being a sufferer’s current outcry,” the two directors commented on this rare and exciting cinematic collaboration. The sound design of the film was transformed into a frame of comparison and exposition. With the help of its unique use of editing and cinematography, the film leads the viewer into a deep, shocking journey of observation. This portrayal of a run-down population and an entire structure in the service of rapidly expanding tourism stands as a sharp political precursor to New Greek Cinema, which was to emerge alongside the political change-over. The film was bought by, among others, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), which housed it in its collection.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THE YOUNG RUNAWAY** by Stavros Tsiolis | 1969 | 89' | Screenplay: Stavros Tsiolis | Cinematography: Markos Defilippou | Editing: Vassilis Syropoulos | Music: Kostas Kapnisis | Set design: Markos Zervas | Make-up: Nikos Xepapadakos | Songs: Giannis Pouloupoulos, Popi Asteriadi | Production: Finos Film.

Cast: Maria Papaioannou, Nikos Oikonomidis, Giorgos Zografos, Nansy Mandrou, Tasoulis Dardamanis, Damianos Zeis, Marivana Blanou, Petros Beretas, Angelos Antonopoulos, Aina Maouer, Maria Foka, Theano Ioannidou, Vasilis Andronidis, Spyros Konstantopoulos, Liza Koudouri, Nasos Kedrakas, Christos Stypas, Nikos Paschalidis, Giannis Kontoulis, Takis Alavanos, Efi Arvaniti, Ntouo Ballas.

A young boy runs away from the reformatory where he has spent the last couple of years and hides at a young girl's house. The two of them will form a strong friendship; yet, when his parents' on-tour acting troupe passes through the village, the boy will reunite with his family, and they will take him with them. With the songs of Yannis Pouloupoulos enhancing the melodramatic mood, Stavros Tsiolis directed his debut film after working on several films as assistant to Finos. In the tender relationship between the two children, Tsiolis depicted something almost primordial, a pure viewpoint, which, combined with childish naivety and an open heart, reflects a world that probably does not make sense. Tsiolis himself said that, in order for Finos to give the go-ahead for the film, he requested a demo; this was when he shot the scene where the children are marrying their dolls, in an emotional scene that summarises the viewpoint of the entire film. Finos was mesmerised by the childlike tone of the scene and convinced to give him the green light. Thus, he started one of the most impressive careers in the history of modern Greek Cinema, with an unexpected turn: after two years, and having experimented with different genres, Tsiolis gave up cinema and travelled around Greece, to return in 1985 with the film *Such a Long Absence* starting a period of classical comedies that became collective relics for viewers for years to come. In their own way, these comedies were nothing more than folklore tales, much like the magic realism melodrama *The Young Runaway*. All of them served as personal readings of reality from a stylistically tense cinematic viewpoint. Maybe sometimes it is simply vital to escape.

The film was digitally restored by Finos Film.

**Z** by Costa-Gavras | 1969 | 127' | Producers: Jacques Perrin, Ahmed Rachedi | Screenplay: Jorge Semprun, Costa-Gavras (based on a Vassilis Vassilikos novel) | Cinematography: Raoul Coutard | Editing: Françoise Bonnot | Music: Mikis Theodorakis | Production Designer: Jacques D'Ovidio | Costumes: Piet Bolscher | Sound: Michèle Boëhm.

Cast: Yves Montand, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Irene Pappas, Jacques Perrin, François Périer, Charles Denner, Pierre Dux, Georges Géret, Renato Salvatori, Bernard Fresson, Clotilde Joano.

Awards / Distinctions / Festivals: Oscar Award for Best Foreign Language Film and Best Editing 1970. Nominated for three more Oscars 1970 (Best Film, Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay). Jury Prize and Best Actor Award (Jean-Louis Trintignant), Cannes Film Festival 1969. Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film 1970. BAFTA for Best Music (Mikis Theodorakis) 1970.

"Any resemblance to real events, to people alive or dead, is intentional!" The sincere rage that runs through Gavras' classic political thriller is evident in every frame, from the credits to the glances, from the demonstrations to the interrogations, and at every possible point in between. Based on the novel of the same name by Vassilis Vassilikos, about the assassination of EDA MP Grigoris Lambrakis by para-state operatives in the turbulent decade of the 1960s, the *Z* (not read "Zeta" but "Zi," which means "alive" in Greek) starts with the attack on a political figure of the opposition (Yves Montand) and the immediate attempt at concealment, following the subsequent investigation by a judge (Jean-Louis Trintignant) determined to bring the true facts to light. But what can be the price of truth in such a corrupt and politically unstable environment?

In a screenplay that he co-wrote with the future Spanish Minister of Culture, Jorge Semprun, Costa-Gavras wove a thriller that keeps one on tenterhooks not by using exaggerations and cheap twists, but by locating and intentionally commenting on political terror, through interrogations and glances that never hide the truth. Through an uninterrupted montage and the impetuous compositions of Mikis Theodorakis, Gavras followed faces, processes and truths hidden in the shadows, completing a bold, vital portrait of that period's social impasse that captivated the world audience. It was the second non-English-language film in history to be nominated for an Oscar in the Best Film category.

The film was digitally restored in 2014 by KG Productions with the support of CNC.

**EVDOKIA** by Alexis Damianos | 1971 | 105' | Screenplay: Alexis Damianos | Producer: Artemis Kapasakali | Direction of Photography: Christos Mangos | Editing: Matt McCarthy | Music: Manos Loizos | Costumes: Julia Andreadi | Sound: Tony Anscombe, Nikos Despotidis | Make-up: Julia Andreadi.

Cast: Maria Vassiliou, Yorgos Koutouzis, Koula Agagiotou, Christos Zorbas, Eleni Roda (Evdokia's voice).

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Actress Award (Maria Vassiliou), Thessaloniki International Film Festival 1971. Ciné-Clubs Award of France 1971. Golden Apollo Award by the Greek Film Critics Association.

In this prominent masterpiece of Greek Cinema, a sergeant meets a hooker, Evdokia, and they end up getting married. Bound by a common destiny, they now have to confront a society that wants to restrain and, ultimately, crush them. The two lovers live on the fringes of a familiar yet surreal universe, full of destitute neighbourhoods and harsh landscapes, full of nothingness. Like the screen adaptation of a tragedy that was never written, the film boasts an unconventional narrative approach, way ahead of its time, that refuses to succumb to quick redemption. Focusing on a female lead (Maria Vassiliou) who wants to live and love on her own terms, the film won the Best Actress Award at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival.

The second feature—following *Until the Ship Sails*—by director, actor and playwright Alexis Damianos, *Evdokia* is a wildly free, deeply political film that is intricately entwined with Manos Loizos' emblematic theme music. A triumph of frenzied passion and towering rage, it is a reaction against a world that refuses to move forward.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THE PLOT** by Thodoros Maragos | 1971 | 13' | Producer: Thodoros Maragos | Screenplay: Thodoros Maragos | Cinematography: Thodoros Maragos | Editing: Thodoros Maragos | Synch and Technical Process: Manolis Sakkadakis | Production: Triantafyllos Films.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: First Award, 2nd Greek Short Film Festival 1971.

The film portrays life in an empty lot in Petralona, Athens, throughout three seasons of a year. In autumn, an amusement park sets up shop, while in winter the lot is deserted and in spring serves as a stadium for the school's athletics festivals. The latter, during the junta period, were used by the regime to distract public opinion. The film consists of a composition of moments as life unfolds in one of the underprivileged (at the time) neighbourhoods of Athens, where a site comes alive. The passage of time erodes the piece of land, leaving its mark on it, as it would on a human being. Moments of joy and liveliness give way to a rainy melancholy, like changes of mood in the changing of seasons. The exogenous force of profit destroys all of this when a building is erected on the site. The end is inevitable and merciless.

In his first example of live action cinema after notable work in animation, Maragos looked with a human and cinematic eye where there seemed to be nothing at all to see and saw the lyricism of existence. Using the simplest means, he recorded a space in a very human and authentic way, while ensuring a rare inner rhythm. By turning something so mundane that goes unnoticed into poetry, he gave prominence to its political dimension. "I was showing the degradation of Greek society during the years of the junta," he says of the film, which was shot in 1971 and banned by the regime. Throughout his career, Maragos remained true to his anthropocentric vision, giving audiences films with great commercial and artistic success, such as *Learn How to Read and Write, Son*; he combined a statement of political convictions with his visual sensibility, leaving a significant legacy.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**ANNA'S ENGAGEMENT** by Pantelis Voulgaris | 1972 | 85' | Producer: Dinos Katsouridis | Screenplay: Pantelis Voulgaris, Menis Koumantareas | Cinematography: Nikos Kavoukidis | Editing: Dinos Katsouridis | Sets & Costumes: Kyriakos Katzourakis | Sound: Petros Patelis.

Cast: Anna Vagena, Smaro Veaki, Kostas Rigopoulos, Stavros Kalaroglou, Aliki Zografou.

Awards/ Distinctions / Festivals: Awards for Best Artistic Film, Newcomer Director, Actress in Leading Role (Anna Vagena), Supporting Actress (Smaro Beaki), Supporting Actor (Kostas Rigopoulos), Thessaloniki Film Festival 1972. FIPRESCI Prize, Otto-Dibelius Award, OCIC Award, Berlin Film Festival 1974. Outstanding Film of the Year, London Film Festival 1974.

Anna, a poor girl from the countryside, has been working as a domestic servant for a middle-class Athenian family for ten years. When her bosses realise that Anna has reached a marriageable age, they choose a young man on her behalf and invite him over on a Sunday. That same evening, they let Anna go out alone with the prospective groom. On this short outing, Anna will experience, for the first time in her life, feelings that she had deeply suppressed—but her bosses' moral hypocrisy will not allow her to enjoy them. When she returns home, they have already changed their mind, pulling the rug out from under her feet, with the same ease with which they decided to build a life for her.

In his feature film debut, Pantelis Voulgaris introduced himself as a filmmaker eager to comment on the bourgeois reality of the early 1970s in a subtly biting way, making one of the most influential films for the birth of New Greek Cinema. Voulgaris examined class dynamics, relations of economic dependence and the position of women, at a time when the city of Athens was beginning to be the only way out, where the new Greek dream was born and died, where fates were determined by the whims of the ruling class. Staying true to his original personal vision and refusing to allow any changes that would make the film more commercial, Voulgaris ultimately completed a stark, honest ethnography of a savage era.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**LETTERS FROM AMERICA** by Lakis Papastathis | 1972 | 19' | Screenplay: Lakis Papastathis | Cinematography: Thanassis Netas | Editing: Thanassis Rentzis | Music: Manos Loizos, Domna Samiou (song) | Production: Cinetic.

Narrator: Thodoros Katsadramis.

The life of an immigrant, as told by himself through a bundle of 120 postcards and photographs, becomes a document of an entire nation's uprooting. Anastasios starts from Gythio in 1905, reaches Patra, and from there sails to America, where he starts working in restaurants. In 1930, he returns to his hometown to marry a woman from his motherland. They leave together for America, where they start a family and have two children. After the civil war and Marshal Papagos' rise to power, they return to Greece permanently. The entire documentary is based on the images from the postcards and photographs he had been sending home for about fifty years. On the back of these images, there is always a text, which serves as the voice-over of the film.

Lakis Papastathis deciphered the life of an immigrant through his own memorabilia that somehow, once upon a time, ended up in an underground antique shop in Monastiraki—an entire life forgotten in a dusty pile on an old shelf. In Papastathis' hands, it became something more, as his film shares the motifs and common struggles of life in an "evil foreign land" and the social and economic conditions behind the "curse of Greece." The words that Anastasios wrote decades ago envelop his images with warmth and gentleness, living relics of collective national pain. "His body ached from the uprooting, and he turned to his roots here to find the words to express it," Papastathis says, managing to capture in a great cinematic document the experience of nostalgia in a way that is as innovative as it is deeply human. At the same time, this short film set the tone for an emblematic and permanently restless body of work extending across the decades to follow.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.



**JOHN THE VIOLENT** by Tonia Marketaki | 1973 | 177' | Producer: Tonia Marketaki | Screenplay: Tonia Marketaki | Cinematography: Giorgos Arvanitis, Giorgos Panousopoulos | Editing: Giorgos Korras | Art director: Anastasia Arseni | Costume Design: Lefteris Haronitis | Sound Recordist: Panos Panousopoulos | Make-up artist: Efi Arvaniti.

Cast: Manolis Logiadis, Mika Flora, Vangelis Kazan, Minas Chatzissavas, Takis Doukakos, Mairi Metaxa, Nikitas Tsakiroglou, Lida Protopsalti, Malaina Anousaki, Kostas Arzoglou.

Awards / Distinctions / Festivals: Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Leading Actor, Honorary Distinction for the Cinematography, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1973.

It is midnight on a deserted street in Athens. A young woman is stabbed to death by a stranger who instantly slips into the shadows. The alleged perpetrator, John Zachos, is a mentally unstable young man who fantasises about killing women. He believes that this gives him a sense of empowerment and validates his manhood as dictated by society at large. After his arrest, he immediately confesses to the murder, but during the trial it becomes apparent that his testimony is full of inconsistencies and an impression of what he has read in the press. The search for the truth is interrupted, and the battle between society and individual rages on.

This monumental debut by Tonia Marketaki was based on real-life events, which caused great controversy in the media and mesmerised audiences at the Thessaloniki Film Festival. It is the labyrinthine psychological portrait of a self-confessed murderer forged by toxic masculinity moving across the darkened streets of a city (and an era), plagued by uncertainty and listlessness. As it turns out, the truth has many faces and guilt has even more. Marketaki did not focus on the crime, but only used it as a springboard for a feminist exploration that was far ahead of its time. *John the Violent* is a definitive study of ethics in 1960s Greece, the delineation of a psychologically fractured social fabric in need of redemption.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THE REHEARSAL** by Jules Dassin | 1974 | 88' | Screenplay: Jules Dassin | Producer: Melina Mercouri for Nike Films | Direction of Photography: Alan Metzger | Editing: Suzanne Bauman | Music: Mikis Theodorakis and two songs by Yannis Markopoulos | Sets: Danny Quinn | Sound: Bill Daly.

Cast: Melina Mercouri, Mikis Theodorakis, Yannis Markopoulos, Renos Mandis, Stathis Giallelis, Robyn Goodman, Steve Inwood, Olympia Dukakis, Jerry Zafer, Yiannes Iordanidis, John Moratus, Dmitri Hadjis, John Randolph, Jerrold Ziman, Louis Zorich, Salem Ludwig, Steve Karp, Lou Tiano, Tom Eleopoulos, Phyllis MacBride, Aristedes Philip DuVal, Stephen Diacrussi, Giorgos Panousopoulos, Michael Hardstark, Michael Mullins, Sarah Cunningham, James Dukas, Greg Antonacci, Elena Karam, Brenda Currin, Vera Lockwood, Tom Aldredge, Jules Dassin.

Special guests: Arthur Miller, Laurence Olivier, Lillian Hellman, Maximilian Schell, Rex Reed.

As the resistance against the junta was gathering momentum, Jules Dassin and Melina Mercouri, exiled from Greece for a number of years, continued their anti-dictatorial campaign in Europe and America. Made in 1974, this impossible-to-categorise film essay on popular uprisings by Dassin depicts the rehearsals and the shooting of a film about the Athens Polytechnic Uprising in 1973 and the torture of people who opposed the junta.

Dassin combined documentary, recreation, Brechtian structures, prose, music and his own thoughts and experiences in a film that is bursting with energy, pain and hope. Theodorakis and Markopoulos performed their songs live, and Melina Mercouri read *The Star-Lantern* from Odysseus Elytis' *The Axion Esti*, while other artists read poetry, prisoners' letters and other documents, interspersed with newsreels and testimonials. *The Rehearsal* was completed just as the junta collapsed and never released theatrically, forever remaining an artistic and political riddle.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**MEGARA** by Sakis Maniatis and Yorgos Tsemberopoulos | 1974 | 72' | Producer: Yorgos Tsemberopoulos | Screenplay: Yorgos Tsemberopoulos, Sakis Maniatis | Cinematography: Sakis Maniatis | Editing: Sakis Maniatis | Sound: Yorgos Tsemberopoulos.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: FIPRESCI Prize, Berlin Film Forum 1974. Best Film Award, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1974. Official Selection, Venice Film Festival 1975. Official Selection, Rotterdam Film Festival 1975.

The film features the uprising of the farmers in the Megara area against the junta's decision to expropriate a large rural space for the installation of an oil refinery, as well as the final outcome of their struggle. At a time when ecology and the environment were still unknown terms in Greece, the film gave voice to the farmers and created a space for them to narrate their experiences and express their emotions. The film's *vérité* language and the farmers, who were the victims of an inhuman economic transformation, managed to identify deeper causes and effects behind the level of the visible. With a gaze that is not only probing but also socially aware, the film took notice of the agony of a class of people whose voice rarely found its way into the cinema with such clarity and directness, carving the image of Greece at a crossroads through human faces, instinctive words and a nightmarishly decadent landscape. As one of the most serious ecological disasters that the country has ever seen takes place, the two filmmakers document it with dynamic cinematic language in one of the most important documentaries of contemporary Greek (and international) Cinema. This purely political film was the first eco-themed Greek documentary and received awards at the Berlin and Thessaloniki International Film Festivals, marking the beginning of a great journey for its two important creators: Sakis Maniatis, who later worked as director of photography on films such as *Karkalou* and *Order*, and Yorgos Tsemberopoulos, whose deeply people-centred cinema never ceased to be in dialogue with an anxious society in constant change.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS** by Theo Angelopoulos | 1975 | 230' | Producer: Yorgos Papalios | Screenplay and Dialogues: Theo Angelopoulos | Direction of photography: Yorgos Arvanitis | Editing: Takis Davlopoulos | Music and Music supervisor: Loukianos Kilaidoinis | Sets & Costumes: Mikes Karapiperis | Costumes, Illustrations: Yorgos Patsas | Sound: Thanassis Arvanitis | Make-up: Yorgos Stavrakakis.

Cast: Eva Kotamanidou, Vangelis Kazan, Aliko Georgouli, Kyriakos Katrivanos, Stratos Pachis, Nina Papazafeiropoulou, Yannis Fyrios, Alexis Boubis, Maria Vassiliou, Grigoris Evangelatos, Petros Zarkadis, Kostas Styliaris.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participations: FIPRESCI International Film Critics Award – Cannes 1975. Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor (Vangelis Kazan), Best Actress (Eva Kotamanidou), Greek Critics Association Awards, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1975. Special Award, Taormina Film Festival 1975. Interfilm Award, Berlinale Forum 1975. Sutherland Trophy, British Film Institute 1975. Golden Age Award for best film of the year, Brussels 1975. Figueira da Foz Award, Portugal 1976. Grand Prix of the Arts & Best Film of the Year, Japan 1979. Best Film for 1971-80, Italian Film Critics' Association. 44th Best Film in the History of World Cinema, FIPRESCI International Critic Association.

The film follows a group of travelling actors in Greece, between 1939 and 1952, as they wander through provinces, cities and villages, performing in increasingly threadbare circumstances a 19th-century pastoral melodrama, Peresiadis' *Golfo the Shepherdess*. The political history of Greece and the private lives of the members of the troupe, who also belong to the same family, become inextricably entwined. The adventures of Orestes, his sister, father, mother and her lover recall the myth of the House of Atreus. The father is executed by the German occupiers after being turned in by his wife's lover; Orestes, a communist guerrilla, assisted by his sister Electra, will kill his mother and her lover on stage, only to be executed himself during civil-war cleansing operations against the Greek guerrillas. The story's main character is the elder sister (who, following the myth of the Atreides, would be Electra). The film's sequential structure, complex and complicated, is built around continuous temporal manoeuvres and alternating time periods.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**LAST STOP, KREUZBERG** by Giorgos Karypidis | 1975 | 22' | Producer: Giorgos Karypidis | Screenplay: Giorgos Karypidis | Cinematography: Theodoros Margas.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participations: Second Award for Short Film, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1975.

The Kreuzberg district of West Berlin is home to foreign workers, Greeks and Turks, who are struggling for a better future while trying to maintain their national identity. The lives, problems and collective political action of the *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) are explored in this important documentary by Giorgos Karypidis, who himself lived and worked as director for SFB national television in Berlin.

Karypidis is a filmmaker with comprehensive knowledge of the constantly evolving international socio-political situation, which he gained through working and studying in different countries. His background made possible the creation of a cinema open to international social issues. Whether through documentaries or through his later classic noir films, the common thread always returned to situations and heroes who carry their existential weight with a hopeful eye to the future. In this exemplary social documentary, far from any attempt to establish a narrative of emotional ease, Karypidis captures the collective anguish of entire generations who find themselves rootless.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**LISA AND THE OTHER** by Takis Spetsiotis | 1976 | 7' | Screenplay: Takis Spetsiotis | Producer: Takis Spetsiotis | Direction of Photography: Yannis Kaspiris | Editing: Yannis Kaspiris | Sets: Dimitris Xanthoulis | Costumes: Dimitris Xanthoulis | Sound: Yannis Kaspiris | Make-up: Dimitris Xanthoulis.

Cast: Nikos Mouratidis, Nikos Panayotopoulos.

Sound and image follow distinctly different routes in one of Greek queer cinema's early avant-garde shorts, which also happens to be Takis Spetsiotis' graduation film in 1976. On screen we see a man (Nikos Mouratidis) who plays Liza Minelli in a parody of her classic hit *Life is a Cabaret*. What we are actually hearing, however, are two parents consulting a psychologist on how to get their son to be more macho. Their voices are delirious—they rant, they sing, and sometimes they are dead serious—like a half-formed thought that is trying to work itself out, instincts colliding with insights.

At a time when queer representations in cinema either veered towards melodrama or took the stereotypically comedic route, Spetsiotis' early works, like *Liza and the Other* and *La Belle*, went in a new direction, deconstructing gender stereotypes.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THE OTHER LETTER** by Lambros Liaropoulos | 1976 | 72' | Producer: Lambros Liaropoulos | Screenplay: Lambros Liaropoulos | Cinematography: Stavros Hapsapis | Editing: Andreas Andreidakis | Production: Greek Film Centre.

Narrator: Andreas Kastanas.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participations: Second Award for Best Film, Cinematography Award, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1976.

"You're asking me to tell you a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. Its beginning happens every moment and the end doesn't fit on the screen you see." These words by director Lambros Liaropoulos himself became the conceptual anchor of a stylistically ambitious but above all unbearably personal, hybrid visual document, where the city, the country, the era and the political transformations are intertwined with the *cinéma d'auteur*. The film is the first and last feature by a director who died very young, leaving behind a small body of work (Theo Angelopoulos said, "I guess Liaropoulos' work was quite large, but it seems that even his colleagues were not aware of it"). It is as much an autobiographical record as it is a commentary on the crucial decade between 1965 and 1975—it is about time that sculpts, creates, destroys; about the changing world around us; about Athens and Greece.

The film begins as a first-person essay, with Liaropoulos explaining that "the film we are making has no plot or actors. Time that passes and the world around us that changes are the film's protagonists. This world is all of us; everyone who has a job, children or people they love. It is our homes, the city we live in, our country. The film camera captures images of everyday life and their meaning." The film incorporates his two short films *Letter from Charleroi*, shot in 1965 when he was still working as Henri Langlois' assistant at the French Cinémathèque, and *Athens, a Smiling City*, shot in 1967 just before the advent of the dictatorship. These images are all tied together to form a riveting attempt to talk about the relationship between the director and the country as they both try to adjust to a new decade, a new era. The film presents his relationship, and ultimately the relationship of all of us, to life and to our own country.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**IDÉES FIXES / DIES IRAE (VARIATIONS ON THE SAME SUBJECT)** by Antouanetta Angelidi | 1977 | 63' | Producer: Antouanetta Angelidi | Screenplay & Editing: Antouanetta Angelidi | Cinematography: Paco Perrián | Music: Gilbert Artman | Production management: François Margolin | Sound: Alain Bonnot, Dominique Vialar | Make-up: Vuokko Nikkinen | Production: IDHEC.

Cast: Jossy Delettre, Antouanetta Angelidi, Makiko Suzuki.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Debut Director Award, Hellenic Association of Film Critics Award, "Anti-Festival" of Thessaloniki 1977. Official participation in Thonon-les-Bains Festival 1977. Official participation in 16mm International Film Festival of Montreal 1978. Official participation in Women's Film of Gothenburg 1981. Official participation in Delft Experimental Cinema Week 1979. Official participation in 10th "Cinéma différent" of Yerres 1983.

Antouanetta Angelidi used her knowledge of the history of cinema and connected it with a universal artistic language in the creation of an alternative and poetic cinema, while keeping her unique personal form and her own inquiries. With a magnificent meta-narrative, the film uses not only the tools of cinematic language, but also music, language, sound, architecture, poetry and, most importantly, body language, in an experimental exploration of gender, expanding, by means of an audio-visual collage, on a study of every kind of contrast between art and reality. Angelidi states that she was initially preoccupied with "the expansion of the limits of cinematic representation and the inclusion of the creator's subjectivity." Indeed, through the masterful use of space, each sequence, each frame is a representation of contrasts, resulting in the synthesis and inversion of codes, a true cinematic material and anti-material. "The film explores the representation of the female body in the history of modern art: gender as a construction and not as destiny," comments the filmmaker. "The inversion of the code, as well as the clash of different codes, becomes a method of writing and, therefore, of reading the film. A sequence of indirect references and games comment, in an unconventional way, on aesthetic theories and specific artworks. The inversion of image and sound works in favour of the narrative, re-writing the female body." One of the pivotal experimental films of Greek Cinema, it marked the debut of a filmmaker who never stopped challenging the viewer or exploring the limits of cinematic representation through remarkably made films.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.



**THE STRUGGLE OF THE BLIND** by Maria Hatzimihali-Papaliou | 1977 | 87' | Cinematography: Dimitris Vernikos, Kostas Karamanidis | Editing: Dimitris Vernikos, Maria Hatzimihali-Papaliou | Sound: Giannis Dermitzakis, Dimitris Athanasopoulos | Production: Positive EPE.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Film, FIPRESCI 1977, 2nd Award for Feature Film, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1977. Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival (Quinzaine des Réalisateurs) 1978. Official Selection, Locarno Film Festival 1978.

Starting with the harsh reality and the indifference with which thousands of blind people in Greece had been treated, the documentary followed their impetuous two-year rebellion (1976-77). During these demonstrations, more than 15,000 blind people raised their voices, demanding an end to their oppression and exploitation by the state and the charity circuit. Under the slogan "Bread, Education and not Beggary," 300 people occupied the House for the Blind and put their problems openly on the table, achieving their first victories. In the agitated climate of the post-regime-change period, after the fall of the junta, this struggle of the blind took place at a time when social relations were being redefined, determining the direction of the country for decades to come.

Hatzimihali-Papaliou powerfully captured the pulse of the events and the first steps towards a better tomorrow. Her film even succeeded in answering the question of whether cinema can change the world, as the film itself eventually became part of the struggle it depicted. It helped to make the demands of the movement more widely known and established a current of support in the face of the exploitation and continued persecution of the insurgents, the supporting press and the director and her film, which had been banned by the House of the Blind on the grounds that its content was offensive to "the Church and the State." Through the screenings of the film in Greece and abroad, thousands of signatures were collected to support the struggle of the blind, from people such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Costa-Gavras, Yves Montand, Simone Signoret, Mikis Theodorakis, Michel Foucault and Ray Charles. An example of a pivotal cinema of strong social character, it has been in the Film Archive of the Georges Pompidou Centre since 1980.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THE IDLERS OF THE FERTILE VALLEY** by Nikos Panayotopoulos | 1978 | 117' | Production: Alix Film Productions Ltd | Screenplay: Nikos Panayotopoulos (from Albert Cossery's novel) | Cinematography: Andreas Bellis | Editing: Giorgos Triandafyllou | Music: Gustav Mahler (selection from his work) | Sets & Costumes: Dionysis Fotopoulos | Sound: Nikos Ahladis | Make-up: Fani Alexaki.

Cast: Olga Karlatou, Yorgos Dialeghmenos, Nikitas Tsakiroglou, Dimitris Poulikakos, Vasilis Diamantopoulos, Kostas Sfikas, Ivi Mavridi, Thanassis Koniaris.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Gold Leopard, Locarno Film Festival 1978. 2nd Best Film Award, Best scenography, Best editing, Greek Film Critics Association Award, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1978. Bronze Hugo, Chicago Film Festival 1978.

Having returned to Greece from Paris and a few years after his directorial debut with *The Color of Iris*, Nikos Panayotopoulos already left his mark on the domestic cinematic landscape with his second film, perhaps the most defining film of his filmography. A wealthy member of the upper class and his three sons stay in a country villa where they start to succumb to idleness, free from the need for any work. Immobility becomes contagious and spreads in their world, to the point that they start looking like living dead. They emerge from their lethargy only for food and sex. A son tries to leave with the maid, but before leaving he feels tiredness overcoming his body, and he falls asleep on the spot. Another son sleeps incessantly. Is there a way out of the pleasure of laziness? In this world of mentally old, lazy males, only the female servant represents a positive energy of movement, of will. Panayotopoulos here completed a dark satire that looked with pity on the bourgeoisie of the time, highlighting its laziness and decline. A descendant of Buñuel and a forerunner of the Greek cinema that followed, the film is allegorical without ever being trapped in (its) time, maintaining its surreal power as well as its light-hearted dimension. The latter has turned it into a timeless classic.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**BETTY** by Dimitris Stavrakas | 1979 | 33' | Screenplay: Dimitris Stavrakas (Based on Betty Vakalidou's book) | Production: Christos Mangos | Cinematography: Stavros Chassapis | Editing: Gianna Spyropoulou | Sound: Marinos Athanasopoulos.

Cast: Betty Vakalidou.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Film, Drama International Short Film Festival 1979. Best Documentary, Larissa Film Festival 1979. Best Short Film, Greek Film Critics Association.

Forty years before gender change was legally recognized, Dimitris Stavrakas directed an emblematic hybrid short—part fiction, part documentary—depicting 24 hours in the life of a trans woman, based on the autobiography of Betty Vakalidou. Memories from her earlier life mingle with moments from the present day as it turns into night. Images of pastel beauty are interspersed with painful savagery, in a profile of loneliness and power where past and present collide. Betty talks about her childhood and her current struggles, as Stavrakas—in complete command of both style and narrative—expertly veers into essay film territory. This is the portrait of a heroine, a moment in time and a society in transition, all rolled into one.

Shot in a country that was still reeling from the seven-year-long junta regime and a society entirely unprepared to listen to LGBTQ voices, *Betty* was met with opposition, but was immediately embraced by the queer community. It had been only two years earlier that the government, led by Karamanlis, had passed a bill on the “Protection from venereal diseases and other relevant issues.” The film was rejected by the Competition Section of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival “due to the subject-matter and not the aesthetics,” but it received a special screening that met with an enthusiastic reaction from the audience. *Betty* was released theatrically the following season, opening for Federico Fellini's *Orchestra Rehearsal*.

**TOURKOVOUNIA** by Lefteris Xanthopoulos | 1982 | 23' | Screenplay: Lefteris Xanthopoulos | Cinematography: Spiros Nounesis | Editing: Spiros Provis | Sound: Dimitris Athanasopoulos | Production: Greek Film Centre, Emirzas EPE.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Documentary, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1982.

On the highest peak of the Tourkovounia hill in Athens, the first illegal buildings appeared in the 1950s, settled by homeless families of internal migrants in search of a place they could call home. Based on the local residents' narratives, from the adventures that led them there, to their portraits of a still tormented and uncertain present, the film completed a trilogy of short documentaries on immigration by Lefteris Xanthopoulos, following *Greek Community in Heidelberg* and *Yorgos from Sotirianika*.

Xanthopoulos reflected on uprooting and escape through his unique artistic language and discovery of the harsh urban poetry in documentary cinema. His gaze was focused both on his heroes in rapidly changing Athens and on the context in which they moved, from the resistance they encountered to the juxtaposition with a labyrinthine urban landscape that lurks in the margins of the portrait he paints. This documentary was made with the bare essentials, with humility and detail on faces and places, structured as an unbearable social drama about an entire society that is hidden from sight.

The film was granted by the Film Archive of the Directorate of Performing Arts and Cinema of the Ministry of Culture and Sports and has been digitally restored with Ministry funds.

**FOURNOI, A FEMALE SOCIETY** by Alinda Dimitriou and Nikos Kanakis | 1983 | 48' | Screenplay: Alinda Dimitriou, Nikos Kanakis | Cinematography: Alexis Grivas | Editing: Nikos Kanakis | Sound: Mimis Kimouliatis | Production: Ministry of Culture and Sports.

Narrator: Nikos Kanakis.

On the island of Fourni in Ikaria, a researcher observes the life of the inhabitants. He has no script or questions prepared; he merely watches. The island thus comes to life before our eyes, through its people, through memories, struggles and daily toil. On the island, the men are sailors, while the women have taken over all the jobs that one would more conventionally expect men to perform, from construction to farm work. Alinda Dimitriou and Nikos Kanakis' camera captured the relations between the two sexes and how the division of labour is key to the operation of the social machine.

This is one of the first documentaries by Alinda Dimitriou, who throughout her career has served as activist documentary filmmaker, connecting social observation with the exploration of women's position in Greek society. It is also one of the most important works of the editor and director Nikos Kanakis, who, having completed his documentary series *Greece of the 5 Oceans*, applied his expertise and vision onto a smaller but denser semantic canvas here. With great dedication to oral history methodology, where history is narrated through the experiences of the witnesses themselves—usually with no outlet or voice of their own—Dimitriou and Kanakis perfected a kind of political documentary that does not remain a sterile recording but connects observation with ideology and social paradigm. Their anthropological gaze provides a platform for voices marginalised by official history. *Fourni* is a case in point, as feminism is seen to develop organically, due to the economic and social conditions on the island.

The film was granted by the Film Archive of the Directorate of Performing Arts and Cinema of the Ministry of Culture and Sports and has been digitally restored with Ministry funds.

**LOAFING AND CAMOUFLAGE** by Nikos Perakis | 1984 | 96' | Screenplay: Nikos Perakis | Cinematography: Giorgos Panousopoulos | Editing: Yorgos Triandafyllou | Music: Nikos Mamangakis | Sets: Yorgos Koliopantos | Costumes: Heidrun Brandt (aka Haido Peraki) | Sound: Marinos Athanasopoulos | Make-up: Niki Psimouli, Amarylis Siniosoglou | Production: Filmmakers Corporation Ltd (Stefi Film), Greek Film Center, Spentzos Film, Nikos Perakis Filmproduktion.

Cast: Tania Kapsali, Ifigeneia Makati, Roky Teilor, Dimitris Poulikakos, Antonis Maniatis, Nikos Kalogeropoulos, Yorgos Kimoulis, Takis Spyridakis, Fotis Polychronopoulos, Yannis Chatzigiannis, Paris Tselios, Stavros Xenidis, Andreas Filippidis, Christos Valavanidis, Antonis Theodorakopoulos, Nikos Tsachiridis.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Grand Prix, Best Screenplay, Best Actor & Best Editing, Thessaloniki International Film Festival 1984. Official Selection in Competition, Berlin International Film Festival 1985. Special Mention, Valencia International Film Festival 1985.

During their compulsory military service in 1967 and 1968, before and during the Greek junta, a group of soldiers was assigned to the then recently founded Armed Forces Television. This TV station was run by the Army Cinematographic Unit, which until then had only produced propaganda films and newsreels and had been responsible for entertaining the troops. The film follows the tragicomic events in the soldiers' daily lives and is taken from autobiographical incidents, in a story that is only 95 percent true (and this only because the truth is even more absurd), forming the image of an entire era. Drawing a contrast between oppression and freedom, Nikos Perakis dived into his personal experiences and set up a hilarious satire where irrationality masks despair in a delightfully structured political farce. Inspired by real people and events from the director's time in the army and in the authentic language and style of the material of the time, the film brings to life the dawn of the dictatorship through a bitter comic filter. It is an impressive exercise of balance in tone and content. Performed by a talented cast, Perakis' comedy never loses its edge, while at the same time serving as a perfect example of entertaining cinema. This is proven by the fact that, in spite of mediocre reviews, the film was the greatest cinematic success of the 1980s; in a vote in 2016, the readers of *ATHINORAMA* magazine ranked it Best Greek Film for the years 1976-2016.

**MANIA** by Giorgos Panousopoulos | 1985 | 87' | Screenplay: Giorgos Panousopoulos | Producer: Giorgos Panousopoulos | Executive producer: Yorgos Tsemberopoulos | Cinematography: Giorgos Panousopoulos | Editing: Giorgos Panousopoulos | Music: Nikos Xydakis | Art Direction: Nikos Perakis | Sound: Marinos Athanasopoulos | Production: Synergasia Ltd, Greek Film Center, Spentzos Film.

Cast: Alessandra Vanzi, Aris Retsos, Antonis Theodorakopoulos, Stavros Xenidis, Aspasia Kralli (Zoe's Voice).

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participations: Thessaloniki International Film Festival 1985. Official Selection in Competition, Berlin International Film Festival 1986.

It is one of those impossibly scorching hot days of early summer, when the heat beats down on humanity so relentlessly that anything can happen. Thirty-year-old Sophie is a married mother of two who works at a multinational IT company as a programme analyst. She has just found out that she is the only female chosen to attend a special educational programme in the US because of her... square logic. What she does not know is that her memories and her primal instincts affect her subconscious, her work and her entire identity in ways she cannot control.

That same afternoon, at the National Gardens, a series of events cause her to fall prey to those dark inner forces, as she gradually loses all sense of identity and runs away, like a hunted animal, while her husband makes a desperate attempt to save her and their daughter. After *A Foolish Love*, Panousopoulos returns with a film that stands in open dialogue with Euripides' *Bacchae*, a retelling of the tragedy through a contemporary point of view, where the new tech-crazed reality openly clashes with deep-rooted pagan fury. Like a rampant bacchanalian goddess, the main character casts social restraints aside, embodying the ancient struggle between the earthbound and the metaphysical, the instinctual and the rational.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**THE TREE WE HURT** by Dimos Avdeliodis | 1986 | 65' | Screenplay: Dimos Avdeliodis | Producer: Dimos Avdeliodis | Cinematography: Filippos Koutsaftis | Editing: Costas Fountas | Music: Dimitris Papadimitriou | Sets: Maria Avdeliodi | Costumes: Angeliki Zyglaki | Sound: Dinos Kittou | Production: Greek Film Centre.

Cast: Yannis Avdeliodis, Nikos Mioteris, Marina Delivoria, Dimos Avdeliodis, Takis Agoris, Katerina Kyriakodi, Vagelio Misailidou, Stelios Makrias.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participations: C.I.F.E.J. Award, Berlin Film Festival 1987. Special Mention by the Greek Film Critics Association, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1987. Official Selection, Semaine de la Critique, Cannes Film Festival 1987. Golden Elephant for Best Film and Silver Elephant for Best Director, New Delhi Film Festival 1987.

Chios, 1960. A few days before the school summer break, the friendship of two boys is unwittingly spoiled by an unfortunate incident. In mid-summer the boys meet again and spend some carefree time with their friends. They find ways to make some money and go on adventures in their green kingdom. Yannis helps his mother collect the “tears” of mastic, the precious extract of the mastic tree, or “the tree we hurt.” A girl’s arrival will disturb the balance, but before the children know it, autumn is fast approaching, marking the end of an era—in every possible sense.

Dimos Avdeliodis’ feature debut painted the scrapbook of an innocent youth and one of the most distinctive coming-of-age stories in the history of Greek Cinema with bright earthy hues and vivid, *sui generis* poetics. While the camera calmly follows the young heroes and an unparalleled sensitivity permeates the episodic narrative, small moments take on the significance of seismic events. The narrative acts as a link between events that could be narration, dream, or memory. Sensitive, strange, funny and harsh, this “tree” has grown from common, collective roots. It recounts a summer so specific that we might have dreamt it.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.



**MORNING PATROL** by Nikos Nikolaidis | 1987 | 108' | Producers: Nikos Nikolaidis, Marie-Louise Bartholomew | Screenplay: Nikos Nikolaidis, with excerpts taken from published works by of Daphne Du Maurier, Phillip K. Dick, Raymond Chandler, Herman Raucher | Cinematography: Dinos Katsouridis | Editing: Andreas Andreadakis | Music: Giorgos Hatzinasios | Sets & Costumes: Marie-Louise Bartholomew | Sound: Ilias Ionesko, Syvilla Katsouridi | Production: Greek Film Center.

Cast: Michele Valley, Takis Spyridakis, Panagiotis Thanasoulis, Takis Loukatos, Rania Trivela, Charis Mavros, Nikos Chatzis, Liana Chatzi, Vicky Kavouri.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Director, Thessaloniki International Film Festival 1987. Cinematography, Scenography & Technical Achievement Award, State Film Quality Awards 1988. Official Selection in: Montreal Film Festival 1987, Avorial Film Festival 1988, San Remo Film Festival 1988, Porto Fantastique Film Festival 1989, Cairo Film Festival 1989, Tétouan Film Festival 1989.

In a dystopic abandoned city, a woman travels alone. She wants to pass the Forbidden Zone and get to the Sea. Deceptive traps lurk everywhere, and the Morning Patrol is on her trail. The city's mechanisms work uncontrollably. Electronic voices warn the non-existent citizens to desert the city. A man, one of the few survivors, who now guards the city, suddenly appears. They will approach each other; they will try to recall the past. This is a relationship of violence and death, a story of love in an unbearable world. What can be the point?

Presenting Nikos Nikolaidis' post-apocalyptic vision of a possible future world, *Morning Patrol* takes us to a ruined Athens where everything seems haunted and where people are like echoes of past cultures and relationships. Through the use of literary excerpts (our collective cultural past) and moving in an ostensibly harsh environment, the film brings to life a nightmare of yesterday, of tomorrow, of today. The cinematography of Dinos Katsouridis, the art direction of Marie-Louise Bartholomew and the music of Giorgos Hatzinasios provide the hues in the darkness of the cinematic universe of Nikos Nikolaidis. This miraculous film was made on a tight budget in 1980s Greece, but its influence remains incalculable.

The film was digitally restored in 2020 by the heirs of Nikos Nikolaidis.

**...DESERTER** by Giorgos Korras, Christos Voupouras | 1988 | 121' | Producers: Giorgos Korras, Christos Voupouras | Screenplay: Giorgos Korras, Christos Voupouras | Cinematography: Andreas Bellis | Editing: Giorgos Korras, Christos Voupouras | Music: Eleni Karaindrou | Sets & Costumes: Damianos Zarifis | Sound: Nikos Achladis | Production: Optikoakoustiki EPE, E.T., Greek Film Centre.

Cast: Stelios Mainas, Toula Stathopoulou, Leonidas Nomikos, Stelios Pavlou, Sinda Stefanopoulou, Giorgos Giannopoulos, Stelios Reppas, Yannis Christoyannis, Magda Tsagani, Panagiotis Stamatopoulos, Tasos Pantzartzis.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Supporting Actress (Toula Stathopoulou) & Critics' Award, Thessaloniki International Film Festival 1988. 1st Prize, Torino Film Festival 1989. Official Selection Panorama, Berlin International Film Festival 1988.

In a provincial spa town, Manolis, who deserted from the army three times, wants to reintegrate into the society of his hometown. This change is observed with bitterness by Christos, a young gay man who arrives from Athens and is fascinated by Manolis' rebel character and his ability to carry seemingly effortlessly all the contradictions of their social environment. In this mosaic of characters, money acts as a connecting link, as the town ultimately prospers thanks to the local tourist businesses. It is precisely this turn to quick profit and the dead end of uncontrolled commercialisation that will ultimately allow Manolis to be assimilated by his surroundings, leaving Christos to watch, feeling fascinated and repelled at the same time. Not only is their homosexuality not accepted there, but bourgeois hostility is echoed and reproduced by provincial riches.

The film, thanks to a robust cinematic eye and a necessary economy of approach, foreshadows a new era of Greece that is coming or is already here; it captures the heroes' psyche, their love affair that is being tested and a social microcosm immersed in hypocrisy, a *nouveau riche* environment in spiritual decline. In other words, it vividly captures the decline of the Greek countryside and Greek society as they lose their charm—a charm that has nourished Greek Cinema and art for decades. Boasting roots that can be traced back to Italian neorealism and a passionate search for stimuli, aesthetic truth and poetry in a cynical new reality, the film travelled to the Panorama section of Berlin International Film Festival. It constitutes not only a bold addition to queer filmography, hitherto rare in local territories, but also the foundation of a filmography dedicated to the exploration of otherness. This is something that, as co-director Christos Voupouras says, for him is “a neverending fascination. Everything that is different includes an unknown world. Its discovery is a source of knowledge and a mirror of our own self.”

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**ROM** by Menelaos Karamaghiolis | 1989 | 76' | Screenplay: Menelaos Karamaghiolis | Cinematography: Andreas Sinanos, Elias Kostandakopoulos | Editing: Takis Giannopoulos | Music: Nikos Kypourgos | Sound: Dimitris Athanasopoulos, Mimis Kasimatis.

Narrators: Ilektra Alexandropoulou, Giorgos Konstas, Menelaos Karamaghiolis, Marika Tziravidou.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Documentary and Editing Award, Thessaloniki Film Festival 1989. Best Documentary and Best Music Award, State Film Quality Awards 1990. Official Selection in: Cinéma du réel Film Festival 1990, IDFA Film Festival 1991, San Sebastian Film Festival 1991, Viennale 2018.

In 1979, the United Nations recognized all Romani people under the name ROM. A decade later, this daring documentary pioneered the term for the first time in the Greek public sphere and attempted to give a true picture of the Romani people in Europe, following four different paths charted by four narrators. The Teacher presents the roots of the Roma, analysing the rare historical references as though reading from the margins of History. The Photographer documents in pictures the present state of a people who have never had a written tradition or an official history. Tamara guides us through ancient myths, stories and terrors expressing an entire common history, while Aima introduces us to the gaze of a new generation that looks to the future, seeking a new identity tied to the present day.

Thematically and stylistically daring, a pioneering avant-garde documentary produced by public television—which was not enthusiastic about its contents—Karamaghiolis' film was met with resistance and censored in its time. It provoked strong reactions, diving deep into a side of Greece that many would prefer to pretend did not exist. Skilfully interweaving myth with historical truth and touches of magic with sociological observation, Karamaghiolis abandoned the linear narrative approach and traced the historical evolution of Roma tradition within a social context of violent rejection. The persistent leitmotifs of music and imagery play a cohesive part, stressing the associative dimension of the film yet further, a dimension that does not follow the course of logic but the trajectory of adventure, and which, by insisting on the charm of the incidental, comes as close as possible to Romani fairy tales. A landmark in the history of Greek documentary, hailed as "a masterpiece that must become a classic of the history of cinema," Karamaghiolis' film is a formally adventurous example of social and political cinema that decisively investigates the idea of identity.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**ATHENE** by Eva Stefani | 1995 | 40' | Cinematography: Eva Stefani | Editing: Gideon Boulting | Sound: Laurentiou Calciou | Production: The National Film & TV School.

The film portrays life at the Larissa railway station, a spring night in 1995. Filmed over the course of four weeks, but adopting the chronological structure of one evening, the film is a gallery of people who frequent the station—homeless people, soldiers and immigrants—defining a space where different worlds meet and coexist. Eva Stefani's graduation film not only introduces us to a defining figure of the Greek avant-garde, but also to the world of observational documentary, allowing her characters to occupy the cinematic space that mainstream cinema often denies them.

The exercise of observing affects that which is observed, but Stefani wanders through the space, comes closer to the subjects until they become familiar with the intrusion of the camera, ultimately giving her almost invisible heroes an absolute freedom of movement and expression, cinematically almost unattainable. In this way, she ends up exploring the very dimensions of truth through image, leading the viewers to lose themselves in a real world where unpredictable people—some of them marginalised—find their voice, travel to unexplored corners of their psyche and define their own world. Observation serves as a journey to another place, familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. A train station is made meaningful by its occasional inhabitants.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.

**FROM THE EDGE OF THE CITY** by Costantinos Giannaris | 1998 | 94' | Screenplay: Costantinos Giannaris | Producers: Anastasios Vasiliou, Dionyssi Samiotis | Executive producer: Maria Powell | Direction of Photography: Yorgos Argyroiliopoulos | Editing: Ioanna Spiliopoulou | Music: Akis Daoutis | Art direction: Michalis Samiotis | Costumes: Sunny Alberti | Sound: Dinos Kittou | Make-up: Eleftheria Efthymiou | Hair stylist: Chronis Tzimos | Production: Mythos Ltd, Rosebud SA, Hot Shot Productions, Greek Film Center.

Cast: Stathis Papadopoulos, Dimitris Papoulidis, Theodora Tzimou, Costas Kotsianidis, Panayiotis Chartomatzidis, Anestis Polychronidis, Nikos Kamontos, Stelios Tsemboglidis, Yorgos Mavridis, Panagiota Vlachosotirou, Silvia Venizelea, Emilios Heilakis, Vasias Eleftheriadis, Evri Sofroniadi, Yannis Kontrafouris, Tasos Nousias.

Awards / Distinctions / Festival participation: Best Director Award & 2nd Best Film Award, Thessaloniki International Film Festival 1998. Official Selection, Panorama, Berlin International Film Festival 1999.

The film follows the daily lives of a small group of Pontic-Greek teenagers, from their adventures in their neighbourhood of Menidi to petty thefts and turning tricks in Omonia Square. Sasha, Kotsian and Panagiotis are immigrants from Kazakhstan who still want to conquer the world. Newly arrived in Greece a few years earlier, they still feel marginalised in their new homeland. Sasha is constantly clashing with his father and frustrated in the construction job he hates. Panagiotis is supposed to be keeping tabs on a hooker until her pimp can sell her off to someone else, but he ends up falling for her. As one of their friends dies from a bad heroin batch, their raging, dead-end journeys through the city meet with devastating results.

An electrifying portrait of adventurous, marginalised youth, the film follows a handful of boys on a mission to conquer the Greek metropolis and get one step closer to fulfilling a dream that remains elusive. Starting out with a bang, their collision is destined to be dramatic. *From the Edge of the City* established Constantine Giannaris as a household name just before the dawn of the 21st Century, followed by *One Day in August* three years later.

The film was digitally restored for the purposes of the event *Motherland, I See You*.



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