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TOWARDS THE CREATION OF 'QUALITY' GREEK NATIONAL
CINEMA IN THE 1960S

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A B S T R A C T

In the field of Greek film studies, the 1960s are widely seen as the heyday of the ‘Old Greek Cinema’ (PEK), while the binary model ‘Old/mainstream’ versus ‘New/artistic’ still dominates historical, theoretical and critical discourse on Greek film. The contribution of this thesis is that, on the one hand, it considers the 1960s under the light of the rise of ‘New Greek Cinema’ (NEK) and, on the other, complicates the relationship of PEK and NEK by focusing on the culture surrounding Greek cinema of the time and by exploring the continuities and interrelations between the ‘Old’ and the ‘New’.

Particular emphasis is given to the debates about ‘quality’ national cinema, including issues of realism, ‘Greekness’ and ‘popular authenticity’, the crucial contribution of state policies and institutions such as the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ in Thessaloniki and cine clubs, the establishment of international art film in the domestic market, and the emergence of a young generation of film critics and cinephiles who promoted the idea of an indigenous art-house film culture. This thesis highlights also the ‘Old Greek Cinema’s’ attempts to raise the cultural status of commercial film and address international audiences and its subsequent openness to formal, thematic and artistic experimentation normally associated with NEK. The rise of history as a thematic concern of Greek cinema of the 1960s is another main focus of this thesis, which attempts to reveal how the Civil-War trauma, and oppositional historical perspectives (typically associated with NEK) found way in disguised forms in the narratives of mainstream films. Finally, through a close examination of the thematic and stylistic concerns of short films made in the 1960s (which include the early works of some of the major NEK figures) it demonstrates the continuity between the cinematic developments of the 1960s and the 1970s.

INTRODUCTION

From the late 1960s to the present, critical and theoretical discourses around Greek cinema have largely assumed a strict division of film production into two broad and opposing aesthetic categories, which have also become accepted as two distinct and long-lasting periods in Greek film history. On the one hand, the ‘Old Greek Cinema’ [‘Palios Ellinikos Kinimatografos’] (PEK) that roughly covers the period from after the Second World War to the early 1970s, represents the mainstream model of Greek cinema that was determined primarily by the producers. On the other hand, the ‘New Greek Cinema’ [‘Neos Ellinikos Kinimatografos’] (NEK), which begins gradually in the 1960s and is developed fully during the 1970s and 1980s, represents an art and auteurist model of Greek film practice, initially reliant on the independent production mode and later on state subsidies. Another term has recently been introduced into the critical vocabulary of Greek film: ‘Contemporary Greek Cinema’ [‘Synchronos Ellinikos Kinimatografos’] (SEK), which first emerged in the early 1990s, often challenging the ‘serious’ thematics of NEK and employing more popular narratives and forms than those used by the dominant trend in the NEK period. Even though the theoretical and practical value of these divisions has often been questioned, their ‘totalitarian’ domination over the way Greek cinema is comprehended and studied has been proved impressively strong.¹

The ‘New’-versus-‘Old’ model of classification provides an absolute and exclusive division of Greek films and periodization of Greek film history which reflects the influence on Greek film criticism and scholarship of the binary opposition ‘high art

¹ The clearest example of this perception of Greek film aesthetics and history is the three-volume publication of essays on Greek cinema by ‘Optikoakoustiki Koultoura’: *Xanavlepontas ton Palio Elliniko Kinimatografo* [Reviewing Old Greek Cinema] (2002), *Opsis tou Neou Ellinikou Kinimatografou* [Aspects of New Greek Cinema] (2002), *Anichnevontas ton Synchrono Elliniko Kinimatografo* [Detecting Contemporary Greek Cinema] (2002). Various models of aesthetic groupings and periodisation of Greek cinema are encountered in several theoretical and critical texts, but they do not manage to dispute the essence of the Old-versus-New dichotomy.

versus popular culture'. However, a thorough study of the development of Greek film reveals serious flaws in this widely accepted approach to Greek cinema.

The most problematic aspect of the 'New'-versus-'Old' model, which is based on aesthetic principles and production-mode criteria, is that it has until recently, and for many current critics and commentators, been used as a way of assessing Greek films. The very terminology 'New' / 'Old' – that manifests the conceptual and ideological context in which cinema was understood at certain times by certain people who invented the above typology – implies the inferiority of the latter, since 'Old' suggests decay, triviality, conservatism and inflexibility, while 'New' – 'Neos' in Greek means both 'young' and 'novel' – evokes originality, freshness, vitality, promise and change. In recent years, after the long-lasting failure of NEK films to win over Greek audiences and the continual screening of 'Old' movies on Greek television, there has been a growing fascination among viewers and commentators with the "good 'Old' Greek movies" of the charismatic actors and the inspired dialogue in contrast to the "boring and incomprehensible New Greek films". Therefore the binary opposition 'Old' versus 'New' has become a formula of judgment that prioritizes the 'Old' or the 'New' model of cinema, according to the vantage point.

The second problem with this binary approach to Greek cinema is that it precludes the possibility of interaction, dialogue, exchange and overlap between the 'Old' and 'New'. It is widely assumed, for instance, that the films made by the commercial industry during the 'Old' period were envisaged merely as commercial and industrial enterprises, devoid of artistic or other intentions. In addition, the prominence accorded by scholars to the role of producers and genres has disregarded the importance of the director in PEK. Meanwhile, discussions of NEK have not taken into account the economic and commercial motives of filmmaking, or offered a framework for considering NEK filmmakers and works that draw on popular or generic narrative forms (e.g. the films of Dinos Katsouridis,

Theodoros Marangos, Nikos Nikolaidis, Giorgos Panousopoulos, Nikos Perakis, Pavlos Tasios, Nikos Tzimas, Pantelis Voulgaris, Nikos Zervos) rather than employing the dominant NEK modernistic idiom, which has received much greater critical attention. Moreover, there is no acknowledgement of the existence of another strand of popular film, which is rooted in the 'Old' model in terms of aesthetics, production system, filmmakers, screenwriters and stars, but which developed during the NEK period. The solidarity and homogeneity implied within the two groups of the 'New'-versus-'Old' binary leads to over-generalisations about the two models / periods of Greek cinema. With the exception of some authors who worked within NEK and who by definition claim their individuality, scholarship has largely failed to address the diversity and differentiation within PEK and NEK, the alternative kinds of production practices, the range of production companies, variety of aesthetic, thematic and ideological trends, and alternative kinds of economic and artistic motivation.

Nevertheless, I use the terms PEK and NEK for ease of reference, since their position is so entrenched in scholarship and criticism, as well as in the public consciousness. However I try to shift the emphasis away from judgment, and concepts of exclusiveness and homogeneity towards interpretation and concepts of coexistence, interrelation, differentiation and diversity. What I call PEK is the Greek film culture that was formed during the post-war period upon an understanding of cinema as a commercial activity and popular form of entertainment, and which lasted until the decline of the industry in the early 1970s. It encompassed a diversity of production and promotion practices, form, narrative, ideology, authorial view, aesthetic trends and artistic achievements. I use NEK to refer to the phenomenon which existed between the 1960s and 1980s, the culmination of a Greek film culture, which was built upon an artistic and high cultural understanding of cinema. This alternative film culture evolved simultaneously, co-

existed and overlapped for a long time with PEK, and also encompassed a diversity of production practices, forms, narratives, ideologies, authorial views, aesthetic trends and artistic achievements.

To define more precisely the phenomenon of the 'New Greek Cinema' is a rather complicated task. It is not accidental that many commentators, who have defined the characteristics and temporal dimensions of NEK retrospectively, often treat the subject with some embarrassment and give contradictory statements. For example, Nikos Kolovos argues that NEK is a delayed, at least for a decade, response to the wider European and international phenomenon of the new waves, and that although its origins are in the 1960s, it was born and grown in the 1970s. He states that NEK begins with *Anaparastasis / Reconstruction* (1970, Theo Angelopoulos) and that it continues to the 1990s (Kolovos 2002: 121-218). According to Diamantis Leventakos, NEK first emerged in the mid-1960s and both its temporal and substantial dimensions remain under question. He also defines NEK in opposition to PEK, analyzing alternative terms and forming a set of binaries: 'New' versus 'Old', 'art' versus 'commercial', 'independent cinema' versus 'cinema of the producers', and 'politically progressive' versus 'politically conservative' (Leventakos 2002: 5-10). According to Yannis Bacoyannopoulos, NEK is not simply a new wave, but a radically different cinema in terms of its production modes, treatment of subjects and forms, which can broadly identified with auteurist cinema. As its starting point he identifies *Reconstruction* and the year 1970, while its endpoint is vague, located somewhere in the late 1990s (Bacoyannopoulos 2002: 11-34). According to Stathis Valoukos, NEK usually refers to all independent films made outside the commercial sector by newcomers and young filmmakers during the period 1966-1980 (Valoukos 2002: 65). Moreover current critical discourse often identifies NEK with a certain generation of filmmakers (Theo Angelopoulos, Pantelis Voulgaris, Nikos Panayotopoulos, Tonia

Marketaki and many others) and with the following concepts that briefly describe its profile: 'art', 'modernism', 'auteur cinema', 'leftist ideology', 'conflict with the establishment', 'formal experimentation', 'renewal of theme', 'representation of Greek history', 'Greekness', 'independent production practice', 'state subsidies', and 'alienation from the wide audience'. However, the nature, identity, coherence and temporal dimensions of NEK and of NEK films and filmmakers remain largely unexplored. Furthermore, no conclusive answer has been given to the question of whether NEK is a diachronic model of filmmaking that could be applied in the present, or it is so closely associated with the historical, socio-political and financial background of the time of its birth and peak that it is legitimate to think of it as historical.

This thesis demonstrates that it is necessary to examine not only films and filmmakers, but film culture in general in order to understand and define NEK. What could be perceived as 'new', or 'alternative', or 'oppositional' model of cinema, which, in my view, emerged in the 1960s and dominated the next two decades, cannot be defined solely by independent art-house films, auteurs, leftist ideology, and European modernism, because these existed in previous years. What actually emerged as a new phenomenon in the 1960s was the growth of a whole alternative film culture, which encompassed a broad range of cultural and institutional activity around film, characterized by specific attitudes to film production. In this sense NEK is a many-faceted cultural, political and economic phenomenon involving parallel and interrelated activities, institutional structures, individuals and relations, which developed around cinema, supporting and sustaining each other. NEK, in my view, can be considered in terms of three defining factors:

- First, the systematic production of independent films which were either self-financed or funded by individuals mainly, but not exclusively, outside the commercial industry, or by state subsidies. These independent or state-subsidised

films explored the potential of cinema beyond mere entertainment, inspired by developments in European and international art-house film. There are three main factors behind this: a) alternative models of production, which although had been employed occasionally in the past, gained a stronger hold on the Greek cinematic scene, allowing for the creation of films unhampered by the pressures of commercialism. b) Films conceived primarily as art: cinema as a language and a means of self-expression, formal and narrative experimentation, exploration of socio-political and existential problems, occasionally with ‘enlightening’ and educational motives. c) New-wave, European and world art-house film culture as inspiration and point of reference.

- Second, the remarkable flourishing of journalistic and critical writing on film, which treated cinema as a subject of high cultural prestige. It developed ‘serious’ language, employing aesthetic and ideological terms, as well as modern theories of film textual analysis (semiotics, psychoanalysis etc.) to discuss art, auteur and third cinema in the daily and specialized press. A specific rhetoric developed around Greek and international film (film as ‘high art’), and a close relationship was formed between film theory and practice.
- Third, the growth of new patterns of exhibition, namely an organized cinephile culture through the Thessaloniki Film Festival, film societies and arthouse cinemas, which provided the vital parallel distribution and exhibition network for both foreign and domestic art films.

Attitudes specific to NEK can be identified:

- a) The direct or indirect politicization of film activity with explicit and implicit left-wing references and the articulation through film of oppositional and socio-critical

discourses, a development closely connected to the socio-political and cultural conditions in Greece during the period when NEK was evolving.

- b) An almost obsessive concern with Greek history (especially the Civil War) and national identity ('Greekness').
- c) An atmosphere of melancholy and grief: it prevails in the films, and it is symptomatic of the preoccupation with politics, a troubled past, and the perceived loss of authenticity and national specificity.
- d) The idea of authorship: it enjoyed a privileged position in critical rhetoric, cinematic practice and market strategies alike.
- e) The dubious but close relationship of NEK with state and power: a relationship that was one of both conflict and dependency. It was impossible for NEK to develop and survive without institutional support, state policies and legislation.
- f) The formation of the Greek Film Festival in Thessaloniki as an event of enormous cultural and financial importance that provided directors and films a means of promotion, and a terrain for institutional claims and ideological conflicts.
- g) The configuration of different groups within the body both of filmmaking and critical writing with conflicting interests.

These forms of and attitudes to cultural and socio-economic activity that defined the NEK phenomenon went through different phases and only gradually became pronounced. Some had existed previously, some survived longer than others. In this sense, the flourishing and decline of NEK critical writing mirrored the development of NEK films and of the accompanying cinephile culture. However this does not rule out the fact that NEK critical writing preceded NEK films or the possibility that, even after NEK film rhetoric and exhibition network have vanished, films might still today be made in

accordance with NEK production modes and concepts, and that attitudes and behaviours characteristic of NEK may continue to exist. However, in my view, NEK as a whole belongs to the past.

This thesis considers NEK to be the summation of cinematic practices which developed as alternatives to the established popular Greek film culture (in terms of productivity and popularity, but not of critical acceptance). It aims to demonstrate that NEK was not only a manifestation of a break with PEK, but that there is some kind of continuity and dialogue between the two models and the two decades, the 1960s (the highpoint in Greek commercial filmmaking) and the 1970s (the period of the explosion of domestic arthouse film). It challenges the accepted starting point of NEK, and moves it from the late to the early 1960s. It is typically said to begin either in 1970, originating with a single film, *Anaparastasi / Reconstruction*, the first feature by Theo Angelopoulos, or in 1966, the first year that there appeared at the Greek Film Festival a large number of art-oriented and independently produced feature films, including *Prosopo me Prosospo / Face to Face* (Roviros Manthoulis), *Mechri to Plio / Until the Ship Sails* (Alexis Damianos), *Ekdromi / Excursion* (Takis Kanellopoulos), *O Thanatos tou Alexandrou / The Death of Alexander* (Dimitris Kollatos) and *Me ti Lampsi sta Matia / With Glittering Eyes* (Panos Glykofrydis). This study proposes a new periodisation and argues that the period 1960-1967 represents the first phase of 'New Greek Cinema', starting with the establishment of the 'Week of Greek Cinema' (renamed in 1966 Greek Film Festival), which initiated an increase in the production of 'quality' films, and ending with the military junta, when the dictatorship radically changed the political and cultural framework for film activity. Occasionally I look back to the late 1950s, because several important cinematic developments were already evident in these years.

This thesis comprises five Chapters:

Chapter 1 examines the debate about a ‘quality’ national cinema and offers a brief account of the sociopolitical, cultural, legislative and cinematic contexts within which the notion of ‘quality’ film, and NEK itself, developed in the 1960s. In other words this Chapter explores the main motivating factors behind the birth of NEK: the turbulent but creative decade of the 1960s (including the international flourishing of art and new wave film), the existence of a productive and relatively robust commercial film industry, the establishment of new legislation concerning film activity and the influential and prominent debates that voiced the demand for Greek ‘art’ cinema.

Chapter 2 focuses on one of the most important aspects of NEK namely the growth of a rich cinephile culture in the 1960s: the expansion of cine clubs throughout Greece, the appetite for international art films, and the rise of a new generation of militant left-wing film critics, who provided the vital journalistic framework for both the domestic and foreign art cinema.

Chapter 3 examines the commercial sector’s response to the demand for ‘quality’ national cinema, the competition with imported films and the desire to make films with international appeal. It discusses the ways in which the commercial movie absorbed elements from art cinema and created within mainstream production a strand of ‘quality’ film. This Chapter investigates continuities between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ film cultures, and demonstrates how the ‘New’ was prefigured and anticipated by the ‘Old’.

Chapter 4 focuses on the subjects of history and the Civil War in 1960s Greek cinema (commonly regarded as main preoccupations of NEK). This chapter challenges the dominant scholarly beliefs that history first became a thematic concern during the dictatorship; that the Civil War did not appear in popular films of the 1960s and that PEK

films took the official line on controversial issues of the past, such as the Resistance. It argues that a strong interest in history first emerged between 1958 and 1967 and that the Civil War is present in a disguised form in the narratives of 'Old' cinema, while popular films offered alternative perspectives on history with which left-wing viewers could identify.

Finally, Chapter 5 is a close examination of short-film activity in the 1960s, its thematic, aesthetic and ideological innovations and how its predominantly independently produced and state-subsidized films provided the first example of the production mode of 'New Greek Cinema'. Short-filmmaking of the 1960s includes the early works of some of the major NEK filmmakers and first explores themes and forms which became preoccupations of feature NEK films after 1970, demonstrating therefore the continuity between the 1960s and the 1970s.

1.

THE ORIGINS OF NEK: *SOCIOPOLITICAL, CULTURAL, LEGISLATIVE AND CINEMATIC FRAMEWORK, AND THE GREEK NATIONAL CINEMA DEBATE*

1.1 The 1960s: the socio-political and cultural framework

The 1960s, more precisely from the late 1950s to 1967,¹ was a period during which Greek society experienced an all-pervasive political and ideological polarisation – the inevitable legacy of the Civil War (1944-1949) – which gave rise to constant political upheaval and instability. The period was also one of increased economic development and social mobility which created new socio-economic structures, relations and demands that established the consumer society. Additionally the 1960s was an era of an explosive flourishing of cultural creativity that grappled with the Civil-War trauma, investigated new forms of expression, openly referenced new movements in European and international art and placed emphasis on questions about Greek identity and cultural tradition. Importantly the deep politicization of Greek society at that time brought about the close association of cultural life with politics.

The aftermath of the Civil War found the Left – which had led the domestic armed mass Resistance against the Axis occupation – defeated, while the right-wing establishment was making constant efforts to secure its power through the institution of a powerful apparatus of repression and exclusion of the Left. This system of oppression and discrimination – comparable only to the practices of dictatorial regimes, although legitimized by a parliamentary democracy (Tsoukalas 1981: 102 & 1984: 562) – turned a considerable portion of the population into second-class citizens, while thousands of communists remained in prison or in internal exile and over 80,000 settled in socialist countries as political refugees. The police and right-wing extremists exercised arbitrary powers, creating an atmosphere of terror and suffocation especially in the provinces. Files were kept on left-wing citizens by the police (including information about their private

¹ About the notion of the ‘short’ or the ‘long-lasting’ Greek 1960s, see Tsoukalas 2008: 41-46.

lives), and the ‘certificates of lawful opinions’ (*pistopiitika kinonikon fronimaton*) were required for several important aspects of everyday life.² In addition to authoritarianism and anti-Communism, the post Civil-War regime imposed via the official institutions (education, state-controlled radio, etc.) a ‘nationalistic’ ideology (*ethnikofrosyni*)³ and parochial cultural model, while censorship attempted to control artistic, intellectual and cultural activity.

Traumatized by its defeat and stigmatized by ‘nationalistic’ rhetoric as traitors of the nation, the Left struggled to survive and reassert its lost dignity and position in society. The struggle was twofold: on the one hand, coping with persecution and claiming vindication, and on the other, confronting internal conflicts – the growth of oppositional ideological trends that caused the split of the Communist Party in 1968 – which were intensified by international developments in leftist politics, since the official Greek Left had deep links to the Soviet Union.⁴

New dynamics in politics and society emerged after the general election of 1958, when the United Democratic Left (EDA) – a coalition of communists, socialists and other democratic leftists led covertly by the Communist Party (which had been outlawed in 1948) – became the second largest party in Parliament with 24.5% of the vote. The self-confidence of the Left and its influence on society increased, while the liberal Centre Union coalition (EK), under Georgios Papandreou, emerged as a new political force. The results of the election of 1961, which re-established the power of the Right, gave rise to accusations of “electoral fraud and violence” and motivated the mass mobilization that

² Civil service, entry to university, getting a passport or driver’s license (Tsoukalas 1981:134).

³ *Ethnikofrosyni* (= national conviction, national loyalty, national mindedness) was the core element of the post-Civil War ideology of the Greek state. It represented the ideology of the nationally minded as opposed to the communists who were accused as non lawful to the nation and servants of foreign powers.

⁴ The authoritarian regimes of Eastern Europe, the political changes in the Soviet Union, its violent intervention in other Socialist countries’ internal affairs, the fragmentation of the international communist movement and the ideological emancipation of west-European Left from the Soviet Union caused great internal ideological disputes.

challenged the political and social status quo. The assassination of Grigoris Lambrakis, an EDA Member of Parliament, by right-wing extremists in May 1963 contributed to the electoral defeat of the Right Party in November 1963, when the liberal centrists (EK) rose to power. With the general aim of democratising and liberalizing Greek society, Papandreou came into conflict with both the Crown and the state apparatus and this, together with intra-party oppositions, brought about the fall of his government in July 1965. The consequences were tremendous and hundreds of demonstrations and strikes broke out, often leading to violent clashes with the police. The military coup of April 1967, which brought to power the 'Dictatorship of the Colonels', aimed to prevent the popular Papandreou from winning the forthcoming election. So the oppressive, anti-Communist and parochial conditions prevailed for seven more years until democracy was finally established in 1974.

The mass radicalisation, which encompassed people from across the social, political and cultural spectrum, helped shape the socio-political situation in Greece of the 1960s and reflected major concerns of Greek society at the time. Four components can be discerned in the mass movement of the 1960s:⁵ first, a democratic one, demanding the democratization of society ('the unrelenting struggle', the movement of '114' in defence of the constitution, anti-monarchism, amnesty for political prisoners, the abolition of censorship, etc.). Second, a social dimension, requiring higher living standards for the poor (working-class strikes) and better access to education (the student movement called for the allocation of 15% of the state budget to education). Third, an international dimension in protests for peace, against nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War, and also for the liberation and self-determination of nations including Cyprus. Finally, a patriotic, even nationalistic dimension, that was present in the other three concerns, since the Left was

⁵ See Theodoros Pangalos in *Idryma Politismou ke Ekpedevsis 'Andreas Lendakis'* (2006:23-28).

accused of treachery and forced to defend its patriotism. Reflecting events internationally, the mass movement of the 1960s also campaigned on issues of women's emancipation and racial equality.

The 1960s was also a period of rapid economic growth, social mobility and increasing prosperity. Massive emigration (approximately 1,000,000 Greeks left mainly for Germany and Australia) that caused a flood of remittances, vast population movement towards the cities and the subsequent growing urbanisation, extensive construction to which the method of *antiparohi* (contractual consideration)⁶ contributed greatly and the following changes in housing conditions, the growing availability of consumer goods and great improvements in standards of welfare influenced the dramatic transformations of socio-economic conditions. So the mass radicalization of the public, as we have described above, was accompanied by counter-forces: opportunities for upward mobility and social advancement (which caused the impressive expansion of the middle-class) and the rise of the consumer dream.

After the transitional period of the 1950s, the 1960s was a highly productive and innovative time in Greek cultural life, both for 'popular' and 'high' art. This blossoming and progress is perhaps demonstrated more clearly in the field of popular music. The work of Manos Hadjidakis and Mikis Theodorakis, which inspired a whole generation of young composers⁷ and lyricists,⁸ brought about a revolution in music and verse which made popular song an object of high cultural prestige. The public presentation in 1960 of *Epitaphios / Epitaph*, a modernistic poetic work written by Yannis Ritsos and set to music by Theodorakis, is generally regarded as a pivotal moment and a decisive turning point. The event was revolutionary because high-art poetry was combined with popular music

⁶ The land-for-apartment exchange system.

⁷ Yannis Markopoulos, Stavros Xarchakos, Manos Loizos, Yannis Spanos, Christos Leontis, Notis Mavroudis, Mimis Plesas, Dionysis Savvopoulos, et al.

⁸ Nikos Gatsos, Tasos Leivaditis, Dimitris Christodoulou, Lefteris Papadopoulos, et al.

(using bouzouki and traditional musical forms) and performed by a popular singer (both in terms of public perception and social class), Grigoris Bithikotsis. This was part of a general reappraisal of the relationship between ‘high art’ and ‘popular culture’ that had been taking place in intellectual circles since the 1950s and was closely related to notions of ‘Greekness’ and ‘popular authenticity’ (*laikotita*) in art. Other significant developments in Greek cultural life were the introduction by Theodorakis in the spring of 1961 of big popular concerts of Greek music, the popularity of *Boîtes*⁹ and a growing interest among the young in foreign pop tunes.

Literature was another prolific area, with at least three generations of writers and poets active simultaneously: the so-called ‘generation of the thirties’, some older prominent figures¹⁰ and the ‘first’¹¹ and ‘second’¹² post-war generations (Kapsomenos 1994: 385-396), which shared the painful experiences of war and post-war realities. For the first time female writers also played a prominent part.¹³ The growing number of periodicals, even in provincial areas, dealing with literary, artistic, philosophical and other cultural subjects such as *Epitheorisi Technis* [Art Review], *Epoches* [Times], and also *Diagonios* [Diagonal] and *Kritiki* [Critique] in Thessaloniki, and the translation of a remarkable number of influential foreign literary and theoretical works suggest a vast interest in cultural matters.

Important developments took place in the theatre too. Prominent among theatrical groups was the legendary *Theatro Technis* [Art Theatre], which under the leadership of

⁹ Small music halls providing live music.

¹⁰ E.g. Kostas Varnalis.

¹¹ Stratis Tsirkas, Dimitris Hatzis, Kostas Taxtsis, Giorgos Ioannou, Andreas Frangias, Spyros Plaskovitis, Antonis Samarakis, Tasos Leivaditis, Aris Alexandrou, Takis Sinopoulos, Titos Patrikios, Manolis Anagnostakis, Miltos Sachtouris, et al.

¹² Vasilis Vasilikos, Marios Hakkas, Thanasis Valtinos, Giorgos Himonas, Menis Koumandareas, Dinos Christianopoulos, Alexis Aslanoglou, et al.

¹³ Dido Sotiriou, Margarita Liberaki, Tatiana Milliex-Gritsi, Kostoula Mitropoulou, Kiki Dimoula, et al.

Carolos Koun, played a significant role in introducing the Greek audience to a wide range of foreign repertory (from Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller to Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco and Harold Pinter), also promoting plays by contemporary Greek writers and breaking with stage conventions. There was also a large number of alternative theatrical groups, such as the *Dodekati Avlea*, *Theatro Poria* (Alexis Damianos), *Kykliko Theatro* etc. Moreover the emphasis on contemporary Greek plays brought to the fore a generation of young and innovative playwrights.¹⁴ The so-called commercial theatre and *epitheorisis*,¹⁵ for which writers such as Alekos Sakellarios, Asimakis Gialamas, Christos Giannakopoulos and Kostas Petenteris worked, was also at its peak at this time.

The visual arts were perhaps the most responsive to European influences, as many artists had studied or lived abroad (especially in Paris). Modernism came to the fore and a wide spectrum of styles from ‘abstract art’ to symbolism and realism were developed. Numerous exhibitions were organized, attracting considerable public and critical interest, and debates about formal and conceptual issues were intense. In the wider context of the cross-fertilisation of ‘high art’ and the ‘popular’ at that time, memorable is also *Omada Technis a* [Art Group a] and its projects, which aimed to familiarise the general public with modern art.

It is an undeniable fact that cultural activity became closely connected with politics in the 1960s and the Left (in its broader sense) greatly influenced the post-war generations of artists and intellectuals. This politicization of culture is manifest in two main aspects: first, whether officially committed to the Left or not, the artists and intellectuals were directly involved in the historical and socio-political realities of their

¹⁴ Iakovos Kampanellis, Vangelis Goufas, Dimitris Kehaidis, Giorgos Sevastikoglou, Vasilis Ziogas, Kostas Mourselas, Alexis Damianos, Marios Pontikas, Giorgos Skourtis, Pavlos Matesis, Loula Anagnostaki, et al.

¹⁵ A popular urban theatrical form characterized by a loose mix of music, dance, comedy, farce, satire and melodrama.

time and were grappling with the experiences of the war and the Civil-War trauma as well as with contemporary problems. Politics therefore became an integral part of cultural production. Second, cultural activity created spaces of protest and by extension of influence and intervention for the Left. Culture became associated with challenging state obscurantism, and the Left placed significant emphasis on organizing cultural events and establishing culturally-oriented groups. The most representative illustrations of the link between culture and politics were the figure and work of the composer and (since 1964) EDA deputy Mikis Theodorakis, and 'Lambrakis' Democratic Youth Organization' (a mass left youth movement led by Theodorakis) which combined cultural and political activity. Culture also – more obviously the popular song – gave expression to the feelings and demands of the rising mass movement and, consequently, cultural activities often came into conflict with state censors.

Another important aspect of the cultural life of the 1960s was that the internal ideological disputes of the Left found considerable expression in public discussions about art and intellectual subjects. The most distinguished among them were the debates around the *rebetico* music and popular song, 'socialist realism', the so-called 'poetry of defeat' and the 'abstract art', all of which challenged the role of art, artists and intellectuals in society and the importance of their political and social commitment. The fact that Stratis Tsirkas (one of the most prominent and influential writers and literary critics of the time) was expelled from the Greek Communist Party (in Egypt) in 1961 is indicative of the significance attached to art and culture and of the Communist party's attempts to manipulate them. It is important to stress that the cultural and artistic revolution we have described above took place not only in terms of commitment to the Communist party line, but also in terms of emancipation and conflict.

The 1960s also saw the rise of an increasingly self-aware youth as a distinct social entity and a leading force behind many of the socio-political and cultural developments of the time. The massive student movement, the Democratic Youth of Lambrakis, martyrdom of youths such as the university student Sotiris Petroulas killed by police at a demonstration, numerous young artists in every aspect of cultural life, distinctive youth sub-cultures exemplify that the 1960s in Greece, as in any other place, was the age of youth.

1.2 The commercial film industry and the development of two co-existing and intersecting film cultures

Although approximately 60 features and plenty of documentary material came out of the pre-war period, Greek cinema – in terms of regular production and audience attendance – was a post Second-World-War phenomenon, which developed as a commercial activity of the private sector. The market viability of the domestic cinema was subject to the films' ability to overcome the obstacles of limited finance, poor technical equipment, state legislation (tax policies and censorship) and competition with the huge number of imported films, all of which hampered the development of an organized film industry. Nevertheless, Greek cinema in the 1950s and especially in the 1960s blossomed in terms of both productivity and popularity. The total production of the 1950s reached 258 films, while in the 1960s it almost quadrupled, rising to 917 movies. The annual film output in the late 1950s fluctuated between thirty and fifty, while in the mid-1960s it reached over a hundred, which is reported as the highest number of films produced per capita in the world at that time. In addition, in the 1963/64 season a boom in the

consumption of Greek movies took place, which lasted until the 1971/72 period.¹⁶ According to Panos Kouanis, Greek films accounted for 40% of film attendance in Athens and Thessaloniki, 60% in other big cities, 75% in small-town areas and 95% in agricultural regions (Kouanis 2001: 71).

This huge popularity reflects the strong bond that Greek movies managed to establish with the domestic audience. In this respect, the average Greek film was an entertainment film that deliberately addressed the general public, which at that time was defined by specific characteristics: little or no education (approximately 30% of the population was illiterate),¹⁷ peasant, working or middle-class origins and East Mediterranean, Balkan and domestic cultural traditions, although with a keen interest in foreign cultural products.¹⁸ Consequently, the thematic, stylistic and narrative properties of the films echoed the cultural material and narrative structures familiar to the general public and drew on a wide range of popular cultural resources and pre-cinematic forms of entertainment, including local music, popular theatre, *epitheorisis*, *Karagiozis*, pulp fiction, as well as foreign mainstream films. The people working in the film industry were also to a

¹⁶ According to the official statistics, while in the 1962/63 season just 4 Greek films topped 100,000 tickets with the most successful of them – *Meriki to Protimoun ... Kryo / Some Like it ... Cold* – reaching 212,247 admissions in the first-run cinemas of Athens and Piraeus, in the 1963/64 season 46 Greek films sold over 100,000 tickets with the number one in the box-office list – *Kati na kei / Something Hot* – reaching 660,793 admissions. However, in the newspapers and film periodicals of the time this radical change in Greek film attendance was not discussed extensively. Only a few comments are encountered attributing the growth of the audience to the rise of the number of film theatres, pointing out that the rise in ticket sales was false since the average number of admissions for each venue was reduced. [See *Theamata* (15/9/1963) and (15/1/1964)]. The lack of interest in noting and discussing such an impressive phenomenon at the time of its emergence, in combination with the fact that there was no real explanation for such a sudden and dramatic turn in film attendance, leads us to consider statistics with some suspicion and to wonder whether the way numbers were collected had changed. (One possible explanation could be the fact that during that period the accessibility of the first-run venues for Greek films became easier and a bigger number of them exhibited Greek movies)[See *Avgi* (6, 9/10/63)]. However, it is beyond dispute that the rapid economic growth, urbanization and electrification of rural areas that took place in the 1960s brought about a dramatic expansion of the film-going public. Statistics show that during the 1960s there were over 100 million admissions per year, reaching a peak in 1968, when 137 million tickets were sold. Taking into account the size of the Greek population, these numbers were a European record. (Sotiropoulou 1995: 53)

¹⁷ Statistics show that in the 10+ age group the rate of illiteracy in the semi -urban areas reached 55%, while in the agricultural and mountain areas it exceeded 70% [*Avgi* (14 /6/ 1964)].

¹⁸ For a discussion of the public interest in the 1960s in world-wide popular cultural forms, see Eleftheriotis 2001: 193-194.

significant extent of limited education, having working, peasant or middle-class background and a previous or parallel career in other forms of popular entertainment, especially theatre and *epitheorisis*. As a consequence, Greek cinema became synonymous with ‘lower class’ popular entertainment and commercialism.

The ‘Old’ Greek films were actor-centered, drawing heavily on the talent and popularity of at least three generations of actors, and promoting an impressively broad pantheon of star images. They had easily comprehensible and often loosely structured or episodic narratives with frequent musical and dance interludes. They were structured according to the popular genres of comedy and melodrama, which were the most dominant generic categories in Greek cinema, and also mountain films (the so-called *foustanella*),¹⁹ musicals which were extremely popular in the 1960s, social dramas, crime movies, war films and other secondary genres. Their subject matter most commonly focused on family and personal relationships, reflecting aspects of domestic daily life, the efforts of the lower social classes to improve their living conditions, and the villagers’ difficulties in adjusting to the urban environment. In terms of form and style, simplicity prevailed with the dialogue prioritised over the pictorial dimensions of cinema. In addition, the creative staff worked in various aspects of film production (directing, writing, acting, cinematography, singing, choreographing, dancing, set-designing, etc.) and successful visual and narrative motifs were recycled, creating an apparent stylistic and narrative uniformity across movies, especially within particular production companies, for example Karagianis-Karatzopoulos, Finos and Klak film.

Nevertheless, Greek commercial cinema of the period does not constitute a homogeneous body of works, but a broad array of mainly (but not exclusively) entertainment films, which span a stylistic, thematic and even ideological range. This is

¹⁹ *Foustanella* is a traditional Greek male clothing item, similar to a Scottish kilt.

demonstrated through an examination of not only the different genres, but the differentiation within a single genre: for example, within the comedies starring the hyper-active Thanasis Vengos and the chatty Kostas Chatzichristos, or the melodramas made by Klak film and Finos, with each of these two companies developing and maintaining recognisable styles. Diversity can be traced also within the films of the same company – compare, for instance, the Neo-Realism-inspired *To Taxidi / The Journey* (1962) and the claustrophobic and studio based *Kinonia Ora Miden / Society, Point Zero* (1967) both produced by Finos and directed by Dinos Dimopoulos – or among separate film directors such as Yannis Dalianidis and Vasilis Georgiadis. Different points of cultural and stylistic references are also evident. Some allude, both formally and thematically, to Greek popular theatre and *epitheorisis*, others look to Hollywood or European cinema – both popular and art – and others rework patterns derived from East Mediterranean (primarily Turkish and Egyptian) and Hindi films (Apostolos Tegopoulos). Moreover from the mid 1940s to the early 1970s, there were clear changes in Greek cinema as it reflected and followed the economic, political, cultural, social and cinematic developments occurring in Greece at the time.

In terms of the audience, the commercial film industry was generating a distinct popular film culture where the film-going public as a ‘family’ attended en masse. Very illuminatingly the movies produced by the Klak film company defined their audiences in including in their credits the words “a movie for the whole family”. This audience was keenly interested in Greek popular genres and stars, a fact that was crucially contributed by the popular press. This was part of a broader popular film culture that included an impressive range of foreign entertainment films elevating cinema-going to a major social activity of the time.

However, immediately after the War an alternative kind of film culture began to develop which took cinema primarily as an art form, a means both of personal expression and the articulation of serious ideas. It sought to investigate the artistic and educational potential of cinema, and to dissociate the film product from the appeal to the majority. In the 1950s, this cultural approach to cinema was advanced primarily by the critical writing, which attempted to guide Greek film in a more elitist, artistic and socially critical direction. It found also several important outlets in the very film production. This happened either through independently produced films, such as, *Mavri Gi / Black Earth* (1952, Stelios Tatassopoulos), *Magiki Poli / Magic City* (1955, Nikos Koundouros), *Drakos / Ogre of Athens* (1956, Nikos Koundouros) and *I Arpagi tis Persefonis / The Abduction of Persephone* (1956, Grigoris Grigoriou) or, and most importantly, through commercially-made features. Thus, the critically acclaimed films *I Paranomi / The Outlaws* (1957, Nikos Koundouros), *To Potami / The River* (1960, Nikos Koundouros) and *To Telefteo Psema / A Matter of Dignity* (1958, Michael Cacoyannis) were financed by Finos Film; *To Kyriakatiko Xipnima / Windfall in Athens* (1954, Cacoyannis) and *Stella* (1955, Cacoyannis) by Millas Film; *To Pikro Psomi / Bitter Bread* (1951, Grigoriou) by Olympia Film and so on. Furthermore, many movies produced by established film companies that drew on popular cultural resources (e.g. the films of Giorgos Tzavellas and Dinos Dimopoulos) also demonstrated artistic aspirations. Importantly some of the artistic features made by the industry became very popular with the audiences (e.g. *Windfall in Athens* and *Stella*). Therefore, it might well be argued that both in terms of filmmaking and audiences there was a considerable degree of crossover between the ‘commercial’ and ‘cultural’ conceptions of cinema in the 1950s.

However, a serious conflict between these two models did also exist. One has only to scan the lines of Grigori Grigoriou’s autobiography *Mnimes se Mavro ke se Aspro*

[*Memories on Black and White*] (1996) to become aware of the difficulties faced by filmmakers in their effort to realize their artistic vision within the confines of the film companies. This conflict between authorial creativity and the producer's control is best exemplified by the legal dispute between Nikos Koundouros and 'Justin Wilson Productions' over the director's version of *To Potami / The River*, which was made in 1958 and finally released in 1965.

However contradictory it may seem, the existence of the commercially successful and over-productive popular sector played a pivotal role in the emergence of the 'New Greek Cinema'. First of all, it was the training ground for a great number of filmmakers and other film specialists who later became exceptional figures of NEK. Giorgos Arvanitis, Alexis Damianos, Kostas Ferris, Dionysis Grigoratos, Giorgos Katakouzinis, Dinos Katsouridis, Nikos Kavoukidis, Stavros Konstandarakos, Roviros Manthoulis, Nikos Nikolaidis, Giorgos Panousopoulos, Nikos Panayotopoulos, Panos Papakyriakopoulos, Vasilis Serdaris, Kostas Sfikas, Giorgos Stambouloupoulos, Dimitris Stavrakas, Pavlos Tasios, Dimos Theos, Stavros Tornes, Stavros Tsiolis, Nikos Tzimas, Pantelis Voulgaris, et al., all worked in commercial films mainly as assistant directors, but also as scriptwriters, cinematographers, and in several other production roles.²⁰ Moreover, a considerable number of them (Manthoulis, Ferris, Tasios, Tsiolis, Katsouridis and Tzimas) directed commercially-made movies in the 1960s.²¹

²⁰ Voulgaris, Ferris, Katakouzinis, Panayotopoulos (assistant director to Apostolos Tegopoulos), Stambouloupoulos, Stavrakas, Kostantarakos, Tasios, Serdaris worked as assistant directors; Theos as an assistant director and a production manager; Tornes as an actor and assistant director; Sfikas as a scriptwriter (*To Spiti tis Idonis / The House of Pleasure*, 1961, Giorgos Zervoulakos); Damianos as an actor; Tsiolis as an assistant director and scriptwriter; Nikolaidis also as an assistant director and scriptwriter (*Agapi gia Panta / Love for Ever*, 1969, Georgiadis); Grigoratos as a scriptwriter (*Parthenes stous Valtous / Virgins at the Marshes*, 1969, Zervoulakos); Panousopoulos, Arvanitis, and Kavoukidis as cinematographers; Katsouridis as a film director, cinematographer and editor; Papakyriakopoulos as an editor, etc. Some of them also worked as assistant directors in films made by Nikos Koundouros and Cacoyannis.

²¹ The filmography of those who made films in the commercial industry is the following: Manthoulis: *I Kyria Dimarchos / Misses Mayor* (1960), *Ikogenia Papadopoulou / Papadopoulos Family* (1960) and *Psila ta Heria Hitler / Hands Up Hitler* (1962); Ferris: *Enas Delikanis / A Lad* (1963) [The film is cited as it was

It is important to underline that Voulgaris, Ferris, Tornes, Nikolaidis and other NEK filmmakers have openly acknowledged their debt to the commercial industry, in the films and studios of which they were apprenticed.

In 1958, I entered the field of Greek Cinema and I worked as an assistant director. A great experience, especially when you were termed ‘a special assistant for non-experienced filmmakers’ and you had the opportunity to direct secretly. (Ferris)²²

You had to do a lot of things when you worked on a Greek movie. This, however, made you free ... Practical energies were freed. You didn’t only know how to use a dolly, you knew how to make a costume, how to cast an actor, how to manage the ten drachmas that you were entrusted with to solve one thousand problems, and so on... You had to know everything. This is a great fortune for the older of us who had worked as assistants in Greek cinema. [...] This is our treasure, our capital. (Tornes)²³

The commercial sector provided therefore an important, and sometimes the only, educational and early professional grounding for many of the filmmakers who later worked in the context of NEK. In addition, the popular industry provided the necessary

directed exclusively by Manolis Skouloudis and Ferris is credited as a *mise-en-scène* advisor. However, Ferris had the main responsibility for directing the movie (see Frangoulis 2004: 53-55 and 89)] and *Merikes to Protimoun ... Haki / Some like it ... Khaki* (1965); Tasios: *Ftochologia / Poor People* (1965), *Paranomi Pothi / Illegal Desires* (1966), *Hameni Eftyhia / Lost Happiness* (1966), *Antizili / Rivals* (1968) and *Pligomena Niata / Hurt Youth* (1969); Tsiolis: *O Mikros Drapetis / The Young Runaway* (1969), *Panikos / Panic* (1969), *I Zougla ton Poleon / The Jungle of the Cities* (1970) and *Katahrisi Exousias* (1971); Katsouridis: *Englima sta Paraskinia / Backstage Crime* (1960), *Ime Athoos / I am an Innocent* (1960), *Tis Kakomiras* (1963), *O Kyrios Pterarchos / Mister Wing-Commander* (1963), *Adistaktoi / Ruthless* (1965); Tzimas: *Astrapoyannos* (1970).

²² In Frangoulis & Ferris (2004: 37). [My translation (All translations from Greek are mine)].

²³ In Kanellis & Kaplanidis 2001: 24. See also Voulgaris: ‘Mia politimi mathitia’ [‘A valuable apprenticeship’] in Kolonias (ed.) (2002: 71) and Nikolaidis ‘Gia ton Vasili G.’ in Soldatos (ed.) (1999: 48-49). For an alternative point of view, see Giorgos Stambouloupoulos in Sotiropoulou 2004: 19-21: “What I really learned very well as an assistant director, during the ‘golden’ era of Greek cinema, was what I should never do”.

infrastructures for the development of all kinds of film activity (laboratories, technical equipment, professional experience of the technicians etc.), without which artistic experimentation could not flourish. It provided also the model of the ‘Other’, the ‘Enemy’, the cinematic tradition that would be questioned and rejected and against which NEK could define itself.

1.3 The state’s institutional and financial involvement in cinema: the beginning of a new direction

Although there is some evidence that the Greek state was aware of the ideological power of cinema,²⁴ it did not grasp the opportunities that the medium offered to disseminate the official ideology and exert cultural and political influence. Far more concerned with censorship, post-war governments did little to encourage a propagandistic cinema. With the exception of the newsreels, which had been controlled by the state propaganda apparatus since 1953,²⁵ and the establishment of a strict censorship mechanism, cinema was not a great concern to the state.²⁶ This fact was significant for two major reasons: firstly, until 1967 Greek cinema, unlike the state-controlled radio, was protected from being a vehicle for the official anti-communist and ‘nationalistic’ ideology. Secondly, for a long time Greek cinema did not receive any kind of state support.

²⁴ In 1953, Pavlos, then King of Greece, drew attention to the necessity of using cinema as a mechanism of propaganda. (See Meletopoulos 1993: 65). In a ‘Report’ also of the Directory of Letters, Theatre and Cinema of the Ministry of Education, written in 1950, about its activities developed during the 1945/1950 period and the following five-year plan (1951-1955), particular emphasis is stressed on both the economic and the ‘enlightening’ function of Cinema (1950: 102).

²⁵ The Greek Newsreels since 1953 were within the scope of the Press and Information Office of the Ministry of Presidency of the Government (Alinda Dimitriou 1993:12).

²⁶ “We feel sorry for the fact that until today the State has failed to see the usefulness [...] of Greek cinema, as a means of real enlightenment of the people about their problems, as a powerful tool for the education and edification of the Greek youth, as an overpowering medium of national propaganda and promotion of our culture abroad as well as an instrument for promoting tourism to our beautiful land and as a link with our emigrated children.” Platon Kappas (a producer) in *Theamata* (28/12/1965).

Post-war governments saw Greek cinema primarily as a source of tax revenue and tended to disregard the business, cultural and national potentials of film activity, a fact that created and maintained an increasingly accumulated body of problems: high taxation on domestic film production,²⁷ no state subsidies, censorship limitations, no market protectionist measures, no national film school or official film institutions, no trade facilities and union agreements, anarchic multiplication of film companies and film-venues, ‘minimum guarantee’ and the difficulty of securing releases in first-run film theatres.²⁸ Those circumstances forced both the industry and film commentators to campaign for the state provision of institutional and financial support, and especially, the abolition of relevant taxes and the introduction of supporting legislation.²⁹ The state was under constant criticism for its lack of interest in supporting Greek cinema and regarded both by the industry and critics as being largely responsible for the difficulties of domestic cinema, the shortage of ‘quality’ film and a national cinema that did not compare

²⁷ Greek cinema was heavily taxed especially compared to other forms of entertainment e.g. theatre. There was a plethora of taxes: tax of Public Entertainment, tax of Crown Providence, tax for Providence of the North Territories of Greece, Tax for Town Bands, value added tax 6% etc. For example, in 1965, when the price of a cinema ticket was 16 drachmas, the taxes were: Tax of Public Entertainment 6.02 drachmas and tax of Crown Providence 1.40 drachmas, while the producer received approximately 2 dr. On the contrary, at the same year, a theatre thicket was 40 drachmas, while tax of Public Entertainment 3.85 dr. and of Crown Providence 1.90 dr. [see Platon Kappas in *Theamata* (28/12/1965) and also Sotiropoulou 1989: 64-74].

²⁸ ‘Minimum guarantee’ was the prerequisite for exhibiting Greek movies in the first-run venues, namely a deposit that the film producers were forced to pay in order to guarantee a minimum number of tickets.

²⁹ In the 1960/1967 period, the pressure on the state to address the problems of Greek cinema was manifest in different sectors of the film industry: strike action that was instigated by several unions associated with film activity (e.g. ETEK [= Greek Union of Film Technicians]); letters to Ministers (e.g. the letter from the Union of Film Producers addressed to the Minister of Commerce in February 1966 [see *Theamata* (10/2/1966)] or the open letter addressed to the Prime Minister George Papandreou from the film exhibitors [see *Theamata* (April 1965)]; meetings between representatives of unions and government officials, etc. The most successful of these protests was the strike organised by POKE (= Panhellenic Organisation of Film Enterprises) on 31 March 1961 which shut all film theatres for twenty-four hours and demanded the reduction of taxation and a review of the impending law on cinema (see ‘I Aperia ton Kinimatografon’ [‘The Strike of the Cinemas’] in *Epitheorisi Technis*, 1961, no. 76, p. 369). Protests of film theatres in 1963 against the tax of Crown Providence (established in 1946 for covering the financial demands of the Civil War, but it continued into the post-Civil-War period [*Theamata*, 20/5/1964]) clearly became political [see *Avgi* (20/8/1963) and (10/9/1963)].

favourably with those of other European countries. It was during this period that the idea of the necessity for state intervention was scrutinized.³⁰

Despite the dominant view in scholarly work that tends to pay attention only to the state's indifference to or its inadequate involvement in film activity,³¹ there occurred, nevertheless, a shift in state policies on cinema in 1960/1967 period, which crucially influenced the emergence and development of NEK. Under pressure from the unions, individuals and critics, and due to the rapid development of the film industry itself, which was now too sizable to be ignored, the state was forced in the 1960s to deal with the problems of Greek cinema. It demonstrated a clear interest in the economic and cultural potential of cinema, establishing or adopting institutions, introducing legislation and partly contributing to film finance which helped to promote 'quality' film production. It is not my purpose to offer an exhaustive account of the state's measures on cinema or of the details of legislation. I shall focus instead on certain measures and activities that were instrumental in the rise of NEK.

The first state measure of decisive significance was the establishment in 1960 of the 'Week of Greek Cinema' (renamed in 1966 Greek Film Festival). The 'Week', which organized by the state-sponsored International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki, was devised by a group of intellectuals who lived and worked in Thessaloniki,³² but was soon taken on by the state and became the major annual cinematic event in Greece. The most significant impact of the 'Week of Greek Cinema' was that, on the one hand, it encouraged film companies to produce 'quality' films, since inclusion was dependent on high standards and, on the other, it created an opportunity for independently produced 'quality' and art-

³⁰ See, for example, Roussos Koundouros in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1964, no.119-120, pp 598-602) and Marios Ploritis in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1965, no. 121, pp 99-100).

³¹ See, for example, Sotiropoulou 1989: 44-56.

³² See Chapter 2, pp. 66-67.

oriented features to be screened and promoted. The ‘Week’ also stimulated critical writing and debates on the identity of Greek national cinema, played a part in the development of an audience for ‘quality’ Greek films, and introduced Greek cinema to foreign critics and commentators.

The second major contribution of the state to Greek cinema was Act 4208/61 which was introduced by the Minister of Industry Nikolaos Martis and passed on September 1961 by the Karamanlis’ government. Its aim was to develop the Greek film industry and facilitate the production of foreign films in Greece (article 1). Despite widespread disapproval,³³ the law was the first example of domestic legislation on film activity aside from censorship and practical issues (e.g. the operation of film venues)³⁴ offering some kind of official motivation and financial support.

The law introduced the notion of a ‘film worthy of protection’. To qualify for this a film had to “demonstrate artistic or intellectual elements and to be perfect in terms of technique” (article 16). The privileges that came with this label were the obligatory screening in the first-run venues of Athens, Piraeus and Thessaloniki for a period of one week every three months (article 17), and free exportation without further official permission (article 20). Many involved in cinema expressed dissatisfaction with the criteria for judging the ‘films worthy of protection’, accusing ‘advisory committees’ of elitism and intellectualism that excluded almost all popular movies. They also complained that the

³³ For the main reasons for this disapproval see Chapter 1, footnote 41. See also ‘The law AGAINST Greek cinema’ in *Avgi* (5/2/61) and ‘O Peri Kinimatografias Nomos ke I “Kathevontes Mandarinis”’ (Rafaelidis) in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (21/10/1965). In addition see *Theamata* (15/9/1961), Fotos Lambrinos in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (21/5/1964), Roussos Koundouros in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1964, no.119-120, pp. 598-602) and Marios Ploritis in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1965, no. 121, pp. 99-100).

³⁴ See Stergianopoulos, ‘I Nomothetiki Prostasia tis Kinimatografias ke I Simvoli aftis is tas Morfotikas Shesis ton Kraton’ [‘Legislative Protection of Cinema and its contribution to cultural relations of the states’] (*Theamata*, 28/12/1964).

venues' legal obligations were never observed.³⁵ Since 1964 'films worthy of protection' had granted state awards to the producers, directors and screenwriters of feature films and the producers and directors of short films.³⁶ Therefore state awards, along with those given by the 'Week of Greek Cinema', became an indirect but helpful method of public funding. Even though the institution of 'films worthy of protection' was not fully realised as far as exhibition was concerned, we cannot ignore the importance of the prizes in supporting 'quality' and art-oriented movies. However, the greatest contribution of this institution was, in my view, that, together with the 'Week of Greek Cinema', it situated the question of 'quality' film within a national and institutionalized framework.

The new law also introduced 'advisory committees', which were responsible for granting the state and 'worthy of protection' awards. They included government officials and civil servants from the Ministries of Industry, Presidency of the Government, Finance, Education, and National Defence, producers and exhibitors and also respected figures from cinema and the wider cultural milieu.³⁷ Through these committees as well as the festival juries (the members of which were also appointed by the state) the state judged the films and determined the criteria for inclusion in the aesthetic canon of Greek national cinema, which was inextricably linked with the idea of the 'quality' film. The emphasis placed by the state on the idea of the 'quality' and 'art' film is also demonstrated by a circular sent to producers from the Ministry of Industry in January 1963 which, after naming a few 'quality' films such as *Electra* (1962, Cacoyannis), *Ouranos / Sky* (1962, Takis

³⁵ Representatives of the Union of Film Producers visited the Minister of Industry and protested against the way the Advisory Committee applied the institution of the 'film worthy of protection' (see *To Vima*, 14/3/1963) See also Nestoras Matsas, 'I Prostatevomenes Tenies' ['The protected films'] (*Theamata*, 10/3/1963) and 'Ta Chalkina Parasima' ['The Bronze Medals'] (*Theamata*, 25/4/1963).

³⁶ For further details on state film awards, see *Theamata* (30/11/1964 and 28/12/1964), *To Vima* and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (3 /12/1965).

³⁷ Some distinguished names were Roussos Koundouros, Aglaia Mitropoulou, Angelos Prokopiou, Ilias Venezis, Angelos Terzakis, Eleni Vlachou, Cacoyannis and Ploritis.

Kanellopoulos), *Orgi / Fury* (1962, Vasilis Georgiadis), *To Taxidi / The Journey* (1962, Dinos Dimopoulos) and *Thriamvos / Triumph* (1962, Alekos Alexandrakis) criticized Greek cinema as being of low quality:

Unfortunately the production of a large number of low-quality films has been noted.³⁸ The producers of these films are either ignorant of the art of cinema or they try to increase profit not by making films of good quality, but by reducing the production value. In these films which lack artistic principles, a complete absence of the film director is notable, the cinematography is unacceptable, the editing is crude, the sets are childish and the actors unknown and without training [...]. The films that have neither artistic nor technical merit will not receive permission for public release.³⁹

This conscious and dynamic intervention by the state in the cinematic life of the country established the official institutionalization of Greek cinema and confirmed its position as a national cultural product worthy of attention. It also implied that to represent the national culture cinema ought to have ‘quality’ and ‘art’ characteristics. Thus, a connection was made between state policies on the one hand, and ‘quality’ and ‘art’ cinema on the other.⁴⁰

³⁸ According to the circular it accounted for the three-quarters of the total output.

³⁹ *Theamata* (25/1/1963). In March 1963 the films *Danise mou ti Gineka sou / Lend me your Wife* and *Ta Pedia tis Madalenas / Madalena's Children* were prohibited since they were regarded by the Committee of the Presidency of the Government as lacking artistic value and harmful to the aesthetic development of the audience (*To Vima*, 22/3/1963). See also the article ‘Enas Ipourgos krini tis Ellinikes Tenies’ [‘A Minister judges the Greek films’] in *To Vima* (26/1/1964).

⁴⁰ Other legislative plans were also publicized but in the end remained mere intentions. For example, Karamanlis’ government aimed to establish a National Film Foundation whose aim would be to provide financial support to ‘quality’ films [see *Theamata* (30/6/1963), *To Vima* (16/6/1963 and 16/7/1963)]. Also, the Papandreou government considered reforming the 4208/61 and 1108/42 Acts and mapping out a five-year program for the development of Greek cinema. Two committees were established: The first for figuring out the five-year program and the second for reforming and completing the legislation [see *Theamata* (18, 31/1/1965), *To Vima* (17, 24/1/1965) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (18, 25/1/1965)].

Another aspect of the 4208/61 Act, which had an indirect though noteworthy effect on the emergence of NEK, was that it granted foreign producers special incentives to shoot in Greece.⁴¹ Since the late 1950s foreign film companies had been attracted by the Greek landscape and the low cost of labour and living (e.g. *Boy on a Dolphin*), but it was the 1960s that saw a dramatic rise in the use of Greece as a location for foreign productions. *The Guns of Navarone*, *Summer Holiday*, *In the Cool of the Day*, *Not on Your Life*, *America-America*, *The 300 Spartans*, *It Happened in Athens* were just a few of the movies that were partly or entirely shot in Greece during the decade.⁴² In addition, important films directed by Cacoyannis [*Eroica / Our Last Spring* (1960), *Electra* (1962), *Zorba the Greek* (1964), *The Day the Fish Came Out* (1966)] and Jules Dassin [*He, Who must Die* (1956), *Never on Sunday* (1960), *Phaedra* (1961), *Topkapi* (1964)] were also partly or entirely shot in Greece. This situation offered a great opportunity to many assistant directors and future NEK filmmakers and other film technicians to learn about technical developments and methods of filmmaking that were prevalent outside the country. Giorgos Stamboulououlos (in an interview given to the writer) stresses the importance of his experience working on international productions, stating that assistant directors and technicians who worked on foreign films broadened their practical knowledge and learnt alternative modes of filmmaking. Distinguished foreign filmmakers working in the Greek film industry also exerted a significant influence on the NEK generation. One of the most outstanding figures among them was the cinematographer Walter Lassaly who first came to Greece in 1955 to work with Cacoyannis (*A Girl in Black*) and stayed on for a long time after that, working with Finos Film. It is revealing that

⁴¹ The incentives offered to foreign film activity in Greece caused irritation among domestic industry and film commentators, who accused the 4208/61 Act of promoting tourist interests and underrating domestic problems.

⁴² A list with twenty films that they were produced or co-produced in Greece by foreign companies during 1962 alone is cited in *Theamata*, (10/2/1963). See also 'Greece, an international film crossroad' by Nestoras Matsas in *Theamata* (15/4/64).

the prominent NEK cinematographer and director Giorgos Panoussopoulos (also in an interview given to the writer) asserts that he learned cinematography while watching either Lassaly work with Cacoyannis or the Italian cinematographer Giovanni Variano.⁴³

1.4 The public debate over a 'valued' Greek national cinema

During the 1960s cinema was at the forefront of cultural life in Greece because vast numbers of cinema theatres had sprung up in the big cities and the countryside, and going to cinema became the most popular form of entertainment.⁴⁴ Greek cinema was also propelled forward by the rapid development of the domestic film industry, the high levels of film production, the huge popularity of Greek movies, the establishment of the 'Week of Greek Cinema', and the first artistic and commercial successes of Greek films abroad (*Never on Sunday*, *Electra*, *Young Aphrodites*, *Zorba the Greek*). In addition, since the early post-war years, cinema was gradually freed from the prejudices of artistic circles, men of letters and other intellectuals, becoming accepted as a respectable form of art and entertainment and as a decent activity for educated people.⁴⁵ This was a decisive

⁴³ For Voulgaris' apprenticeship with Lassaly see 'Mia politimi Mathitia' in Kolonias (ed.) (2002: 71).

⁴⁴ Public polls conducted in Athens in 1963 showed that the most popular mode of entertainment among Athenians was cinema, accounting for 55% of the respondents' preferences, which among young people (18-34 years old) reached 62% (*Theamata*, 30/6/1963).

⁴⁵ There is not yet a reliable scholarly work on educated people's, men of letters' and artists' relationship to cinema in Greece. So our knowledge of their attitude to cinema is very limited. Nevertheless, it is widely written that in the pre-war period, a significant part of them, especially those related to theatre, regarded cinema with embarrassment, suspicion, and even hostility, not only domestic film, but cinema in general. Cinema was often dismissed as a popular spectacle for an uneducated public, and it was seen as a serious threat to the theatre (an art form that enjoyed high cultural prestige at that time) since it attracted a considerable part of the audience (See Sotiris Demetriou 2001: 75). The following words of Fotos Politis (an eminent man of letters and the theatre and an established and influential critic as well) and Yannis Sideris, (also involved with theatre) are illuminating for the way cinema was perceived by a considerable portion of Greek intellectuals in the pre-war period:

[Cinema] has been degenerated into [...] a real plague, a wound, a non artistic light form of entertainment, hardly different from horse-racing that alienates the mass audience from the excitement of real art. [*Proodos* (5/3/1917) in Politis 1984: 1 & 66].

development as a post-war generation of intellectuals was involved both in filmmaking and film criticism and cinema elevated to the status of high-cultural importance. This significant shift in the perception of cinema owed much to the impact of Italian Neo-Realism on Greek intellectuals and to a new awareness of cinema's power to exercise cultural and ideological influence. The huge explosion of new wave and art films in the 1960s and the high cultural prestige that they enjoyed all over the world further fortified cinema's position as a powerful art form.⁴⁶

But while cinema in general ceased to be a taboo theme, Greek cinema largely did not. Ilias Venezis, a distinguished writer and academic, in his front-page article 'Greek Cinema' in *To Vima* (6/10/1964) wrote:

I was, for the third time, chair of the Jury at the 'Week of Greek Cinema'. Friends from Athens, prominent men of letters, told me: 'Why do you agree to be chairman? Is Greek cinema a serious matter, to take it seriously? Do you not see that the central, the respectable venues of Athens do not release Greek films? And that respectable people do not go to see them? These films are intended for second-class cinemas, the shantytown, the rural areas and the Greek workers in Germany. What do you expect from this affair of bad taste?'

I don't dare to be in opposition to the achievements of our century, but it would be a great happiness if these public and futuristic dormitories did not exist in the world (Sideris in *Mousika Chronika* (1930) cited by Soldatos, 1994: 129).

For alternative and positive views on cinema see the article 'I Piisi tou Kinimatografou ke o Walt Disney' ['The poetry of Cinema and Walt Disney'] by the poet (and Nobelist) Odysseas Elytis (1938, *Nea Grammata*, no. 6-7 cited by Soldatos 1992: 148-153) and the texts by Nikolas Calas (Spieros) (cited by Soldatos 1994: 129-130), Takis Papatsonis (cited by Soldatos 1994: 140) and Tellos Agras (cited by Soldatos 1994: 142).

⁴⁶ The appreciation of cinema in Greece in the post-war period is not an indigenous phenomenon. The "widespread *acceptance* of cinema as a cultural fact" is regarded by Francesco Casetti as a post Second-World-War phenomenon in general. He states that "the reasons for this are twofold: on the one hand, cinema had widely proved its ability to testify to the spirit of an epoch and to express individual creativity. On the other hand, the notion of culture itself was becoming broader, to the point of including all the cultural forms – even the most current ones – that society used to speak about itself, its members or the world." (Casetti 1999: 7-8)

Sidestepping the class-discriminatory and elitist content of the above statement, we can focus on the fact that post-war Greek cinema had become an object of disapproval. This aversion sprang from an impressively wide range of educational, cultural and political standpoints: upper-class highbrows, leftist as well as right-wing commentators, the government, a considerable segment of the film-going public, and also, even more interestingly, people who were actively involved in the film industry. All of them shared the notion that Greek cinema was of low quality and bad taste. This, combined with the dramatic rise in the cultural significance and influence of cinema both within Greek society and on an international level, triggered debate around the cultural status of Greek film and the imperative of a 'valued', 'quality' or 'art' national cinema.

Such discussions had begun in the early post-war years, but in the 1960s they broadened into a lively public debate among intellectuals, filmmakers, producers, critics, cinephiles, students and many others about the thematic and formal identity of Greek national cinema, 'what it actually was' and 'what it ought to be'. This debate was influenced by the European cinematic paradigm and it emerged as a part of a wide-ranging discussion of cultural and political subjects that occupied Greek intellectuals in the 1960s. It raised issues of censorship and focused on thematic, aesthetic, national, economic, legislative, and institutional concerns, strongly criticising the established model of cinematic practice and proposing new directions. Debates around domestic cinema were fuelled by both the 'Week of Greek Cinema', which offered the opportunity to examine and review the artistic achievements of annual film production in an institutionalized context, and the extensive cine-club network of the period.⁴⁷ The level of interest in Greek cinema at the time and the range of the debate is demonstrated by the mass of critical texts,

⁴⁷ See Chapter 2, pp. 65-81.

comments, interviews, tributes to Greek cinema, discussions of specific Greek films⁴⁸ and subjects related to Greek film activity that were published in the daily and periodical press, the enormous interest surrounding Greek movies at international festivals, the frequent lectures and forums on Greek cinema,⁴⁹ and also the passionate conversations among young filmmakers within the framework of collectives.⁵⁰

This section is not a critical account of the totality of the conceptions and ideas about Greek cinema that were circulated in the context of the just mentioned debate. It is rather an attempt to construct a coherent synthesis of the most prominent among the scattered opinions, comments and remarks on Greek cinema drawn from writings of the period which, in fact, have never been brought together in a single text. In other words, it is an attempt to illustrate the theoretical and ideological climate within which producers and filmmakers worked, creating both commercial and alternative films. The ideas that follow were not of course shared by all NEK filmmakers of the 1960s, and the NEK films of the period were not absolute manifestations of those ideas, as critical approaches were multi-dimensional and polyphonic. However, the extensive public debate on Greek cinema that took place at the time should be understood, on the one hand, as a major influence on NEK

⁴⁸ Specific Greek films triggered extensive and intensive discussions in the press. Exceptional among them were *Never on Sunday* and *Zorba the Greek* which raised questions about the proper representation of the Greek nation abroad, and also *Synikia to Oniro / A Neighbourhood Called Dream* that provoked discussions about censorship.

⁴⁹ From the plethora of forums on Greek cinema at that time I am citing two illuminating cases:
- At the margins of the '5th Week of Greek Cinema', a public discussion was organized by a group of filmmakers and cinephiles (Kostas Vrettakos, Stavros Konstantarakos, Kostas Ferris, Zois Manaris and Kostas Fotinos) entitled 'Kentro Erevnon Kinimatografou' ['Centre of Research in Cinema'] on the subject 'For the creation of a Greek national cinema'. Among the participants were several distinguished intellectuals such as Anagnostakis, Pentzikis, Christianopoulos, Vasilikos and Zannas. [See *To Vima* (24/9/1964), *Dimokratiki Allagi* (21, 24, 26/9/ 1964) and especially *Tachydromos* (24/10/64)].

-On 4 May 1966 a forum about the "Future of Greek Cinema" was arranged by the women's magazine *Moda* in Athens Hilton Hotel. Participants: Marios Ploritis (moderator), Irini Kalkani ("Film Studies"), Roussos Koundouros ("The Short Films"), Antonis Samarakis ("Censorship in Cinema"), Yannis Bacoyannopoulos ("Cinema and Audience"), Alekos Sakellarios and Aglaia Mitropoulou ("Film Criticism"), Kostas Karayannis ("Film Production"), Vasilis Vasilikos ("The screenplay as an Art"). See *Dimokratiki Allagi* (2, 4 /5/1966) and *Theamata* (15/5/ 1966).

⁵⁰ In personal interviews given to the writer by NEK directors an emphasis is placed on such vivid discussions among young filmmakers. Thus, for instance, Dimos Theos, recalling his friendship with Stavros Tornes in the 1960s, states: "[...] the discussions about the 'Other' cinema and revolution lasted until morning" (Theos, 2003/2004: 102).

films and a considerable number of commercial movies of the time, and, on the other, as a manifestation of the NEK phenomenon itself.⁵¹

The criticism of Greek cinema is best summarized by one statement which was often repeated in the debate on Greek film: “Greek national cinema does not exist. The existing one is neither Greek nor cinema. Greek cinema has to become cinema, Greek cinema has to become Greek”.⁵²

Reviewing the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ in 1963, the highly respected highbrow and film commentator Marios Ploritis argued that the ‘Week’ could prove very beneficial to domestic cinema, provided that there was such a thing as Greek cinema in the first place.⁵³ The subject of the public discussion organized by the ‘Centre of Research in Cinema’ in 1964 in Thessaloniki was “the creation of a Greek national cinema”.⁵⁴ In 1965, the film critic and future NEK filmmaker Tonia Marketaki writing in *Dimokratiki Allagi* [*Democratic Change*] spoke of Greek cinema as being a future reality.⁵⁵ In the same year in an interview given to the French magazine *Cine-Monde*, Cacoyannis stated that there

⁵¹ A systematic concentration and comprehensive study of the relevant critical material is a demanding task, since it is spread across an extremely wide range of sources, available or not: popular and quality press, periodicals, specialized film magazines etc. The method I have used is to focus on typical texts and writers, since the same ideas reappear through decades and in different texts. In the following pages, writings on Greek cinema and films published in the period 1944-1967 have been examined. The years from 1944 to 1959 are covered by the collection of randomly selected writings published in the two-volume edition on Greek film edited by Soldatos (*Enas Eonas Ellinikos Kinimatografos / A century of Greek cinema*, 2001). The period 1960-1967 draws on a more systematic collection of all film criticism published in the daily centrist newspapers *To Vima* (1960-1967) and *Eleftheria* (1960-1967) as well as the left-wing newspapers *Avgi* (1960-1967) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (1964-1967). These newspapers have been chosen because of the emphasis they had placed on Greek cinema, publishing key texts written by key writers. Additional sources considered are the collected articles on Greek film that appeared in the periodicals *Epitheorisi Technis* (1956-1967) and *Epoches* (1963-1967), as well as in the film journals *Theamata* (1960-1967), *Kinimatografos-Theatro* (1960, 4 issues) and *Ellinikos Kinimatographos* (1966-1967, 5 issues). Articles by foreign critics, published in *To Vima* and *Ellinikos Kinimatographos* have also been included.

⁵² See, for example, Bacoyannopoulos’ article entitled ‘To Provlima tou Ellinikou Kinimatografou: O Ellinikos Kinimatografos prepi na gini Kinimatografos, O Ellinikos Kinimatografos prepi na gini Ellinikos’ [‘The problem of Greek cinema: Greek cinema has to become cinema, Greek cinema has to become Greek’] in *Nea Ikonomia* (no. 10-11, 1965) reprinted in *Ta Theamata* (28/12/1965).

⁵³ *Epitheorisi Technis* (1963, no. 104, pp. 230-251).

⁵⁴ See Chapter 1, footnote 49.

⁵⁵ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (28/9/1965).

was not yet Greek cinema but only a few skilful film directors.⁵⁶ Even the popular actor Spyros Kalogirou spoke in 1966 about the need for a ‘true’ Greek cinema.⁵⁷ So although the productivity and popularity of Greek films peaked in the 1960s, and although there was a lot of talk about an indigenous national cinema, it was a commonly expressed belief that an ‘authentic’, a ‘real’ Greek cinema did not yet exist. Alternatively, since the number of domestic films conforming to the European tradition of ‘quality’, ‘art’ and ‘auteurism’ were limited, it was believed that Greek cinema was in its infancy⁵⁸ or in the best case in its adolescence.⁵⁹ Thus, according to the dominant view, Greek national cinema was either as yet unborn or immature, it was not a reality but a potential, only an expectation.

What existed was a “large ‘nothing’” (Marketaki),⁶⁰ a “desert named Greek cinema” (*Epitheorisi Technis*),⁶¹ “a non-cinema of eighty annual film productions” (Dinos Dimopoulos),⁶² “silly fabrications unworthy of the name film” (Antonis Moschovakis),⁶³ “one thousand minor comedies of the standards of silent cinema or cheap melodramas and only four-five films” (Dimitris Stavrakas).⁶⁴ Discussing the film *Ton Palio Ekino ton Kero / In the Old Times* (1964, Sakellarios), which consisted of extracts from pre-war Greek movies, Marketaki wrote:

This pitiful history of Greek cinema, narrated by the fragments of the ‘ancient monuments’ of our cinema, is laughable. [...] Is it ever possible not to think of the fact that the miserable [...] *Maria Pentagiotissa* [...]

⁵⁶ *Theamata* (28/2/1965).

⁵⁷ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (26/10/1966).

⁵⁸ *Epitheorisi Technis* (1963, no. 104, pp. 230-251).

⁵⁹ Kostas Agoniatis in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1961, no. 82, pp. 365-367).

⁶⁰ *To Vima* (29/12/1965).

⁶¹ 1963, no. 103, p. 119.

⁶² *To Vima* (24/8/1962).

⁶³ See *Hroniko in Theatro 1965*, cited by Soldatos 2001: 294 (vol.1).

⁶⁴ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no.3-4, p. 10).

was made in the same period as *Potemkin* and the masterpieces of German Expressionism?⁶⁵

Similarly the editorial of the film journal *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* [*Greek Cinema*] stated in 1966:

[Cinema in Greece now] is at a stage of development equivalent to that of American or European cinema in the period 1910-14. It is only in the last 2-3 years that Greek cinema began to overcome the period of the “pioneers”. This, however, does not mean that we ignore the unique, very important presence – in the period immediately after the war – of film authors who struggled alone and without support to find a path.⁶⁶

As the above statements on Greek film demonstrate, there was a strong tendency to review and assess retrospectively the general progress, cultural status and artistic achievements of Greek cinema. In this respect, Greek cinema was placed within an international context, and was compared with other national cinemas. The accomplishments of the European art film and the works of major European authors served as the prime canon for evaluation and comparison. According to these criteria, from the entire prolific Greek production only a few films stood up to the conventions of European art film and were distinguished as worthy of critical recognition. These few achievements were credited most often to two highly respected directors, Cacoyannis and Koundouros who, according to the dominant view of the time, rose above the level of triviality and mediocrity, displaying artistic inspiration and European quality. The list of critically

⁶⁵ *To Vima* (15/12/1965).

⁶⁶ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no. 2, p. 3).

acclaimed films was occasionally extended to include a few other cases, most often *Bitter Bread* (1951, Grigoris Grigoriou) and the work of Takis Kanellopoulos. The vast majority of film production, however, was perceived as an almost homogeneous body of low-quality movies unified by a market-driven strategy and artistic insignificance.⁶⁷

- a. Art versus commodity: The demand for ‘art’ and ‘quality’ cinema and the notion of ‘popular authenticity’/ ‘*laikotita*’.

In the 1960s films were evaluated according to the dualistic distinction of commodity versus art which was dominant in film critical discourse. Cinema was appreciated primarily as an art form:

We have to realize first of all that cinema, as it has been shaped all over the world, is not only a means of entertainment and pleasure for the audience. It is one of the High Arts: the seventh. Consequently, the cinema must be conceived as an art form and not as a means of making profit for some of the producers. In addition, it must be conceived as a medium of education and *guidance* of the masses. (Varoutsis)⁶⁸

The average Greek film was constantly situated by critics on the side of commercialism and this commercial property of Greek movie created the idea that Greek cinema was not real cinema but a commercialized and inferior product. Producers (“the big sharks” in the words of the popular actor Spyros Kalogirou⁶⁹) with their intentions of making profit were held responsible for the poor results of film production. Even

⁶⁷ However, several critical texts noted the artistic achievements of popular cinema. In the 1960s critical acceptance of popular films becomes a more frequent phenomenon, especially as far as commercial films made for the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ are concerned. General retrospective assessment of Greek cinema tended to underestimate popular movies, while discussions of individual popular movies were often positive.

⁶⁸ *To Vima* (1/1/ 1964).

⁶⁹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (26/10/1966).

producers themselves like Filoiminos Finos criticized other producers, accusing them of opportunism and sloppiness, and of being interested solely in commercial profit rather than quality.⁷⁰ Foreign mainstream films were also perceived as being second-rate products, “worse than the worst of our production”.⁷¹ Due to the strong politicization of the period and the prevalence of Marxist approaches to the economic relations of society, commercialism was identified with the corrupt capitalist system. As a consequence, the art/commerce binary was turned into a matter of moral principle and constructed on a clearly competitive basis. On the one side there was ‘culture’, ‘art’, ‘education’ and ‘mass enlightenment’, and also ‘experimentation’, ‘personal style’ and ‘authenticity’, and on the other side, economic motives and ‘exploitation’ of the audience’s desire for entertainment.⁷² According to the dominant view, the two different cinematic practices were decisive for the formal, narrative and thematic characteristics of the films.

Commercial cinema is made by the producer, since *he* [sic] is the person who supervises most of the movie-making process. In terms of form, it is based on a kind of calligraphy. By contrast, art cinema originates in experimentation and belongs to the filmmaker. Commercial cinema deals superficially with problems, promoting unworthy messages. In addition, it includes elements that attract the masses e.g. sex, vendettas, striking titles, happy end. In short, it is deprived of style, it is faceless and for this

⁷⁰ See ‘Parafrones I mipos saltadori: I hronia krisi tou Ellinikou kin/fou’ [‘Insane or Opportunists: the long-lasting crisis of Greek cinema’] that includes comments of Damaskinos, Drakaki, Lazaridis and Finos (*To Vima*, 23/2/1964).

⁷¹ See the article ‘Aapistefto ke exorgistiko! Mia alli foveri pligi tou kinimatografikou mas viou, spatilame athono synallagma gia apithana xena ipoproionta’ [‘Unbelievable and Exasperating! Another terrible plague of our cinematic life, we waste foreign exchange for the worst foreign by-products’] (*To Vima*, 5/3/1964).

⁷² The art-versus-commodity binary is reflected in an article by Fotis Alexiou in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no.1, pp. 5-11) under the title ‘Festival Ellinikou Kinimatografou: Nei ke Palii skinothetes synantionte sto pirama tou syndyasmou tis piotitas me tin emporikotita’ [‘Greek Film Festival: New and Old film directors meet each other at the experiment of combining quality and commercialism’]. This article tries to calculate the ‘quality’ and ‘commercialism’ of certain films, as though such properties were quantifiable. A similar approach is applied more schematically in the subsequent text of Yannis Bacoyannopoulos ‘I Enilikiosi tou Festival’ [‘The Festival’s coming of Age’] (in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos*, no. 1, pp. 16-17). The films are distinguished by the writer according to whether they are ‘personal’ artistic enterprises or ‘commercial’ products. Films are placed on the left and right from a point that is regarded as the equilibrium between ‘commercialism’ and ‘art’. The art films are placed on the left, while the commercial ones on the right.

reason it repeats itself endlessly. On the contrary, in art cinema there is restlessness in terms of form and content and for this reason the narrative, in the majority of cases, is difficult for the general public (1967, Manthoulis)⁷³

Commercialism, it was believed, was directly related to the taste of the wider audience. Accommodating the general public's tastes lowered the quality in terms of thematic content and aesthetics, privileged the inferior genres of melodrama, farce⁷⁴ and *foustanella*, and also meant that bouzouki music, and depictions of the underworld and prostitution featured to excess. According to one point of view, the audience was responsible for the inferiority of Greek films since its poor educational background and bad taste forced producers to make poor movies.

To cover its expenses a film needs at least 400,000 Greek spectators, since the foreign markets are not available. So it is normal for producers to turn towards 'easy', namely bad movies, which in their turn contribute to a bad tradition, ruin further the audience's taste and debase the film production to the level of ridicule, insignificance or mediocrity. (1965, "Our Opinion")⁷⁵

Greek cinema is a slave to both its audience and producers: it expresses their taste. The audience, mostly tired, in ignorance, unprotected and in a hurry [...] forms our cinema instead of us, who are responsible for making cinema for the audience. (1962, Dinos Dimopoulos)⁷⁶

However, others argued that Greek films underestimated and disrespected the film-going public, which was "fed up with the misery of Greek cinema" (*Epitheorisi*

⁷³ From a lecture given in 21 March 1967 (see *Dimokratiki Allagi*, 23/3/1967).

⁷⁴ The Greek term is *farcomodia*.

⁷⁵ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (11 /2/1965) commenting on a lecture given by Bacoyannopoulos.

⁷⁶ *To Vima* (24/8/1962).

Technis).⁷⁷ “The majority of Greek films”, it was argued, “are addressed to mentally retarded people” (Marketaki)⁷⁸ while the Greek audience was mature and intelligent enough to appreciate quality films. The article “Our Opinion”,⁷⁹ in *Dimokratiki Allagi* highlighted the huge success of Frederic Rossif’s documentary *To Die in Madrid* (about the Spanish Civil War), which initially had been released at a second-run cinema because it had been deemed unprofitable, and praised the audience’s sophistication:

Last week the Athenian film-going public taught the importers of foreign movies a great lesson [...]. There were so many people that evening in front of the *Pantheon* cinema that the queue disrupted the traffic on Panepistimiou road. It is evident that the film importers underestimated both the film and the maturity of the audience.⁸⁰

Mature or not, the audience was recognized as being the major factor upon which the viability of a ‘quality’ Greek national cinema depended. Critics and filmmakers who promoted the idea of ‘art’ and ‘quality’ film were well aware of the commercial dimensions of cinema and the necessity of public acceptance for this kind of cinema to survive. Films “are basically industrial products” (Manthoulis)⁸¹ and “nobody has the right to disregard the commercial rules” (Pavlos Zannas)⁸². “Commercial success must be taken into consideration if ‘new’ Greek cinema is to survive” (Fotis Alexiou)⁸³

⁷⁷ 1963, no. 101, p. 493.

⁷⁸ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (17/3/1964).

⁷⁹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (27/1/ 1965).

⁸⁰ For the necessity of reexamining the widespread idea of the immaturity of the Greek audience and its inability to accept quality films, see also ‘Greek Film Festival: New and Old film directors meet each other at the experiment of combining quality and commercialism’ (Fotis Alexiou in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos*, no. 1, p. 5).

⁸¹ ‘Gia enan Ethniko Laiko Kinimatografo’ [‘Towards National Popular Cinema’] in *Epoches* (1966, no. 44, p. 552).

⁸² *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no. 2, p. 7).

⁸³ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no. 1, p. 5).

Consideration was also given to the ‘enlightening’ function of cinema and the moral responsibility of producers and filmmakers towards the audience. Cinema was understood to be “the most effective means of mass communication and dissemination of cultural and art values”⁸⁴, and “the most effective medium for spreading ideology”⁸⁵ while the viewer was considered a passive participant.⁸⁶ This automatically tasked filmmakers with educational, ideological and guiding duties. Thus, even though ‘quality’ and ‘commercialism’ were perceived as contradictory terms which coexisted uneasily, and although there was demand for a cinema which did not cater to the taste of the average audience, the necessity of commercial viability and maintaining a bond with the general public for ‘enlightening’ and ideological reasons, meant that ways had to be sought to combine art and commerce, despite those who argued the purity of art must not be compromised.⁸⁷ This discussion should be understood as part of a broader concern with the notion of ‘popular authenticity’ in art, as defined in the ‘authentic’ cultural background of the ‘people’ and the general public’s ability to understand high cultural forms. ‘Popular authenticity’ became a driving concern of intellectuals and artists on the Left, since they believed that art should be for and about the people.

We have to move towards films that bring us closer to the audience [...]. For me, a film is successful when it touches the general public – whether educated or not. I think that it is not difficult to combine quality with commerce. [...] The audience is thirsty and we commit a crime when we

⁸⁴ Yannis Kallioris, ‘To Evdomo Festival Ellinikou Kinimatografou stin Thessaloniki’ [‘The seventh Greek film festival in Thessaloniki’] (*Epitheorisi Technis*, no. 143-144, pp. 402-427).

⁸⁵ See the editorial of *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no. 1, p. 3).

⁸⁶ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no. 1, p. 3).

⁸⁷ See, for instance, ‘Ema ke bouzouki: telos!’ [‘Blood and bouzouki: the end!’] written by Gideon Bachmann, in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no. 3-4, p. 17): “An effort is made to force cinema to offer in the same film both problematization and entertainment [...] Such a hybrid combination is impossible in modern cinema [...] Only the strict division between art film and entertainment film could create both genres that today are fused with disastrous consequences.”

allow it to satisfy its thirst in the way that all of us know. (Takis Hatzopoulos, short film director)⁸⁸

The idea of making films for the Festival and not for the audience is definitely wrong. (Iraklis Papadakis, short film director)⁸⁹

Filmmakers are peculiar artists. [They combine] poetry, social responsibility (a filmmaker guides the masses) and financial speculation [...]. The art of cinema in our country has undergone a transitional period during which the ‘hermetic’ filmmaker could not communicate with the audience. [...] There is always room for ‘high’ subject-matter and formal experimentation even in the most ‘popular’ movie. The contemporary Greek filmmaker is forced by the facts to find links with his [sic] audience. This is true especially for the filmmaker who is socially committed. (Manthoulis)⁹⁰

A series of activities were developed by filmmakers and critics in response to ‘quality’ cinema’s imperative to communicate with the general public. Manthoulis, for instance, based the screenplay and style of his film *Prosopo me Prosopo / Face to Face* (1966) on the results of opinion surveys he conducted on the film-going public in Athens and the countryside.⁹¹ Filmmakers and critics of the time often expressed the belief that “commercial intent does not exclude artistic achievements” (Bacoyannopoulos)⁹² and “*quality films are not necessarily unprofitable*” (Manthoulis),⁹³ and also the idea that

⁸⁸ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (28/10/1966).

⁸⁹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (15/10/1965).

⁹⁰ ‘Gia enan Ethniko Laiko Kinimatografo’ [‘Towards National Popular Cinema’] in *Epoches* (1966, no. 44, p. 553).

⁹¹ For further details about Manthoulis’ experiment, see ‘Mia statistiki, afetiria sto gyrisma mias tenias’ [‘Statistics, the starting point for making a film’] in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (23/12/1966). For another opinion survey about audience’s taste organized by *Dimokratiki Allagi*, see ‘O Kinimatografos ke to Kino’ [‘Cinema and the audience’] written by Rafaelidis in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no. 3-4, p. 15).

⁹² *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no. 1, pp. 16-17).

⁹³ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (9/7/1966)

‘quality’ films could develop a ‘positive’ tradition and improve the audience’s taste (which was one of the main ambitions of the advocates of ‘quality’ films).⁹⁴ Nevertheless the notion of ‘popular authenticity’ was viewed with some embarrassment and, as it became apparent in the following decades, as a necessary evil rather than a positive attribute of ‘quality’ films. The aesthetic judgements and elitism of most critics and NEK filmmakers created a disparity between what the Greek public and the experts considered ‘popular’. Thus in Manthoulis’ article ‘Gia enan Ethniko Laiko Kinimatografo’ [‘Towards a National Popular Cinema’], he called for “a national popular cinema” that was “national in terms of ‘authenticity’, and popular in terms of ‘familiarity’ for the audience”,⁹⁵ while elsewhere he stated: “We need a popular national cinema. The films made by Bergman, Resnais, Godard are the main representatives of this kind of cinema.”⁹⁶

b. The filmmaker as an artist and the aesthetic poverty of Greek cinema

Critical writing on film in the 1960s was influenced by contemporary developments in European film critical discourse (auteur theory) and viewed film directors as artists. According to the dominant view, film directors ought to be creative individuals who applied their personal vision to the final film product. Thus, apart from Cacoyannis and Koundouros and – since 1960 – Takis Kanellopoulos, who fitted the model of the European auteur, film directors working within the popular industry were deemed

⁹⁴ See ‘I Simasia Ton Vravion’ [‘The significance of the prizes’] in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no.2, p. 8).

⁹⁵ Manthoulis, in *Epoches* (1966, no. 44, p. 553).

⁹⁶ See ‘Anagki na apoktisoyme laiko kinmatografo’ [‘The need to have a popular cinema’] in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (10/10/1966). We should not forget, however, that the films of Godard, Resnais and Bergman, as we shall see in Chapter 2 (pp. 81-87), were quite popular with Greek audience at the time.

artistically inferior. Talented directors such as Errikos Andreou, Vasilis Georgiadis, Grigoris Grigoriou, Yannis Dalianidis and Dinos Dimopoulos were thought to have ‘sold out’ to the commercial system, while others were considered as completely ignorant of the art of cinema. Greek filmmakers, considered largely uneducated and without original artistic voice, were blamed for the low quality of films and a demand for the intellectual filmmaker-artist emerged:

Quality primarily depends on film directors and [...] until today there have been no truly skilful ones in Greek cinema. This phenomenon is attributed to the educational crisis in Greece and the low level of intellectual and artistic life in the country.⁹⁷ [...] The limited number of intellectuals who were involved in Greek cinema were very quickly defeated by the forces of the Establishment. [...] As a consequence, others were discouraged from trying. Thus, our cinema, alienated from the intellectual forces of the country, has not managed yet to secure its intellectual directors. (1967, Dimitris Stavrakas)⁹⁸

Greek directors were also criticized for lacking knowledge of film technique and the aesthetic rules of cinematic language,⁹⁹ for the complete absence of *mise en scène* in their films and disregard for form. “Greek filmmakers have not managed to absorb and exploit the fact that cinema is a language, an independent way of expression that employs [...] idioms” wrote Marketaki in 1966.¹⁰⁰ One of the main inadequacies on which criticism focused was that commercial directors extensively used theatrical forms and static shots, a phenomenon which was intensified by the large number of plays adapted for the screen.

⁹⁷ It is noteworthy that while retrospective surveys of cultural developments in the 1960s note the impressive flourishing of cultural and intellectual life in Greece, this was largely overlooked by intellectuals at the time.

⁹⁸ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no. 3-4, pp. 10-11). On the director’s responsibility for the problems of Greek cinema see also Varoutsis in his article “Perspectives on the 1964” (*To Vima*, 1/1/1964).

⁹⁹ See the editorial in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no. 1).

¹⁰⁰ Commenting on *Dichasmos / The Split* in *To Vima* (26/1/1966).

Greek films were therefore not accepted as ‘real’ films, but rather as badly-made theatrical imitations.

Although in the 1960s there was much discussion of the technical poverty of Greek film, it was also believed that Greek cinema often reached the technical level of European films, especially in the movies of Finos Film. The main task now was to achieve authorial originality and explore cinematic modes of expression, which were thought to be by nature visual rather than verbal. Criticism also focused on the absence of coherent mood and style in Greek movies, since it was common for shifts from melodrama to comedy and from one narrative style to another to occur within the same film, and for the narrative flow to be interrupted by popular songs and other ‘attractions’. However, although critics encouraged Greek cinema to experiment with cinematic form and language and to abandon theatrical conventions, formalism and the idea of ‘art for art’s sake’ were widely condemned. The dislike of formalism led to suspicion and criticism of even the work of Nikos Koundouros, as well as the formal experimentation attempted by filmmakers working in the commercial industry.¹⁰¹ Alexis Grivas (Fotis Alexiou) wrote in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos*:

In *I Paranomi / The Outlaws* the exaltation of the ‘formal’ element [...] was an eloquent prelude to what came to follow in *Mikres Afrodites / Young Aphrodites*: the overwhelming dominance of formal composition, the architecture of the frame and the stylisation through abstraction over a simple [...] story [...]. In the context of Greek film reality [...] this Koundouros’ film was an entirely negative and probably damaging [development for Greek cinema].¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ See also accusations of formalism addressed to the films *I Mira enos Athoou / An Innocence’s Destiny* (Grigoris Grigoriou) and *Fovos / Fear* (Kostas Manousakis) in *To Vima* (21/9/1965). (See Chapter 3, p.160)

¹⁰² ‘To Prosopo tis Medousas’ [‘The face of Medusa’] in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no.2, p. 11). Alexis Grivas’ criticism of the film also concerned its erotic-folkloric aspects. See also Yannis Savvidis’ review of *Young Aphrodites* in *To Vima* (12/11/1963).

c. The fear of reality: the demand for ‘truth’ and ‘realism’

The most serious thing that we could blame Greek cinema for is the fear of reality. [...] We mean the systematic sidestepping or mocking of the problems that are created by the conditions of life in Greece today. (1961, Kostis Skalioras)¹⁰³

There are moments when our films try to convince us that their fundamental and consistent characteristic is untruth. Because there are not people in our country who dress, move, speak [...] like the heroes of Greek cinema. Because it is impossible to believe that there are real people surrounded by the furniture we see, who have such adventures. (1964, L.B.K)¹⁰⁴

Greek cinema constantly avoids showing the real face of our country. It prefers the fake world of the bourgeois comedy, the police adventure, the beautified ‘poor neighbourhood’, and the ‘heroic *foustanella*’. Only a handful of films have ventured to confront Greek reality directly. (1964, Pavlos Zannas)¹⁰⁵

As the above statements demonstrate, the “fear of reality” was a recurrent concern in the 1960s debate on Greek cinema. Most Greek film critics of the time thought cinema should reflect ‘real life’ and judged films by how accurately they did so. Greek films were therefore strongly criticized for not representing domestic social conditions and historical facts, or systematically distorting and beautifying them. This applied not only to commercial films, but even those that had artistic qualities, such as *Stella* (1955,

¹⁰³ See ‘Gia ena neo xekinima, Efhes ke prosdokies gia ton kinimatografo, I evdomi techni stin Ellada ke o fovos tis pragmatikotitas’ [‘Towards a new start, wishes and expectations about cinema, the seventh art in Greece and the fear of reality’] in *To Vima* (31/12/1961).

¹⁰⁴ *To Vima*, (27/10/1964).

¹⁰⁵ *To Vima*, (24/9/1964).

Cacoyannis)¹⁰⁶ and *Drakos / Ogre of Athens* (1956, Koundouros)¹⁰⁷ in the 1950s, and *Mikres Afrodites / Young Aphrodites* (1963, Koundouros)¹⁰⁸ or *Ekdromi / Excursion* (1966, Kanellopoulos) in the 1960s.

Ekdromi / Excursion is one of the most systematically anti-realistic films ever made in the history of world cinema. [...] This film borders on the psychopathology of art. Kanellopoulos' absolute indifference for even the most elementary plausibility is almost irritating. (Bacoyannopoulos)¹⁰⁹

On the other hand, films that dealt with contemporary Greek issues from a realistic point of view were welcomed enthusiastically, for example *Pikro Psomi / Bitter Bread* (1951, Grigoriou) or the highly praised short film *Jimmis o Tigris / Jimmy the Tiger* (1966, Pantelis Voulgaris), which received critical acclaim for its “aesthetic of the real”¹¹⁰ and its intention to “rediscover and highlight the real elements of the Greek space free from the ‘beautification’ which is imposed on them by the commercial movies”.¹¹¹

The critics' approval of ‘real life’ thematic material and realism as a form of representation was not accidental. Although contemporary modernistic European art-cinema, which was moving beyond realism, enjoyed high cultural prestige and extensive coverage in the daily and specialized press in 1960s Greece, there was still a deep

¹⁰⁶ See Moschovakis in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1955, no.12, p. 516).

¹⁰⁷ See Moschovakis in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1956, no.16, p. 355).

¹⁰⁸ See Bacoyiannopoulos' criticism addressed of Koundouros for ignoring contemporary reality, in *To Vima* (3/10/1963) and in ‘O Nikos Koundouros ke I aferesi’ [‘Nikos Koundouros and Abstraction’] in *Epoches* (1963, no. 7, pp. 66-69). See also a letter about the same film written by Kostis Zois in *Epoches* (1964, no. 9, pp. 83-84).

¹⁰⁹ Film review in *Epoches* (1966, no. 44, pp. 562-67).

¹¹⁰ Kallioris in ‘The seventh Greek Film Festival in Thessaloniki’ (*Epitheorisi Technis*, no. 143-144, pp. 402-427).

¹¹¹ Fotis Alexiou in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, vol.1, p. 6).

admiration for the Italian Neo-Realism among critics and filmmakers. It was widely believed that Neo-Realism was the ideal form for exploring post-war Greek society, since it suited both the domestic industry's infrastructures (small budgets and poor technical equipment) and the sociopolitical reality in Greece.

I remember that our gaze was fixed on Italian Neo-Realism. And that was normal. Our social poverty and political oppression were sufficient reasons for discovering in the Italian films of the time the artistic ideal that deserved the devotion of the best in ourselves. (Dimos Theos 2004: 102)¹¹²

In the 1950s and 1960s, 'reality', 'realism' and 'truth' were central to discussions of art in Greece, such as the debates on 'abstraction' and 'realism' in Fine Arts. Realism was promoted primarily by the official left-wing rhetoric, which was extremely influential because a large number of artists and intellectuals were attracted by the Left. The official Left focused on a kind of realism that conveyed 'objective actuality', highlighted 'real social problems', and encouraged viewers to challenge the status quo. "Realism is the essence of art. [...] A movement against realism means a movement against art", stated Manos Zacharias, a film-director and political refugee in the Soviet Union, on his return to Greece in 1964.¹¹³ Socialist realism – the official leftist aesthetic canon significantly promoted by left-wing periodicals and newspapers – gained some acceptance among the

¹¹² Many texts about Italian Neo-Realism were published in the daily and periodical press in the 1950s and 1960s, and Neo-Realism became the standard by which films were judged. See, for example, the critical text on *La Strada* by Moshovakis criticizing Fellini for departing from Neo-Realism (*Epitheorisi Technis*, 1956, no. 15, p. 275). Similarly, the criticism of *Synikia to Oniro / A Neighbourhood Called Dream* (1961, Alekos Alexandrakis) by Theos and Lambrinos (future NEK film directors) who also blame the film for deviating from Neo-Realism (in *Epitheorisi Technis*, 1961, no. 83, p. 491). For debates on both literary and film Neo-Realism see Karali 2005: 346-353.

¹¹³ From an interview given to Fontas Ladis in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (11/11/1964).

artists, but it was also the object of considerable dispute.¹¹⁴ Italian Neo-Realism and other realist and critical cinematic forms (Free Cinema, films such as *Salvatore Giuliano* [1961, Francesco Rossi], and also contemporary documentary practices) provided sophisticated alternatives to Socialist Realism and were extremely popular among filmmakers on the Left.

Tackling contemporary reality meant dealing with problems, which inevitably involved politics. Greek cinema was accused of being apolitical and escapist, even though it was understood that the absence of direct commentary on important social, political and historical issues was largely a result of political oppression. The demand for ‘realist’ content necessitated the easing of censorship and this was part of a general cultural struggle against prohibition and silence:

Censorship has kept Greek cinema apolitical in the broader sense of the term. We refer neither to a subject matter with a specific political point of view, nor to films dealing in a specific way with certain periods of history, like the Resistance, for example. These have been prohibited by the regime and are unthinkable even. We are talking about films that might have any hint or criticism of contemporary Greek reality. [...] Consequently, it is inevitable that the themes of our cinema are restricted to ones that are painless, unproblematic and most irresponsible, since from the outset our screenwriters and directors have eliminated every thought of a more serious confrontation with reality. (Stavrakas)¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Criticism of Socialist Realism in cinema is evident in the review of the Soviet film *Zoya* written by Rafaelidis in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (2, 5, 7/1/1967) [See Chapter 4, pp. 178-179] and articles such as ‘O Modernos Kinimatografos ke o Antonioni’ (Adonis Kyrou in *Epitheorisi Technis*, 1962, no. 85, pp. 132-135), ‘Dynatotites tou avrianou kinimatografou’ (Adonis Kyrou in *Epitheorisi Technis*, 1964, no.110, pp. 213-217) and ‘Olga tina peri “proodeftikou lyrismou ke epanastatiku sourrealismou” ston kinimatografo’ (Rafaelidis in *Epitheorisi Technis*, 1964, no. 115-116, pp. 101-105). See also Kotzia (2002).

¹¹⁵ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no. 3-4, p.10).

The prohibitions imposed by censorship exclude from our cinema many crucial and essential themes: everything related to our recent history, the Resistance, the State, the army, the police, the Church, the social conditions and social problems of our country, have been expelled from what is permitted in our cinema. Thus, our cinema is often restricted to the barbarities of farce [*farcomodia*], to the stupidities of ‘melò’ and the cruelties of cheap drinking-dens. (Ploritis)¹¹⁶

It was also widely argued that when ‘Old’ Greek films dealt with social problems and class conflict, they diluted them into family and sentimental melodramas. It was believed that ‘real’, ‘socially committed’ and ‘consciousness-raising’ subjects would by definition improve the level of screenplays and free them from melodramatic forms,¹¹⁷ saving the films from insignificance and triviality. ‘Real’ and ‘socially committed’ subject matter was seen as an imperative and, according to the left-wing critical discourse, was demanded by the audience itself.

For months and years our people have been fighting for better times. For years they have been assassinated, imprisoned, forced to emigration; they starve and suffer unemployment, but they do not give up. [...] Our people are expecting to see themselves reflected in the only medium of entertainment and education that they have. (1964, Fotos Lambrinos commenting on *Lola* by Dimopoulos)¹¹⁸

Moreover ‘reality’, ‘truth’ and ‘realism’ – and by extension the terms ‘socialization’ and ‘politicization’ – were linked by the critics to the notion of ‘popular authenticity’ (both in terms of content and the accessibility of the film to its audience) and

¹¹⁶ *Epitheorisi Technis* (1965, no.121, p. 99).

¹¹⁷ For the problematic – as it was widely regarded – screenplays of Greek cinema see ‘Pios ftei gia tin krisi tou Ellinikou Kinimatografou?’ [‘Who is responsible for the crisis of Greek cinema?’] in *Proto*, cited by Soldatos 2001: 221 (vol. 1).

¹¹⁸ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (18/2/1964).

consequently to the film's commercial success and influence on the public. Realism was therefore directly related, on the one hand, with the educational purpose of cinema and, on the other, to the viability of 'quality' Greek film. Commenting on the audience's positive reaction to the short film *Tzimis o Tigris / Jimmy the Tiger*, at the '7th Greek Film Festival' in 1966, Fotis Alexiou attributed the success of Pantelis Voulgaris' short to the realistic use of setting, "the environment in which the audience lives its everyday life". The audience was mature enough to accept realistic films, and in this respect *Jimmy the Tiger* was a leading exponent of what could be perceived as the "new Greek cinema".¹¹⁹ Realism was, according to Fotis Alexiou, "the right way for Greek cinema to go at this particular time."¹²⁰

It is noteworthy, that there were some critics and filmmakers who argued against realism in favour of modernism. Exceptional among them was Adonis Kyrou, who published two texts in *Epitheorisi Technis* ('O Modernos Kinimatografos ke o Antonioni' ['Modern Cinema and Antonioni']¹²¹ and 'Dynatotites tou Avrianou Kinimatografou' ['Potentials of the Cinema of Tomorrow']¹²²) which attacked realism, particularly Socialist Realism and also Neo-Realism which he regarded fatalist. Modernist and poetic cinema, in Kyrou's opinion, was the only form capable of portraying the complexity of contemporary life.¹²³ Although in response to Kyrou's piece, Rafaelidis wrote a letter to *Epitheorisi Technis* in defence of realism,¹²⁴ elsewhere, flirting with modernism, he summarized his personal vision of cinema as follows:

¹¹⁹ Alexiou, *Ellinikos kinimatografos* (1966, no. 1, pp. 5-6).

¹²⁰ F. Alexiou, *Ellinikos kinimatografos* (1966, no. 1, pp. 11).

¹²¹ 1962, no. 85, pp. 132-135.

¹²² 1964, no. 110, pp. 213-217.

¹²³ See also Ninos Fenek Mikelidis, 'Morfes Realismou ston Kinimatografo' ['Realist forms in cinema'] in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1964, no. 111-112) and 'Oliga tina peri technis (realistikis ke mi) ke kinimatografou' in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1964, no. 117).

¹²⁴ 'Oliga tina peri 'proodeftikou lyrismou ke epanastatiku sourrealismou' ston kinimatografo' in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1964, no.115-116, pp. 101-105).

Our personal preferences are placed at the side of the ‘modern’, anti-dramatic, anti-narrative cinema. Namely the cinema, which does not narrate plain stories, enjoyable or not, in order to ... ‘relax’ us ..., but aims to ‘investigate visually’ the problems and conditions of the world in which we live, which explores this world ‘from inside’, becomes a tool of knowledge, comprehension and questioning, provokes restlessness and does not make [us] feel reassured. [...] Our difference from the so-called ‘commercial cinema’ lies exactly in the need to counter relaxation, prompting thought and motivating discussion. [...] The cinema [...] is not a medium for escapism [...] but an instrument of struggle and alertness, a way to comprehend both ourselves and the world, a way of contributing to changing the world.¹²⁵

d. An authentic Greek national cinema: a question of identity and national pride

As we have already seen, Greek cinema in the 1960s was conceived within both a national and an international framework. Within national boundaries it had to not only entertain, but also educate and enlighten the public, represent their reality faithfully, express their feelings and problems, and raise their consciousness. Internationally, it had to be exportable to foreign markets and successful at festivals as legitimate works of art representing Greek national culture and the image of the nation. The need to build Greek cinema’s international presence was of both economic and national significance. On the one hand, the commercial and artistic success of Greek films abroad was seen as essential to the commercial survival of ‘quality’ Greek national cinema, because the limited domestic market could not support ‘quality’ films. On the other hand, it was considered a matter of national pride, the nation’s ability to produce culture, compete in and dominate an economic and cultural terrain where nations struggled for symbolic authority.

¹²⁵ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (18/6/1966).

So the perceived inferiority of Greek cinema, in comparison to other European national cinemas, caused a feeling of national shame. *Avgi*, for instance, writes with bitterness of Greece's lack of success at film festivals "[We are] always at the bottom",¹²⁶ while *Epitheorisi Technis* discusses, with shame and anger, the international ridicule of Greece's poor representation at the 1961 Cannes Film Festival.¹²⁷ By contrast, when Koundouros' film *Mikres Aphrodites / Young Aphrodites* won a prize at the 1963 Berlin Festival, Lambrakis' youth movement reacted enthusiastically, announcing that "it includes Koundouros among the founding members of the movement and feels particularly proud of the young man who, battling in the beautiful and peaceful field of art, was awarded the prize of best director and brought Greece honour".¹²⁸

However, there were critical voices that questioned Greek cinema's attempts to win an international audience, claiming that films were made according to qualities that would appeal to international audiences but were not authentically Greek. This is demonstrated by the waves of reaction that followed the release of internationally successful films such as *Never on Sunday* and *Zorba the Greek*, which were widely accused of portraying Greeks as cruel, uncultured and stereotypical and consequently of humiliating the nation.¹²⁹ Thus current debates were concerned not only with improving the artistic and technical standards of Greek movies in order to become comparable to European films and address international markets, but also with the way Greek films represented the nation. The term 'internationalism' [*diethnismos*] was invented at the time to describe the use of thematic material which appealed to the tastes of foreign viewers by

¹²⁶ *Avgi* (8/7/61).

¹²⁷ *Epitheorisi Technis* (1961, no. 77, p. 512).

¹²⁸ *To Vima* (4/7/1963).

¹²⁹ See, for instance, 'I Paracharactes tis Ellinikis Zois, Kinimatografos ke Pragmatikotita' ['The falsifiers of Greek life, Cinema and Reality'] by Tasos Vournas, discussing *Never on Sunday*, in *Avgi* (7/12/60) and 'O "Zorbas o Ellinas" tou Cacoyanni: O Pseftogrekismos ston kinimatografo' ['Cacoyannis' *Zorba the Greek*: pseudo-Greekness in Cinema] by Athanasios Tsouparopoulos in *Avgi* (28/3/65). For the debates about *Zorba the Greek*, see Agathos (2007).

putting emphasis on antiquities, bouzouki music, dance, fake folklore, beautiful landscapes and exoticism. It was a criticism frequently made of Dassin, Cacoyannis, Koundouros and some commercially produced films and, according to several commentators, it emerged as a major threat for Greek cinema.¹³⁰

Some African tribes that survive thanks to tourism frantically export their [culture] making thousands of bad reproductions of their 'popular' art. Folklore is turned into exoticism and the buyers have in their hands a mockery of traditions and customs. The impressive eliminates the true. [...] Unfortunately Greece joins in with these trivialities, with its foustanelles, the tears of its mothers and the photogenic 'ferocity' of its people, who are capable only of screaming and dancing. Thus a false image of a country is created and the lie is reproduced so often that, as Goebbels said, everybody, even Greeks, believe it. And of course the lie suppresses the truth. Fortunately, there is still time to recover and make films that address international audiences without dishing up exoticism. (1967, Adonis Kyrou)¹³¹

In films made mainly for export, real Greek life, with all its terrible problems, is replaced by clichés and myths aimed at the imagination of the 'tired' western people. (1966, Bacoyannopoulos)¹³²

So the main question was how Greek films could gain international respectability without distorting or neglecting the distinctive Greek national identity. According to the

¹³⁰ For texts discussing the notion of 'internationalism' see, 'O Michalis Cacoyannis ke i kindyni tou Diethnismou' ['Michael Cacoyannis and the risks of internationalism'] by Bacoyannopoulos in *Eleftheria* (10, 24/8/66 and 7/9/66) and 'To Prosopo tis Medousas' ['The face of Medusa'] by Alexis Grivas in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, vol.2, p. 11).

¹³¹ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (no. 5, 1967).

¹³² *Eleftheria* (10/8/66).

dominant view, the solution to the problem did not lie on the adoption, imitation or plagiarism of ‘international’ and ‘westernized’ themes and forms – another perceived shortcoming of the ‘Old’ cinema – but in striving towards authentic ‘Greekness’. The distinguished intellectual and film commentator Ploritis had, since the late 1940s, emphasized this need:

There is only one way for Greek cinema to exist [internationally]: to be profoundly Greek. Presenting heroes and stories which are indigenous to the country and not smuggled imports from abroad. In this dedication to ‘Greekness’ there is no room for cheap ethnography (*ethografia*). It is the only one way for the heroes and the theme to demonstrate reality and originality. (Ploritis)¹³³

The same idea is expressed some twenty years later:

The blind move towards art models derived from the western world is particularly dangerous. [...] The formation of themes and forms of national specificity is a necessity in order to get a place for ourselves to stand. (Bacoyannopoulos)¹³⁴

It would a platitude to repeat that only national themes achieve ‘internationality’” (Rafaelidis)¹³⁵

Only when our cinema becomes national, truly Greek, will it overcome the deadlock. Because returning back to its roots and tradition it will find growing recognition with the audience, a fact that it will increase the ticket sales in the domestic market. Moreover it will open doors to the foreign markets, since being purely Greek, it will not resemble any

¹³³ Commenting on the film *Hameni Angeli / Fallen Angel* in *Eleftheria*, cited by Soldatos 2001: 94 (vol.1).

¹³⁴ *Eleftheria* (10/8/66).

¹³⁵ Reviewing *Dama Spathi / Queen of Clubs* in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (6/12/1966).

other cinema, and having returned to the roots it will encounter the deep human origins and the common start.¹³⁶

The ‘nationalistic’ accusation that communists engaged in counter-national activities forced the official Left to adopt an excessively nationalistic and patriotic discourse (Karali 2005:60), which coloured all aspects of left-wing political and cultural practice (Karali 2005: 75). In addition, the Left had embodied the notion of ‘Greekness’ in its struggle for national independence and resistance against the western-oriented policies of the Right (Greece’s membership in NATO and EU) (Mathiopoulos 2002: 380). There was therefore great suspicion of anything culturally foreign, a fact revealed in a letter sent to *Epitheorisis Technis* by the future NEK filmmaker and committed leftist Dimitris Stavrakas. Stavrakas criticized in *Electra* (1962, Cacoyannis) the “Scandinavian photography” which destroyed the clarity and sharpness of Greek light, the adoption of acting methods from Actor’s studio and Reinhardt’s school, the percussive music reminiscent of other countries, as well as Clytemnestra’s “Babylonian costume” and hairstyle, which he thought alien to Greek traditions.¹³⁷

But how could Greek ‘purity’ be guaranteed? ‘Greekness’ is a notoriously slippery and complex term, subject to ideology and a shared value of both Left and Right. It had for decades held currency in debates about literature and art, and although journalistic film writing had long called for ‘Greekness’, the term was not clearly defined by film commentators. Discussions were based rather on a commonsense conception of ‘Greekness’ rather than on clear-cut statements. However ‘Greekness’ was most often associated with two crucial notions: the ‘real’ and the ‘popular’ [*laiko*].

¹³⁶ From the public discussion organized by the ‘Centre of Research in Cinema’ entitled ‘For the creation of a Greek national cinema’. See *Tachydromos* (24/10/64).

¹³⁷ Stavrakas in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1962, no. 96, pp. 753-754).

Writing on *Zorba the Greek* in *Avgi*, Tsouparopoulos cited the ‘national’ poet Dionysios Solomos’ words that the nation must learn to consider as national anything real.¹³⁸ In the discussion ‘For the creation of a Greek national cinema’ organised by the ‘Centre of Research in Cinema’,¹³⁹ Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis argued that the formation of national cinema depended on the development of a “Greek realism”,¹⁴⁰ while Kostas Fotinos stated that Greek cinema would become “local” when it depicted “objective reality”.¹⁴¹ It follows from this argument that the ‘real’ is integral to the ‘national’ and therefore the commercial Greek cinema, which according to the dominant view does not engage with reality, cannot be national.¹⁴² There were also close ties between the ‘national’ and the ‘popular’. The ‘popular’ was elevated to a high cultural status by the Left, which offered the principle of ‘people’ / ‘laos’, as an alternative to the Right’s valorisation of ‘nation’/ ‘ethnos’. However, in left-wing political discourse there was little distinction between the two terms ‘people’ and ‘nation’ (Karali 2005: 51). The Left identified the ‘popular’ with tradition and folklore – we should not forget that the former socialist regimes celebrated folk culture – recognising in them the ‘authentic’ culture of the Greek ‘people’, the ‘real popular’ culture of the Greeks or in other words the ‘true national culture’. This Left’s fascination with ‘authentic’ folk culture and tradition is reflected in Marketaki’s review of the commercially produced comedy *Ou Klepsis / Thou Shalt you Steal* (1965, Dimis Dadiras):

¹³⁸ “Cacoyannis’ *Zorba the Greek*: pseudo-Greekness in Cinema” in *Avgi* (28/3/65).

¹³⁹ *Tachydromos* (24/10/1964).

¹⁴⁰ *Tachydromos* (24/10/1964).

¹⁴¹ *Tachydromos* (24/10/1964).

¹⁴² Alternative points of view also existed. The following comes from the introductory speech to the already mentioned discussion organized by the ‘Centre of Research in Cinema’ on the subject ‘For the creation of a Greek national cinema’: “We must accept that commercial success is a substantial proof for the existence of elements of Greekness [in the mainstream films]. [...] These films include some elements of Greekness, without however possessing any kind of cinematic form. This discovery is important because the careful study of these mainstream films can give us the solution to many secondary problems or can offer us some directions for the basic problem of the creation of a National Cinema, and even offer some signs of hope for the next film season in Greece, if we consider that any next phase is incubated by the preceding one”. See *Tachydromos* (24/10/64).

It introduces to Greek film comedy a sense of humour that draws on folklore which is much more refined than the falsifications of the American [humour] [...] There is also the freshness of the bucolic ethnography, the scent of the Greek countryside in the way that is depicted by Kondylakis and Papadiamantis and not in the fake manner of the *Foustanella* film.¹⁴³

‘Greekness’ was sought both in the film form and subject matter. However, it was widely believed that as far as national cinematic form was concerned “the rejection of the foreign influences would result in the rejection of the language of cinema which is international and based on the technique” (Manolis Anagnostakis).¹⁴⁴ As Pavlos Zannas pointed out, even the socialist countries “Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia follow the path of the West”.¹⁴⁵ Therefore the problem was not formal, but “basically thematic”,¹⁴⁶ while the ‘new’ national cinemas were those that could function as a model, since “they breathe the air of the new, the live cinema”,¹⁴⁷.

In short, the debate on Greek national cinema that took place in the 1960s identified four vital elements as prerequisites for a valued Greek national cinema: the ‘quality’/‘artistic’, ‘real’, ‘popular’ and ‘national’, which were inextricably linked and resulting in one the other. Greek national cinema should be ‘quality’ in terms of content and technique as well as of authorial view, ‘real’ in its thematics and representational styles, ‘popular’ in its content and familiarity to the audience and finally ‘Greek’ in its theme and, if possible, form.

¹⁴³ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (28/9/1964).

¹⁴⁴ *Tachydromos* (24/10/64).

¹⁴⁵ *Tachydromos* (24/10/64).

¹⁴⁶ Zannas in *Tachydromos* (24/10/64).

¹⁴⁷ Zannas in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, vol. 2, p. 6).

2.

FILM SOCIETIES, FILM WRITING AND THE GROWTH OF A
CINEPHILE CULTURE: *CINEPHILIA AND POLITICS*

In the introduction to this study NEK was defined as a multifaceted socio-political and cultural phenomenon that includes, among other aspects, ‘serious’ cinephilia, namely an intense fascination with ‘art’ films and the culture that accompanies them. The rise of ‘serious’ cinephilia in Greece is usually located by film commentators and historians in the 1970s, as a post-dictatorship trend associated with new forms of youth culture and the growing student movement of the time, overlooking the fact that the roots and first flourishing of this phenomenon emerged in the previous decades.¹ In the present chapter I shall attempt to illustrate how the first blossoming of ‘serious’ cinephilia in Greece took place in the 1960s, and through the discussion of the different dimensions of the phenomenon to support my argument for a revised understanding of the emergence of NEK, locating it in the 1960s rather than the 1970s. I will discuss in some detail the rise of the cine-club and ‘film week’ culture, the establishment of foreign art cinema in the domestic market and also the expansion of film writing with a particular focus on the emergence of a new generation of left-wing and militant film critics who came to dominate the rhetoric about cinema in Greece over the coming decades.

2.1 Cine clubs, film weeks and film seminars

A ‘serious’ cinephile culture in Greece had been developing throughout the first post-war decades, manifest primarily through film journalistic writing and art-film attendance and with the establishment in November 1950 of ‘Kinimatografiki Leschi Athinon’ [‘Cine Club of Athens’], which marked a decisive turning point. It was the first ever film society in Greece and it was founded by ‘Enosi Kritikon Kinimatografou

¹ See, for example Sotiropoulou 1989: 146-147. Although she recognises the cine club’s contribution during the 1960s, she underestimates the audience’s artistic taste.

Athinon' ['Athens Film Critic's Union'] soon after its establishment in the same year. It is important to underline that among the founding members of both the 'Union' and 'Cine Club' were – apart from distinguished intellectuals such as Marios Ploritis – individuals with close links to the commercial film industry (Kostas Asimakopoulos, Frixos Iliadis, Yannis Maris, Nestoras Matsas and Vion Papamichalis), a fact that demonstrates that the interest in 'art' and 'quality' film and the desire to create a cine-literate audience was not confined to the NEK generation. The leading force in 'Cine Club of Athens' was Aglaia Mitropoulou, whose relations with Henri Langlois secured access to the rich archives of the 'French Cinémathèque'.

The second film society, "Kinimatografiki Leschi tis 'Technis'" ["Cine Club of 'Art'"], was established in Thessaloniki five years later (November 1955) as an initiative of "Macedoniki Kallitechniki Eteria 'Techni'" ["Macedonian Cultural Company 'Art'"]. Head of "Cine Club of 'Art'" was Pavlos Zannas, a highly respected intellectual who had studied abroad and who in the course of his career wrote extensively on cinema, theatre and literary subjects, became head of 'International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki' (1965) and of the domestic Film Festival (1966), as well as president of P.E.K.K. (1974)² and of the 'Greek Film Centre' (1981).³ The idea for the creation of a cine club in Thessaloniki was introduced by Henri Ehret, who was in charge of the French Institute in Thessaloniki and had previously been involved in similar ventures in France (Xanthopoulos 1999: 17). Both the relationship of Mitropoulou with Langlois and the impetus given by Ehret reveal the close connections between Greek and French cultural life at the time. "Macedonian Cultural Company 'Art'", "Cine Club of 'Art'" and Zannas were also the founders of the 'Week of Greek Cinema'. In 1960 'Diethnis Ekthesi Thessalonikis' ['International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki'] (D.E.TH.) asked "Macedonian Cultural Company 'Art'" to suggest

² 'Panellinia Enosi Kritikon Kinimatografou' ['Union of Greek Film Critics'].

³ For further information about Pavlos Zannas, see Lefteris Xanthopoulos (1999).

cultural events that could be included in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of D.E.TH.'s foundation. The 'Week of Greek Cinema', which was proposed in a letter by Zannas, was the only suggestion that was taken up.⁴

In September 1961 an influential event took place in Athens: the 'First International Festival of Ethnographic and Sociological Cinema' (1-10 September 1961), organized by Roussos Koundouros, IMEK⁵ and the 'Greek Committee of Ethnographic Cinema' headed by the ethnologist Prince Peter. The festival, which was state-subsidized and involved prominent government figures (proof again of the state's growing interest in cinema),⁶ included among its events⁷ a documentary showcase entitled 'Forty years of ethnographic and sociological documentary: from Flaherty's *Nanouk* (1921) to Rouch's *The Chronicle of the Summer* (1961)' as well as public discussions. Distinguished individuals such as Roberto Rossellini and Jean Rouch appeared at the Festival (Rossellini introduced his film *India 58*), while 110 films⁸ were shown in Greece largely for the first time, presenting the history of documentary to the Greek audience and informing specialists about recent developments in international non-fiction film.⁹ The public

⁴ Lefteris Xanthopoulos (1999: 7-9, 18, 54-55) and Thessaloniki Film Festival / Makedoniki Kallitechniki Eteria 'Techni' (2002: 15-17).

⁵ 'Instituto Morfotikou ke Epistimonikou Kinimatografou' ['Institute of Cultural and Scientific Cinema']. IMEK was founded in 1959 as a result of ongoing attempts by Roussos Koundouros, as early as 1953, to produce and promote scientific and educational documentaries (*To Vima*, 13/6/64). As well as the production of shorts, IMEK organized several cinephile events that provided public discussions and showings of important documentaries which had not been released in Greece and were of educational and cultural significance. For further information, see Thessaloniki Film Festival / Makedoniki Kallitechniki Eteria 'Techni' 2002:170, and Neofotistou 2008: 58.

⁶ Among those involved in the Ethnographic Festival there were Giorgos Kournoutos (director of Letters and Arts at the Ministry of Education) (*Avgi*, 19/8/61), Panayotis Kanellopoulos, Konstantinos Tsatsos (Minister of Presidency), Georgios Vogiatzis (Minister of Education), Nikolaos Martis (Minister of Industry) and Georgios Plytas (President of EOT). At the opening ceremony of the festival Tsatsos and Vogiatzis made speeches (*To Vima*, 30/8/1961).

⁷ International forums about 'The art and technique of Ethnographic film' held at the Hotel 'Mon Parnes' at Parnitha mountain. For further information about the Festival, see (*Avgi* from 13/8/61 to 10/9/61), *To Vima* (9/7/61 and from 27/8/61 to 13/9/61), *Epitheorisi Technis* (no. 82, 365-367, no. 83, 517-519 and no. 84, 640-644).

⁸ *Avgi* (19/8/61).

⁹ Examples of documentaries released at the Ethnographic Festival: *New Earth* (1934, Joris Ivens), *Moana* (1926 Robert Flaherty), *Man of Aran* (1934, Flaherty), *Louisiana Story* (1948, Flaherty), *Land without Bread* (1933, Luis Buñuel), *Que Viva Mexico!* (1932, Sergei Eisenstein), *Night Mail* (1936, Harry Watt / Basil

response surpassed expectations. According to Bacoyannopoulos, the audience smashed the glass in the doors of the theatre *Trianon* in their eagerness to get in.¹⁰ As a result additional screenings were put on and the Festival was extended for three more days.¹¹ The daily and periodical press gave extensive coverage to the event and numerous critical texts were devoted to the films screened. More importantly, the ethnographic festival was to some extent a formative event for filmmakers of the NEK generation. Kostas Sfikas, for instance, states that it was at the Ethnographic Festival that he first encountered British Free Cinema and that he decided to make short documentaries.¹²

The phenomenal success of the Ethnographic Festival led to the creation in Athens in September 1961 (before the festival was even finished) of the ‘Elliniki Kinimatografiki Leschi’ [‘Greek Film Society’] and an initially small but gradually significantly expanded network of city and provincial cine clubs named ‘Omospondia Kinimatografikon Leshon Ellados’ (OKLE) [‘Federation of Greek Film Societies’].¹³ This soon became acknowledged as the Greek department of the ‘International Federation of Film Societies’¹⁴ and included cine clubs in Piraeus, Thessaloniki,¹⁵ Drama, Kavala, Larisa, Katerini, Ioannina, Volos, Mitilini, Tripoli, Chalkida, Chania, Iraklio, Rodos and Patra, while the ‘Greek Film Society’ was the main cine club of OKLE. This project was

Wright), *Coal Face* (1935, Alberto Cavalcanti), *Night and Fog* (1955, Alain Resnais), *Even Statues Die* (1953, Resnais / Chris Marker), *Hippopotamus Hunt* (1950, Jean Rouch), *O Dreamland* (1953, Lindsay Anderson), *Every Day except Christmas* (1957, Anderson), etc. Three Greek documentaries were also screened: *Anastenaria* (1959, Roussos Koundouros), *Psarades ke Psaremata / Fishermen and Fishing* (1961, Leon Loisios) and *Diabolonisi / Devil's Island* (1960, A. Triantafyllidis). See also the Appendix in Kalandidis (1996).

¹⁰ In an interview given to the author. See also Neofotistou E. (2008: 58-59).

¹¹ *To Vima*, (3, 7/9/1961) and *Epitheorisi Technis* (no. 82, 365).

¹² From an interview given to the writer. In 1964 the ‘18th International Festival of Popular Science Films’ (19-27 September) took place in Athens, again under the direction of IMEK and Roussos Koundouros, but it was not such a success. For further information see IMEK (1964), *To Vima* (13/6 and 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 30/9 and 6/11/1964), *Avgi* (13, 16, 18, 19/9/64) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (16, 19/9/1964).

¹³ According to Kalandidis and information in the press of the time, a limited number of regional cine clubs associated with ‘Cine Club of Athens’ preceded OKLE. See Kalandidis 1996: 8-10.

¹⁴ *To Vima* (6/9/ 1961), *Avgi* (12/12/61) and *Epitheorisi Technis* (1961, no. 84, p. 631).

¹⁵ The already existing “Cine Club of ‘Art’” and also ‘Kinimatografiki Leschi tis Fititikis Estias tou Aristoteliou Panepistimiou Thessalonikis’ [‘Cine Club of Student Centre of Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki’].

directed by Roussos Koundouros (president), Bacoyannopoulos (vice-president) and Zannas (general secretary) along with Loisios, Rafaelidis, Grigoratos and later Leventakos, and many others. The 'Greek Film Society' and OKLE, which could almost be considered a movement, were formed as alternatives to the 'Cine Club of Athens', seen by OKLE's founders as a rather bourgeois, apolitical and occasionally reactionary organisation.¹⁶ Soon after the establishment of OKLE, there developed a fierce conflict between the 'Cine Club of Athens' and the 'Greek Film Society'. Roussos Koundouros publicly accused Mitropoulou of preventing the 'Greek Film Society' from renting films or hiring venues, thereby forcing the venues and programmes to be changed.¹⁷

In response to this competition between the two major film societies, the 'Cine Club of Athens' was reorganised. From February 1963 it was renamed 'Teniothiki tis Elladas' ['Cinémathèque of Greece'] and by Royal Decree¹⁸ it officially became the state-subsidised 'Greek Film Archive' which survives until today. In addition to its weekly screenings (every Sunday morning at the theatre *Asty*), from 1965 it also held daily evening screenings at 'Mikri Leschi' ['Small Cinémathèque'], located at *Megara Deligiorgi*. A few months earlier, in November 1962,¹⁹ the 'Greek Film Society' (OKLE) had become the 'Elliniki Teniothiki' ['Greek Cinémathèque'] whose purpose was "to gather, preserve and propagate historically important films of international cinema".²⁰ Both 'Greek Cinémathèque' and 'Cinémathèque of Greece' are evidence that, for the first time

¹⁶ From interviews given to the writer by Bacoyannopoulos and Loisios. For comments by Kostas Stamatou about 'pseudo-metaphysical', 'pseudo-aristocratic' and 'reactionary' ideas expressed in pointless post-screening discussions at 'Cine Club of Athens', see *Avgi* (22/10/61). For the purposes of OKLE, see *Avgi* (22/10/61) and Kalandidis 1996: 19-20.

¹⁷ For the conflict between the two major film societies see, *Avgi* (14, 22, 24 /11/61). See also the circulars of OKLE (20/10/61, 20/11/61 and 10/12/61) in Appendix (Kalandidis: 1996).

¹⁸ *To Vima* (20/2/1963).

¹⁹ Kalandidis 1996: 20.

²⁰ See 'Elliniki Teniothiki ke OKLE' ['Greek Cinémathèque and OKLE'] in Appendix (Kalandidis: 1996).

in Greece, there was an awareness of the importance of preserving the history of cinema in film archives.²¹

The growing influence of the student movement is reflected in the establishment in 1964 of the 'Fititiki Kinimatografiki Leschi Athinon' ['University Student's Film Society of Athens'] founded by D.E.S.P.A.²² and the 'National Metsovion Polytechnic School' which organized massively popular weekly screenings at the cinema *Iris* (attended by 1000 students per screening).²³ From 1965 there were also two University Student Film Societies in Thessaloniki.²⁴

In the 1950s and 1960s cine clubs were instrumental in introducing a young and fairly educated audience, as well as a younger generation of filmmakers, to international art film culture by screening a remarkably wide range of historically important films and by following contemporary developments. Particular attention was given by the cine clubs to pre- and post-war European and American cinema, distinguished directors, foreign shorts (including animation), documentaries, new waves and other new developments in western and Eastern Europe.²⁵ The cine club's regular film suppliers were foreign national film archives, foreign educational institutions and embassies, as well as local distributors (art films destined for wider exhibition were often first screened and later circulated extensively by cine clubs). 'Film Weeks' and seasons dedicated to the work of great

²¹ The preservation of Greek films was among the major aims of 'Cinémathèque of Greece' ['Greek Film Archive'] (See Mitropoulou 2006: 417-422). Also Finos assigned 82 Greek films to the 'Greek Film Archive' (*To Vima* 25/5/66). Moreover the compilation film, *To Palio Ekino Kero / In the Old Times* (1964, Sakellarios), comprising fragments from pre-war Greek films, is another example of this 'newborn' awareness.

²² 'Diikousa Epitropi Sillogon Panepistimiou Athinon' ['Chief Committee of the Athens' University Student Unions'].

²³ Data given by Kalandidis 1996: 34.

²⁴ Information given by Kalandidis 1996: 35-36. There is nevertheless evidence for the existence of student film societies both in Athens and Thessaloniki in previous years. See, for instance, about screenings of 'Pamfititiki Leschi' in *To Vima* (25/11/1961 and 24/2/1962) and a 'Student Film Society' (1960) in Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki Film Festival / Makedoniki Kallitechniki Eteria 'Techni' 2002:171).

²⁵ For an overview of the films screened by film societies at the time, see Thessaloniki Film Festival / Makedoniki Kallitechniki Eteria 'Techni' (2002) and the Appendix in Kalandidis (1996).

directors, national cinemas and particular themes were an important part of the cine-club culture.²⁶ Between 1965 and 1967 OKLE organized a ‘Week devoted to Classical German Cinema:1919-1926’ (7-16 February 1965) that focused on German Expressionism;²⁷ a week entitled ‘Man Conquering Space and Cinema (1902-1965)’ which was set up as a parallel event to the ‘6th Week of Greek Cinema’;²⁸ a ‘Retrospective on Classic Soviet Cinema (1924-1945)’ (January 1966) which was so successful that it was extended for one more week;²⁹ a week devoted to ‘Contemporary Hungarian Cinema’ (15-20 March 1966);³⁰ a tribute to ‘The influence of Neo-Realism on Greek Cinema’³¹ and a ‘Retrospective on Classical American Comedy’ which both took place as parallel events at the 1966 Thessaloniki Film Festival and transferred later to Athens (November 1966);³² a retrospective on the Rumanian animator Ion Popescu-Gopo (1966-67);³³ a ‘Retrospective on Epic Cinema’ including both American and Soviet films (1967) and a tribute to Gérard Phillippe by the ‘Cine Club of Piraeus’ (1967).³⁴ OKLE would repeat these ‘weeks’ through its network of provincial film societies.³⁵

²⁶ Film weeks devoted to national cinemas also sporadically took place in the 1950s. See, for example, about a Festival of Spanish Cinema in Athens and Thessaloniki in Thessaloniki Film Festival / Makedoniki Kallitechniki Eteria ‘Techni’ (2002: 59).

²⁷ See *To Vima* (26/1/1965 and 3/2/1965) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (26, 28/1/1965).

²⁸ See *To Vima* (22/8, 22/9, 19/10, 5/11/1965) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (3/11/ 1965).

²⁹ *To Vima* (7, 15, 22 /1/1966) and *Avgi* (8/1/66).

³⁰ *To Vima* (11, 13/3/1966).

³¹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (19/9/66). This retrospective demonstrates the general tendency of the period to review and reevaluate Greek cinema as a whole, and it also reveals which films were regarded as valuable in the context of Greek cinema. The following were screened: *Bitter Bread* (Grigoriou), *Barefoot Battalion* (Gregg Tallas), *Windfall in Athens* (Cacoyannis), *Magic City* (Nikos Koundouros), *The Counterfeit Coin* (Tzavellas), *The Abduction of Persephone* (Grigoriou), *The Lake of Desires* (Giorgos Zervos), *A Matter of Dignity* (Cacoyannis) and *A Neighbourhood Called Dream* (Alexandrakis).

³² *To Vima* (14/9/1966 and 3/11/1966) and *Avgi* (5/10/66).

³³ *To Vima* (6/10/1966).

³⁴ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (23/2/1967).

³⁵ OKLE also developed some other cultural activities. In 1963 it organized at the French Institute of Athens and in collaboration with the French Cinémathèque an exhibition about Georges Méliès [*To Vima* (7, 20/12/1963)]. ‘Cine Club of Piraeus; set up a concert with music by Mozart and Chopin [*Avgi* (16/5/1963)] and ‘Cine Club of Mitilini’ an exhibition of paintings by Theophilos [*Epitheorisi Technis* (1962, no. 94-95, pp. 554-55) and *Avgi* (2/9/1962 and 13/10/1962)].

The program of 'Cine Club of Athens' ('Cinémathèque of Greece') was also impressive: in 1963 it organized a 'Retrospective on Ozu';³⁶ in 1964, a tribute to the Lumière brothers with 43 shorts introduced by Langlois himself,³⁷ and also a 'Week of Bulgarian Cinema' (November 1964),³⁸ in cooperation with the Bulgarian national film archive and in response to the preceding 'First Week of Greek Cinema' held in Sophia (February-March 1964);³⁹ in 1965 a retrospective on Jean Cocteau films and a 'Panorama of Hungarian Cinema';⁴⁰ in the 1965/66 season⁴¹ panoramas of French New Wave and Classical American Cinema (1903-1927), a retrospective on Abel Gance, 'weeks' of New Czech, Brazilian, Polish and Indian cinemas including the trilogy of Satyajit Ray, tributes to Carl Dreyer, Godard, Georges Franju and René Clair (the two latter visited Greece to introduce their films);⁴² in the 1966/67 season⁴³ 'weeks' devoted to American Comedy, Classical American Films, Classic Soviet Cinema, Buñuel, Bresson,⁴⁴ Bergman, Renoir, Orson Welles, Ion Popescu-Gopo,⁴⁵ New Czechoslovakian⁴⁶ and contemporary French, Japanese, Brazilian, Yugoslavian,⁴⁷ Canadian and Polish cinema and a panorama of 'erotic' films.⁴⁸

Several 'weeks' were also organized by students' film societies, the most distinguished of which were a 'Student Week of Soviet Cinema' at *Iris* (1964),⁴⁹ a 'Week of Resistance Film' (7-13 September 1964) organized by EFEE(=National Union of

³⁶ *To Vima* (9/11/1963).

³⁷ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (15/10/1964).

³⁸ *To Vima* (17/11/1964), *Dimokratiki Allagi* (27, 30/11/ 1964) and *Avgi* (27/11/1964).

³⁹ *Avgi* (28/2/1964).

⁴⁰ *Avgi* (22/4/1965), *To Vima* (23, 30/4/1965) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (22/4/ 1965).

⁴¹ See the press conference given about the program of 'Cinémathèque of Greece' about the 1965/66 season in *To Vima*, *Dimokratiki Allagi* and *Avgi* (27/10/65).

⁴² *To Vima* (16, 17/3/1966 and 24/4/1966) and *Avgi* (23, 28/4/66).

⁴³ See the press conference given about the program of 'Cinémathèque of Greece' about the 1966/67 season in *Avgi* and *To Vima* (14/9/66).

⁴⁴ *To Vima* (5, 6/1/1967).

⁴⁵ *To Vima* (23/10/1966).

⁴⁶ *To Vima* (24/2/1967).

⁴⁷ *To Vima* (4/11/1966) and *Avgi* (6/11/66).

⁴⁸ *Avgi* (9/3/67) and *To Vima* (21/3/1967).

⁴⁹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (25/3/1964) and *Avgi* (26/3/64).

Students)⁵⁰ and a ‘Week of Quality Film’ (22-28/2/65) at *Rodon* set up by ASOEE (= Athens University of Economics).⁵¹

The most prominent and successful among the seasons devoted to national cinemas were those screening films from the Socialist states. Athenian cinephiles of the 1960s were well informed about film production in Eastern Europe because there had been considerable cultural exchange as a consequence of both the relative liberalization of the Papandreou era and the wider effort to improve relations between Greece and Eastern European countries. Apart from the aforementioned ‘weeks’ organized by film societies in collaboration with Eastern European national film archives and embassies, several other similar events were also held: a ‘Week of Czechoslovakian Cinema’ (11-17/2/1963) in Athens and Thessaloniki showing recent films, arranged by Anzervos and the Czech Film-export at ‘Esperos’,⁵² a ‘Week of Special Soviet films’ at *Averof* and *Splendit* in Athens (1964),⁵³ a Festival of Rumanian Cinema at *Esperos* (20-26/12/65)⁵⁴ which was repeated in Thessaloniki (28-3/4/66),⁵⁵ and a ‘Week of Soviet Films’ (23-29/1/1967) organized by the production-distribution company Damaskinos-Michailidis and Sov-export and with Grigori Chukhrai visiting Greece to introduce his films.⁵⁶ There were so many film seasons devoted to national cinemas of the Socialist countries at the time that in the week of May 3rd 1965 there were three different ‘weeks’ running concurrently: a ‘Week of Bulgarian Cinema’ (3-9/5/1965) organized by SAKE (= Union of Greek Exhibitors)⁵⁷ at *Rex* simultaneously in Athens, Piraeus and Thessaloniki,⁵⁸ a ‘Panorama of Hungarian Cinema’

⁵⁰ See Chapter 4, p. 175.

⁵¹ *Avgi* (19/2/65) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (18, 20/2/1965).

⁵² *Avgi* (1, 2, 10, 12, 13, 19/2/63) and *To Vima* (2, 12, 19/2/1963) and *Theamata* (10/3/1963).

⁵³ *Avgi* (31/3/64).

⁵⁴ *To Vima* (16, 23, 24/12/1965).

⁵⁵ *Avgi* (19/3/66).

⁵⁶ *Avgi* and *To Vima* (22/1/67).

⁵⁷ ‘Syneterismos Ethousarchon Kinimatografiston Ellados’.

⁵⁸ *Avgi* (22/4/65), *Dimokratiki Allagi* (22/4/1965) and (3/5/1965) and *To Vima* (23/4/1965).

(2-6 May 1965) – which, as seen, was arranged by the ‘Cine Club of Athens’ – and a ‘Victory Week’ (3-9 May 1965) at *Esperos* releasing 6 Soviet films.⁵⁹

Although the emphasis was on international film culture, cine clubs functioned also as a parallel and alternative exhibition network for those Greek movies that were considered artistically important and were either no longer distributed or they had limited access to the commercial exhibition network. Older films such as *Bitter Bread*, *The Abduction of Persephone*, *Windfall in Athens*, *Stella*, *Girl in Black*, *Outlaws*, and primarily *Drakos / Ogre of Athens* (1956, Nikos Koundouros) – which was the most frequently screened by film societies Greek film at the time⁶⁰ – occasionally shown by cine clubs. Particular attention was given to Greek short films, which were a flourishing form in the 1960s. So, for instance, the independent short *The Acropolis of Athens / I Acropolis ton Athinon* (1960, Manthoulis) was first screened in the “Cine Club of ‘Art’”,⁶¹ while *Thasos* (1961, Takis Kanellopoulos) and *Prespes* (1966, Takis Hatzopoulos) in the ‘Cine Club of Athens’.⁶² There were several seasons of shorts which had been screened previously or had won prizes at the Thessaloniki Film Festival,⁶³ while Greek festival feature-length films such as *Ouranos / Sky* (1962, Takis Kanellopoulos), *I Tragodia tou Aegeou / The Tragedy of Aegean* (1961, Vasilis Maros), *Mikres Aphrodites / Young Aphrodites* (1963, Nikos Koundouros), *Ekdromi / Excursion* (1966, Kanellopoulos),⁶⁴ *Prosopo me Prosopo / Face to Face* (1966, Manthoulis), *Mechri to Plio / Until the Ship Sails* (1966, Damianos) and *O*

⁵⁹ See Chapter 4, p. 175.

⁶⁰ In the 1960s there is a shift in the appreciation of *Ogre of Athens* from general disapproval to the creation of its status as the best film ever made in Greece. This is demonstrated by both its repeated screenings and critical texts [see, for instance, Theo Angelopoulos’ review of *Fovos / Fear* (1966, Kostas Manousakis) in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (1/3/1966)] and public discussions. [For a public discussion about *Ogre of Athens* with lecturers Stavrakas and Ferris, see *To Vima* (19/12/1962)].

⁶¹ *To Vima* (22/11/1960).

⁶² *To Vima* (14/2/1961) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (2/4/1966).

⁶³ See, for example, *To Vima* (9/10/1962 and 13/10/1966) and *Avgi* (13/11/1965 and 18/12/1965).

⁶⁴ *Excursion* was first screened by ‘Cinémathèque of Greece’ [‘Cine Club of Athens’] in *Asty* before the 1966 Thessaloniki Film Festival. See *To Vima* (12/2/1966).

Thanatos tou Alexandrou / The Death of Alexander (1966, Dimitris Kollatos) were also shown.

Another activity organized by film societies – and occasionally by other organizations – which influenced the public understanding of cinema was discussions about films. These usually comprised a short introduction by a specialist before the screening and an open discussion afterwards. Bacoyannopoulos, Zannas, Roussos Koundouros, Sfikas, Rafaelidis, Manthoulis, Kyrou,⁶⁵ and occasionally foreign specialists⁶⁶ all introduced films at societies, often regional ones. Aside from these regular discussions, which were often accompanied by critical and informative texts about the films screened, the societies, especially OKLE, also arranged cinema lectures and seminars.

Thus between March and May 1962 OKLE, in collaboration with the ‘French Institute of Athens’, organised a series of “Lectures / Public discussions” and screenings under the general title “Introduction to Cinema: Cinema as a social phenomenon” (lecturer: Bacoyannopoulos), “Cinema as a mode of expression and art” (Bacoyannopoulos), “Filming” (Bacoyannopoulos), “Cinema and the Novel” (Zannas) and “Contemporary Cinema” (Zannas).⁶⁷ Later that year (November 1962-January 1963) a second cycle of lectures was arranged by OKLE, with published material on the content of the seminars: “The origins of Cinema – the contribution of French cinema” (lecturer: Manthoulis), “French cinema until Resnais” (Sfikas), “Scientific cinema” (Roussos Koundouros), “The cinematic analysis of a film” (Bacoyannopoulos), “The problems and Perspectives of

⁶⁵ *Avgi* (15 /12/61).

⁶⁶ See, for instance, about a lecture given on German cinema by Hans Rusch, head of the Munich periodical ‘Film’, in the context of the ‘Week of Classic German Cinema’ set up by OKLE. [*Dimokratiki Allagi* (26, 28/1/1965)].

⁶⁷ *Theamata* (31/3/1962), *Avgi* (28 /3/62 and 16/5/62) and *To Vima* (11/4/1962 and 11/5/1962).

Greek Cinema” (Grigoris Grigoriou) which was arranged in collaboration with the ‘Union of Greek Film Directors’, and finally “Television” (Vasilis Vasilikos).⁶⁸

Moreover, shortly before the dictatorship came to power (between February and April 1967) the ‘Cine Club of Piraeus’ (belonging to OKLE) in collaboration with ‘Lambrakis’ Youth Movement’⁶⁹ and M.O.P. (‘Music Organization of Piraeus’) organized a series of seminars and screenings under the title “Towards a Greek Cinema”, reflecting the rising interest in Greek cinema at the time and forming a part of the ‘debate’ (as discussed in Chapter 1):⁷⁰ “An Introduction to Cinema” (Bacoyannopoulos), “Cinematic expression” (Manthoulis), “Tradition” (Kostas Stamatiou), “Commercial Cinema” (Manthoulis), “Poetic Cinema” (Bacoyannopoulos), “Internationalism⁷¹ in Cinema” (Rafaelidis), “Socio-political Cinema” (Ninos Fenek Mikelidis), “Greek Realism” (Panos Papakyriakopoulos) and “Greek Documentary” (Alexis Grivas).⁷² The latter did not take place because the arrival of the junta interrupted the seminars. The “Tourist-educational-entertainment society ‘I Ilioupolis’” also organized a retrospective week of Greek cinema with screenings and seminars as part of the ‘Spring Celebrations’ arranged by the local municipality and with the involvement of people from the film societies:⁷³ “The Present of Greek Cinema” (lecturer: Bacoyannopoulos),⁷⁴ “The screenplay in Greek films” (Vasilikos),⁷⁵ “Film Societies” (Mitropoulou),⁷⁶ “Ethnographic Cinema” (Roussos

⁶⁸ *Avgi* (14/11/62 and 8/12/62) and *To Vima* (9/10/1962, 13/11/1962 and 4, 8, 12/12/1962 and 18/1/1963). For lectures organized by the “Cine Club of ‘Art’” in Thessaloniki see Kalandidis 1996: 13.

⁶⁹ Information from an interview given to the writer by Bacoyannopoulos.

⁷⁰ *Avgi* and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (23/2/67). See also Appendix in Kalandidis (1996).

⁷¹ As discussed in Chapter 1, p. 57.

⁷² In *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no.5, p. 4) it is reported that there was an overflow of people participating the lectures and screenings.

⁷³ *Avgi* (24/5/66), *Dimokratiki Allagi* (16/5/1966) and *Theamata* (31/5/1966).

⁷⁴ Screenings: the shorts *Macedonian Wedding* (Takis Kanellopoulos) and *Memories from Greece* (Francis Carabot) and the feature *The Counterfeit Coin* (Giorgos Tzavellas).

⁷⁵ Screenings: the shorts *The Thief* (Pantelis Voulgaris) and *Waiting* (Kostas Sfikas) and the feature *The Lake of Desires* (Giorgos Zervos).

⁷⁶ Screenings: the shorts *Prespes* (Takis Hatzopoulos) and *Wheel* (Theodoros Adamopoulos) and the feature *Jo the Terrible* (Dinos Dimopoulos).

Koundouros),⁷⁷ “The Future of Greek Cinema” (Stavrakas),⁷⁸ and “Problematization in short films” (Kostis Zois).⁷⁹ Following the paradigm of the successful forum on Greek cinema held by the “Centre of Research on Cinema” during the ‘5th Week of Greek Cinema’ in Thessaloniki,⁸⁰ at the next festival OKLE organized a public debate between artists and intellectuals on “The Week of Greek Cinema and its attitude towards reality and the problems of Greek Cinema”. However, the event faced difficulties.⁸¹

Film societies were often aggressive participants in debates on Greek national cinema. For example an article in *Dimokratiki Allagi* entitled ‘Students will struggle for the qualitative improvement in films’ describes an event organized by the ‘University Student’s Film Society of Athens’:

“No more bad movies”. This slogan was displayed last Sunday after the screening at *Iris* of the documentaries that competed at the recent Thessaloniki Film Festival [...] Not only did the students decide [...] to stop watching the low quality Greek films, but with public statements and other activities to influence the audience to do the same.⁸²

Some of the activities of the OKLE film societies and film weeks were not only cinephile and educational in character, but also political. Culture and politics in the 1960s were, as we have discussed, closely connected, with cultural events providing a space in

⁷⁷ Screenings: the shorts *Anastenaria* (Roussos Koundouros) and *Psarades ke Psaremata / Fishermen and Fishing* (Leon Loisios) and the feature *Ogre of Athens* (Nikos Koundouros).

⁷⁸ Screenings: the shorts *Periptoseis tou Ochi / Cases of NO* (Lakis Papasthis, Dimitris Avgerinos, Rena Choime) and *Mias Dekaras Istoria / A Penny Story* (1965, Dimitris Nollas) and the feature *Kyriakatiko Xypnima / Windfall in Athens* (Cacoyannis).

⁷⁹ Screenings: the shorts *To Alogo / The Horse* (Kostis Zois) and *Lacrimae Rerum* (Nikos Nikolaidis) and the feature *Pikro Psomi / Bitter Bread* (Grigiris Grigoriou). Most of the films in this event were introduced by their directors.

⁸⁰ See Chapter 1, footnote 49.

⁸¹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (25/9/1965).

⁸² *Dimokratiki Allagi* (22/12/1965).

which critical opinions about the values of the political establishment could be articulated and left-wing ideas expressed. As seen, a significant part of the cinephile culture of the period involved the exhibition of films from Socialist countries or with politically progressive content, a fact that reflects both the political background of those who were engaged in such activities and the character of the events. This process of politicization is more obvious in the Student film societies, particularly after the fall of the Papandreou government. For example, the police intervened to cancel a screening at *Iris of Hands Over the City* (Francesco Rosi) organized by the 'University Student's Film Society of Athens', invoking reasons of public order. However the students ignored the order to stop the screening.⁸³ The 'University Student's Film Society' also organized a screening at *Iris* of Frederic Rossif's *To Die in Madrid* (about the Spanish Civil War) in support of seven students who had been imprisoned due to "their struggles for academic freedoms and democracy".⁸⁴ The 'Week of Resistance Film' (1964) arranged by EFFEE⁸⁵ and the 'Week of Antiwar film' set up by the 'Committee of Defense of Culture and Democracy'⁸⁶ had also clearly political intentions.

The film societies also fought for the abolition of censorship. A letter from Roussos Koundouros published in the press protested against the government's refusal to grant OKLE permission to screen whichever film they chose, without needing official approval. Koundouros declared that OKLE would suspend the operation of the cine clubs if censorship was not lifted.⁸⁷ Also, although officially banned due to its bold content, the short *Elies / Olive Trees* (1964, Dimitris Kollatos) was screened and discussed by the

⁸³ *To Vima* and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (13/12/1965).

⁸⁴ *Avgi* and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (5/3/1966).

⁸⁵ See Chapter 4, pp. 174-175.

⁸⁶ See Chapter 4, p. 174.

⁸⁷ *Avgi* (6, 11/10/64) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (5/10/1964).

‘Greek Film Society’ (OKLE).⁸⁸ Moreover the ‘University Student’s Film Society of Athens’ protested against the censoring and cutting of scenes from Kollatos’ *The Death of Alexander* and Resnais’ film *The War is Over* (1966).⁸⁹ The latter was part of a wider reaction against the censorship of Resnais’ film that included the publication of a statement of protest signed by prominent intellectuals such as Ploritis, Tsirkas, Sinopoulos, and many others.⁹⁰ ‘Cine Club of Piraeus’ also protested against a governmental committee’s refusal to allow the Greek films that had competed at the 1966 Thessaloniki Film Festival to participate in international events.⁹¹ Predictably, with the rise to power of the junta in 1967, all film societies except the ‘Cine Club of Athens’ (‘Cinémathèque of Greece’) were shut down (Kalandidis 1996: 9).

In the 1960s, the screenings and other activities organized by film societies associated with OKLE or the ‘Cine Club of Athens’ created a strong audience for art film; they became gathering places and a school for young cinephiles and future NEK filmmakers, they contributed to the formation of collectives and triggered critical discourse on film. Today they are integral to the shared experiences of generations of filmmakers. The influence on the NEK generation of 1960s film societies is revealed by the following comment on the NEK director Tasos Psaras by Panos Chrysostomou:

Primarily in the Film Society of Zannas and the ‘Theatre-Film Student Society’, as a high-school student [...], he watched innumerable films, he

⁸⁸ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (23, 27/ 2/ 1965). See also Appendix in Kalandidis (1996).

⁸⁹ *To Vima*, *Dimokratiki Allagi* (27/10/1966) and *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no.2, p. 14). *The War is Over* was excluded from the Cannes Film Festival after the intervention of the Spanish government. It was excluded also from the Karlovy Vary Film Festival after the intervention this time of the Secretary General of the Spanish Communist Party Dolores Ibarruri (Passionaria) (*Dimokratiki Allagi*, 2/8/1966). The film was chosen by Zannas to open the 1966 Thessaloniki Film Festival, which became for the first time an International Festival. Prior to its cinema release Greek censors cut several scenes.

⁹⁰ Among them Nikos Koundouros, Manthoulis, Voulgaris, Panousopoulos, Fotis Alexiou, Marketaki, Mikelidis, Rafaelidis, Angelopoulos, Skalioras, Stamatiou and Bacoyanopoulos. See *Epitheorisi Technis* (1966, no.141, p. 194).

⁹¹ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no. 5, p.5).

does not remember how many, he joined [...] the discussions that took place after the end of the films, he became enthusiastic about a variety of [film] trends and he was captivated by another cinema. (Chrysostomou 2004: 9)

A handful of domestic film schools were also instrumental during the 1950s and 1960s in the development of a ‘new’ generation of filmmakers. The most influential were: ‘Anotera Epangelmatiki Scholi Kinimatografou ke Theatrou’ [‘Higher Professional School of Cinema and Theatre’]⁹² established by Lykourgos Stavrakos in 1950, the ‘Anotati Scholi Kinimatografou’ [‘Higher School of Cinema’] founded in 1956⁹³ by Ioannidis, and the ‘Kentro Spoudon Theatrou ke Kinimatografou Athinon’ [‘Study Center for Theatre and Cinema’] founded in 1961 by Kostas Fotinos and Irini Kalkani.⁹⁴ Almost all NEK filmmakers and critics studied in one of these schools, where prominent figures such as Mikis Theodorakis, Manos Hadjidakis, Yannis Tsarouchis, Angelos Terzakis, Iakovos Kambanellis, Carolos Koun, Christos Vachliotis, Theodosiadis, et. al. were tutors. Manthoulis, Sfikas, Rafaelidis, Bacoyannopoulos, Theos and Ferris were also tutors, while some stayed on as lecturers after their studies (e.g. Ferris, Rafaelidis, Theos). Other NEK filmmakers such as Theo Angelopoulos, Nikos Panayotopoulos, Tonia Marketaki, Lambros Liaropoulos and Alexis Grivas studied abroad.

The role played by the domestic film schools was multifaceted. They brought an older generation of filmmakers such as Grigoris Grigoriou and Dinos Dimopoulos, who were teachers, into contact with a younger generation who were students, often functioning

⁹² I am using the name of the school as it was known in the 1960s. Its initial name was ‘Epangelmatiki Scholi Kallitechnon ke Technikon Kinimatografou’ [‘Professional School of Film Artists and Technicians’]. See Stavrakou 2001: 55.

⁹³ The dates of the establishment of the film schools are taken from Mitropoulou 2006: 422.

⁹⁴ Also in 1964 IMEK announced the creation of a University for Film studies [see *To Vima* and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (6/10/1964)]. However there is no information about its activities.

as the first step towards the commercial industry, as students from the film schools often worked with their tutors as assistant directors (e.g. Voulgaris who was assistant director to Dimopoulos). Film schools were also meeting points for ‘young’ filmmakers helping the formation of collectives, while occasionally they functioned as independent producers of both feature and short films. Exceptional among such ventures were the feature films *I Arpagi tis Persephonis / Abduction of Persephone* (1956, Grigoris Grigoriou) and *To Mystiko tou Kokkinou Mandya / The Secret of the Red Mantle* (1960, Kostas Fotinos) produced by Stavrakos and Ioannidis film schools respectively as a part of their students’ training.⁹⁵

2.2 The foreign art film becomes established in the domestic market

In the study *Elliniki Kinimatografia (1965-1975)* [*Greek Film Industry (1965-1975)*], Chrysanthi Sotiropoulou argues that the Greek market of the 1960s was dominated by American movies and ‘art’ films were not circulated. She asserts that Greek audiences were unaware of the important developments of international cinema such as Italian Neo-Realism and French New Wave since the films were screened one or two decades later. In support of her argument, she cites *Bicycle Thieves* and *Jules and Jim* which, according to her research, were first commercially released in Greece in 1968/69 and 1969/70 respectively. She states also that the interest of Greek audiences in ‘art’ films in the 1960s was limited and only increased around 1970 (Sotiropoulou 1989: 138-140). Complaints by film commentators about the Greek audience’s lack of access to international ‘art’ and ‘quality’ films can be found also in the daily and periodical press throughout the 1960s. For instance, in his 1964 article ‘The films which we have never seen’, Mikelidis declares

⁹⁵ On the funding of short films by Film schools see Chapter 5, pp. 238-239.

that “masterpieces of international cinema remain unknown to the Greek viewer” and cites a long list of Polish, Japanese, French and other features.⁹⁶ Contrary to these assertions about the film-going experience in Greece of the 1960s, I will try to demonstrate that a plethora of international films of artistic importance were available to the wider audience not only through the cine-club networks but through popular venues, and also that they were considerably popular.

Even a cursory examination of the weekly film columns of the 1960s daily press, which reviewed new film releases, proves that Greek cinemas of the time screened an impressive range of artistic features. The following examples of films screened illustrate the rich diversity of the viewing experience: almost all British and French New-Wave films (interestingly *Jules and Jim* was first released in 1962),⁹⁷ the complete work of major Italian directors (e.g. Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini, Luchino Visconti, Roberto Pasolini), American independent films (e.g. *Shadows* by John Cassavetes), Soviet films that rejected socialist realism (e.g. Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Ivan’s Childhood* or Sergei Paradjanov’s *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*), other *auteurs* such as Ingmar Bergman, Luis Buñuel and Akira Kurosawa, radical films such as *I am Cuba* (Mikhail Kalatozov) and *Salvatore Giuliano* (Francesco Rosi), New Polish and New Czechoslovakian cinemas. In fact the vast majority of ‘art’ films of the 1960s, were released in Greece immediately or soon after their creation. Even films which had not been thought profitable enough to be shown in the 1950s, such as *Seven Samurai* and *Wild Strawberries*, were released in the 1960s to a growing audience which, contrary to the expectations of distributors and exhibitors, favoured ‘art’ films.

⁹⁶ *Avgi* (19/4/64). See also relevant articles in *Avgi* (30/1/65) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (23/10/65).

⁹⁷ See *To Vima* (10/4/1962). *Bicycle Thieves* also was released in the 1940s and reviewed by Marios Ploritis in *Eleftheria*.

As early as the late 1950s, writing in *Epitheorisis Technis*, G. N. Makris noted a change in the audience's preferences, citing some commercially successful artistic films such as Bardem's *Death of a Cyclist*, Ophuls' *Lola Montez* and Chukhrai's *The Forty-first*:

Nevertheless many good films have earned huge profits. [...] In the last years a considerable portion of the Greek audience – enough to support 2 or even 3 quality films per week – has begun to appreciate good movies, to be attracted by the film directors rather than the stars, to seek something original, to be bored by the ceaseless repetition of the trivial themes of Hollywood [...] A film taste for artistic value in films is gradually developing.⁹⁸

In 1961 a growing interest in European films is noted by *Avgi*:

The main characteristic of the current film season is the plethora of European films. It has really been proven in the last years that the Greek audience prefers European films, whatever the subject and quality, to Hollywood's empty fabrications, and the importers / distributors have been forced to follow the trend.⁹⁹

In a review of the most popular films of the 1959/60 film season, the trade film periodical *Theamata* observes:

Films of more human and artistic value were not ignored [by the audience]. Tickets sales for the ten recommended films¹⁰⁰ are much more than one could expect. This shows that not only the curiosity but also the taste of the audience has gradually begun to improve. In the past, films

⁹⁸ *Epitheorisi Technis* (1957, no. 28, pp. 382-383).

⁹⁹ *Avgi* (8 /10 /1961).

¹⁰⁰ The periodical provided a list of the best ten films of the season using artistic criteria.

like *Hiroshima mon amour* would pass unnoticed. Now they provoke a storm, discussions and ticket sales.¹⁰¹

An article, commenting on Thessaloniki's film-going public in *I 'Techni' sti Thessaloniki*, refers to *Hiroshima mon amour* in stating that "one of the most difficult and original films in the history of cinema found satisfactory success. It was more successful than some 'popular' movies – even Tarzan".¹⁰² According to data given by *Theamata*, in the 1959/60 film season *Hiroshima mon amour* sold 53,990 tickets in the first-run cinemas of Athens, while the 1959 Cannes Golden Palm-winner Marcel Camus's *Orfeu Negro* sold 69,266, succeeding the popularity of Greek movies such as *O Thisavros tou Makariti / The Treasure of the Deceased* and *Englima sto Kolonaki / Crime at Colonaki* with 54,899 and 68,097 admissions respectively. According to data in *Eleftheria*, during the week of 21 November 1960, *La Dolce Vita* was by far the most successful film with 68,845 admissions, followed by *It Started in Naples* starring Clark Gable and Sophia Loren with less than the half tickets (31,667).¹⁰³ In addition, in the week of 24 October 1960, with the exception of *Mandalena, Breathless* had the most admissions in one separate venue (*Rex*, 18,812 tickets).¹⁰⁴ *Theamata* also commented on the flood of people attending the screening of *Seven Samurai* in the first-run cinemas.¹⁰⁵ Moreover in the 1964/65 winter season, *Silence* was the biggest foreign-film box office attraction in the first-run cinemas of Athens with 198,008 admissions, while in the second place was the James Bond film *Goldfinger*.¹⁰⁶ The 1966 Cannes Golden Palm-winner *A Man and a Woman* (Claude Lelouch) was also a huge success with 260,417 tickets in both the first and second-run

¹⁰¹ *Theamata* (20/6/1960).

¹⁰² Thessaloniki Film Festival / Makedoniki Kallitechniki Eteria 'Techni' 2002: 171-172.

¹⁰³ *Eleftheria* (30/11/60).

¹⁰⁴ *Theamata* (24-30/10/60).

¹⁰⁵ *Theamata* (15/3/1964).

¹⁰⁶ *Theamata* (31/12/66).

cinemas of Athens (forth position in the foreign-film box office).¹⁰⁷ Therefore, as it is evident, several ‘art’ films were popular at this time, a fact that is clearly reflected in promotional material from Damaskinos-Michaelidis (the major Greek distributor) for the 1966/67 film season, which was published in *Theamata* and addressed to exhibitors: ‘art’ films such as *The Seventh Seal*, *Pierrot le fou*, *Fahrenheit 451* and *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* were advertised as potentially commercial together with ‘popular’ movies such as *The Brides of Fu Manchu*, *Pouic-Pouic*, *Gendarme in New York*, *A Fistful of Dollars*, *My Fair Lady*, *Arabesque* and *Three on a Couch*.¹⁰⁸

Such was the interest of Greek audiences in art films that major *auteurs* like Alain Resnais and François Truffaut visited Greece to attend the first commercial release of their films *Last Year at Marienbad*¹⁰⁹ and *The Soft Skin*¹¹⁰ respectively. Moreover the sensation caused by the Nouvelle-vague movies among youth audiences, – “even the films of the most insignificant nouvelle-vague director have been released in Greek cinemas” Ninos Fenek Mikelidis observed¹¹¹ – is echoed in the name of an influential trend in Greek music of the time: *Neo Kyma* [‘New wave’].¹¹² Film citations in popular Greek movies also reveal the wider impact of art cinema in the 1960s. Interestingly, *Gamos ala Ellinika / Wedding – Greek Style* (1964, Vasilis Georgiadis) reworks a scene from Fellini’s *8 ½*, while *Katiforos / Decline* (1961, Yannis Dalianidis) makes reference to *La Dolce Vita*.

¹⁰⁷ *Theamata* (31/12/1967).

¹⁰⁸ *Theamata* (30/11/66).

¹⁰⁹ *Avgi* (27/3/62).

¹¹⁰ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (20/11/65).

¹¹¹ *Avgi* (19/4/64).

¹¹² ‘Neo kyma’ was the name used by the director of the music company ‘Lyra’ (Alekos Patsifas) in 1964 to refer to a group of young song-writers and singers in response to the French New Wave. (Papanikolaou 2006: 278).

Furthermore art films became part of the marketing policy of several venues and the 1960s saw the establishment of the first arthouse cinemas. *Theamata* comments on the development:

During the current season many venues at Patision Street have chosen 'high art'. It began with the new [...] open-air theatre *Art*, which [...] was turned into ... the Venice festival. It took several art films out of storage [...] and gave them life and tickets. The surrealist film of Louis Malle *Zazie in the Metro* [...] was shown for a whole week [...]. The paradigm was followed by other neighboring venues and Fellini, Antonioni, Resnais, Bolognini and other art film directors gained a regular presence at Patision. [...] The point is that this theatre, in the period of crisis that most venues suffer, found a way to fill seats, and this proves that today, in order to succeed a venue [...] needs the creativity and imagination of its owner.¹¹³

In November 1967 *Theamata* also notes the spread of arthouse cinemas, mentioning two other venues showing art films: *Philippe* and *Cine-Negro*, and praising the successful initiative of Socrates Kapsaskis to direct *Studio* and screen only art films.¹¹⁴ In addition a few days before dictatorship came to power, Alexis Damianos suggested that his theatre *Poria* be developed into an arthouse venue. It became the legendary *Alkyonis*.¹¹⁵

The audiences for art cinema were mainly students, young and educated. However art cinema also appealed to other sections of the film-going public with its eroticism, which was a vital component of art films. Discussing the narrative realism of art cinema, David Bordwell points out that "part of this reality is sexual; the aesthetics and commerce of the art cinema often depend upon an eroticism that violates the production code of pre-

¹¹³ *Theamata* (18/7/1966). On the theatre *Art* see also *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no.5, p. 25).

¹¹⁴ *Theamata* (30/11/1967).

¹¹⁵ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (24, 30, 31/3/1967).

1950 Hollywood” (1979: 57). The unexpected success of *Silence*, a film that triggered much debate in the press, is commented by *Theamata* in that “the noise caused by two shocking sexual scenes led to great commercial success at the first-run cinemas”.¹¹⁶ Moreover the commercial value of overt sexuality in art films is reflected in advertisements and the exploitative way titles of art films were changed in the Greek version. Thus *Jules and Jim* became *Apolafse to Kormi mou* [*Enjoy my Body*], *L’Eclipse* turned into *Stin Ecstasi tou Pathous* [*In the Ecstasy of Passion*], *Siberian Lady Macbeth* (Andrei Wajda) became *Achortagi gia Idoni* [*Insatiable Lust*] and *Senilità* (Mauro Bolognini) turned into *Otan I Sarx Ipokipti* [*When the Flesh Succumbs*].

The film-going experience in Greece of the 1960s was vastly enriched by art films, both through film societies and popular venues, creating an elite audience and touching also a considerable section of the ‘popular’ film-going public. In parallel with international developments, ‘serious’ cinephilia became for the first time a notably massive and influential phenomenon, which can be seen as another manifestation of the cultural flourishing occurring in Greece during the 1960s.

2.3 New critical voices

As we have already discussed, there was a re-evaluation of cinema in the post-war years by Greek intellectuals and cinema acquired a higher cultural status. As a consequence of this, and in response to the growing public interest in film, cinema attracted much critical attention, especially in the 1960s. Since Greek film had long been condemned and dismissed, critical writing had largely focused on foreign cinema. Most critics regarded the vast majority of domestic films and filmmakers as unworthy of

¹¹⁶*Theamata* (31/1/1965).

criticism, and either entirely ignored Greek cinema or wrote about it briefly, favouring foreign movies, particularly artistic ones.¹¹⁷ So, Greek movies or directors were seldom the subject of critical writing in aesthetic terms, and usually only those with artistic aspirations. Nevertheless, both the popular and ‘serious’ papers gave systematic and detailed information about the stars, the shooting, the locations and the stories of many Greek movies of all types.

What distinguishes the 1960s from the previous period is that, apart from the dramatic proliferation of critical writing on film in general, there was a large shift in the focus of critical texts on Greek cinema. This development was furthered by the establishment in 1960 of the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ which generated widespread discussion about domestic movies and although foreign film continued to be the main concern of reviewers, there was a much more pronounced interest in Greek films. Even prominent figures of letters wrote exclusively on Greek movies in the daily press, for example Giorgos Savvidis in *To Vima*. Furthermore, compared to the previous decades the period saw a greater number of people involved in writing on film, the prestige of film reviewers grew dramatically and film criticism became more influential. This did not pass unnoticed by commentators:

The influence of film criticism in shaping the audience’s choice of film to view is considerable. This influence, exerted by the daily press reviews, is not yet decisive, but it has an undeniable importance for the audience of the first-run cinemas and less or minimal for other viewers and the provincial areas. Film criticism, which became systematic in the last years in the Athenian press, has played a key part in raising and improving the film criterion of the spectators [...] and offered tickets to

¹¹⁷ G. N. Makris, in his article ‘A Review’ commenting, in a revealing way, on the “trash” and art-oriented features of the international film production, states: “Only in [the art-oriented] films we are interested: all the others are placed out of the area of even the most condescending criticism” (1959, *Epitheorisi Technis*, no. 53-54, pp. 270-272).

art films that in the past would have passed unnoticed or would never been shown.¹¹⁸

The establishment in 1962 by the ‘Athens Film Critics’ Union’ of annual awards for Greek films, which aimed to improve the quality of domestic cinema, confirms the increasingly influential role played by critics at the time, as well as the re-assessment of their relationship with Greek film.¹¹⁹ Moreover two days before the military coup, on 19 April 1967, the foundation of the ‘Enosi Kinimatografikon Kritikon Ellados’ [‘Union of the Greek Film Critics’], the future PEKK (= Panellinia Enosi Kritikon Kinimatografou), was announced. However it was only given official state approval after the dictatorship period. The main aims of the ‘Union’ included the active intervention in the problems of domestic cinema, the promotion and further development of ‘quality’ Greek cinema, the improvement of the status of critical film discourse, the education of the audience and the establishment of closer relations with Greek filmmakers in order to work together towards a quality national cinema.¹²⁰

Another important new development of the time was the rise of not simply the film commentator and film reviewer, but of the ‘film intellectual’, associated largely with a group of militant young writers who shared a strong sense of cinephilia and a leftist point of view.¹²¹ The Left was in general more open to film and this new generation of critics agreed with Lenin’s statement that cinema was the most important of all the arts. The article ‘Kinimatografos: Mia techni tou mellontos’ [‘Cinema: An art of the future’] in the

¹¹⁸ Papadopoulou, ‘Criticism and the film’ in *Theamata* (30/4/64).

¹¹⁹ *Avgi* (15/3/62). The awards concerned the best film, best film direction, best actor and best film music.

¹²⁰ For further information see *Dimokratiki Allagi* (19/4/67). The founding members: Giorgos Makris, Marios Ploritis, Pavlos Zannas, Lena Savvidou, Giorgos Savvidis, Leon Karapanagiotis, Kostis Skalioras, Antonis Mosxovakis, Kleitos Kyrou, Kostas Stamatiou, Petros Linardos, Mirella Georgiadou, Yannis Bacoyannopoulos, Tonia Marketaki, Vasilis Rafaelidis, Frixos Iliadis, Theo Angelopoulos, Spyros Payiatakis, Alexis Grivas, Nikos Bacolas, Ninos Fenek Mikelidis, Manolis Mavrommatis, Dimitris Haritos, Yannis Kalioris, Nikos Kontos, Kostas Sfikas, Dimitris Stavrakas and Panos Papakyriakopoulos.

¹²¹ As far as the commitment of a ‘new’ generation of critics to left-wing ideology is concerned, there were exceptions. Prominent among them was Pavlos Zannas.

periodical *Elliniki Aristera* [*Greek Left*]¹²² by Vasilis Rafaelidis, who became the most emblematic critical voice of NEK, is particularly enlightening. It argues passionately for cinema's superiority and greater influential role in relation to other art forms as well as for the need to educate the audience and elevate film criticism to the status of a serious and politically committed form.

Since, at least in the western world, it is impossible for us to control commercialized film production, we have to confine ourselves to the secondary manipulation of the final product, namely the proper and responsible guidance of viewers regarding the film which they are going to watch, and more generally, the formation of better criteria for the masses. This is the main role played by criticism. In Greece film criticism is restricted to the weekly journalistic presentation of the films released, a practice that cannot be seen as criticism. (Rafaelidis)¹²³

These new critical voices surfaced mainly – but not exclusively – through left-wing press and specialist journals that dealt with cinema in artistic and aesthetic terms and were modeled on European periodicals such as *Cahiers du Cinema*. The first film journal in the 1960s to follow this pattern was *Kinimatografos-Theatro* [*Cinema-Theatre*] founded in April 1960. It was edited by the 'Higher Professional School of Cinema and Theatre Lykourgos Stavrakos' and the public relations organization *Horizon* and headed by Yannis Bacoyannopoulos, Roviros Manthoulis and Leon Loisios, (teachers and a student of the school) who published only 4 issues because the enterprise was not commercially viable. *Kinimatografos-Theatro* focused primarily on foreign film, including extensive tributes to French New Wave and Free Cinema, coverage of the 1960 Cannes and Berlin Festivals,

¹²² *Elliniki Aristera* (1966, no. 38, pp. 124-128).

¹²³ *Elliniki Aristera* (1966, no. 38, pp. 127).

interviews with Visconti and Bresson, articles about distinguished authors (Clair, Carne, Rossellini) and prominent films (*La Dolce Vita*, *Pickpocket*), subjects related to Hollywood and the international star system, while coverage of Greek cinema was restricted to Cacoyannis, Nikos Koundouros and briefly to Grigoriou. *Kinimatografos-Theatro* also introduced the practice of grading films. However, it was not the first attempt for a ‘serious’ film journal. In 1951 the short-lived but high-status periodical *Kinimatografos* [*Cinema*] was published again by the Lykourgos Stavrakos’ film school with contributions of Kornilios Angelidis, Floritis, Angelos Prokopiou, Grigoriou, et. al.¹²⁴

The left-wing periodical *Epitheorisi Technis* [*Art Review*] (1954-1967) was a prestigious and influential publication that enabled young critics to develop theoretical, historical and critical discourse. From 1963 to 1966, under the leadership of Mimis Despotidis, the journal published a group of ‘young’ writers (Rafaelidis, Papakyriakopoulos, Stavrakas, Fotis Alexiou (Alexis Grivas), Mikelidis, Yannoulakis, Kalioris, Theos,¹²⁵ and Fotos Lambrinos¹²⁶) – most of them committed to ‘Stichio Kinimatografou tis EDA’ [‘EDA element of Cinema’]¹²⁷ – who wrote critically on foreign and Greek film. The interest in Greek cinema was continuous, with attention given to censorship, state policies, the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’, short films and debates about Greek film culture. The film pages of *Epitheorisi Technis* between 1963 and 1966 were also filled with national cinemas, tributes to and interviews with distinguished foreign

¹²⁴ For further information, see Stavrakou 2001: 52-54.

¹²⁵ Dimos Theos published a text entitled ‘O Jean Genet ke o *Sosias*’ (1962, no. 94-95, pp. 536-554), while his study of *Salvatore Juliano* was never published due to ideological disagreements. (Information given by Stavrakas).

¹²⁶ He soon left for the Soviet Union to study cinema and he sent a correspondence about Mikhail Romm.

¹²⁷ The ‘EDA element of Cinema’ was a collective of people involved in cinema and officially committed to the left-wing political party EDA. It was the counterpart of ‘Kommatiki Organosi Vasis’. Until 1964, when he left for the Soviet Union, the Secretary of the ‘EDA element’ was Fotos Lambrinos being replaced by Dimitris Stavrakas. Other members were Theos, Tornes, Loisisos, Vrettakos, Rafaelidis, Papakyriakopoulos, Konstantarakos and many film technicians.

directors, foreign short films and documentaries, coverage of international festivals, discussions on realism in cinema, translations from foreign periodicals and writing on left-wing international cinema.

The evening newspaper of EDA, *Dimokratiki Allagi* [*Democratic Change*] (1964-1967), was another focal point of 'young' writers and during 1965-1967 it was the most outspoken about Greek cinema. More precisely, in *Dimokratiki Allagi*, Lambrinos, Stavrakas and Mikelidis wrote occasionally, Marketaki (until 1965), Rafaelidis and Theo Angelopoulos (both from 1965) contributed regularly, while Fotis Alexiou sent frequent correspondences from Paris where he studied at that time. Apart from the weekly reviews of foreign and Greek films, *Dimokratiki Allagi* gave equal weight to exploring the realities of Greek and international film with a particular emphasis on landmarks of the international film history, new waves and the most recent developments of European art cinema, including that of Eastern Europe. Tributes to major directors, actors and other subjects often appeared in response to either new art-film releases or to the exhibition program of film societies and 'film weeks'. As far as Greek cinema is concerned, issues about legislation, censorship, film societies, film seminars as well as lively debates on particular Greek movies, the 'Week of Greek Cinema' and interviews with Greek filmmakers were among *Dimokratiki Allagi's* main concerns.

The pages of *Dimokratiki Allagi* often contained polemics about commercial Greek cinema. For instance, reviewing the comedy *Teddy-boy ... Agapi mou / Teddy-boy ... my Love* (1965, Dalianidis), an adaptation of a theatrical play by the leftist Gerasimos Stavrou, Rafaelidis concluded: "only a massive boycott will stop this irresponsibility. We have had enough of them growing rich at our expense".¹²⁸ Likewise, in his damning review of *To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land* (1965, Vasilis Georgiadis), which

¹²⁸ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (14/12/1965).

interestingly was welcomed by other left-wing commentators (e.g. Antonis Moschovakis in *Avgi*), Rafaelidis suggested: “Don’t go to this movie, not even out of curiosity. Not only you are going to waste 18 drachmas but you will be upset, and worst of all, your money will help to perpetuate a completely unacceptable and dirty situation”.¹²⁹

Ideological conflicts are evident between the ‘young’ writers in *Dimokratiki Allagi* and the party line. Particularly enlightening is a fierce debate that ensued when Rafaelidis attacked the Soviet film *Zoya* (1944, Lev Arnshtam) as socialist realism, and both party officials and many readers responded.¹³⁰ Ideological deviations are traceable also in the open support by the ‘young’ critics of the French New Wave and Godard, when in previous years the paper had printed hostile texts by anonymous writers such as the following:

The reputation [of Godard] was in obvious discord with the quality of his films [...] Saying unbelievable nonsense, with the dark style of a blasé intellectual who had resolved all the problems. [...] His films, miracles of stupidity and banality, were so trivial that the viewer did not dare to believe that an entire film was made just to say follies. [...] Occasionally there was a critic who made hints about the lack of quality in Godard’s films and his impudence. [...] Some others began to remember that Godard was once a fascist, and the fact that a young artist was a fascist when fascism [...] threatened Europe means that he could be a fascist now. [...] It is time for the French people to cease to consider Godard as a significant force behind their cinema.¹³¹

Rafaelidis himself commented on this situation:

¹²⁹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (11/1/1966).

¹³⁰ See also Chapter 4, pp. 178-179.

¹³¹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (31/8/64). Adonis Kyrou shared similar views on the French New Wave. See ‘O Modernos Kinimatografos ke o Antonioni’ (*Epitheorisi Technis*, 1962, no. 85, pp. 132-135) and ‘Dynatotites tou avrianou kinimatografou’ (*Epitheorisi Technis*, 1964, no.110, pp. 213-217).

“We were doing well in this newspaper until the first ideological difficulties emerged. Reproaches for ideological deviations began [...]. If Elli Pappa had not intervened, [...] I would have quit”¹³²

Dimokratiki Allagi also played an active role in the current developments of Greek cinema by holding events. In October 1966 it set up the ‘First Athens’ Week of Greek Cinema’, screening independent films that had competed at the recent Thessaloniki Film Festival, which was regarded by the ‘young’ critics as a decisive turning point. During this event it also carried out a survey of audience preferences,¹³³ while it published a long series of interviews in which the recipients of the 1966 Thessaloniki Festival’s awards opened a debate on Greek film.¹³⁴ *Dimokratiki Allagi* also organized and published over six issues (24 March - 1 April 1967) an open discussion about Greek cinema under the title ‘Young filmmakers and their problems: Greek cinema has reached a stalemate’ – in the context of similar discussions about the troubles of a wide range of cultural sectors, focusing particularly on young artists, writers, poets and musicians. Participants in the debates included Theo Angelopoulos, Yannis Bacoyannopoulos, Thanasis Valtinos, Pantelis Voulgaris, Dionysis Grigoratos, Alexis Grivas, Alexis Damianos, A. Efstathiadis, Thodoros Zamanis, Kostis Zois, Dimos Theos, Takis Kalantzis, Dimitris Kasolas, Giorgos Katakouzinis, Dimitris Kollatos, Roussos Koundouros, Diamantis Leventakos, Leon Loisios, Roviros Manthoulis, Tonia Marketaki, Ninos Fenek Mikelidis, Nikos Nikolaidis, Dimitris Nollas, Panos Papakyriakopoulos, Vasilis Rafaelidis, Dimitris Stavrakas and Stavros Tornes.

¹³² Soldatos / Greek Film Festival / PEKK (2000: 14).

¹³³ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (22/10/66) and *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no. 3-4, pp. 13-16).

¹³⁴ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (October 1966).

In October 1966 the film journal *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* [*Greek Cinema*] was published thanks largely to the efforts of Fotis Alexiou (Alexis Grivas)¹³⁵ who had returned from Paris. *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* was the predecessor of *Synchronos Kinimatografos* [*Contemporary Cinema*]¹³⁶ – which was extremely influential in the 1970s and early 1980s – but published only five issues because the sixth, published by ‘Themelio’ (the official public House of the Left), was stopped at the printing house and destroyed by the junta.¹³⁷ Apart from Alexiou, writers such as Zannas, Rafaelidis, Lambrinos, Stavrakas, Marketaki, Angelopoulos, Mikelidis, Kostis Skalioras, Bacoyannopoulos, Kyrou and Leventakos gathered around *Ellinikos Kinimatografos*. The title of the periodical clearly reflects the shift of interest towards domestic cinema, evident also in the journal’s content. The editorials of *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* state that the unique purpose of the publication is to serve Greek cinema, to allow ‘young’ filmmakers to express freely their opinions about their work and bring together all those working to improve Greek cinema. They state that the periodical encompasses people with different political views, declaring its objectivity and independence from any kind of political guidance or economic forces that functioned within the industry. Furthermore they stress that *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* is independently funded and reliant on volunteers, and the only acceptable link with another organization was with OKLE, in whose film societies the periodical was distributed.¹³⁸ Apart from a close examination of international art film culture (‘new’ cinemas, festivals, *auteurs*, an essay written by André Bazin, etc.) much of the periodical is devoted to debates around Greek cinema, with the contribution also of

¹³⁵ This information comes from interviews given to the writer by Bacoyannopoulos and Alexis Grivas.

¹³⁶ The editorial of the 1st issue of *Synchronos Kinimatografos* (p. 33) recognizes as *Synchronos Kinimatografos*’ forerunners the two previous similar attempts for a serious film journal: *Kinimatografos-Theatro* and *Ellinikos Kinimatografos*. Moreover many of the contributors and founders of *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* and of the subsequent editors and contributors of *Synchronos Kinimatografos* were the same persons.

¹³⁷ Soldatos / Greek Film Festival / PEKK (2000: 14).

¹³⁸ *To Vima* (13/12/1966). *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* was distributed also at ‘Themelio’.

foreign commentators (Gideon Bachman, Barbe Funk and Louis Marcorelles) who had been invited to join the recent Thessaloniki festival. From the rather marginal position of domestic film in *Kinimatografos-Theatro* in 1960, and the almost exclusive concern with Cacoyannis and Koundouros, now the focus had shifted to the close examination of Greek national cinema and a new generation of filmmakers who had appeared at the 1966 Thessaloniki festival with short and feature-length movies. Moreover when a government committee decided to exclude the Greek films that had competed at the recent Thessaloniki Film Festival from international competitions due to their “low quality”, *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* intervened and secured the screening of the films *Prosopo me Prosopo / Face to Face* (1966, Roviros Manthoulis), *Mechri to Plio / Until the Ship Sails* (1966, Alexis Damianos), *Ekdromi / Excursion* (1966, Takis Kanellopoulos), *Tzimis o Tigris / Jimmy the Tiger* (1966, Pantelis Voulgaris) and *750,000* (1966, Alexis Grivas) at the festivals of Cannes, Pesaro, Oberhausen and Hyères.¹³⁹

‘Young’ film critics also contributed to several other newspapers and journals. Bacoyannopoulos, for instance, wrote regularly in the prominent periodical *Epoches* and from 1965 he replaced Ploritis in the newspaper *Eleftheria*.¹⁴⁰ Mikelidis wrote in *Avgi* and *I Genia mas [Our Generation]* which was the newspaper of the ‘Democratic Youth of Lambrakis’, Marketaki and Zannas contributed to *To Vima* and *Tachydromos*, while from 1956 Zannas wrote film criticism anonymously in the periodical *I Techni sti Thessaloniki*.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (6, 13, 16/2/1967) and *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no.5, p. 6).

¹⁴⁰ The prominent intellectual Marios Ploritis reviewed films in *Eleftheria* from the 1940s until 1965, and his influential articles inspired several younger critics, for instance, Bacoyannopoulos and Rafaelidis. On Rafaelidis’ influence by Ploritis see *Soldatos / Greek Film Festival / PEKK* (2000: 12).

¹⁴¹ There was also another film periodical in the 1960s, entitled *Kinimatografiki Techni / Film Art*, which focused primarily on technical subjects and was published by ‘Elliniki Leschi Erasitechnon Kinimatografias’ [‘Greek Society of Film Amateurs’] headed by Tasos N. Petris. See *To Vima* (19/6/1964) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (24/6/1964). Another development of the time that reflected the rising interest in cinema in artistic and aesthetic terms was that for the first time a considerable number of books about cinema emerged and attracted significant attention: *I Techni tou Ithopiou ston Kinimatografo [Film Acting]* by Vsevolod

Although there is an apparent sense of uniformity, it is wrong to consider all these ‘young’ writers as a homogeneous group, because their discourse on film was varied. There were disagreements about realism, completely different views on particular Greek and foreign movies and diverse points of reference in international film culture. However, despite their differences, what united them – apart from an engagement with leftist ideology – was their desire to change Greek cinema in artistic and political terms as well as their dedication to the notion of authorship and the importance of ‘truth’. As far as Greek cinema is concerned two broad areas of interest defined the ‘young’ critics. On the one hand, a strong concern with reconsidering and reviewing the progress of Greek film, which led to the first attempts to write the history of Greek cinema. Representative examples of this tendency are two articles by Dimitris Stavrakas about the history of the short film in Greece¹⁴² and the history of Greek film in general.¹⁴³ On the other hand, ‘young’ critics, participating in the nationwide debate on Greek national cinema, suggested specific criteria that Greek national cinema ought to follow and through their articles a strong anticipation for a ‘quality’ Greek national cinema was expressed, which was identified with the demand for a ‘new’ cinema.¹⁴⁴ The word ‘new’ / ‘neos’, either indicating ‘young’ or ‘novel’, was scattered throughout critical texts to describe the work of Nikos Koundouros, short filmmakers or commercial directors who experimented with alternative forms or genres (e.g. Dinos Katsouridis). However from the mid-1960s the term was used more frequently

Pudovkin, *I Istoría tis Technis tou Kinimatografou* [*History of the Art of Cinema*] by Georges Sadoul, *Skepsis enos Kinimatografisti* [*Thoughts on Cinema*] by Sergei Eizenstein, *Ta Kyrioterá Stadia tis Exelisis tou Kinimatografou* [*The main stages of the evolution of Cinema*] by Ninos Fenek Mikelidis, *Aesthítiki tou Kinimatografou* [*Aesthetics of Cinema*] and *Kinimatografos* [*Cinema*] both by Henri Agel and *The Autobiography of Chaplin* translated by Kosmas Politis. [On the success of the film books at that period see Rafaelidis, ‘I kinimatografiki pedia stin Ellada’ in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1965, no. 126, pp. 530-31) and *Elliniki Aristera* (1966, no. 38, p. 128).

¹⁴² ‘To Kratos ke I Mikrou Mikous Tenia’ [‘The State and the Short Film’] in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1963, no.102, pp. 622-28).

¹⁴³ ‘Poria ke Prooptikes tou Ellinikou Kinimatografou’ [‘The Trajectory and Perspectives of Greek Cinema’] in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no. 2, pp. 5-12). In 1960 the first history of Greek cinema is published by Frixos Iliadis entitled *O Ellinikos Kinimatografos* [*Greek Cinema*] (Athens: Fantasia, 1960), which further confirms the general tendency towards the re-examination of Greek cinema that took place in the 1960s.

¹⁴⁴ A strong desire for a Greek new wave in film was expressed not only by the young but also by older film commentators.

by the ‘young’ critics and some foreign commentators to characterize a particular tendency in Greek cinema. Thus Marketaki, reviewing the short *O Kleftis / The Thief* (1965, Pantelis Voulgaris) in *Dimokratiki Allagi*, observed that the film was not confined to the minimum but it had greater artistic ambitions, a fact that was encouraging for the “new Greek cinema”.¹⁴⁵ Fotis Alexiou, talking about *Bloco / Round Up* (1965, Adonis Kyrou) and the short *Gramma ap’to Charleroi / Letter from Charleroi* (1965, Lambros Liaropoulos), in a correspondence from Paris in *Dimokratiki Allagi*, argued that these films were the first representatives of a “new Greek cinema”. He also announced the screening of *Elies / Olive Trees* (1964, Dimitris Kollatos) and a special season exhibiting films of “New Greek Cinema” including the shorts *Periptoseis tou Ochi / Cases of NO* (1965, Lakis Papastathis, Dimitris Avgerinos, Rena Choime), *Anamoni / Waiting* (1963, Kostas Sfikas), *Letter from Charleroi* and *Achilles* (1965, Aimilia Provia)¹⁴⁶ to be held as part of the ‘2nd International Festival of Independent Cinema’ in Paris. In an article in *Epoches* entitled ‘Impressions from the Thessaloniki festival’ Glaude Ollier stated that two aspects of Greek cinema were evident in the 1965 ‘Week’: the ‘old’ and the ‘new’.¹⁴⁷ Discussing in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* about realism in Greek cinema, Alexiou stated that *Jimmy the Tiger* was a major example of what could be conceived as “new Greek cinema”.¹⁴⁸ Moreover referring to *Face to Face*, *Jimmy the Tiger* and *750,000* (Alexis Grivas) in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos*, Louis Marcorelles announces the first victory of the “new Greek cinema”.¹⁴⁹ Thus the term became part of the vocabulary on Greek film in the pre-dictatorship 1960s to describe a phenomenon which already existed.

¹⁴⁵ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (22/9/65).

¹⁴⁶ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (3/3/1966 and 12/3/1966).

¹⁴⁷ *Epoches* (1965, no. 32, pp. 62-64).

¹⁴⁸ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1966, no. 1, pp. 5-6).

¹⁴⁹ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no.5, p. 11).

Another defining characteristic of this generation of film writers was a blurring of the lines between film writing and filmmaking. Manthoulis, Theos, Marketaki, Angelopoulos, Stavrakas, Lambrinos, Papakyriakopoulos and Leventakos, who wrote on film during the 1960s, also made distinguished documentary or fiction shorts (with the exception of Leventakos) and later became prominent NEK filmmakers, while Fotis Alexiou (Alexis Grivas) became a prominent cinematographer. Moreover Manthoulis and Theos directed 'new' feature films, *Face to Face* (1966) and *Kierion* (1967) respectively. Even Rafaelidis, Bacoyannopoulos¹⁵⁰ and Mikelidis, who later followed careers exclusively as critics, made attempts at short films in the 1960s.

So a significant and well-organized cinephile culture developed around film societies, film schools, film seminars, and film writing, which were closely connected and interacted. At the same time there developed a clearly identifiable community of people who shared similar values and were involved in cinema in multiple ways – lecturing, writing, organizing film events, participating in film institutions and making films. Ferris argues¹⁵¹ that a single collective, almost the entire NEK generation,¹⁵² labeled 'Omada' ['Group'] was created during the 1960s with the purpose of reinvigorating Greek cinema. The activities of the 'Group' included discussions about cinema, translations of foreign articles, seminars on cinema and making short films.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, in interviews given to the author by NEK filmmakers there was not a single person who confirmed this information, rather it was dismissed as a mythologized approach of the period. However, what is certain is that there developed at this time a strong sense of comradeship and

¹⁵⁰ Bacoyannopoulos made a short depicting the making of Dassin's film *He Who Must Die* (1956), funded by the French Cinémathèque.

¹⁵¹ Frangoulis & Ferris 2004: 21. Also from an interview given to the writer.

¹⁵² Vrettakos, Yiannoulakis, Tornes, Theos, Fotinos, Bezou (Tempou), Adamopoulos, Serdaris, Stavrakas, Lykas, Sfikas, Loisios, Rafaelidis, Bacoyannopoulos, Panayotopoulos, Stambouloupoulos, Lychnaras, Katakouzinis, Kollatos, Nikolaidis, Voulgaris, Marketaki, Panousopoulos, Angelopoulos, Konstandarakos, Nollas, Zois, Liropoulos, Mangos, Tasios, Pitsios, Vouyioukas, Kavoukidis, Tsiolis, Rentzis, Papastathis and Hatzopoulos (Frangoulis & Ferris 2004: 21).

¹⁵³ From an interview given to the writer.

several collectives originating in film societies, film schools, periodicals and newspapers, working as assistance directors in the industry and collectively making films. Among them the most distinguished were the 'EDA element of Cinema' and 'I Omada ton 5' ['Group of Five']. The 'Group of Five' consisting of Manthoulis, Roussos Koundouros, Bacoyannopoulos, Iraklis Papadakis and Fotis Mesthenaios (the latter two were students of Manthoulis at Stavrakos Film School) was a collective that, through screenings and lectures, promoted the idea of documentary in Greece and made several short documentaries.¹⁵⁴ Thus cinema was considered a subject of interest that extended much beyond filmmaking and film writing per se. Film theory was seen as being closely connected to film practice and collective activism was widespread, organizing events, establishing institutions and editorial enterprises that promoted art and oppositional cinema. This generation of leftists-cinephiles-writers-lecturers-filmmakers, gathered around certain publications, institutions and collectives, began to exert increasing influence, formulate criteria about cinema and more importantly to influence the taste of the cinephile and youth audiences, because they controlled all aspects of 1960s cinephile culture. Thus they played a pivotal role in the formation of NEK, of which they were also part.

¹⁵⁴ See chapter 5, p. 239 and p. 256, footnote 59.

3.

THE INDUSTRY'S RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL CINEMA DEBATE
AND THE **NEW** MARKET'S NEEDS: *'THE REFINEMENT OF THE
POPULAR' OR 'THE POPULARISATION OF ART'*

In the first chapter of this study I briefly discussed the two alternative Greek film cultures, the 'art' and the 'popular', which co-existed, clashed and intersected during the 1950s. In the present chapter I shall argue that while these cultures became increasingly polarized between 1960 and 1967, a noteworthy synthesis of the two emerged. The 1960s was a highly prolific period for the Greek mainstream, which reached the peak of its productivity, technical sophistication and commercial appeal. However the period saw the foreign art film becoming established in the Greek market and also the rise of a self-conscious and systematically organized domestic 'art' cinematic model which included legislation, critical writing, publications, cine clubs, festivals and independently produced art films. The 'art' model predominantly defined itself in opposition to the commercial sector, its rhetoric was polemical, and it claimed institutional power and a position in the market as the only authorized national film culture.

As I shall try to demonstrate, in the 1960s, the Greek 'art' film – at that time primarily termed 'quality' film – was not a matter of marginal concern confined to elite circles and institutions, as it is widely believed, but instead of much wider impact. A closer examination of the period reveals that an increased concern with 'quality' in the mainstream also emerged, since an inclusion in a considerable number of popular films of thematic and formal motifs more associated with art cinema, and moreover the rise of a conscious and clearly identifiable 'quality'/'art' film tendency within the commercial sector made their presence considerably felt. As a consequence, daring thematic material of cultural, social, political and existential significance in combination with formal experimentation and an emphasis on the visual properties of cinema – all qualities most commonly attributed exclusively to NEK – permeated popular films turning areas of commercial production into more critical and cinematic articulations. This development is not surprising and should be seen in the wider context of blurring the boundaries between

‘high culture’ and the ‘popular’ that marked the Greek cultural life of the 1960s as a general phenomenon.

The above view distances itself from other understandings of Greek film history by emphasising the factors that suggest continuities between the cinematic developments of the 1960s (the golden age of the Greek commercial movie) and the 1970s (the period of the explosion of the domestic art film) as well as between the ‘Old’ and the ‘New’ models. The main purpose of this chapter is to show that the rise of NEK was not a definite and sudden break with the established popular cinematic model of the 1960s, but instead that in many ways the ‘new’ was prefigured and anticipated in developments already present in the commercial industry and market itself.

3.1 New challenges, new strategies

During the 1960s changes in both the domestic and international film industries shaped a considerably different and more antagonistic market environment. Firstly, there was the spectacular expansion of the domestic market with the demand for film product (foreign and Greek alike) increasing dramatically. Plenty of room for investment in film activity was created for old and established production companies – distributors and exhibitors as well – and at the same time for more or less ambitious newcomers who sought a place in the market. Illuminatingly, the 1959/60 to 1966/67 film seasons saw an impressive influx of more than 170 new production companies into the industry, raising the total number of active production firms to over 200. While these companies struggled to remain in business, strong competition between them flourished.

Antagonism was further intensified by competition from the huge number of imported films. In contrast to the majority of European countries,¹ Greek audiences had been exposed to an impressively wide range of foreign features because there had been no market protectionist measures. Statistics show that the annual number of imported films between 1959/60 to 1966/67 fluctuated from 559 to 696.² This situation caused producers to complain about the state's inaction in defending the national industry while commentators talked of cultural colonization. The fact, however, is that the Greek audience's access to a wide range of spectacular, sensual, exotic or modern films had elevated their expectations as far as subject matter, technical sophistication, spectacle, glamour, action, eroticism, exoticism and depiction of the modernity of the western societies were concerned.

A new development also of crucial importance was the establishment in 1960 of the 'Week of Greek Cinema' in Thessaloniki, which opened an exhibition and promotion space for locally produced 'quality' / 'art' films. The prestige of winning awards in the domestic film festival created strong competition among the producers and conflicts with the institution of the festival. The 1960s also witnessed the explosion of film festivals across the world. Prizes won in foreign competitions were a matter of much greater prestige and enormous national pride, signifying also the possibility of international distribution. In addition, new legislation and institutions (such as the honour of being a film 'worthy of protection', state awards, awards from the critics) generated a new terrain of antagonism and provided a significant impetus to the creation of 'quality' / 'art' films.

¹ On the viewing experience of European countries after the war see Nowell-Smith 1997(a): 442.

² See, Vakalopoulos 2005: 437 and compare with Kouanis 2001: 238. Numbers should be regarded with some suspicion, since a careful research shows that there was a much greater number of imports than those included in the official statistics. Thus Despoina Skalotheou in a letter sent to the trade periodical *Theamata*, which publicized the official statistics, complained about the incorrect data that the periodical provided, namely only 4 films being distributed by her own company instead of the actual 15. Interestingly the films which were excluded from statistics were 6 Turkish, 3 Spanish, 1 Indian and 1 Mexican. (*Theamata*, 30/6/63).

The growing culture of ‘serious’ cinephilia and the emergence of an educated, cine-literate and politicized young audience that demanded ‘quality’ / ‘art’ films were also new developments of the time. Internationally, the 1960s was the heyday of the art film. Creative authors and new movements across Europe and the world carried out fresh energies that transformed the international cinemascape. In Greece art and new wave films had a significant impact not only on the film societies and the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ but they were also often highly successful at the box-office. In addition, the growing criticism and unanimous disapproval of popular films as ‘bad taste’ and ‘low quality’, accompanied by a strong desire for a ‘valued’ national cinema, precisely in the 1960s, was elevated to the status of a national public debate about high cultural standards and the proper representation of Greek film abroad. Public debates set up a framework of expectations about what a ‘quality film’ ought to be, requiring realism, social and other serious content, ‘Greekness’, European standards, *mise-en-scène* sophistication, ‘popular authenticity’, etc. placing an insistent pressure upon producers and filmmakers, who were challenged to respond.

Although the Greek mainstream enjoyed extraordinary domestic popularity, its presence outside the country was very restricted, relying almost entirely on the Greek diaspora communities in countries such as West Germany and Australia.³ At the same time the limited – by nature – domestic audience began to show evidence of change and diversity and become less reliable. The threat of television – which had already devastated more robust national film industries – was felt for the first time in 1960 when the first

³ And also US, Canada, Cyprus, Turkey, Britain, South Africa, Ethiopia, Israel, etc. (See *Theamata* 10/2/63 and 25/3/63).

Greek television broadcast was made from an experimental station and the government announced (in 1963) its intention to develop an extensive broadcasting network.⁴

Moreover, the socioeconomic, political and cultural environment in which Greek popular films were produced and consumed in the 1960s was radically different from that of the previous decade. The political upheaval and mass radicalization, the rapid modernization of Greek society, dramatic improvements in welfare, the blossoming of creativity throughout domestic and international cultural life, the loosening of censorship, the emergence of youth as a driving force behind sociopolitical and cultural change were also developments to which the commercial industry was challenged to respond.

In this complex and changing market and socio-cultural context, the over-expanded Greek cinema industry, with its plethora of production companies, imported and domestic films (over 100 per year) and venues,⁵ all catering to a limited audience, began to suffocate. In the 1960s, as the Greek popular film reached its high point it also seemed to enter a state of crisis because the repetition of old formulas could no longer guarantee large audiences and commercial viability. New challenges required new strategies and producers were forced to rethink and modernize their product as well as reexamine their production and marketing policies. In this sense industry was compelled to innovate by investigating fields until then unexplored: new genres (e.g. musical, 'social protest' film, female war melodrama), new stars, new themes, new directors, new styles, widescreen and colour formats, all were used in the 1960s to enrich the commercial appeal and competitiveness of the films.

⁴ See *Theamata* (10/3/63). For detailed information about the history of the Greek television see Valoukos 1998: 12-49.

⁵ According to data given by Kouanis, in 1961 film theatres in Greece accounted 560, while in 1971 were raised to 1034 (Kouanis 2001:107).

The familiar to the audience popular traditional Greek forms of entertainment had provided an important and constant point of reference for domestic popular film in terms of themes, narrative and visual style. At the same time the popular films of the 1960s demonstrated a remarkable awareness of their place in an internationalized market environment (as the domestic film market was),⁶ having the foreign products as an additional major point of reference and prime example of how to structure themselves. For these reasons Greek popular cinema has been widely accused of being derivative, hybrid and inauthentic.

Although closer examination is required of the relationships between specific Greek genres and their foreign counterparts,⁷ as well as the focus of domestic production at certain times on genres which had originally experienced box-office success as imported products, it is indisputable that the Greek popular film of the 1960s was influenced by foreign cinema significantly, creating its own indigenous versions of foreign genres, motifs and styles. In this sense, in the 1960s, a period during which the international art film experienced its heyday, the Greek film industry was forced to acknowledge the strong commercial and export potential of the 'quality' / 'art' film and to attempt a partial shift towards more sophisticated and artistic products. Similarly, in its struggle to cope with external and internal tensions, the industry assimilated into popular movies thematic and formal borrowings from art films which appealed to a wider audience.

From the early 1960s people within the industry had expressed great anxiety about the future of Greek film, widely reflected in interviews, texts and debates of the period. Particularly enlightening is the title of an article written by the small-scale producer and

⁶ See Eleftheriotis 2001:188.

⁷ E.g. mountain film with 'spaghetti western', the popular *melo* with Indian, Turkish, Egyptian and Italian melodrama, domestic musical with Hollywood, etc.

filmmaker Vasilis Betsos in the trade periodical *Theamata*: ‘We must stay alive’.⁸ The dominant view was that the viability of the industry depended on expanding the audience for Greek film and thus one of the central problems became the lack of access to international audiences:

10 million people is a slight number. [...] Without international promotion of the Greek product, we do not have the preconditions for its consumption (Savvas Pylarinos).⁹

Let’s start with the most burning problem faced by Greek cinema: the closed frontiers (Nestoras Matsas).¹⁰

A commonly stated view in such discussions was that access to foreign markets could be achieved by raising the cultural standards of Greek films. Nestoras Matsas in his article ‘Greece confronting international Festivals’ argued that given the marginality of the Greek language and the unfamiliarity of Greek actors, the only reliable way to succeed in international competitions was by having a quality product: “such a quality that could overcome all the other obstacles”.¹¹ Reinforcing this conviction, in a discussion on Greek cinema, the producer Antonis Zervos paid particular attention to the fact that the art film *Mikres Aphrodites / Young Aphrodites* (1963, Nikos Koundouros) had been a commercial success in Japan.¹²

In addition, several producers pointed out that a clearer understanding of the Greek audience was needed to ensure better results in the domestic market.

⁸ *Theamata* (28/12/65).

⁹ *Theamata* (18/12/64).

¹⁰ *Theamata* (31/1/65).

¹¹ *Theamata* (15/5/65).

¹² *Theamata* (28/12/65).

It seems that we have to review many of our ideas about the ‘public’ which Greek films are addressing. Because either the taste of the audience has begun to change radically or they have simply become bored by triviality. (Giannakopoulos)¹³

Similarly the distributor and producer Victoras Michaelidis argued that the anxiety about the growing quality of foreign films would help Greek cinema move forward: “the audience has begun to be interested in films of artistic quality, which now enjoy commercial success. For example the film [*Wild*] *Strawberries* is successful even in the provinces”.¹⁴ Thus the challenge for the producers was twofold: on the one hand to establish themselves in international markets and on the other to satisfy the raised expectations of the domestic audience, including its most educated section which traditionally disdained Greek movies. Higher cultural standards seemed to offer opportunities for further development and a way to avert crisis in the industry. Importantly, this aspired ‘Europeanization’ or ‘internationalisation’ of Greek film through ‘quality’ was in line with the demands for the cultural legitimacy of Greek cinema and its proper representation abroad, which emphatically had been articulated in public discourse on Greek film and promoted by state policies.

The production sector of ‘Old’ cinema of the 1960s was not of course a homogeneous and coherent entity, as the business environment was highly fractured. There were, broadly speaking, three types of competitors: firstly, a handful of well-organized and determined professionals including both older players (e.g. Anzervos) and ambitious newcomers (e.g. Damaskinos-Michaelidis, Roussopouloi Bros-G. Lazaridis-Sarris-Psaras, James Parris, Klearchos Konitsiotis, etc.) who competed against Finos Film (the most

¹³ *Theamata* (15/10/65).

¹⁴ *Theamata* (28/12/65).

powerful and well-organized production firm) and each other. These companies had high production and technical standards and aimed to satisfy a wide spectrum of the audience including the first-run cinemas. Secondly, there were several medium-sized firms which had smaller budgets but maintained a relatively stable presence (e.g. Olympia film, Novak film, Sabatakos, Strantzalis, et.al.). Finally, there was a plethora of opportunistic and often short-lived enterprises producing low-cost quickies with an output of on average one or two films before they folded. The medium and small-sized companies mainly catered to the second-run cinemas and provincial areas, and although they experimented with several types of films tended to focus on the popular genres of comedy, popular *melo* and mountain film (*foustanella*), attracting large audiences and therefore putting pressure on the established producers.¹⁵ Opportunistic entrepreneurs were widely accused of lowering the cultural status of Greek cinema:

These upstarts, opportunists [...] realizing that this job [...] offers easy money [...] began to make ... *Greek films*. [...] [And while the others] needed 8 to 10 weeks to make a film, for those upstarts 2 or 3 weeks were enough to complete their disastrous work. And I am saying disastrous because these films which flooded the Greek market confused the audience, harmed Greek cinema and negatively influenced its development. (Dinos Dimopoulos 1998: 280-281)

Nevertheless, since the films from these medium or small-sized companies were not the products of the organized commercial sector, they can be considered independent productions, bearing therefore the features of independently-made films. This, although open to discussion, offers an interesting way to approach a large segment of the 'Old'

¹⁵ The most successful among them was the medium-sized though dynamic Klak film, which, specializing in the popular *melo* and following clever production and marketing strategies, managed to achieve huge commercial success and establish enormously popular new stars (Nikos Xanthopoulos and Martha Vourtsi) and new manners.

cinema, which might reveal aspects of their style, subject matter and ideology that have until today not attracted the attention of scholars.¹⁶ And indeed the scholar with surprise can detect behind some of these companies a striving for alternative and even artistic films.¹⁷ Generally speaking, the production policies of the industry were based on two co-existing types of films – present even in the annual output of a single production company (e.g. Finos Film) – that enabled producers to meet the demands of competition and the market: on the one hand relatively low-cost and quickly made movies that usually – but not exclusively – followed already successful formulae, and on the other a smaller number of demanding and often big-budget films in which a degree of thematic and formal experimentation was encouraged. Some of these films, derived from all three types of production companies, attempted to indigenize the European art film or internationalize the Greek film product.

In the previous decade there had also been films which through artistic quality strove for an international audience such as *Stella* (1955), which launched Cacoyannis' international career. After this success and hoping to compete at international Film Festivals, Finos supported projects made by the two most prestigious film directors of the time, Michael Cacoyannis and Nikos Koundouros: *I Paranomi / The Owtlaws* (1957, Koundouros), *To Potami / The River* (1958, Koundouros) and *To Telefteo Psema / A Matter of Dignity* (1958, Cacoyannis). Finos also investigated the possibility of reaching international audiences with popular films. Thus in the romantic comedy *Mia Zoi tin Ehoume / We Have Only One Life* (1958, G. Tzavellas), he hired for the female lead the

¹⁶ For example, films made by independent enterprises often bear Neo-Realist qualities, since poor financing did not permit the extensive use of studios. In the context of 'independent' production we can also trace alternative star systems, the codes of which form ideological alternatives compared to the star system promoted, for instance, by Finos Film.

¹⁷ One example of a small-scale firm which produced alternative films is the production company TH-V founded by Thanasis Vengos.

Italian star of melodramas Yvonne Sanson,¹⁸ who was extremely popular with Mediterranean audiences. In addition, *Agioupa* (1957, Gregg Tallas), *I Limni ton Pothon / The Lake of Desires* (1958, Giorgos Zervos) and *Matomeno Iliovasilema / Sunset in Blood* (1959, Andreas Labrinos) are examples of independent films whose form and content reveal an awareness of the international market.

The commercial failure of Finos' attempts to appeal internationally in the 1950s made him more cautious of taking such risks in the 1960s. Nevertheless he co-funded Cacoyannis' *Electra* (1962)¹⁹ and experimented with other types of 'quality' films using established popular directors and often stars who appealed to both the international and the domestic market. *Madalena* (1960, Dinos Dimopoulos), brilliantly photographed by Walter Lassaly, the violent *Amok* (1964, Dimopoulos) and the artistically ambitious *Ekinos ki Ekini / He and She* (1967, Errikos Andreou) offer representative examples of Finos' conception of films which are both 'popular' and 'artistic' with export potential. Dimopoulos, who was behind the idea for *Amok* wrote in his autobiography:

It was an experiment. I wanted with this film to show Finos that it was possible to make films that would be liked by the Greek audience and also have an export potential. Importantly, that it could be made with less than a quarter of the budget of the other big productions with the big stars. [...] I am saying experiment because if it was successful, then when we had to make low-budget films, we could shift towards quality, which we desired so much at the time, when we were young. (Dimopoulos: 1998: 294).

¹⁸ See Aktsoglou 1994: 19 and 56.

¹⁹ It was coproduced by Lopert Pictures.

Moreover the dominant distribution and exhibition company in Greece, Damaskinos-Michaelidis, dynamically moved into production²⁰ and strove for ‘alternative’ and ‘quality’ films with appeal to international markets. Films such as *Englima sta Paraskinia / Backstage Crime* (1960, Dinos Katsouridis), *Gamos ala Ellinika / Wedding, Greek Style* (1964, Vasilis Georgiadis) and *I De Gini na Fovite ton Andra / And May the Wife Fear her Husband* (1965, Giorgos Tzavellas) make manifest a refreshing mentality, while films such as *Kokkina Fanaria / Red Lanterns* (1963, Georgiadis) based on the huge stage success of Alexis Damianos’ *Theatro Poria, O Fovos / Fear* (1966) written and directed by Kostas Manousakis whose *Prodosia / Betrayal* (1964) had already won awards at the Moscow Festival, *Diplopenies / Dancing the Syrtaki* (1966) and *Dama Spathi / Queen of Clubs* (1966) directed by the highly promising Giorgos Skalenakis, who had studied and worked in Czechoslovakia, confirm Damaskinos-Michaelidis’ aspiration to reach international audiences. In 1965, a short-lived partnership between Finos Film and Damaskinos-Michailidis was created with the aim of dominating the domestic and opening up international market. This enterprise combined the strong international connections of Damaskinos-Michaelidis’ and Finos’ strong track record in making films. Their official announcement in the press highlighted the ambition of crossing the borders: “[With this partnership] the foundations of a magnificent campaign and international promotion of Greek cinema are established”.²¹ Among the films that this partnership produced, *To Choma Vaftike Kokino / Blood on the Land* (1965, Georgiadis) was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1965, as *Kokkina Fanaria / Red Lanterns* (pr. Damaskinos-Michaelidis) had been two years earlier (1963).²² Other

²⁰ As a consequence of the dramatic expansion of the domestic market and the increasing demand for Greek film, in the early 1960s, the major distributors (Damaskinos-Michaelidis and Skouras Films) moved into production. For some information about the production activity of Damaskinos-Michaelidis, see Grigoriou 1996: 47 (vol. 2).

²¹ *Theamata* (15/5/1965)

²² On Damaskinos-Michailidis / Finos Film partnership, see also Kartalou 2006c: 142-146.

partnerships were set up with similar aims, such as the Skouras-Konitsiotis association: “The film company Skouras films intends to make Greek films addressing international audiences. Klearchos Konitsiotis will supervise the production sector.”²³ Anzervos also produced *Mikres Afrodites / Young Aphrodites* (1963, Nikos Koundouros), while Vasilisa Drakaki, the daughter of Antonis Zervos,²⁴ took the risk of funding the art film *Ouranos / Sky* (1962, Takis Kanellopoulos).

International co-productions were another way that producers could establish themselves in foreign markets. Due to the rising international interest in Greek settings and the new legislation (Act 4208/61) that gave foreign producers significant financial benefits, international co-productions became more attractive. However, only a small number of them were actually made, although the most distinguished of them *Never on Sunday* (1960), *Phaedra* (1961), *Electra* (1962), and *Zorba the Greek* (1964) played a pivotal role in promoting Greek film internationally. Especially after the failure of the expensive *Aliki / Aliki my Love* (1962), an English-language Greek-American co-production starring Aliki Vouyouklaki for which Finos hired Rudolph Mate (the director of *The 300 Spartans*), led Finos to abandon international co-productions.²⁵

The ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ provided opportunities for promotion and establishment in the domestic market in terms of quality and film companies were encouraged to include in their annual plan films that would be able to compete. The fact that Finos often came into conflict with the festival and withdrew his films from the

²³ *Avgi* (27/6/65).

²⁴ The founder of Anzervos.

²⁵ I am citing some representative examples of co-productions in which Greek producers participated: *Hellas, I Chora ton oniron / Traumland der Sehnsucht* (1960, dir. Wolfgang Muller-Zen, pr. Skouras films / Wolfgang Muller-Zen), *Poliorkia / Le moutons de Praxos* (1962, dir. Claude Bernard Auber, pr. Lodice / K. Karagiannis), *Ta Sintrimmia tis Zois / Casablan* (1963, Anzervos / Natas Film, dir. Larry Frish), *I Kathos Prepi / The Dignified* (1963, pr. Atlantic film / P. Koukouvinos, dir. Giorgos Dizikirikis), *Chtipokardia sto Thranio / Siralardaki heyecanlar* (1963, pr. Konitsiotis / Birsell Film, dir. Sakelarios), *Mia Sfaira stin Kardia / A bullet Through the Heart* (1965, dir. Jean-Daniel Pollet, pr. C.M.S. / Lembesis Films), *Ta Skalopatia / The Steps* (1966, pr. Petropoulakis / Lenni Hersfield, dr. Lenni Hersfield), etc.

competition opened up a fertile space for other competitors.²⁶ At least two dynamic producers, James Parris and Klearchos Konitsiotis, who made films that departed from the norm, used the festival to establish a prestigious profile. James Paris' career trajectory is particularly illuminating. He started out in film production with *Galini / Serenity* (1958) directed by the Greek-American experimental filmmaker Gregory Markopoulos and based on a highly acclaimed novel of Ilias Venezis, and he went on to adapt the Sophocle's *Antigone* (1961, Giorgos Tzavellas).²⁷ In 1963 he hired Grigoris Grigoriou to make a series of artistically ambitious and alternative films: the anti-war dramas *Adelfos Anna / Monk Anna* (1963) and *Diogmos / Persecution* (1964), the unconventional music film *Ta 201 Kanarinia / 201 Canaries* (1964), the politically brave *I Mira enos Athoou / An Innocent's Destiny* (1965) and the lighthearted *Ochi Kirie Johnson / No Mr Johnson* (1965).²⁸ He also produced the provincial social drama *Dichasmos / The Split* (1965, Errikos Andreou), the resistance film *Xehasmenoi Iroes / Forgotten Heroes* (1966, Nikos Gardelis) and the cosmopolitan *Erotas sti Lesvo / Love Affairs in Lesvos* (1967, Jiri Sequens). Most of the above films competed and won prizes at the domestic festival. The extensive use of English (*No Mr Johnson*, *The Split* and *Love Affairs in Lesvos*), the use of actors internationally known from *Never on Sunday* (*No Mr Johnson*, *The Split*)²⁹ and Jiri Sequens's direction (*Love Affairs in Lesvos*) reveal that the films were intended for international promotion. Similarly Konitsiotis produced a cluster of high-status films for both domestic and foreign festivals. For the three war dramas he made, *Prodosia / Betrayal* (1964), *Epistrofi / Return* (1965)³⁰ and the English-language film, whose story is set in Berlin, *Ephitaphios gia Echtrous ke Filous / Epitaph for Enemies and Friends* (1966), his

²⁶ By the 2nd Week there was conflict between the producers when Finos withdrew his films (*O Katiforos / Decline*, *I Liza ke I Alli / Liza and her Double* and the short *Giannena*) in protest at the acceptance in the festival of *Antigone* and *Alimono stous Neous / Woe to the Young* although it was behind schedule. (See *Eleftheria*, 19/9/61)

²⁷ See Aktsoglou 1994: 59.

²⁸ For the collaboration of Grigoriou with James Paris, see Grigoriou 1996:88-108.

²⁹ Despo Diamantidou and Titos Vandis.

³⁰ It was co-produced with Damaskinos-Michaelidis.

scriptwriters were the distinguished poet Aris Alexandrou and the highly acclaimed young novelists Antonis Samarakis and Vasilis Vasilikos respectively. To direct the films he employed Manousakis, whose first independently funded feature *Erotas stous Ammolofous / Love in the Sand Dunes* (1958) had artistic merits, Andreou whose exceptional psychological thriller *Efialtis / Nightmare* (1961) won a prize at the New Delhi Film Festival and the Czech director Jiri Sequens known for his *Assassination* (1964).

Medium and small-sized companies such as Savvas Pylarinos [*I Adistaktoi / The Ruthless* (1965, Dinos Katsouridis)] and newly founded firms like ‘Studio Macedonia’ [*I Ekdikisi tou Kavalari / The Revenge of the Rider* (1962, Errikos Thalassinos)], ‘Dan Film’ [*I Pagida / The Trap* (1962, Giorgos Dizikirikis)] and ‘W.R.C. Films’ [*Epichirisi Doureios Ippos / Ops Trojan Horse* (1966, Treddy Roumanas)] also hoped to gain prestige with an award at the Thessaloniki festival. Moreover, Errikos Andreou, the 23 year-old director of the self-supported *Efialtis / Nightmare* (1961) established his reputation at the festival, while Soctates Kapsaskis and Dinos Katsouridis, who had both worked extensively in the industry, presented independent projects, *O Zestos Minas Avgoustos / Hot August* (1966) and *Sintomo Dialimma / A Brief Break* (1966) respectively. Equally worthy of attention are the independent films *Enas Delikanis / A Lad* (1963, Manos Skouloudis) and *Monemvasia* (1964, Giorgos Sarris), which also competed at the Thessaloniki festival.

Many of the above films were exhibited abroad and each year four-five films represented Greece in several foreign festivals, receiving various prizes at international events,³¹ a fact that fortified the expectations and efforts of producers and filmmakers.

³¹ Such as *Never on Sunday* (best actress award at the 1960 Cannes Film Festival, Academy award for best original song at the same year), *Antigone* (best actor at the 1961 Saint Francisco Film Festival, best actress at the 1961 London Film Festival, etc.), *To Potami / The River* (best direction at the 1961 Boston Film Festival), *Efialtis/ Nightmare* (a special distinction at the 1961 New Delhi Film Festival), *Electra* (1962) (best adapted screenplay and best sound design awards at the 1962 Cannes Film Festival, Silver Laurel at the 1962 Berlin Film Festival, Special Jury Award at the 1962 Acapulco Film Festival, nomination for an Academy Award as best foreign language film, etc.), *Young Aphrodites* (winner of the Best Director Prize at

Occasionally films appeared only at foreign festivals, such as *Fovos / Fear*, which went directly at Berlin Film Festival, omitting Thessaloniki. Additionally, Finos and Damaskinos-Michaelidis organized ‘Weeks’ and festivals abroad to promote their movies.³²

The desire for cultural legitimacy, the influence of critical discourse on Greek audience and the anxiety of the industry to stand up to competition from imported films are clearly reflected in the promotion material for popular movies. The term ‘quality film’ was extensively used as part of the popular film’s advertising practices, the rhetoric of which often adapted the dominant critical discourse on Greek cinema. So, apart from advertisements which focused on the film as pure entertainment (e.g. “Without ‘high art’ and ... deep meanings ... it will offer to you two really happy hours”)³³ there was also the following type of promotional material:

A quality film. (*Epichirisis Dourios Ippos /Ops Trojan Horse*)³⁴

It is not only a Greek film. It is a film with Greek content and cinematic quality. (*I Katara tis Manas / The Mother’s Curse*)³⁵

the 1963 Berlin Film Festival), *Ouranos / Sky* (Silver Prize at the 1963 Napoli Film Festival), *Enas Delikanis / A Lad* (best actress in supporting role at the 1963 Saint Francisco Film Festival), *Zorba the Greek* (academy awards for best photography, best costume design, best actress in supporting role and academy award nominations for best film, best direction, best actor, best adapted screenplay), *I de Gini na Fovite ton Adra / And May the Wife Fear her Husband* (best direction at the 1965 Chicago Film festival), *Prodosia / Betrayal* (Special distinction from the Soviet Peace Committee at the 1965 Moscow film Festival) *Dichasmos / Split* (special distinction at the 1966 Chicago Film Festival). *Katiforos / Decline* was the most successful film at the Mexican box-office in 1962/63 film season (Rouvas & Stathakopoulos 2005: 210), while *Amok* (1963) gained extraordinary popularity in the U.S.A. (Rouvas & Stathakopoulos 2005:299).

³² Finos organized an Aliko Vouyouklaki festival in Israel [*To Vima* (6/4/63) and *Theamata* (10/4/63)] and together with the Greek Embassy a festival of 7 Greek movies in Buenos Aires [*To Vima* (2/5/63)]. Damaskinos-Michaelidis during the 1966 Cannes Festival set a festival of Greek films (including *Fear*, *Split*, *Dancing the Sysrtaki* and *Blood on the Land*). [*To Vima* (29/4/66) and *Avgi* (6/4/66)]. Greek film Weeks took place also in Austria [*To Vima* (15/12/63)], Bulgaria [*Avgi* (28/2/64)], East Berlin [*To Vima* and *Avgi* (18/2/65)], London [*To Vima* (10/6/65) and *Avgi* (23/6/65)], Soviet Union [*Theamata* (31/10/66)], etc.

³³ Taken from an advertisement of *O Klearchos, I Marina ke o Kontos / Klearchos, Marina and the Short* (1961, dir. Nikos Tsiforos, pr. Finos Film) in *Avgi* (17/12/1961).

³⁴ *Theamata* (7/4/1966).

³⁵ *Avgi* (23/2/61).

A strong AVANT GARDE creation without triviality.³⁶ A great creation garlanded at Thessaloniki Film Festival. A film with the force of avant garde that propels Greek cinema 10 years forward. (*I Mira enos Athoou / An Innocent's Destiny*)³⁷

It is an absolutely European film. (*I De Gini na Fovite ton Andra / And May Wife Fear her Husband*)³⁸

A work of international standards. A film that bears no relation to what Greek production has hitherto shown. (*Otan Lipi I Gata / When the Cat is Away*)³⁹

Full of the anxieties of contemporary youth. For the first time Greek cinema turns its attention to a social problem.⁴⁰ A stirring social document. (*Katiforos / Decline*)⁴¹

A realist creation by Dinos Dimopoulos (*I Ehtiri / The Enemies*).⁴²

[A film] of great *mise-en scène*, of equal value as the best foreign one. (*I Zoi moy Arhizi me Sena / My Life Starts with You*)⁴³

A film from Greece addressed to the whole world. (*I Adistaktoi / The Ruthless*)⁴⁴

A super musical of international value and marvelous songs that the whole world will soon be singing (*Diplopenies / Dancing the Syrtaki*).⁴⁵

³⁶ *To Vima* and *Avgi* (20/11/65).

³⁷ *To Vima* and *Avgi* (21/11/65).

³⁸ *To Vima* (16/1/65).

³⁹ *Avgi* (18/3/62).

⁴⁰ *Avgi* (1/12/61).

⁴¹ *Avgi* (2/12/61).

⁴² *To Vima* (16/10/65).

⁴³ *Avgi* (11/1/62).

⁴⁴ *To Vima* (17/10/65).

⁴⁵ *To Vima* (13/3/66).

Damaskinos-Michaelidis proudly announces that the new work by Manousakis has been chosen to represent Greece at the Cannes Festival. (*Fovos / Fear*)⁴⁶

In addition, the company ‘Roussopoulos Bros-Giorgos Lazaridis-Sarris-Psaras’ (established in 1959) particularly emphasized the quality of the film in their marketing and promotion campaign and introduced the idea of distinguishing as ‘Special’ a small number of films in its annual production.⁴⁷ *Dipsa gia Zoi / Thirst for Live* (1964, Socrates Kapsaskis), for example, was promoted as a ‘Special film’ belonging to a tetralogy entitled ‘People of our Time’.⁴⁸ The company’s press release about *Thirst for Live* declared:

[The film] is one of the most demanding accomplishments of Greek cinema. [...] The subject matter of the film has nothing in common with the usual dull, trivial and boring themes that have plagued Greek movies and their viewers for years. It is an original story, real, alive, ‘existing’. [...] It bears something of our time and, in parallel with the main plotline, situations and problems relevant to the contemporary people are developed. [...] [The film] comprises 52 different settings and one could easily say that the film is ‘c i n e m a’ and not filmed theatre [...] as is the case with nine out of ten Greek films.⁴⁹

As it is evident from the above examples, promotional material – which was often dismissive of earlier Greek movies and hailed the promoted film as a ‘new departure’ – distinguish the promoted films from other domestic productions in terms of their quality,

⁴⁶ *Avgi* (27/2/66)

⁴⁷ For details about ‘Special films’ and the quality campaigns of Roussopoulos Bros, see *Eleftheria* (9/10/63) and *Theamata* (28/12/64 and 31/5/66).

⁴⁸ The first film promoted as ‘Special’ and belonging to the tetralogy was *Orgi / Fury* (1962, Vasilis Georgiadis), which also won the honour of being a film ‘worthy of protection’.

⁴⁹ *Theamata* (15/1/1964).

realism, social criticism, international appeal and European standards, national specificity, formal innovation and *mise-en-scène* sophistication, all qualities determined by the public debate on Greek film. In other words the film's status as 'quality' was part of its commercial value.

3.2 Prestigious subject matter: Ancient Drama, modern literature and history

The view that Greek film could achieve cultural respectability through the artistic value of its scripts was deeply rooted in the minds of commentators, producers and filmmakers. In his article 'How our film production is going to be improved' the small-scale producer, director and scriptwriter Platon Kappas argued that the way to improve domestic production and enter the international terrain was to draw on ancient and contemporary Greek literature and original scripts written by intellectuals.⁵⁰ Investigating the reasons for Greek cinema's lack of success in foreign markets, Nestoras Matsas wrote in his article 'Ta Siderenia Tichi / The Iron Wall':

There is a problem with subject matter, which is crucial if the international market is to open its iron gate for Greek cinema. [...] Contemporary Greek literature, which has already crossed borders, can offer the basis for films with international potential. Books by Venezis, Mirivilis and other younger writers provide material for great films that will use Greek settings and simultaneously touch the foreign spectator.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Theamata* (28/12/1965).

⁵¹ *Theamata* (31/7/64).

According to this point of view, great ancient and contemporary Greek literary works were basic material for prestigious films since their established artistic merits were a guarantee of quality. As a consequence of these ideas two significant trends in domestic cinema emerged: films drawn on Ancient Greece and adaptations of contemporary literature.

The use of antiquity in the narratives of Greek films can be seen first and foremost as an attempt of filmmakers to bring the ‘high’ cultural associations of Greek Drama and myth into the ‘popular’ form of cinema. It can be also seen as a means to provide the ‘Greekness’ deemed essential for a legitimate national cinema, while also appealing to an international audience (Greek Tragedies and myths were known and highly appreciated across the world). Furthermore it can be conceived as a direct answer of the industry to the popularity of the many foreign mainstream adaptations of ancient Greek myths and history (particularly Italian peplum) – which were felt to make a mockery of Greece’s national heritage – and also to the respectability of the more artistic treatments of Greek myths such as Cocteau’s interpretation of the Orpheus myth or Marcel Camus’s *Orfeu Negro*, which won the 1959 Cannes Golden Palm and the Oscar for best foreign film. Reflecting the demand for cultural legitimacy, reconciliation of national heritage, popularity, indigenous character and internationality, Greek Tragedy and myth served as an effective vehicle for establishing Greek cinema abroad.⁵²

Both industry and independent producers were part of this trend and various approaches to the subject can be discerned: from the five-camera reproduction of National Theatre’s staging⁵³ of Sophocles’ *Electra* (1963, Ted Zarpas), Tzavellas’ ceremonial adaptation of *Antigone* (1961), Cacoyannis’ realist treatment of Euripides’ *Electra* (1962)

⁵² During this period there was also a resurgent interest in theatrical productions of ancient Greek drama with some experimental stagings, such as the legendary *Perses* staged by Carolos Koun.

⁵³ A stage performance starring Anna Sinodinou and directed by Takis Mouzenidis.

shot on location, Nikos Koundouros' modernist and sensual version of the Dafnis and Chloe myth *Mikres Aphrodites / Young Aphrodites* (1963) to Dassin's cosmopolitan *Phaedra* (1961) and Mika Zacharopoulou's independent film *Dafnis ke Chloe 66 / Dafnis and Chloe 66* (1966) which incorporate classic myths in contemporary stories. *Never on Sunday* also includes a stage performance of Medea and alludes to Greek ancient letters. Moreover, several mainstream films make references to ancient literature, for instance the Electra myth in *Dakria gia tin Electra / Tears for Electra* (1966, Yannis Dalianidis), Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae / The Assembly Women in An Oles i Gynekes tou Kosmou / If All Women in the World* (1967, Nestoras Matsas), the myth of Pan and Dionysos in *Enas Delikanis / A Lad* (1963, Manos Skouloudis), Menandros' *Dyskolos in Parthenos / The Virgin Man* (1966, Dimis Dadiras), while the film *Erotes sti Lesvo / Love Affairs in Lesvos* (1967, Giri Sequens) includes the staging of *Lysistrata* by local people.⁵⁴ Instructive is also the fact that the press of the time publicized a large number of planned films adaptations of ancient Greek material.⁵⁵

With regard to NEK, the thematic and stylistic treatment of ancient literature in the 1960s is of pivotal significance, not only because it offered an alternative to the established norms of the mainstream – interestingly *Electra* (1962, Cacoyannis) was hailed as “the greatest achievement of Greek cinema until now” by Marios Ploritis⁵⁶ and “maybe

⁵⁴ A sporadic use of classic myths and drama is encountered also in the 1950s. For example, *I Arpagi tis Persephonis / The Abduction of Persephone* (1956, Grigoriou) incorporates the myth referred to in the title, *O Anthropos tou Trenou / The Train Man* (1958, Dimopoulos) includes a *Medea* performance at Epidaurus, *Apagorevmeni Agapi / Forbidden Love* (1958, Tallas) adapts the myth of Iro and Leandros, and *Matomeno Iliovasilima / Sunset in Blood* (1959, Lambrinos) alludes to the myth of Pan.

⁵⁵ I cite some of the publicized plans: Dassin intended to make a film about Ancient Greece and the golden age of Pericles [*Avgi* (30/6/60)]; a Greek-Italian co-production adapting *Vakhai* was arranged [*To Vima* (17/8/1960)]; Dimitris Kollatos discussed with a French producer a film adaptation of Euripides' *Electra*. [*To Vima* (22/3/62)]; Lila Kourkoulakou discussed with Melina Merkouri the adaptation of *Lysistrata* [*To Vima* (24/3/62)]; Vouyouklaki was going to play *Lysistrata* in an English film. [*To Vima* (23/9/62)]; a film version of *Lysistrata* was also planned by Kollatos [*To Vima* (13/2/65) and (14/1/67)]; Panos Glykofridis intended to adapt Aristophanes' *Ploutos* [*Avgi* (3/2/65)]; James Paris intended to make a film about the life of Hippocrates [*To Vima* (25/10/62)].

⁵⁶ *Eleftheria* (3/10/62).

the most important [accomplishment] of Greek cinema” by Pavlos Zannas⁵⁷ – and it can be seen therefore as a forerunner to ‘New Greek Cinema’. It is significant primarily because, from 1970 onwards, classical myth and drama constitute a key thematic and representational component of NEK films, as they were used extensively as a source for the narrative and style. *Anaparastasi / Reconstruction* (1970, Theo Angelopoulos), *Thiasos / Traveling Players* (1974, Angelopoulos), *Promitheas se Deftero Prosospo / Prometheus 2nd Person Singular* (1975, Kostas Ferris), *Euridiki B.A. 2037* (1975, Nikos Nikolaidis) and *Diadikasia / Proccess* (1976, Dimos Theos) are only a few examples of NEK’s preoccupation with myth and Drama. Moreover NEK’s interest in antiquity can also be understood within market frameworks, as the associations of cultural legitimacy and national specificity raise the film’s international value. In this respect, as early as the 1960s this market orientation of NEK can be firstly traced.

The other noteworthy trend, although one which was more limited in terms of the films actually made, was the treatment of contemporary Greek literature. Interestingly most of the individuals behind this trend were the same ones who had introduced ancient drama and myth to Greek cinema. In 1956 Jules Dassin introduced this practice by making *O Christos Xanastavronete / He, Who must Die* based on Nikos Kazantzakis’ novel *Christ Recrucified*. In 1958, Gregory Markopoulos and James Parris adapted *Galini /Serenity*, while in 1960 Cacoyannis adapted Kosmas Politis’ novel *Eroica (Our Last Spring)*. The greatest success, however, came a few years later with Cacoyannis’ *Zorba the Greek* (1964), an adaptation of another famous work by Kazantzakis.

Especially with the rise to power of the Centrist liberal government and the loosening of censorship, there was a clear shift of interest towards the use of literary

⁵⁷ *To Vima* (13/9/62).

material in commercial films. There was a plethora of announcements in the press about the plans of producers and filmmakers to feature important literary works directed by established directors like Georgiadis or Grigoriou. Reflective of this development but also of the attempt to politicize the content of the films is the following recollection of Giorgos Lazaridis, a particularly dynamic producer of the time (Roussopoulos Bros-Lazaridis-Sarris-Psaras):

Being full of optimism, I applied for an advance permission, sending books, from *I Kageloporta / Wrought Iron Gate* by Andreas Frangias, *Ena pedi metrai t' astra / A child counts the stars* by Menelaos Loudemis, who at that time was a political refugee in Rumania and got in touch with him, to *Matomena chomata / Bleeding earth* by Dido Sotiriou (...) and *Kitrinos fakelos / Yellow envelope* by Karagatsis which had already been adapted by Vasilikos. [...] Of course, these films were never made. (Lazaridis 1999: 481-2)⁵⁸

Similarly, although they were widely discussed, planned film adaptations of other literary works never materialized: *Capetan Michalis / Captain Michalis* (Kazantzakis)⁵⁹ and *Varvari / Barbarians* (Konstantinos Kavafy)⁶⁰ planned by Cacoyannis, *Erotokritos* (Vitsentzos Kornaros),⁶¹ *Kekarmeni / The Shorn* (Nikos Kasdaglis)⁶² and *To Fillo, to Pigadi, t' Aggelliasma / The Plant, the Well, the Angel*, (Vasilis Vasilikos)⁶³ arranged by Nikos Koundouros, as well as *I Zoi en Tafo / Life in the Tomb* (Stratis Mirivilis),⁶⁴ *I*

⁵⁸ See also Soldatos (ed.) 1999: 71-72. The only script that was given permission from the state was *I Evdomi Mera tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation* based on Iakovos Kampanellis' play of the same title because it had already been staged by the National Theatre.

⁵⁹ *To Vima* (28/6/62 and 13/7/62).

⁶⁰ *To Vima* (25/7/63).

⁶¹ *To Vima* (2/3/60).

⁶² *To Vima* (21/2/1961).

⁶³ *To Vima* (29/12/63), *Avgi* (13/1/66), *To Vima* (3/2/66). See also Soldatos (2007).

⁶⁴ It was to be adapted by Savvas film [*To Vima* (27/11/63)] and later by Alekos Alexandrakis after a suggestion made by the East German studio Deffa. [*To Vima* (2/6/64 and 7/6/64) and *Avgi* (2/6/64 and 7/6/64)].

Megali Himera / The Great Illusion (Michalis Karagatsis),⁶⁵ *I Sonata tou Selinofotos / The Moonlight Sonata* (Yannis Ritsos),⁶⁶ *O Zitianos / The Beggar* (Andreas Karkavitsas),⁶⁷ ‘*Aggela*’ (Giorgos Sevasticoglou),⁶⁸ and many others. Nevertheless, *To Potami / The River* (1960, Nikos Koundouros) and *Tetragono / Square* (1964, Yannis Kokkolis / Stelios Jakson / Nikos Ikonomou / Kostas Tosios / Panos Katteris) adapted short stories by Samarakis, *Mechri to Ploio / Until the Ship Sails* (1966, Damianos) was based on short stories by Grigoris Xenopoulos and Spilios Passagiannis, *Metanastis / Emigrant* (1965, N. Matsas) combined *O Amerikanos / The American* and *Tichi ap’ tin America / Fortune from America*⁶⁹ by Alexandros Papadiamantis, while *Enas Delikanis / A Lad* (1963, Manos Skouloudis) reworked *Patouchas* by Ioannis Kondylakis.

Moreover, the company Roussopouli Bros which, as discussed, promoted a ‘quality’ profile, published the following announcement:

[The company], in its effort for a qualitative improvement in film production, wishes to collaborate with the country’s intellectuals, as this kind of contact will actively help the progress of Greek cinema. [...] The company therefore [...] invites Greek writers to send [...] copies of their work (books, novels, short-stories, drafts and scripts) to be used, if suitable, as the subject-matter or even the basis for quality Greek films.⁷⁰

Although with the exception of the *Seventh Day of Creation*, no collaboration arose from this, a number of distinguished writers worked in both the commercial and independent sectors. Apart from Margarita Liberaki (*Magic City, Phaedra*) and Iakovos

⁶⁵ *To Vima* (7/11/65) and (12/8/66).

⁶⁶ *To Vima* (7/2/1961).

⁶⁷ *To Vima* (17/1/1961).

⁶⁸ *Theamata* (31/3/1966, 15 /11/1966 and 28/2/1967) and *Avgi* (5/11/66).

⁶⁹ Delveroudi in Kartalou, Nikolaidou, Anastopoulos (ed.) (2006: 20).

⁷⁰ *To Vima* (9/4/63) and *Theamata* (10/4/1963).

Kampanellis (*Stella, Ogre of Athens, The Abduction of Persephone*) who had worked in cinema since the 1950s, the credits of a noteworthy number of 1960s films include the names of a highly acclaimed new generation of playwrights, novelists, poets and other young intellectuals: Aris Alexandrou, Loula Anagnostaki, Andreas Frangias, Nikos Gatsos, Thomas Gorpas, Vangelis Goufas, Dimitris Kehaidis, Kostas Kotzias, Tasos Leivaditis, Kostas Mourselas, Antonis Samarakis, Kostas Sfikas, Thanasis Valtinos and Vasilis Vasilikos.⁷¹

The desire to adapt great literature for the screen was finally widely fulfilled in the following decades through television serials which provided a new outlet for adaptations of literature. This trend was significantly contributed as much by ‘Old’ [e.g. *O Christos Xanastavronete / Christ Recrucified* (1975, Vasilis Georgiadis) and *Loxandra* (1980, Grigoris Grigoriou)] as by NEK film directors [e.g. *Menexedenia Politia / The Purple City* (1975, Kostas Ferris), *Lemonodasos / Lemon Forest* (1978, Tonia Marketaki), *I Daskala me ta Chrissa Matia / The Schoolmistress with the Golden Eyes* (1979, Kostas Aristopoulos) and *Akivernites Polities / Drifting Cities* (1985, Roviros Manthoulis)]. Although it did not become a dominant trend within ‘New Greek Cinema’, a noteworthy number of

⁷¹ More precisely: Alexandrou: *Prodosia / Betrayal* (1964, Manousakis); Anagnostaki: *Erotikes Istories / Love Stories* (1959, Kapsaskis), *I Ekdikisi tou Kavalari / The Revenge of the Rider* (1962, Thalassinis); Bost: *To Pithari / The Jar* (1962, Dimitris Sklavos); Frangias: *To Megalo Kolpo / The Big Trick* (1960, Christos Theodoropoulos); Gatsos: *Petontas me ton Anemo / Cry in the Wind* (1966, Leon Ardschach-Antony Heller); Gorpas: *Agapi pou de Svini o Hronos / Eternal Love* (1966, Giorgos Zervoulakos); Goufas: *Ikogenia Papadopoulou / Papadopoulos Family* (1960, Manthoulis), *I Liza Ke I Alli / Liza and her Double* (1961, Dimopoulos), *To Taxidi / The Journey* (1962, Dimopoulos), *Enas Megalos Erotas / A Great Love* (1964, Dimopoulos), *Emis I Amartoli / We, the Sinners* (1966, Dimitris Nollas); Kehaidis: *Gia Sena tin Agapi mou / For You my Love* (1961, Giorgos Dizikirikis); Giorgos Kitsopoulos: *Oouranos / Sky* (1962, Takis Kanellopoulos), *Ekdromi / Excursion* (1966, T. Kanellopoulos); Kotzias and Leivaditis: *Sinikia to Oniro / A Neiborhood Called Dream* (1961, Alekos Alexandrakis), *Thriamvos / Triumph* (1962, Alexandrakis); Mourselas: *To Kalokeri tis Orgis / The Summer of Anger* (1962, Iason Giannoulakis); Samarakis: *To Potami / The River* (1960, Koundouros), *Epistrofi / Return* (1965, Andreou); Sfikas: *To Spiti tis Idonis / The House of Pleasure* (1961, Giorgos Zervoulakos), *Mikres Aphrodites / Young Aphrodite* (1963, Koundouros); Gerasimos Stavrou: *To Bloko / Round-up* (1965, Adonis Kyrou); Valtinos: *Eno Sfirize to Treno / While the Train Whistled* (1961, Iason Charalampopoulos-Nikos Chatzithanasis), *Nichtoperpatimata / Night-walk* (1964, Zervoulakos), *Epihirisi Dourios Ippos / Ops Trojan Horse* (1966, Treddy Roumanas); Vasilikos: *Mikres Aphrodites / Young Aphrodites* (1963, Koundouros), *Epitafios gia Ehtrouss ke Filous / Epitaph for Friends and Enemies* (1966, Jiri Sequens), *Ta Skalopatia / The Steps* (1966, Leni Hershfield).

distinguished NEK films also adapted Greek novels: e.g. *Evdokia* (1971, Alexis Damianos) inspired by *Kekarmeni /The Shorn* by Nikos Kasdaglis, *I Fonissa / The Murderess* (1974, Kostas Ferris) based on the eponymous book by Papadiamantis, *Happy Day* (1976, Voulgaris) adapting *Limos /Plague* by Frangias, *Kagkeloporta / Wrought Iron Gate* (1978, Dimitris Makris) adapting the eponymous novel by Frangias, *1922* (1978, Nikos Koundouros) based on *Numero 31328 / The Number 31328* by Ilias Venezis, *To Fragma / The Dam* (1982, Dimitris Makris) based on the eponymous novel by Spyros Plaskovitis, *I Timi tis Agapis/ The Price of Love* (1984, Tonia Marketaki) adapting *Honour and Money* by Konstantinos Theotokis, etc. There were also many collaborations between NEK directors and prominent writers: Angelopoulos, for instance, worked with Valtinos, Petros Markaris, and Dimitris Nollas, while Voulgaris worked with Menis Koumandareas, Nollas and Giorgos Skabardonis.

Although it was shaped by a limited number of features, the trend of adapting classic and contemporary Greek literature was not a marginal phenomenon, since most of the films competed at international festivals winning awards, triggered extensive discussions and some of them found noteworthy popularity with domestic audiences. More importantly it was for the first time that Greek film enjoyed respect and international attention. This was crucial to Greek cinema in general as it opened up foreign markets and offered new opportunities, paving the way for the development of a new kind of cinema which employed the formal and thematic conventions of the international art film.

Finally, historical subject matter became of chief significance at this time. Driving the improvement in cultural standards in Greek films whilst raising their commercial appeal, many producers, such as Paris and Konitsiotis, focused on the highly respected historical theme. This noteworthy tendency towards history, however, will be scrutinized in Chapter 4.

3.3 Realism, sexuality, violence and amorality in 'Old Greek Cinema': 'adult' films

A considerable portion of Greek popular cinema of the 1960s – including films of both established and independent production firms – moved towards greater realism in its narrative and representation. A more pronounced interest in real-life issues and subjects which had previously been considered unacceptable, as well as a more open treatment of sexual behavior and violence, wider use of location shooting, realistic sets and spontaneous acting display a growing engagement of the commercial sector with realist practices. Remarking on this development while reviewing the 1962/63 film season for *Theamata*, Nestoras Matsas wrote:

Over the past year the manner in which the narratives of most Greek films were developed was realistic. Many of the films were characterized by frank realism that often reached the limits. [...] In many cases the films fulfilled their ends satisfactory by presenting this realism in vivid colours with truth to life. But in the majority of cases realism was the pretext for easy commerce and tasteless stripteases which aimed to create a scandal, to make money for the producers and film theatres.⁷²

Matsas' discussion of 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' realism reveals that a considerable number of domestic productions broke with puritanical conventions in their depiction of sexuality. The explicit representation of sexual desire and encounters, as well as an underlying sensuality in many films of the 1960s can be seen as a direct response to the relative relaxation of censorship that permitted the emergence of erotic (and also violent) contents which had previously been suppressed. This development can also be

⁷² *Theamata* (28/12/63).

seen as the industry's answer to the impact of European art and new wave films, whose eroticism appealed to audiences.⁷³ Advertising practices are particularly revealing, since ads often referred to art films which had been successful at the box office, like Bergman's *Silence* and Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*:

[The film] illuminates the secrets of our social life. You will be surprised to learn what exactly happens behind the 'closed curtains' of aristocratic apartments. Is there a *Dolce Vita* in Athens? (*Amartoles / Sinful Women*)⁷⁴

Stand back mister BERGMAN. SILENCE. (The word 'silence' is crossed out with an X) (*To syrtaki tis amartias / The Sinful Syrtaki*)⁷⁵

More human, more powerful, more realist than *Silence*. (*O Fovos / Fear*)⁷⁶

Interestingly, a piece published in *Theamata* about *To Remali tis Fokionos Negri / The Bum of Fokionos Negri* (1965, Kostas Karagianis) identifies three different European art cinemas as points of reference: Bergman, British new wave, and Fellini:

It is going to surpass the boldness of *Silence*. [...] The film will show vividly the life and deeds of a Teddy boy in the scandalous Via Veneto of Athens [...]. It will be utterly realistic.⁷⁷

⁷³ See Chapter 2, p. 85.

⁷⁴ *Avgi* (11/11/62).

⁷⁵ *To Vima* (25/9/66).

⁷⁶ *To Vima* (27/2/66).

⁷⁷ *Theamata* (31/5/65). This practice of cinematic citation is evident too in the films. For example, in *Katiforos / Decline* Kostas Voutsas encourages a young woman get undressed by saying: "Come on, let's see *Dolce Vita*".

These texts make clear the indigenizing of cultural elements, themes and styles from European art cinema and the attempt to contextualize Greek movie alongside European art film. At the same time the term ‘realism’, which emphatically demanded by the critical discourse on Greek cinema, emerged as a crucial marketing tool, implying almost exclusively overt sexuality and the frank treatment of taboo subjects.

It can be argued that sexual realism was introduced into the Greek mainstream in 1961/62 by Finos Film and Yannis Dalianidis with the shockingly new, in terms of content and representation, social drama *Katiforos / Decline*⁷⁸ which was modeled on *The Truth* (1960, Henri-Georges Clouzot) – starring Brigitte Bardot – and included personal experiences of its director (Dalianidis 2005: 91-92).⁷⁹ Along with this new sexuality in Greek popular cinema came a new kind of female star, Zoi Laskari, who was radically different from the other major female stars of the time such as Aiki Vouyouklaki and Jenny Karezi (let alone the popular *melo* star Martha Vourtsi). This alternative female star persona, who often impersonated a young woman of dubious morals, a ‘Teddy girl’, was based on her physicality, her sexual confidence and independent attitude. Also having not worked in the theatre, her acting was more instinctive and natural. The star image of some other female actors, such as Anna Fonsou, Mary Chronopoulou, Elena Nathanael and Betty Arvaniti, who also appeared sexually emancipated and independent from paternal authority and the conventions of domesticity, further illustrate the increasing centrality of sex as a thematic element in the Greek mainstream: nudity, striptease, sex scenes, relations based exclusively on sexual desire, premarital sex, adultery and prostitution became so common that nudity even appeared in romantic comedies such as *I Lisa ke I Alli / Lisa and her*

⁷⁸ A more realistic representation of sex was introduced in the late 1950s with films such as *I Limni ton Pothon / The Lake of Desires* (1958, Giorgos Zervos) and *Matomeno Iliovasilima / Sunset in Blood* (1959, Andreas Lambrinos) as well as with the works of Nikos Koundouros (*I Paranomi / The Outlaws* and *To Potami / The River*). *To Spiti tis Idonis / The House of Pleasure* (1961, Giorgos Zervoulakos) also was unconventional in including a male nude (Nikos Xanthopoulos). However *Decline* can be seen as a turning point because sexuality was a key element of the narrative.

⁷⁹ For *Decline*'s influences, see also Kartalou [in Andreas Lendakis (2006b: 267-268)].

Double and *I Despinis Diefthintis / Miss Director* starring Vouyiouklaki and Karezi respectively, which included voyeuristic bath scenes. Occasionally the representation of sex became softly pornographic, as in the case of Zeta Apostolou's roles in *Amok*, *The Bum of Fokionos Negri*, *Lolites tis Athinas / Lolitas of Athens*, *Echthri / Enemies*, *To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land* and *Pothi ston Katarameno Valto / Desires in the Cursed Marsh*.

Sex not only increased the commercial success of films in Greece, but it made them more exportable. So, most films intended for international consumption used sexual realism such as *Amok*, *Kokkina Fanaria / Red Lanterns*, *Blood on the Land*, *Fovos / Fear* and *Dama Spathi / Queen of Clubs*. This was also true of art films of the 1960s such as *Young Aphrodites*, *Vortex* (Nikos Koundouros)⁸⁰, *Prosopo me Prosopo / Face to Face* (1966, Roviros Manthoulis) and *O Thanatos tou Alexandrou / The Death of Alexander* (1966, Dimitris Kollatos). Therefore the dual elements of open sexuality and antiquity significantly contributed to the international distribution and success of *Young Aphrodites*, while the celebration of anarchic eroticism and the ancient Dionysian spirit contributed to *Enas Delikanis / A Lad* (1963, Manos Skouloudis)⁸¹ being shown at international festivals. The lighthearted and humorous *A Lad* displays a rare openness in its treatment of taboo sexual topics. For example, the young protagonist (Alkis Giannakas) peeps at a twelve-year old girl whose dress has been lifted exposing her underwear while she is watching two donkeys copulating.⁸² Later the hero kisses the girl on the mouth, but although both his family and the local society condemn his action and eject him from the village, the film

⁸⁰ Nikos Koundouros started shooting *Vortex* in 1966/67 but completed the film abroad when the dictatorship came to power.

⁸¹ Officially the film was directed by Manos Skouloudis. Nevertheless in the opening credits of the film the future NEK director Kostas Ferris is credited as 'technical advisor to the director' ('technikos symvoulos skinothesias'). According to Ferris, Skouloudis, who was a writer, entrusted the direction to him because he was unable to make the film himself (From an interview given to the writer and also Fragoulis 2004:89). Today Ferris includes *A Lad* in his own filmography (Fragoulis 2004: 53). The future NEK filmmakers Dimitris Stavrakas and Dimos Theos were also assistant directors.

⁸² This scene, even today, is censored by the state TV channels.

itself does not criticize his behavior but depicts it as poetic and romantic. The hero, who is studying to be a priest, undergoes an erotic Odyssey: he has a love affair with the wife of his Byzantine music teacher and gets her pregnant, he is sent by his family to an isolated mountain village to be disciplined by his austere older aunt, but the middle aged woman cannot control her sexual desire and falls in love with him, and so on. The verbal frankness and playfulness of the ancient god Pan (Manos Katrakis) regarding sexual subjects complete this surrealist and playful tale of sex and anarchy.

Violence, either physical or emotional, and often combined with strong sexual motives, was also common in the narratives of popular movies. In the 1960s violence appeared either as a generic innovation in mountain films (introducing the subgenre of mountain adventure) and crime movies or it pervaded a wide range of features: cruel fights between men, gun-fights, violent beatings, stranglings (*Stefania*), rapes, stoning (*I Istoria mias Zois / A Life's Story*), shootings, public humiliation (*I Porta tis Kolaseos / The Gate of Hell, Nomos 4000 / Law 4000*), public mistreatment of women (*Katiforos / Decline, Orgi / Fury*), falls from heights (*Stefania, I Evdomi Mera tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation*), suicides (*Piretos / Fever, Sinikia to Oniro / A Neighborhood called Dream*), group (*Stefania, Amok*) and domestic violence. *Amok*, for example, is unexpectedly violent. A group of young women prisoners, among them a Jew, rebel and escape after beating the prison guards. They reach an isolated island where they meet a group of men headed by an ex-Nazi officer who are looking for a treasure hidden during the war. The women are trapped by the men and are forced to dig up the earth to find the treasure. A merciless and violent conflict erupts: characteristically a man burns a woman with a cigarette and the women try to blow up the men using dynamite. Violence culminates in the particularly brutal beating and rape of the women. *Fear* is another film that includes shocking violence, with an extremely realistic rape and crime sequence. In a

stable, among horses and cows, the adopted daughter of a patriarchal family is brutally raped by the son and later beaten to death in a close up. Equally brutal is the punishment of the son by his father and the killing of a fish by the family's daughter.

In addition to the treatment of previously taboo subject matter, there was also a growing tendency to call the spectator to identify with morally ambiguous characters who transgressed conventions. This is exemplified by the characters played by Nikos Kourkoulos in films such as *Enas Megalos Erotas / A Great Love* and *I Adistaktoi / The Ruthless* or Zoi Laskari in *Decline* and *Egoismos / Egoism*. This shift in the popular cinema's morality is well demonstrated by a comparison of two films by Dimopoulos, *O Anthropos tou Trenou / The Train Man* (1958) directed in the late 1950s and *Enas Megalos Erotas / A Great Love* (1965) from the mid-1960s. In the first, the conflict faced by the heroine (a married woman and mother of two) between family values and her real love for a heroic former resistance fighter is excused by the fact that they meet years later while she believed him dead. At the end family values prevail and sexual desire is not fulfilled. In *A Great Love*, by contrast, the female protagonist (a respected married woman and mother) falls passionately in love with an amoral man who is also the fiancé of her beloved niece, causing a strong conflict between traditional family values, personal obligations and sexual desire. The inappropriate relationship is consummated and the audience is led to sympathize with the lovers and especially the female protagonist who experiences a claustrophobic domestic environment, the collapse of the family and also a strong feeling of guilt. With narratives centred on morally ambivalent characters, the traditional Manichean polarity between good and evil is disrupted in a considerable number of mainstream films.

Thus many commercial movies sought to attract viewers not by being appropriate to all audiences, as had previously been the case, but by including adult and shocking

material. For instance *Orgi / Fury*, *The Bum of Fokionos Negri*, *Stefania* or *Ta Dichtia tis Ntropis /The Nets of Shame* were advertised and distributed as ‘strictly for adults’ (*Afstiros akatallilon*). The dramatic expansion of the film-going public brought about its fragmentation and diversification, forming more specialized target groups. Therefore, in the 1960s, before pornography became a distinctive type of Greek film and while the vast majority of production remained appropriate for the general public, a portion of the mainstream took the form of a cinema for adults, while the rest extensively used adult pleasures and themes. Taking into account Athina Kartalou’s argument that “NEK is primarily a cinema ‘inappropriate for the under-aged’, in contrast to the cinema ‘for the whole family’ which was the prime concern and concept during the commercial phase of Greek cinema” (Kartalou 2006a: 117), we can assert that a closer consideration of popular films of the 1960s reveals a blurring of the lines between what scholars traditionally term ‘New’ and ‘Old’ Greek cinema.

3.4 Popular films take on social and political themes

It is a widely held view among both contemporary scholars and critics in the 1960s that ‘Old Greek Cinema’ is apolitical and has no interest in troublesome and politically loaded social themes.⁸³ According to my suggestion, however, a closer and unprejudiced examination of the period can reveal that between 1960 and 1967 there was a noteworthy cinematic engagement with contemporary sociopolitical realities, a development that anticipated to some extent the rise of a socially aware and politically committed art-oriented trend. This gradual ‘socialization’ and occasionally politicization of

⁸³ See, for example, Paradeisi 1993: 54.

the 'Old' cinema's themes becomes more pronounced between 1964 (when the government of Georgios Papandreou established its power) and 1967 (the year of the military coup) and reflects both the relative liberalization of censorship and the culmination of sociopolitical turmoil. It seems to me that many films made during this particular period are so outspoken on sociopolitical and moral issues and so open to formal experimentation, that 1964-67 can be considered a distinct period in Greek film history.⁸⁴

Apart from the role played by the relaxation of censorship, the inclusion of social and political themes can be also seen as the industry's response to the critical discourse, which accused the Greek mainstream of being ignorant of contemporary reality and lacking in serious social content. Sociopolitical subjects were seen by producers and filmmakers as a means of increasing the cultural and political legitimacy of the films, as well as their popularity and competitiveness, because socially sensitive subjects – important elements of many European art films of the time – attracted considerable public attention. Moreover, the year before the dictatorship came to power the political establishment encouraged the treatment of social subjects, a fact that may explain the significant number of films with daring sociopolitical content in the 1966/67 film season, from *I Kori mou I Sosialistria / My Daughter is a Socialist* (Sakellarios), *Stefania* (Dalianidis) and *Kinonia Ora Miden / Society, Point Zero* (Dimopoulos) to *Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love* (Zervoulakos) and *I Evdomi Mera Tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation* (Georgiadis). Lazaridis describes the circumstances that led him to apply to the authorities for permission to adapt the play *The Seventh Day of Creation* (Kambanellis) as well as other literary works:⁸⁵

⁸⁴ See also Kartalou 2006c: 141.

⁸⁵ See Chapter 3, page 123.

It is 1966 and we have been informed by the Presidency⁸⁶ that we could apply for approval for more ‘progressive’ scripts to persuade people and ourselves that democracy is alive in Greece. Anyway this notification alarmed us. [...] I remember also the phrase ‘more socialization’ which I heard from the people in charge. The word ‘politicization’ was too heavy then, while ‘socialization’ sounded softer. And this ‘freedom’, this pretentious openness was not accidental. It began with the flood of progressive films from Italy and France. It was also the American underground [...]. There were also the messages coming from the recent Thessaloniki film festival, with some films that departed from the norm [...]. (Lazaridis 1999: 481-2)⁸⁷

The appeal to audience expectations is evident in the film advertisements which stressed the democratic sentiments of the films, promised social commitment or made political references. Thus *I Mira enos Athoou / An Innocent's Destiny* (1965, Grigoriou) was advertised as the “The first democratic film in Greek cinema”,⁸⁸ *Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love* (1966, Zervoulakos) as “A film by the PEOPLE for the PEOPLE”,⁸⁹ *Metanastis / Immigrant* (1965, Matsas) as “The tragic story of emigration” and “A REVOLUTIONARY film”,⁹⁰ while an ad for *Papatrechas* (1965, Thalassinos) commented on the political instability after the fall of Papandreou and suggested that by viewing the film you were joining the democratic movement: “Hurray! At long last the government of fun has been formed. Prime Minister is Thanasis Vengos, the people’s favourite. [...] A demonstration of excellent actors”.⁹¹ The commodity value of sociopolitical content is evident also in the promotional material of *Ta Dichtia tis Dropis /*

⁸⁶ The Ministry of Press and Information of the Ministry of the Presidency, which was responsible for approving.

⁸⁷ See also Kartalou 2006c: 141-142.

⁸⁸ *To Vima* (14/11/65).

⁸⁹ *Theamata* (30/11/ 66).

⁹⁰ *To Vima* (10/10/65).

⁹¹ *Avgi* (27/2/66).

Nets of Shame (1965, dir. Thalassinos, pr. Roussopoulos Bros) in which politics are linked with sex: “The most blatant SEX faces SOCIAL DEMANDS”.⁹² “What are *The Nets of Shame*?” another advertisement for the same film asks: “SEX because sexual hunger plagues the provinces, DEMANDS for social and human justice, DESIRE that whips senses in the heat of the summer, PASSIONS created by the stresses of our era, REVOLUTION when the glass flows over”.⁹³

As early as the 1950s there were indirect references to politics and overt or disguised social commentary,⁹⁴ but in the 1960s these became more outspoken, central to the generic innovations of the time and linked to commercial success. Discussions of social issues in mainstream cinema were part of the establishment of new genres and sub-genres, for instance social dramas about the youth, ‘social protest’ films and mountain adventures. Social issues enabled worn narratives to be reinvigorated and make films more appealing to the audience. Thus, for example, the foregrounding of the social framework in which several melodramatic stories are set (e.g. *Echtri / Enemies*, *Kinonia Ora Miden / Society Point Zero*, *Katigoro tous Anthropous / I Blame the People*, *To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land*, *O Crachtis / The Decoy*, etc.) often accompanied by a rhetoric that strongly criticizes institutions and mechanisms of power, enriched and revitalized the narratives, refreshing simultaneously the audience’s attention. The scriptwriter Nikos Foskolos was particularly active in shaping this trend towards contemporary issues, social problems, history and politics as core elements in melodramas and the other genres in which he worked.

⁹² *To Vima* (7/11/65).

⁹³ *Avgi* (6/11/65).

⁹⁴ Films such as *Pikro Psomi / Bitter Bread* (1951, Grigoriou), *Mavri Gi / Black Earth* (1952, Tatasopoulos), *Magiki Poli / Magic City* (1954, Koundouros), *I Arpagi tis Persephonis / The Abduction of Persephone* (1956, Grigoriou), *I Paranomi / The Outlaws* (1957, Koundouros), etc. articulated strong social and occasionally political critique.

Sex and violence were often combined with social criticism and played a significant role in bringing to view previously suppressed social realities. Highlighting sexual expression and violent behavior in films, marginal until then social groups and previously suppressed social relations came into greater prominence. For example, *Katiforos / Decline* as well as a cluster of other films of the same type (*Nomos 4000 / Law 4000*, *Orgi / Fury*, *Stefania*, *Dipsa gia Zoi / Thirst for Life*, etc.) dealt openly with sex and violence in relation to the morals of young people. Thus the engagement of youth with modernity, the position of the young woman in society, young people's problems and lifestyle came automatically to the fore: youth leisure activities (parties, music, dance, games, billiard rooms, etc.), antisocial and deviant behavior (such as stealing cars), aggression, youth rebelliousness and conformity became core subjects of these films. Moreover themes of youth sexuality and delinquency provided a means of discussing other 'serious' issues concerning society and its institutions: the oppressive and outmoded education system (*Law 4000*), the intolerance and violent nature of law (notable is the hair-cutting and public humiliation of a teenager who had attacked his teacher in *Law 4000*), abortion (*Law 4000*), the repressive structure of the patriarchal family, generational differences, domestic violence (note the scene in *Decline* where a working-class father cruelly hits his daughter because she is late home, or in *Dichasmos / The Split* where an upper-class despotic mother lashes at her daughter who had secretly met her lover), the disintegration of traditional family values, conditions in youth prisons (*Amok*, *Stefania*), embezzlement by the prison governor (*Stefania*), etc. It is important to stress that although the film narratives conventionally punish the deviant young heroes, they also suggest that youth delinquency derives from society and the failure of social institutions (education, family, law) thereby encouraging compassion for the young and occasionally celebrating modern youth culture. Moreover sexual emancipation was often linked to the desire for

freedom from social conventions. For example, in the narratives of the films starring Zoi Laskari female sexuality is associated with honesty and independence, while *Enas Delikanis / A Lad*, a film that deals primarily with male sexuality has an underlying antiauthoritarian message.

In addition, the sexual harassment of a young housemaid in *Istoria mias Zois / A Life's Story* (1965, Dalianidis) reveals several other aspects of the exploitation and ill-treatment of young girls from the provinces who worked as servants in Athens and denounces the hypocrisy and pettiness of the middle class, prefiguring the NEK film *To Proxenio tis Annas / The Engagement of Anna* (1972, Pantelis Voulgaris). The themes of violence and sexual repression also in *Fovos / Fear* provide a stark depiction of the Greek countryside, condemning the patriarchal practices prevalent in both the family and society, the lack of opportunities and choice, the repression of the individual within the community, incest, superstition and hypocrisy, themes dealt with in the independent short *Elies / Olive Trees* (1964, Dimitris Kollatos) and the later *Anaparastasi / Reconstruction* (1970, Theo Angelopoulos). Notable for its realistic treatment and social comment is also the abortion scene in *Ta Dychtia tis Dropis / The Nets of Shame*, where a young rape victim is forced against her will by her mother and the local women to undergo an abortion. In Greece, therefore, it was popular cinema which first dealt with contemporary and shocking subjects with a focus on the youth, thematic innovations which had been introduced into European cinema by the new wave and art films of the late 1950s and early 60s.⁹⁵

Open or indirect comments about prohibited political issues are prevalent in popular films made especially after 1964, which either appear suddenly and briefly or they are more incorporated into the narratives. Two representative examples of the existence of

⁹⁵ Popular films with social content occasionally incited a response from the government such as in the case of *Stefania*, which dealt with conditions in a youth prison for females. An announcement by the Ministry of Justice in the press tried to dispute the images provided by the film. [See *To Vima* (22/1/67)].

such politically loaded comments offer two comedies produced by Rousopouli Bros *Ie mou Ie mou / My Son, My Son* (1965, Grigoriou) and *O Emiris and Kakomiris / Emir and the Miserable* (1964, Orestis Laskos). The first film includes sudden verbal mentions of the inadequacy of the Presidency of Trade, inflation, Xenophon Zolotas,⁹⁶ the Vietnam war, democracy, the 1-1-4 movement, the Resistance, political refugees and their families as well as the retirement of Nikita Khrushchev. *Emir and the Miserable* revolves around the emir's holiday in Athens and his son who is the leader of the revolutionary movement against the emir's authority. The narrative includes *epitheorisis*-inspired satirical allusions to the 'Unrelenting Struggle', the exploitation of the people, the defense of the constitution (1-1-4), elections, demonstrations, police violence, conditions in prisons, democracy, social justice, and national self-determination.

More importantly in this period leftists appear for the first time in minor roles,⁹⁷ such as the emir's son or a harmless employee in *Despinis Diefthintis / Miss Director* (1964, Dimopoulos) played by Yannis Vogiatzis, with the film narratives declaring openly that these characters are communists who either act (*Emir and the Miserable*) or simply articulate a typical leftist discourse. In *Loustrakos / The Shoeshine Boy* (1962, Maria Plyta), when the protagonist (Dimitris Papamichail), who attempted to work as a shoeshine boy at the University's guard to fund his studies, is insulted by the Head of the University, a communist female student comes to his defence. Her identity as a communist is signaled by her Russian nick-name (Ninotska), her materialistic rhetoric and her concern about the rights of the poor. Other noteworthy leftist characters are the Resistance fighter in *Psila ta Heria Hitler / Hands Up Hitler* (1962, Manthoulis) who restlessly organizes demonstrations and dies in a fight, or the poor old wandering seller in *Katigoro tous*

⁹⁶ Zolotas at that time was Governor of the Bank of Greece.

⁹⁷ An exception is the communist performed by Mimis Fotopoulos in *I Germani Xanarhontai / Germans are Returning* (1948, Sakellarios).

Anthropous / I Blame the People (1966, Dimopoulos) who briefly mentions his Minor Asian origins and the persecutions he had experienced. According to Delveroudi, communists and their political discourse are ridiculed and discredited through satire in the comedies (Delveroudi 1997: 156-157). However, in my view – I am referring to the period preceding dictatorship – the appearance of these gently satirized leftist figures and also their dramatic representations for the first time in cinema serve to show that communists form part of society, in contrary to the nationalistic rhetoric which denies their inclusion in “the national family” (Elefandis 1994: 648).

This period also saw the first direct references to political prisoners and refugees [*My Son my Son, O Drapetis / The Fugitive* (1966, Stelios Zografakis)] and mention of the problems faced by their families who remained behind [*Istoria mias Zois / A Life's Story* (Dalianidis), *I Kiries tis Avlis / The Ladies of the Courtyard* (1966, Dimopoulos), *Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love* (1966, Giorgos Zervoulakos)]. More precisely, *Eternal Love* reveals how the everyday life and chances of the young protagonist are affected by his father's status as a political refugee. His family lives in poverty, he struggles to find a job, he cannot afford to study and he is transferred to a remote place near the frontiers during his military service. Although the film was heavily censored and several scenes were cut,⁹⁸ it still includes numerous political allusions.

Several other types of elusive and indirect comments are often encountered in many films. Interestingly, in *Fovos / Fear*, the camera focuses on a newspaper entitled *Allagi [Change]*, a word that bears strong political connotations since it was widely used in left-wing and centrist rhetoric of the time to express dissatisfaction with the existing socio-political situation and demand political and social change. In *Enas Delikanis / A Lad*, the hero returns to his village hoping to be accepted by the local community and as he

⁹⁸ See *Avgi* (25/10/66).

approaches the outdoor traditional café of the village (named ‘The Amnesty Café’) where the male members of the community are gathered, he cries ‘amnesty’, which evokes the Left’s call for the release of political prisoners and refugees. Also, the repressive presence of the police in public life is alluded to in *Eno Sfirize to Treno / While the Train Whistled* (1961, Iason Charalampopoulos / Nikos Chatzithanasis), a crime film scripted by the prestigious writer Thanasis Valtinos, where an innocent person is constantly followed by non-uniformed policemen with dark glasses and is later interrogated.

Moreover, there emerged a series of comedies about Greek political life which were critical of the incompetence and moral corruption of politicians and local bureaucrats:⁹⁹ [*I Kiria Dimarchos / Mr Mayor* (1960, Manthoulis), *I 900 tis Marinas / The 900 Votes of Marina* (1960, Kostas Doukas / Thanos Santas), *Zitite Pseftis / Liar Wanted* (1961, Dalianidis), *I Villa ton Orgion / The Mansion of Orgies* (1964, Dimopoulos), *Iparhi ke Filotimo / There is such a Thing as Dignity* (1965, Sakellarios), *Tzeni-Tzeni / Jenny-Jenny* (1966, Dimopoulos) and *I Vouleftina / She is a Member of Parliament* (1966, Kostas Karagiannis)].¹⁰⁰ The corruption of upper-class politicians and the close ties between political and economic power against the common good was the subject of *Kinonia Ora Miden / Society, Point Zero* (1966, Dimopoulos), a ‘social protest’ melodrama about the intrigue, conspiracy, violence and para-state activity behind politics. In the film, the leader of the opposition party, called ‘Komma Ethnikis Stavroforias’ [‘The Party of National Crusade’] makes a passionate speech (footage of a real demonstration is intercut with shots of the fictional politician) employing ‘nationalist’ and populist rhetoric to attack capitalists and dishonest practices and call for the nation’s salvation. However during short breaks in his speech the politician tries to persuade his son-in-law, the head of a committee

⁹⁹ There was a gap between 1954 – when the last film of relevant theme was released [*Thanasakis o Politevomenos / Thanasakis, the Politician* (1954, Sakellarios)] – and 1960.

¹⁰⁰ For a detailed discussion of politics in Greek comedies, see Delveroudi 1997:145-164.

investigating a fatal plane crash, to accept a bribe to clear the airplane company of responsibility.¹⁰¹ Soon after that, corruption in politics, and politics as an intrigue and conspiracy is given a left-wing and more complex narrative treatment by the NEK film *Kierion* (1967, Dimos Theos). Both films were made during a troubled time in Greek political life when the fall of the Papandreou government, the Lambrakis trial and the ‘Aspida’ [‘Shield’] scandal brought intrigue and corruption to the fore.

A number of popular films exhibited a growing interest in the figure of the proletarian and in working-class subject matter.¹⁰² Poverty, the hardships of work life [e.g. labor accidents (*O Krachtis / The Decoy*, *Ehtroi / Enemies*, *Dipsa gia Zoi / Thirst for Life*, *O Epanastatis / The Revolutionary*, *I Evdomi Mera tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation*)] and working-class demands play a significant part in a variety of film narratives with workers often developing trade union activities such as strikes (even a hunger strike in *The Decoy*), protests against dismissals, demands for overtime-work payments or wage increase and improvements in working conditions [e.g. *I Kori mou I Sosialistria / My Daughter is a Socialist*, *O Krachtis / The Decoy*, *Diskoloi Dromoi / Roads of Hardships*, *The Revolutionary*, *O Anthropos gia oles tis Doulies / The Man for All Kinds of Jobs* (1966, Giorgos Konstantinou), *O Meletis stin Ameso Drasi / Meletis works at Police* (1966, Christos Kyriakopoulos)]. The subject of class consciousness and trade union activities also features in films set in the countryside such as *To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land* and *Asyniditi / Unscrupulous* (1966, Giorgos Arion) about historical peasant revolts, *Dichasmos / The Split* including sponge-divers’ protest to their mistreatment by the

¹⁰¹ For a short discussion of the film, see Kartalou & Panayotopoulos 2007: 379-385.

¹⁰² E.g. *To Taxidi / The Journey* (1962, Dimopoulos), *To Merokamato tou Ponou / A Day's Work in Pain* (1963, Matsas), *O Krachtis / The Decoy* (1964, Kostas Andritsos), *Otan Simanoun i Kampanes / When the Bells Ring* (1965, Stelios Tatasopoulos), *O Epanastatis / The Revolutionary* (1965, Matsas), *Diskoli Dromi / Roads of Hardship* (1965, Matsas), *O Katatregmenos / The Persecuted* (1966, Apostolos Tegopoulos), *I Kori mou I Sosialistria / My Daughter is a Socialist* (1966, Alekos Sakellarios), *Troumba 67* (1967, Grigoris Grigoriou), etc.

ship-owners, *Ta Dychtia tis Dropis / The Nets of Shame* about the exploitation of fishermen by wholesalers and also *I Mira enos Athoou / An Innocence's Destiny*, *Dichasmos / Split* and *Ta Dychtia tis Dropis / The Nets of Shame* about the organization of co-operatives to defend the rights of the poor. The influence of Italian Neo-Realism and in particular *La Terra Trema* is evident in these films, which compared to films from the 1950s, reveal a clear ideological shift. Take for example *I Limni ton Pothon / The Lake of Desires* (1958, Giorgos Zervos) in which the government resolves a conflict between a community of poor fishermen and a rich man establishing rights for the poor. In *The Nets of Shame* (1965, Thalassinos) by contrast, the fishermen fight their own battle, while in the pessimistic film *An Innocent's Destiny* the innocent hero who leads the villagers' struggle against exploitation is persecuted and eventually killed, raising however class awareness amongst the unprivileged. References to police and para-state practices of the time are manifest in the themes of the suppression of revolts and persecution of their organisers: strike-breakers (*The Revolutionary*), water hosing (*My Daughter is a Socialist*), police intervention (*Roads of Hardships*), informers spying on workers who join a rally (*My Daughter is a Socialist*), false accusations, assassinations (*Blood on the Land*, *An Innocent's Destiny*), etc. These popular films set in the provinces are thematically similar to the NEK film *Di Asimanton Aformin / For Trivial Reasons* (1974, Tasos Psaras), as well as many independent shorts of the period.

Scholarly work typically states that the theme of emigration, one of the major social problems of the time, is presented in 'Old' Greek cinema through the recurrent motifs of the returned wealthy Greek-American and emigration as a means of forgetting a failed relationship.¹⁰³ However many popular films of the 1960s strive for a realistic

¹⁰³ On migration in Greek cinema see Sotiropoulou (1995), Konstantopoulou Fotini-Thomai (2004) and Kartalou & Nikolaidou Afroditi & Anastasopoulos, Thanos (ed.) (2006).

portrayal of emigration, depicting the negative aspects such as emotional farewells at the port of Piraeus (*The Seventh Day of Creation*, which uses documentary images), queues at emigration offices (*I Adistaktoi / The Ruthless*), middlemen who take advantage of those desperate for emigration papers (*The Ruthless, Roads of Hardship*), illegal emigration (*Roads of Hardship, Enemies*), etc. Poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunities are shown to be vital motives for emigration (*Roads of Hardship, Enemies, The Decoy, Thirst for Life*), while in *O Metanastis / The Immigrant* (1965, Matsas) the emigrant returns not wealthy but poor, having been exploited and suffering ill health. *The Immigrant* is the first film in Greek cinema to depict the experience of migration from the immigrant's point of view, showing the working and living conditions of the Greek workers abroad, a theme which was explored also by the independent short documentaries of the period. Dan Georgakas writes of *The Immigrant*:

The ailing Thanos [...] has nightmares about a not so-beautiful America in which he was employed as a shoeshine boy, laundry worker, and manual laborer. In a slight comment on the social status of Greek Americans of that time, the only American we see him with is a black man. [...] Its candour about the realities of work life of first-wave Greek emigrants is a surprising and refreshing moment in popular cinema. (2006: 25)

Mass movements also had a place in popular films. References to the existence of a militant student movement are present in *O Loustrakos / The Shoeshine Boy* (1962, Maria Plyta), while *The Seventh Day of Creation* incorporates in the narrative documentary footage of student demonstrations.¹⁰⁴ The massive peace movement of the time also

¹⁰⁴ In late 1962 and 1963 there are several accounts in the press of the shooting of a film entitled '1-1-4', which refers to the radical mass movement of the time. The film, referred to either as a Greek-Italian co-production or as a production of 'Greca Film', was not released in the 1960s. Several Greek cinema filmographies mention a film of the same title with the same contributors which was released in 1977.

features in some commercial movies. The opening credits of *My Daughter is a Socialist* are set against documentary shots of the huge annual peace march from Marathon to Athens which was held in honour of Lambrakis. The story begins when a factory owner bans his workers from joining the peace rally, but the workers disobey him. The demonstration sequence in the film celebrates the event and uses fictional slogans about 'peace', 'love' and 'friendship', but also includes brief shots of real banners calling for 'allagi' ['change'] and the removal of the American military bases from Greece. Similarly *The Seventh Day of Creation* opens with documentary shots of the same peace demonstration.¹⁰⁵ The main character returns home by truck after completing his military service and on the way he encounters the huge rally. The film celebrates the size and optimism of the demonstration with slogans calling for 'democracy' and 'change' appearing on the screen. *An Oles oi Gynekes tou Kosmou / If All the Women in the World* (1967, Nestoras Matsas) also articulates a strong pacifistic discourse and is set in an idealised contemporary society based on equality and shared ownership where women organise a convention of the major countries' representatives (including the Soviet Union and United States) in order to establish world peace. Moreover *Erotes sti Lesvo / Love Affairs in Lesvos* alludes to the active culture that grew up around peace movement (festivals and other cultural events), while *Dama Spathi / Queen of Clubs* confronts the threat of an impending nuclear annihilation, a theme also explored by Cacoyannis in his overtly political film *Otan ta Psaria Vgikan sti Steria / The Day the Fish Came Out* (1966).

In addition a number of films such as *Chamena Onira / Lost Dreams* (1961, Sakellarios),¹⁰⁶ *To Taxidi / The Journey* (1962, Dimopoulos), *A Neighborhood Called*

¹⁰⁵ For detailed information on the documentation of the Lambrakis' peace rally by a group of prestigious cinematographers (Dimos Sakellariou, Dinos Katsouridis, Aristidis Karidis-Fuchs, Nikos Gardellis, Giovanni Variano, Pavlos Filippou and others), see Lazaridis *Gia tin Evdomi Imera tis Dimiourgias [On Seventh Day of Creation in Soldatos* (ed.) (1999: 71-72).

¹⁰⁶ The only melodrama made by Alekos Sakellarios.

Dream, Kokkina Fanaria / Red Lanterns and *The Seventh Day of Creation* are critical of the poor living conditions, social injustice and lack of opportunities with their narratives concerning characters trapped in a repressive social framework that does not enable them to escape their miserable lives. A focus on the slum areas of Athens is also notable in films such as *A Neighborhood Called Dream* (1961, Alekos Alexandrakis), which is the most representative film on the subject. *O Epanastatis / The Revolutionary* is about an engineer who, recalling nightmarish scenes of floods from his childhood, strives to build tenement houses for the slum-dwelling workers. Documentary footage of a flood which decimated a slum area also appears in *Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love*, while there is a bold and moving scene in *The Red Lanterns* showing a hut – the object of a poor old couple’s dream – lying amidst a pile of rubbish on which survivors scavenge. *I Evdomi mera tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation* (1967, Vasilis Georgiadis) restates and encompasses many of these thematic developments. At its centre is a young couple that cannot adjust themselves to the hostilities of contemporary life and seek refuge in dreams, fantasies and lies. Predating the NEK film *Anichti Epistoli / Open Letter* (1967, Giorgos Stambouloupoulos) and responding to *Prosopo me Prosopo / Face to Face* (1966, Roviros Manthoulis), *The Seventh Day of Creation* explores issues around unemployment, lack of opportunities, the elusive dream of social advancement, generational differences, politics, emigration, modernization and industrialization.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore the films *Ekeinos ki Ekeini / He and She* (1967, Errikos Andreou) and *Dama Spathi / Queen of Clubs* (1966, Giorgos Skalenakis) both contain thematic material more often associated with art films, such as the effects on individuals of

¹⁰⁷ On politics and the youth in Greek cinema see also Stella Vatouyou (2006).

modernity, estrangement and failed communication in human relationships, the crisis of the modern couple, consumerism, the destruction of nature and the invasion of tourism. Other social and unconventional subjects also predate NEK thematic concerns. *To Nisi tis Siopis / The Island of Silence* (1958, Lila Kourkoulakou), for instance, explores the lives of the leper community on the isolated island of Spinalonga, which was a leper colony until 1957. *Stin Porta tis Kolaseos / The Gate of Hell* (1960, Kourkoulakou) tells how a socially divided village community is brought together by the threat of a meteorite collision, but later falls in a state of unreasonable violence once the threat is past. Finally the taboo theme of euthanasia is the subject of the courtroom drama *Athoa I Enochi / Is She Guilty or Not* (1963, Matsas).

Thus, social, political and other ‘daring’ subjects usually associated by scholars exclusively with NEK are in fact present in the narratives of the ‘Old’ cinema, while commercial films provided a space for alternative ideological and left-wing discourses. We should not forget that many who worked on commercial films, such as Gialamas, Pretenderis, Dimopoulos, Tatasopoulos, Vengos, Katsouridis, et.al. had democratic or left-wing political ties and often seized the opportunity to include social and political hints in their works giving an outlet to their own repressed political voice and satisfaction to the leftist audiences.

3.5 The rise of the existential and drifting protagonist

The typical ‘Old’ Greek movie is not interested in interior life and psychology but mores, manners and situations, while its characters are often two-dimensional and defined by clear-cut and fixed qualities, for instance a poor and good individual, or a rich and evil

one. However, a noteworthy development of the 1960s, which makes a considerable number of commercial films to stand apart to some extent from the rest of the production, is a growing interest in character and character's subjective world. The character's psychology becomes more complex, films dealing with inner dramas are increased in number, while a new tendency is raised especially in male or female melodramas in which the existential protagonist is introduced. Individuals now are faced with strong moral and social dilemmas, they question their principles and trace painful internal trajectories in search of the self. One illuminating example is the Nazi protagonist in *Prodosia / Betrayal* who informs on the Jewish woman with whom he is in love and then, after an agonizing and sorrowful internal journey full of remorse, he rejects Nazism, acquires self-knowledge and finds salvation by committing suicide. The alcoholic male lead in *Kinonia Ora Miden / Society Point Zero*, who heads a committee investigating a plane crash, is another important example of an existential protagonist. He suffers a personal crisis and undergoes transformative experiences to eventually recover his humanity and moral values.

Nikos Foskolos was once again the key writer who wrote numerous existential melodramatic stories such as *Orgi / Fury*, *O Krachtis / The Decoy*, *Katigoro tous Anthropous / I Blame the People*, *Kinonia Ora Miden / Society Point Zero*, *Adistaktoi / The Ruthless* and *Ehthroi / Enemies*. The actor Nikos Kourkoulos played many characters tormented by existential angst (*Lola*, *I Blame the People*, *Society Point Zero*, *The Ruthless*), while other actors associated with interior dramas and psychological complexities are Zoi Laskari (*Katiforos / Decline*, *Egoismos / Egoism*, *Istoria mias Zois / A Life's Story*, *Stefania*, *Dakria gia tin Electra / Tears for Electra*), Anna Fonsou (*Orgi / Fury*, *Dipsa gia Zoi / Thirst for Life*), Elli Fotiou (*Epistrofi / Return*, *Dichasmos / Split*), Giorgos Foundas (*The Decoy*, *Cry*), Alekos Alexandrakis (*Thriamvos / Triumph*, *Ehthroi / Enemies*, *Syntomo Dialimma / Short Break*), Petros Fyssoun (*Prodosia / Betrayal*, *Split*,

Diogmos / Persecution, I Mira enos Athoou / An Innocent's Destiny) and Jenny Karezi (*Lola, Ta Kokkina Fanaria / The Red Lanterns, Enas Megalos Erotas / A Great Love, Koncerto gia Polivols / Concert for Weapons, Ekeinos ki Ekeini / He and She*).

Apart from a “stress on character” and “an interiorisation of dramatic conflict”, characteristics typical, according to Steave Neale, of art cinema (Neale 1981: 13), there are several other elements that reveal an influence of European art film on character formation in Greek commercial films. As stated by David Bordwell the prototypical characters of art cinema “tend to lack clear-cut traits, motives and goals [...] [or they] may act inconsistently” (Bordwell 1995: 207). In the context of the ‘Old’ cinema, lack of ‘sufficient’ character delineation and motivation or inconsistencies in characters’ behavior are more often conceived by commentators and critics as narrative shortcomings, although in most cases they are sources of narrative pleasure (e.g. a sudden and unexpected turn in character’s behavior that causes excitement). Apart from this fact, occasionally such practices in commercial ‘quality’ films can be recognized as elements from the art-film model. As already mentioned, there was a trend of blurring the lines between good and evil and for morally ambiguous characters. Likewise often character’s behavior was ambivalent, inconsistent and unmotivated. Take for example Zoi Laskari in *Katiforos / Decline*. Her character is far from the typical clear-cut good or evil female protagonist: she is sexually experienced and independent (qualities which were typically associated with negative female characters in PEK), disrespectful of social conventions, manipulative with men, but she possesses positive traits such as straightforwardness and a free spirit. As the daughter of a wealthy family, she does not work or study and is completely aimless, spending her time on meaningless associations with other leisured and aimless young people. Although she has a boyfriend, she flirts with another young man to whom she is equally attracted and while she turns away her boyfriend in a humiliating manner, she later

returns to him without any sufficient explanation. In *O Kaftos Minas Avgoustos / Hot August* (1966, Socrates Kapsaskis) the confused and disappointed young male protagonist (Yannis Fertis) returns to his island after the end of his military service. His thoughts reveal a cynicism and amorality which contrasts with his behavior. He is faced with the devastating prospect of becoming a civil servant on the island, rather than fulfilling his dream of a more interesting life. Although he sets deadlines for himself to do ‘something important’ (a vague goal), he is unable to act, constantly vacillating between two women. He is eventually manipulated by others into becoming, without his knowledge, involved in a crime. Without goals to struggle for, some protagonists therefore become drifters and are “presented as sliding passively from one situation to another” (Bordwell 1995: 207). The clearest example of such a “drifting protagonist” is the male lead in *The Seventh Day of Creation*. He wanders around Athens either taking part in leisure activities or looking for a proper occupation. When he fails to get a job for which he had hardly tried, he hides the truth from his family and pretends to go work every morning, drifting around the city streets. He is an aimless, passive observer who gets drawn into situations. Drifting protagonists are also the focus of *Dipsa gia Zoi / Thirst for Life, Istoria mias Zois / A Life’s Story, Syntomo Dialeimma / Short Break* (1966, Katsouridis), *Dama Spathi / Queen of Clubs, Pyretos / Fever* (1965, Stelios Jakson) *Monemvasia* (1964, Giorgos Sarris), *Ekeinos ki Ekeini / He and She* and *Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love*.

3.6 Modernist practices and narrative innovations in the ‘popular’: an emphasis on style and the visual

It has been widely argued that the formal traits of ‘Old Greek cinema’ arise from an “absolute ignorance of cinematic language that gives the films a clearly theatrical form”

(Paradeisi 1993: 55) which is heavily reliant on dialogue and the actor's performance. As Eleftheriotis has stated, the typical Greek popular film of the time is marked by frontal, flat and theatrical composition of shots, extremely long takes, static camera, organization of narrative space around tableaux rather than action, minimal use of sets and locations used, and close ups that tend to foreground performance rather than the logic of continuity editing (Eleftheriotis 2001: 186). In the 1960s, as genres were gradually standardized and overproduction put pressure on production schedules and budgets, opportunities for formal complexity were limited. These formal characteristics of the 'Old' cinema were therefore products of a production system based on great speed and low cost, and they shaped more often popular *melos* and adaptations of stage comedies. However, as I will try to demonstrate, there was also a strong opposing trend that stressed the pictorial or spectacular, and moved areas of film production towards clearly cinematic articulations. This shift towards visual sophistication becomes more evident towards 1967 as 'modernist' formal and narrative tropes and other art-film borrowings are assimilated by popular films.

If cinematic modernism is defined through its contradiction to Hollywood classicism, then it is problematic to apply the term to the 'Old' cinema because Hollywood classicism does not provide a suitable interpretative framework for most 1960s Greek popular films. As Eleftheriotis has shown, 1960s Greek popular films exhibit a noteworthy departure from classical style since the coherence, closure, singularity and self-sufficiency of the diegesis are constantly destabilized by various 'interruptions' such as musical numbers and other 'attractions', while relations between the 'Old' Greek movies and other popular cinematic traditions, such as Hindi or Turkish melodramas, are clearly traceable (Eleftheriotis 2001: 186 and 2006). These statements, however, do not exclude the existence of other narrative and representational practices from Hollywood or European cinema (e.g. continuity editing), that emerge either in a systematic and coherent fashion or

irregularly and in combination with the modes mentioned above of frontality, visual stagnation and ‘attraction’ logic. Greek popular cinema of the 1960s functioned as a big cultural melting pot, a fact evident also in its narrative and visual styles.

Aside from the two *auteurs* Cacoyannis and Nikos Koundouros, several popular directors of the 1950s demonstrated a remarkable interest in cinematic language and the visual properties of cinema.¹⁰⁸ However, it can be argued that in popular movies a clear shift towards the pictorial, sophisticated *mise-en-scène* and elaborate camerawork was made in the 1960/61 film season with the visually stunning *Madalena* (Dimopoulos), the atmospheric crime movie *Englima sta Paraskinia / Backstage Crime* (Katsouridis), the mountain film *Katara tis Manas / The Mother’s Curse* (Georgiadis) which draws on Westerns and the *nouvelle-vague* style of *Spiti tis Idonis / The House of Pleasure* (Zervoulakos). An emphasis on the visual is also manifest in Dalianidis’ musicals – which are the mainstream films of the period that exemplify most clearly the prioritization of spectacle and style over narrative – with their wide screen format, vivid colour and playfully stylized spectacle. The visual is stressed further in developments taking place in comedy particularly with the rise of an alternative type of comedian, Thanasis Vengos. Vengos’ screen persona is characterised by anxious hyperactivity and physical/visual gags drawing on a cinematic rather than theatrical tradition of comedy. Forced to follow Vengos’ hyperactivity, the camera often neglected frontality and stagnation, while it reached the apogee of its mobility during the dictatorship in some films directed by Dinos Katsouridis.¹⁰⁹ *Kontserto gia Polyvola / Concert for Weapons* (1967, Dimopoulos) also introduced the colorful spectacle of the war melodrama, while *I Aliko sto Naftiko / Alice in*

¹⁰⁸ Dinos Dimopoulos, Vasilis Georgiadis, Grigoris Grigoriou, Frixos Iliadis, Andreas Lambrinos, Kostas Manousakis, Gregg Tallas, Giorgos Tzavellas, Giorgos Zervos, Giorgos Zervoulakos.

¹⁰⁹ *Enas Vengos gia Oles tis Doulies / Vengos, a Man for all Kinds of Jobs, O Thanasis I Ioulieta ke ta Loukanika / Thanasis, Ioulieta and the Sausages and Ti Ekanes ston Polemo Thanasi? / What did you do in the War Thanasis?*

the Navy, Mikri Megali en Drasi / Young and Old in Full Play, Mia Treli Treli Ikogenia / A Crazy Crazy Family and *Jenny-Jenny* brought colour and other visual pleasures into comedy. From 1960/61 until the 1966/67 film seasons the most successful films at the first-run cinemas of Athens and Piraeus were those that, beside the other elements which contributed to their popularity (stars, subject matter, generic category), demonstrated a remarkable concern for visual qualities, with either spectacle or sophisticated *mise-en-scène*.¹¹⁰

It is often stated that the 'Old' cinema was indifferent to the background space and structured images exclusively around the bodies and the performance of the actors, with interiors or exteriors functioning simply as a theatrical backdrop (Paradeisi 1993: 55-56). However, as artistic ambitions and antagonisms grew, export potential became crucial, and generic innovations were extensively introduced, other styles began to challenge the dominance of theatricality. Inspired by European and Hollywood models, filmmakers made conscious efforts to distance their films from theatrical conventions. Thus the flat and frontal composition gave way to more sophisticated framing, a variety of camera angles, expressive camerawork, complex compositions and the foregrounding of the surrounding space.

These developments can be better understood in the wider context of generic innovations such as social dramas and melodramas that had noir-like qualities and existential characters. So, as the narratives became darker and more psychologically complex, there was an increased focus on space and set as a means of expressing the inner life of the heroes. Using sophisticated *mise-en-scène*, atmospheric black-and-white photography, unusual camera angles and elaborate camera movement, directors

¹¹⁰ The impressive box office success of musicals should be understood as a result of the rich spectacle offered by the genre.

constructed carefully composed and often aesthetically challenging images that clearly reflected the mental state of the characters. The frame was no longer organized exclusively around the body and the actors' performance, but often actors were secondary to the construction of the image, appearing overshadowed by their surroundings.¹¹¹ Similar developments can be traced in several films set in the countryside. The mountain adventure, for instance, assimilates influences from Westerns (including 'Spaghetti'), using long (or extremely long) shots and deep focus, and often treating the silhouette of the actors as a component of the image, prioritizing the landscape. Mountain films such as *I Katara tis Manas / The Mother's Curse* (1961, Georgiadis), *I Iperifani / The Proud Ones* (1962, Lambrinos) and *To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land* (1965, Georgiadis) exemplify the strong interest of the 1960s mountain genre in the visual. Other dramatic stories set in the countryside and using location shooting also emphasize the surrounding space and treat landscape in symbolical terms, a tendency which is already manifest from the late 1950s.¹¹² In *Fovos / Fear* (Manousakis), *I Katara tis Manas / The Mother's Curse* (Georgiadis) or *Pothoi ston Katarameno Valto / Desires in the Cursed Marsh* (Grigoriou), for example, the visual and narrative importance of a marsh signifies the emotional and actual immobility of the characters and the ethical decay of a whole society. Moreover, the foregrounding of landscape is also part of a film's exportability, being linked to national identity and creating a tourist attraction. In films such as *Enas Delikanis / A Lad*, *Monemvasia*, *Ekeinos ki Ekeini / He and She*, *Dama Spathi / The Queen of Clubs*, *Dichasmos / Split*, *O Zestos Minas Avgoustos / Hot August* and *I Mira Enos Athoou / An*

¹¹¹ This development is evident in films such as the psychological thriller *Efialtis / Nightmare*, and also in *Prodosia / Betrayal*, *Epistrofi / Return*, *Katiforos / Decline*, *Katigoro tous Anthropous / I Blame the People*, *Stefania*, *Kinonia Ora Miden / Society Point Zero*, *I Adistaktoi / The Ruthless*, *Kravgi / Cry*, *Nomos 4000 / Law 4000*, *To Taxidi / The Journey*, *Lola*, *Amok*, *Ta Kokkina Fanaria / The Red Lanterns*, *Ehthroi / Enemies*, *Enas Megalos Erotas / A Great Love*, *Ekeinos ki Ekeini / He and She*, *Koncerto gia Polyvola / Concert for Weapons*, *Fovos / Fear*, *Diogmos / Persecution*, *Dama Spathi / The Queen of Clubs*, *Monemvasia*, *Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love*, *O Zestos Minas Avgoustos / Hot August*, to mention only a few.

¹¹² In films such as *I Limni ton Pothon / The Lake of Desires*, *Matomeno Iliovasilima / Sunset in Blood*, *Agioupa*, *O Anthropos tou Trenou / The Train Man*.

Innocence's Destiny the camera lingers on landscapes, seascapes, castles, antiquities, etc. and occasionally undermines the narrative flow in favour of the film's visual spectacle.¹¹³

Another significant development in many popular films of the 1960s was the reduction of dialogue and the use of extended silences. In *Desires in the Cursed Marsh*, for instance, the spoken word is reduced to such an extent that there is no dialogue in the first 30 minutes of the film. The visual takes precedence over the verbal in *Fear* too. In the long rape and murder sequence, for example, dialogue is replaced by an aural background of natural and animal noises, and the sounds of the deaf-mute girl's struggle to resist her attacker. The inclusion in popular genre films of extended scenes of sex, violence and action also undermine the dominant verbal character of popular movies.

As already mentioned, the typical Greek mainstream film of the 1960s has a rather loose and often episodic narrative structure which is interrupted by musical intervals. However, in my view, looser-structured and episodic narratives emerge in some 1960s popular films, in a different context: that of the model of European art film. Returning to Bordwell's description of art-film narratives, it could be argued that a noteworthy number of Greek commercial films, dealing with existential and 'drifting' characters and "equivocating about character causality", support "a construction based on a more or less episodic series of events". They emphasize "'insignificant' actions and intervals", with protagonists tracing "an itinerary which surveys the film's social world" (Bordwell 1995: 207). Films such as *To Taxidi / The Journey*, *Dipsa gia Zoi / Thirst for Life*, *Istoria mias Zois / A Life's Story*, *I Evdomi Mera tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation*, *Pyretos / Fever*, *Agapi poy de Svinei o Chronos / Eternal Love*, *Dama Spathi / Queen of Clubs*, *I Adistaktoi / The Ruthless*, *Monemvasia* and *Ekeinos ki Ekeini / He and She*, to

¹¹³ This development is already evident from *The Train Man*.

mention only a few examples, following the actual and existential wanderings of their heroes, loosen to a lesser or greater extent the classic narrative's cause-effect sequence of events to explore the sociopolitical landscape and offer "judgments upon modern life and la condition humaine". (Bordwell (1995: 207). *The Seventh Day of Creation* exemplifies this type of narrative. The male protagonist wanders aimlessly around the city, through various social environments, working places, youth leisure spots, he encounters demonstrations, watches emigrants depart and tourists go sightseeing, witnesses a man stealing, listens or takes part in political and other discussions, and so on. The narrative of *A Life's Story*, divided in chapters, loosely follows the events of the heroine's life while offering insights into the everyday realities of a mountain village, a middle-class house and upper-class society. Moreover *He and She* follows a psychologically motivated, intricate and opaque non-linear narrative merging flash-backs, dreams, memories, fantasies, reality, past and present as it describes a journey through the modern bourgeois and traditional agricultural society, ancient sites, landscapes, history, myth and politics.

Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love (1966) written by the poet Thomas Gorpas, filmed by the prestigious cinematographer Giovanni Varriano and directed by Giorgos Zervoulakos is further example of a loose and episodic narrative structure that explores the film's sociopolitical environment.¹¹⁴ The film attempts to bring together art-film modes with the popular *melo* genre. Using a large popular cast with strong melodramatic background in small parts (Eleni Zafeiriou, Lavrentis Dianelos, Pantelis Zervos, et.al.), the narrative concerns a young couple whose relationship faces obstacles, a generic motif of popular *melo*. It also employs a wide range of other narrative conventions

¹¹⁴ The film was produced by Dan film, a production firm that worked mainly on advertisements and kept close ties to the Centrist party. (From an interview given to the writer by Zervoulakos). Dan film and Zervoulakos also made the newsreels *Poria pros to Lao / Towards the Public* (1962) and *O Neos Anendotos / The New Unrelenting Struggle* (1965) depicting Georgios Papandreou travelling around the country giving speeches as part of the 'Unrelenting Struggle'.

typical of the genre: two opposing worlds (the poor young man and the rich young woman), the absence of a beloved person (the father), the split of the couple, the melancholy mood and the rebetico music intervals. There are however radical differences in narrative and form that distinguish the film from a typical popular *melo*. Here the barriers faced by the couple are not fate, conniving parents or villainous antagonists, but political reasons: the hero (the son of a political refugee) is removed at a remote place during to his military service, which divides the couple. In addition, musical interludes and breaks in the diegesis are used to reflect the hero's occupation as a photo-reporter, wandering around the city to take photos. According to Bordwell, in art-film narratives "certain occupations (e.g. journalism, prostitution) favour an encyclopaedic, "cross-sectional" syuzhet pattern" (Bordwell 1995: 207). The wanderings of the protagonist allow for documentary glimpses into different aspects of Athens' night-life and bring contemporary sociopolitical realities into the narrative such as a carnival, slum areas after a flood or de Gaulle's visit to Greece. The film also shows soldiers training at an actual military camp, which was exceptional and daring for Greek cinema of the time, reminiscent of the NEK film *Evdokia* (1971, Alexis Damianos).¹¹⁵

A further important development in some films of the period is the foregrounding of the urban space and its depiction with a de-dramatized and documentary realism reminiscent of Nouvelle Vague. *I Evdomi Mera tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation*, *Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love* and *Pyretos / Fever* (and also to a lesser extent *To Spiti tis Idonis / The House of Pleasure*, *To Taxidi / The Journey*, *I Adistaktoi / The Ruthless*, *Diplopenies / Dancing the Syrtaki* and *Dipsa gia Zoi / Thirst for Life*) are explorations of Athens largely shot on location. This realist depiction of the city

¹¹⁵ According to Giorgos Zervoulakos, in an interview given to the writer, Damianos said that the relevant scenes in *Evdokia* were inspired by the images of the life and training of the soldiers in *Eternal Love*.

challenges the typical Greek commercial film, which is shot either in studios or uses the cityscape only fleetingly between scenes. Another difference between these films and other Greek mainstream movies is that they do not portray the city and modernity in an entirely positive light (like, for instance, the musicals of Dalianidis). They emphasize the industrial city, the port of Piraeus and train stations, stressing how individuals are dwarfed by the huge buildings, cranes, machines and vehicles and showing a wide range of authentic exteriors and interiors rarely encountered in other popular films. The content, aesthetic and camerawork of these documentary style images of city-life and the urban landscape often recall the French New Wave, while the preoccupation with the city and modernity is shared by both short and feature-length independent films of the period.

The nouvelle-vague style of filming (e.g. location shooting, hand-held camera, natural illumination, disjointed editing) suits a low budget production and is easy to imitate. It is therefore found in several low-budget commercial movies which partly adopt a nouvelle-vague look (e.g. *The House of Pleasure*, *Pothoi ston Katarameno Valto / Desire in the Cursed Marsh*, *Fever*, *Eternal Love*, *The Seventh Day of Creation*, etc.). A mixture of documentary and fiction styles is also quite common (*The Seventh Day of Creation*, *Eternal Love*), a practice which popular films share with both short and feature-length independently produced films of the time. Thus a new documentary-style realism emerges in Greek popular film which goes beyond the depiction of the city and space. Realist ruptures in popular films are created by material that does not advance the narrative, but enhances the sense of social environment or psychological depth, such as trivial incidents and an emphasis on gestures, gazes, slight emotional reactions, silent moments and dead time. Moreover, with the greater realism, more natural styles of acting emerge (e.g. Elli Fotiou), or actors play roles which differ from their established star persona, like Vougiouklaki in *The Journey*, Chronopoulou in *Fear* or Alexandrakis in *Short Break*. In

addition, formal and narrative devices such as flashbacks, dreams, fantasies, hallucinations, distorted images, freeze frames, flash frames, internal monologue, optical point-of-view shots are used extensively to express with greater realism the inner lives of the characters.

Several other narrative and representational elements more often associated with art cinema are also present in a considerable number of commercial films of the 1960s: narrative ambiguity (*He and She*), narrative frustration (*Stefania*, *The Seventh Day of Creation*), open-ended narratives (*Fear*, *Eternal Love*), sequence shots (*He and She*), camera movements independent of the action (*The Seventh Day of Creation*), authorial commentary, etc. Sound is also used in ways that are unconventional for popular Greek film. When, for instance, two characters in *Eternal Love* enter a telephone box, the camera remains outside and the spectator does not hear what it is said inside. Or in the same film the sound of a typewriter is unnaturally loud, suggesting the alienation of the office workers and reminiscent of Godard's fascination with mechanical sounds. Moreover in some other popular films the spectator is invited to identify with amoral, unsympathetic or negative characters (e.g. *Fear*, *Monemvasia* and *Desire in the Cursed Marsh*), overturning the traditional function of spectator-character identification and creating a degree of distance and estrangement. As a result of these developments, elements of de-dramatisation and anti-melodramatic styles are used in popular films, even in those written by Foskolos (e.g. *The Ruthless*) who took Greek melodramatic expression to extremes.

The films of Manousakis and those directed by Andreou before 1967 have an exceptional place among the commercial movies that employed art-film formal and narrative practices. *Dama Spathi / Queen of Clubs* (1966/1967, Skalenakis) also exemplifies how art-film narrative and stylistic conventions were utilized by a director in the commercial sector. After the impressive *mise-en-scène* virtuosity of *Diplopenies / Dancing the Syrtaki*, Skalenakis gave *Queen of Clubs* the look of a contemporary European

art film. The film's narrative builds on the important art-cinema theme of alienation and crisis within marriages by exploring a triangular relationship (a married couple and a lover). Plot complexity is subordinated to the visual style of the film with the director constantly escaping in aesthetic playfulness and directing audience attention to the image. The style of the film is characterized by an emphasis on composition, sophisticated camera movement, long shots, extensive use of tracking shots and long takes, deep focus with foreground and background in the frame attaining significance, unexpected camera angles, limited dialogue, the use of background sound or expressionistic sound, distorted images, empty spaces, and cultural citations (e.g. high-angle shots reminiscent of the work of André Kertész, a Kavafy poem being recited by the female protagonist). The surrounding space is poeticised, often appearing abstract and symbolic or as a projection of the characters' mental state. Small actions in the background are aestheticized or choreographed (a girl plays with a skipping-rope, a bicycle traces circles, fishermen throw dead octopuses onto the stones) and are imbued with symbolical value that comments on the narrative. For example an empty horse cart, recalling the horse-drawn cart of the married couple, passes in the background, suggesting the emptiness of the relationship and the end of their marriage.

Accusations of formalism that were common in reviews of 'quality' commercial films at this time demonstrate further the directors' concern with form and style. Thus S. P., reviewing *I Mira enos Athoou / An Innocent's Destiny* (1965, Grigoriou), writes:

The director of the film [...] narrates all this in the most modernist (*neoteristiki*) and formalist manner cinema can possibly endure. His camera, running amok, is raised to the most inconceivable heights, and

adopts more or less eclectic angles, obviously not to follow an action but for reasons the film itself cannot explain.¹¹⁶

Commenting on *Fear* (1966, Manousakis), Theo Angelopoulos also asserts:

Manousakis did not pay attention to his subject. Not believing in it, or being seduced by the potential for experimentation that the fluid camera of Gardelis [the cinematographer] gave him, he reduced it to an anecdote, he aesthetically overloaded it and finally he destroyed it as an expressive exaggeration. It is a stylistic mistake.¹¹⁷

3.7 The rise of the film director as an *auteur*

It is commonly argued that the ‘Old’ cinema director was entirely subordinate to the producer who was most instrumental in shaping the final film product. This assertion however obscures the fact that there was respect for the role of the film director within the industry and also that several commercial directors in the 1960s enjoyed a considerable degree of artistic freedom, especially on ‘quality’ films in which thematic, formal and narrative experimentation was not only possible, but expected. Aside from those like Kostas Karagiannis and Apostolos Tegopoulos who were also producers and therefore had absolute control over the final product, there were other directors who played a pivotal role in making decisions, innovating or even developing characteristic personal styles. One noteworthy example is Yannis Dalianidis who in many ways revitalized the Greek popular movie and put his mark on many of the films he made. Grigoris Grigoriou also stresses in

¹¹⁶ *To Vima* (21/9/1965).

¹¹⁷ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (1/3/1966).

his autobiography that during the 1960s he enjoyed great independence in his collaboration with the producer James Paris:

It was one of those few times in my career when I felt free to do my job and at the same time so responsible to a man who trusted me so much. Later of course things changed. (Grigoriou 1996: 90)

Furthermore, the director's name was important in marketing a film, since not only it was not ignored in the advertising material, but ads often addressed the audiences in directorial terms, which is a marketing practice more often found in art cinema:

The legendary creation of Errikos Andreou which won prizes at the International New Delhi Festival and Thessaloniki. (*Efialtis / Nightmare*)¹¹⁸

Yiannis Dalianidis' sensational creation. (*I Istoría mias Zois/ A Life's Story*)¹¹⁹

This year's colossal 'special' film made by Vasilis Georgiadis. (*I Evdomi Mera tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation*)¹²⁰

In the 1960s the director also gained official recognition as the author of the film. In 1963, after a long legal battle, Nikos Koundouros finally won the case against his American producers who had re-edited *To Potami / The River* (1958) and changed its intricate narrative structure. The Public Prosecutor stated that "the film director remains the main creator of the film, which is regarded as his own intellectual property, and he is

¹¹⁸ *Avgi* (14/1/62).

¹¹⁹ *To Vima* (10/11/65).

¹²⁰ *Avgi* (11/12/66).

protected by the relevant provisions of the law”.¹²¹ Reflecting the increasing importance of the role played by film directors, the ‘Union of the Greek Film Directors’ was founded in 1962, and identified as its prime concern “the qualitative improvement of Greek cinema and the elevation of the audience’s taste”.¹²² Thus the creative role of the film director was acknowledged not only in critical writing which, as seen, constantly promoted the idea of the director-author, but also the commercial industry, state policies, the directors and audiences themselves, reflecting also the rise of the figure of the director-author in the international film scene in general.

Commenting on Dalianidis and the genre of musical, the NEK film critic Christos Vakalopoulos remarks on the dominance of the commercial director and the shift in Greek film towards the visual. He argues that the transition from the ‘Old’ to the ‘New’ should be understood as the director’s revenge on the actor who, according to Vakalopoulos, was the dominant figure in popular Greek cinema. He asserts:

Koundouros and Cacoyannis were not the forerunners of the ‘new’ Greek cinema. [...] The path [from the ‘Old’ to the ‘New’] lies elsewhere: strangely, it is related to the ‘Old’ cinema and takes place in the 1960s when a new genre, the musical becomes the most popular type of film. Dalianidis’ musicals end the dominance of the actor, although they are not directorial achievements. Improvisation [and] the dominance of the spoken language were replaced by the dance number forcing the actor to become a performer. For the first time, anonymous [sic] films look like they have been ‘directed’. The great actors, Avlonitis, Vasiliadou or Stavridis give way to those who simply can dance well. [...] The musical therefore was the genre that, by radically changing the role of the actor, paved the way for the *mise en scène* conceptions of the ‘new’ Greek cinema. In this

¹²¹ *Theamata* (31/10/63).

¹²² *Avgi* (3/7/62).

respect, *Anaparastasis / Reconstruction* [(1970, Angelopoulos] is an entirely 'choreographed' film. (1982)¹²³

The majority of the commercially-made 'quality' films of the 1960s employed domestic genre conventions as a means of discussing social, moral, historical, political and other 'serious' subjects, while adopting thematic and stylistic traits from European art film. By reworking, re-articulating and popularizing the subject matter and the form of New Wave and art films, they managed to achieve on the one hand a greater and more sophisticated engagement with Greek contemporary and historical realities and, on the other, to connect the domestic genre film tradition with art cinema practices, creating the industry's version of a 'popular' and at the same time 'quality' national cinema. The following extract from a review of Dalianidis' film *A Life's Story* (1965) by Rafaelidis demonstrates that even in an extremely polarised ideological environment, an elitist and militant critic, who suggested a definite break with the commercial model of Greek film could find advantages to certain popular 'quality' movies and, moreover, seek in them a kind of cinematic tradition that could contribute to the emergence of an 'intellectual' national cinema:

... '*Melò*' in Greek cinema is an inherent evil. Nevertheless, Dalianidis is intelligent enough to associate it with American or European models and to give it a completely cinematic form, at least in terms of narrative. The correct and lively dialogue, the smooth '*decoupage*', the careful dramatic construction and the perfect technique create an interesting result and make this film stand out from others [...] If Dalianidis, apart from his indisputable narrative skill, could have given

¹²³ *Mythologies kai Mythoplasies / Mythologies and Fictions* (1982) in Vakalopoulos 1990: 157-58.

subjects a more serious and responsible treatment and imposed on the form his own personality, he might have climbed to the top of the improvised 'popular' filmmakers who, all over the world, constituted the ground from which 'intellectual' filmmakers of the 'national schools' grew.¹²⁴

Although the so-called 'quality' films of the industry exist at some distance from the typical mainstream Greek movie and some received considerable critical attention at the time of their release, most of them were seen as failures and even occasionally as exploitation movies, because their thematic and stylistic explorations remained within genre boundaries and still satisfied the popular audience's demand for enjoyment. However, it is clear that the wider debate in the 1960s about 'quality' domestic national cinema and the impact of the international art film in the domestic market greatly influenced not only the emergence of a 'new' film movement but also and inevitably, the commercial industry itself.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ *Dimocratiki Allagi* (16/11/1965).

¹²⁵ Scholarly works have occasionally noted the existence of commercial films that are resistant to the mainstream. Thus Yanna Athanasatou singles out a very limited number of films (*Never on Sunday*, *Madalena*, *The Journey*, *A Neighborhood Called Dream*, *Betrayal*, *Zorba the Greek*, *Fear*, *Red Lanterns*, *The Ruthless*, *Enemies*, *Lola*, *The Seventh Day of Creation*) as exceptions to the rule and terms them 'artistic popular' films in response to the term 'Entechni laikotita' which describes the developments that had been taken place within the domain of music in the period. See Athanasatou 2002:103-104.

4.

THE RISE OF HISTORY IN GREEK CINEMA OF THE 1960s:
CLAIMING THE 'REPRESSED' PAST

4.1 History as an experienced and remembered reality, history as a demand

History, both as lived experience and discourse, was foremost amongst public concerns in Greece of the 1960s. Its influence was pervasive throughout the public sphere, from politics and cultural activity to ordinary life, to the extent that Greek society could only experience and understand its present through the prism of the past. The 1960s were preceded by a string of major historical crises, from World War I, the Balkan wars, the National Schism and the Asia Minor disaster to the Metaxas dictatorship, World War II and the Civil War. So the majority of the adult population, having lived through these traumatic events which had shaped the contemporary sociopolitical realities, shared vivid and painful memories. Collective and subjective memory was considerably strong, because many of the issues of the recent past, especially the Nazi Occupation and the Civil War, had remained unresolved.

A particular point of view on the most recent history defined the core of the official ‘nationalistic ideology’ (*ethnifrosyni*)¹ according to which the Civil War was a brutal assault on the Greek nation by Slavic communism and communists were enemies of the motherland and a major external threat. This view informed the political and institutional system of the country, legitimizing the strict state apparatus of sociopolitical repression and control. For a significant segment of the society who were imprisoned or exiled, who were political refugees or subject to ‘certificates of lawful opinion’ and secret police files, history was an inextricable part of present experience and daily life. At the same time, through its political rhetoric the Left constantly produced and promoted images of the past, seeking legitimization and vindication in history itself.

¹ See Chapter 1, p.13, footnote 4.

The Left's interest in history was particularly acute. The recent past, and particularly the Occupation during which the Communist Party had led the massive partisan movement, was central to the EDA's political discourse.² The Resistance against the Nazis, on which the Left had based its "foundation myth" (Liakos August 2004: 12), was the main proof of the communists' patriotism and the grounds on which the Left sought legitimization.³ EDA drew comparisons between the sociopolitical conditions and the public demands of the Occupation years and those of the present day, pointing out similarities between the two periods, and thereby establishing a strong hold of the recent past on the present. Emphasis was given to the collaboration or the absence of the right-wing political forces during the Occupation, in contrast to the heroic resistance of the Left. The present was seen as an extension of the Occupation, because according to the leftist point of view, nothing had changed and both fascism and foreign powers, especially American, persisted. In this sense the Left called for resistance against the Fascist and 'quisling' establishment.⁴ The concept of the Resistance therefore was transposed to the present possessing strong political connotations which extended much beyond the role played by the communists in past times.

² EDA (= United Democratic Left). See Chapter 1, p.13.

³ A few illuminating examples: in May 1960, when communists were tried for espionage, the headlines in *Avgi* include: "Greece owes its freedom to those who stand in the dock" (*Avgi*, 5/5/1960). "It is a shame to drag to the courtroom Greeks, fighters of the Resistance on the charge of espionage" (*Avgi* 6/5/1960). "It is unacceptable that fighters of the Resistance are imprisoned for fifteen years" (*Avgi* 8/5/1960). "Freedom to the National Hero [Manolis Glezos], who shredded the Nazi flag." (*Avgi*, 31/5/1960).

⁴ For instance, referring to the elections of 1961, which were marred by 'violence and fraud' *Avgi* declared: "Greece, the kingdom of Terror. The terrorist orgy of ERE is reminiscent of the dark days of the Occupation" (*Avgi* 17/10/1961). On election day in November 1963, when the right-wing party lost power, the result was announced with the title "Today is Liberation Day" (*Avgi* 3/11/1963). Moreover a sense of continuity was created between the contemporary mass movement and the Resistance: "The Illegal Establishment of ERE is a threat to the Fighting People. A NEW RESISTANCE IS BORN" (*Avgi* 6/10/1962). On the occasion of a demonstration demanding the resignation of the government, the paper stated: "National Resistance has been revived. The Democrats of Athens, being united, won an important battle for Democracy" (*Avgi* 21/4/1962). And years later: "National Resistance – Generation of 1-1-4" (*Avgi* 28/8/1965). It is worth noting that comparisons between the right-wing establishment and Nazism existed also in the political rhetoric of other oppositional political forces. One example is the speech made by the centrist Georgios Mavros at the Greek Parliament on the occasion of the passing of the law for "security measures", in which he compared the law with measures of the Nazi regime. (*Avgi*, 6/7/1962).

The commemoration of special events also played a part in the Left's 'lived' relationship with history. Apart from the official national anniversaries of October 28th (the day Greece entered the Second World War) and March 25th (the declaration of the War of Independence), the Left also celebrated, with great formality and sentimentality, the anniversaries of historical events associated with left-wing socio-political and war struggles, such as *Kileler* (related to the peasant struggles for land ownership), the foundation of EAM (the major movement of the Greek Resistance), the liberation of Athens from Nazi occupation, the round-up of Kokkinia (a massacre of hundreds of inhabitants of Kokkinia by the Nazis), the destruction of the Gorgopotamos bridge by the Resistance. In addition, the Left placed great importance on the War of Independence, constructing a strong sense of continuity between this period of Greek history that led to the foundation of the Greek nation-state, and the Resistance, and by extension the present-day political struggles.

However, despite the proximity of the troubled past and the past's all-pervasive influence on the present, the 1960s was a period that for the first time offered a degree of distance from controversial events. At the same time, due to the radicalized mass and cultural movement and the Centrist regime, the atmosphere of repression that had stifled society during the previous decades began to ease. Both developments were crucial in allowing Greek history to be explored, especially for cinema because, in contrast to other forms of cultural expression such as literature, cinema existed in the public domain and was subject to censorship.

From the late 1950s (bearing in mind that, in 1958, EDA became the second largest party in Parliament) there was a marked increase in the production of historical texts and a wide array of historical publications. Most of this written and occasionally illustrated material (often personal memoirs and testimonies written by former political

prisoners) did not address the academic readers, but were usually published as weeklies and destined for public consumption.⁵ Similarly, the daily and periodical press, ‘serious’

⁵ With the exception of Koulouris (2000) there are hardly any sources on this topic. To substantiate my argument, I am citing a few cases in point from the pages of *Avgi* during the 1960-67 period, as well as examples I have collected from other relevant sources. Although the following list – which includes both Greek and translated texts – reflects almost exclusively a historiography originating in the Left, it nevertheless demonstrates the plethora and range of historical works in circulation at the time. (Detailed information about writers or publishers was not always given, so I cite the available data and the year in which the advertisement or the comment was published): *Istoriko Arhio tis Ethnikis Antistasis* [*Historical Archive of National Resistance*] (periodical, first published in April 1958 by the EDA member of parliament Komninos Pyromaglou); *Dourios Ippos* [*Trojan Horse*] (1958, Pyromaglou); *Istoria tis Neoteris Ellados* [*History of New Greece*] (1958, Yannis Kordatos); *I Istoria tou Defterou Pagkosmiou Polemou* [*The history of WWII*] (1960, Ministry of Defense of USSR, Cadmos); *I Istoria toy Agrotikou Kinimatos stin Ellada* [*The History of the Peasant Movement in Greece*] (1960, Dimitris Pournaras); *Eleftherios Venizelos* (1960, Pournaras); *Epopiia tis Ethnikis Antistasis* [*The Epic of National Resistance*] (1960, Kostas Birkas); *Iroika (17 Avgoustou 1944): To Bloco tis Kokkinias* [*Heroic (17 August 1944): The Round-Up of Kokkinia*] (Christos Mavridis); *Kileler* (1960, Giorgos Karanikolas); *Pagkosmia Istoria* [*World History*] (1960, Scientific Academy of USSR, Melissa); *Stalingrand* (1960, Melissa); *I Epopiia tis Ethnikis mas Antistasis* [*The Epic of our National Resistance*] (1960, Anagennisis); *I Elliniki Epanastasi* [*The Greek Revolution*] (1960, Dionysis A. Kokkinos, Melissa); *Vivliothiki tis Ellinikis Epoptias: ‘Thysies kai Dafnes tou Ellinikou Laou’* [*The Library of the Greek Epic: ‘Sacrifices and Laurels of the Greek People’*] (1961, Themos Cornaros, Anagennisis); *I Alithini Istoria tis Ethnikis Antistasis* [*The Real History of National Resistance*] (1961); *Kolokotronis* (1961, Dimitris Fotiadis); *Antistasi* [*Resistance*] (1961, Dimitris Psathas, Aegeo); *Istoria tou Neou Ellinismou* [*History of the New Hellenism*] (1961, Apostolos Vakalopoulos); *Ikonogragimeni Istoria tis Ethnikis Antistasis (1941-44)* [*The Illustrated History of National Resistance (1941-44)*] (1962); *I Politiki Istoria tis Neoteris Ellados* [*The Political History of New Greece*] (1962, D. A. Zakynthinos); *Nikitaras* (1963, Christos Stasinopoulos); *I Diki Ton Exi (Episima Praktika/1922)* [*The Trial of the Six*] (1963, Chrisima Vivlia); *To Antartiko (1941-44)* [*The Partisans (1941-44)*] (1963, Foivos N. Gregoriadis, Kamarinopoulos); *St’ Armata, st’ Armata* [*To Arms, to Arms*] (1964, collective work, Giannikos); *ELAS (Ta apanta tou stratigou Sarafi)* [*ELAS (the complete work of general Sarafis)*] (1964, Synchrono Vivlio); *Akoume ti Foni sou Patrída* [*We Listen to your Voice Motherland*] (personal narratives on the Occupation and Resistance) (1964, Themelio); *Aris, o Protos tou Agona* [*Aris, the Leader of the Struggle*] (1964, Kypseli); *I Istoria toy Emfyliou Polemou (1945-49): To Deftero Antartiko* [*The History of the Civil War (1945-49): The Second Round*] (1964, Gregoriadis, Kamarinopoulos); *O Morias sta Opla: Ethniki Antistasi 1941-44* [*Morias in Arms: Greek Resistance 1941-44*] (1964, Ilias Papasteriopoulos, Erevna ke Kritiki tis Neoellinikis Istorias); *Matomena Chronia* [*Bloody Years*] (Sotiris Patatzis, Giannikos); *Antartes sta Vouna tis Roumelis (Hroniko 1940-44)* [*Partisans in the Mountains of Roumeli (Chronicle 1940-44)*] (1964, Dimitrios Dimitriou-Nikiforos); *Lefkoma toy Agona (1941-45)* [*The Album of the Struggle (1941-45)*] (1964, D. Megalidis); *Elliniki Epopiia 1940-41* [*Greek Epic 1940-41*] (1964, Angelos Terzakis); *I Vivlos tou Eleftheriou Venizelou* [*The Bible of Eleftherios Venizelos*] (1965, Istorike Ekdosis); *I Istoria tis Katohis* [*The History of the Occupation*] (1965, Dimitris Gatopoulos, Melissa); *O G. Kartalis ke I Epochi tou* [*G. Kartalis and his Era*] (1965, Pyromaglou); *I Thessalia stin Antistasi* [*Thessalia during Resistance*] (1966, Lazaros Arseniou); *I Istoria tou Defterou Pagkosmiou Polemou* [*The History of WWII*] (1966, Reimon Kartier, Larousse, Papyros, Paris-Match); *I Istoria tis Makronisou* [*The History of Makronisos*] (1966, Nikos Margaris, Dorikos); *I Istoria tis Anthropolitias* [*The History of Humanity*] (1966, UNESCO, Elliniki Paedia); *Syntomi Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastasis* [*A Short History of the Greek Revolution*] (1966, Tasos Vournas, Drakopoulos); *I Mystiki Organosi Filliki Etairia* [*The Secret Organization Filliki Etairia*] (1966, G. Arsh, Scientific Academy of USSR); *Pos Ftasame stin Tetari Avgoustou* [*The Road that Led to the Fourth of August*] (1966, Spyros Linardatos); *Selides tou Agona* [*Pages from the Struggle*] (1966, Kostas Birkas, Melissa); *1904-1924 Geniki Istoria tis Rosikis Epanastasis* [*1904-1924 General History of the Russian Revolution*] (1966, Istorike Ekdosis); *Kato apo ti Bota tis Dictatorias* [*Trodden by the Dictatorial Boot*] (1966, Birkas); *Neoteri Istoria toy Ellinikou Ethnous (1826-1966)* [*Modern History of the Greek Nation (1826-1966)*] (1966, Elliniki Morfotiki Estia); *Politiki Istoria tis Neoteris Elladas (1826-1964)* [*Political History of New Greece (1826-1964)*] (1966, Spyros Markezinis, Papyros); *I Epanastasi tou 1821* [*The Revolution of 1821*] (1966, A. Strigkou, Themelio); *Pios Voithise ton Hitler* [*Who Supported Hitler*] (1966, Ivan Maisky, Themelio); *Me tin Psychi sta Dontia: Katochi (1941-44)* [*With Bated Breath: the Occupation*]

and ‘popular’ alike, focused on historical content, providing readers either essays or fictional narratives. There was a dramatic increase in historical texts published in the press offering differing versions of the Greek past, which were often discussed in relation to the present-day political situations for comparative and didactic purposes. They covered a wide range of thematic material (the War of Independence, the personality of Eleftherios Venizelos, the National Schism, the Asia Minor Disaster, the Monarchy, the Metaxas’ dictatorship etc.), but the most frequent topic was the recent, traumatic and commonly shared experience of World War II, with its many international and domestic angles. The current events of the time, such as the Merten incident or the trial of Eichmann, also fuelled the public interest in discussing WWII. In the realm of popular culture, one striking example of these phenomena is the great popularity in the 1960s of *Mikros Iros* [*Little Hero*], a series of ‘short’ or ‘graphic’ resistance stories for children and teenagers.

The post-war art and cultural scene was closely engaged with history, although it was equally concerned with the present. In the 1960s, literature, poetry, theatre, popular song and the fine arts were almost obsessively attracted to historical issues. As Antonis Liakos argues, during the 1960s, literary works established the major myths of the new-Greek historical consciousness. Instrumental in forming this collective historical consciousness were the poem *Axion Esti* (1959, Odysseas Elytis) – a re-telling of national history from Antiquity to WWII – both in its printed and its musical version (set to music in 1964 by Mikis Theodorakis), the novels *Matomena Chomata* [*Bloody Land*] (1962, Dido Sotiriou), about the Asia Minor Disaster, and *Akyvernites Polities* [*Drifting Cities*] (1960-1965, Stratis Tsirkas), about WWII and the anti-fascist struggle (Liakos 2005: 95A59 and 2008: 95-97). Translated foreign literature also enjoyed considerable popularity: examples

(1967, Birkas, Melissa); *Asti ke Ergates: Arches Aiona os 1930* [*The Bourgeois and the Workers: Beginning of the Century to 1930*] (1967, Zisis Skaros, Dorikos); *The Second World War* (1967, Winston Churchill, Elliniki Morfotiki Estia); *Pagkosmia Istoría tou Politismou* [*World History of Culture*] (1967, Afi Syropoulou-Koumoundoureas).

include the novels *Romeo, Juliet and the Darkness* (Yan Otcenasek) and *Naked among Wolves* (Bruno Apitz), which were highly appreciated by the public and soon followed by the screening of their cinematic adaptations.⁶ In addition many cultural events were organized (popular music concerts, book and art exhibitions, performances etc.) which focused on WWII and carried strong anti-war messages.

Turning to the cinema and particularly to foreign-film attendance, there are clear signs of a growing interest in features about history and war. This is confirmed by the large number of films about the Second World War and the European Resistance which were distributed in Greek cinemas from the late 1950s. Historic compilations⁷ and an impressively wide range of history-related fiction films were shown, attracting critical attention and considerable audiences.⁸

The film *Ta Aporrita tis Nurembergis / Judgment at Nuremberg* [(USA, 1961, Stanley Kramer)] has been running for five weeks, attracting an unprecedented flood of spectators. The cinemas are swarming with thousands of people from Athens and Piraeus. (1962, *Avgi*)⁹

⁶ *Romeo, Juliet and the Darkness* or *Sweet Light in a Dark Room* (Czech, 1960, Jiri Weiss) and *Naked among Wolves* (DDR, 1963, Frank Beyer) respectively. The case of *O Romeos, I Ioulieta ke ta Skotadia* [*Romeo, Juliet and the Darkness*], a story of a young man in Prague who during the war hides a Jewish girl in the attic of his apartment building, is highly illuminating. It was initially printed in the pages of *Epitheorisi Technis* (1961) and soon published as a book (1961) while its cinematic counterpart was released in Athens (1961). In the summer of 1962 it was staged by the *Piramatiko Theatro* [*Experimental Theatre*]. Many years later, during the dictatorship, Dinos Katsouridis alluded to it in the title of his film *O Thanasis, I Ioulieta ke ta Loukanika / Thanasis, Juliet and the Sausages* (1970).

⁷ I am citing some important examples with the second date referring to the year of release in Greece: *Mine Kampf* (1960/1961, Erwin Leiser), *Benito Mussolini* (1962/1963, Pascuale Prunas), *The Life of Adolph Hitler* (1961/1962, Paul Rotha), *To Die in Madrid*, (1962/1965, Frederick Rossif), *Ordinary Fascism*, (1965/1966, Mikhail Romm) and *The Great Patriotic War* (1965/1966, Roman Karmen). In addition, three British and one American compilations with the Greek titles *Ekino to Vradi to Londino egine Stachtis* (1962), *I Mystiki Zoi tou Hitler ke tis Evas Brawn* (1964), *Winston Churchill* (1966) and *Otan ta Kanonia Vrontoun* (1966).

⁸ On the interest in war and resistance films released in Greece in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the debates around them, see Kleitos Kyrou and Gerasimos Lykiardopoulos in *Kritiki*. See also I. M. Panayotopoulos's discussion of war films in his front-page article 'Agony: Cinema and War' in *Eleftheria* (6/8/1961).

⁹ 'Logi ke Antilogi' ['Discourses and Counter-Discourses'] (10/1/1962).

To a vast crowd of spectators, the film *Oi Gennei de Syghoroun / Death is Called Engelschen* [(Czech, 1963, Klos and Kadar)] is screened in the art-house cinema *Art*. (*Avgi*, 6/8/1966)

After the astonishing audience success of the legendary masterpiece of Russian cinema, *The Great Patriotic War* will be screened from today at *Pantheon* and at *Astron* so that overcrowding can be avoided. (*Avgi*, 9/2/1967)¹⁰

Although the left-wing press of the period complained about the Greek public's limited access to films from the former socialist countries¹¹ and although it might sound surprising today because of the current belief that censorship was strict at that time, many of the historical films screened in Greece were from Eastern Europe, especially from the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. These films were screened not only for the specialist audiences of film societies or during week-long festivals devoted to the national cinemas of the former socialist countries, as we have already seen, but they were also shown in public venues.¹² Especially after the critical and commercial success of films such as *The Forty-First* (1956, Grigori Chukhrai), *Canal* (1957, Andrei Wajda), *The Cranes are Flying* (1957, Mikhail Kalatozov), *Destiny of a Man* (1959, Sergei

¹⁰ From an advertisement. On the success of the film *To Die in Madrid* see Chapter 1, p. 43.

¹¹ See "Our Opinion" in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (30/10/1964).

¹² Despite my conviction that the number of Eastern European films exhibited in Greece during the 1960-67 period was significantly higher than official statistics suggest (as a thorough investigation of newspapers of the period reveals) I am citing the figures given by Kouanis: 151 films from the Soviet Union, 8 from Bulgaria, 7 from Czechoslovakia, 7 from Rumania, 7 from Yugoslavia, 3 from Hungary and 2 from Poland (Kouanis 2001: 238). The majority of these films treated the subject of WWII and Resistance as well as that of the Russian Revolution. It is important to note that direct and indirect methods of censorship were applied, as we are informed by the left-wing press of the time. These included the prohibition of films [e.g. *O Lenin ton Octovri / Lenin in October* (Mikhail Romm), *Avgi* (25/11/1965)], cutting scenes [e.g. *Ordinary Fascism* (Romm), *Avgi* (22/11/1966)] and changing the meaning or omitting parts of the dialogue in the subtitles [e.g. *Aesiodoxi Tragodia / The Optimistic Tragedy* (Samson Samsonov), *Dimokratiki Allagi* (25/2/1964)]. Also *The Great Patriotic War* (Roman Karmen) was initially prohibited and finally was released after changes to the sub-titles (e.g. the word "fascism" was replaced by "Hitlerism", "fascists" by "enemies" and "communists" by "allies" [see *Dimokratiki Allagi* (15/1/1966)]).

Bondarchuk) and *The Ballad of a Soldier* (1959, Chukhrai),¹³ Eastern European war films attracted greater attention and respect from Greek intellectuals. As war was considered a serious theme of cultural and political significance, these features were often appreciated and reviewed not only by the press on the Left but also by specialists of different political standpoints, for instance Marios Ploritis in *Eleftheria*.¹⁴

Moreover, there were ‘weeks’ and seasons dedicated to war and resistance films, which combined political activism and cinephilia. For instance, a ‘Week of Anti-War Films’ (14-20 October 1963) was organized at *Rivoli* by the ‘Epitropi dia tin Iperaspisi tou Pnevmatikou Politismou ke tis Dimokratias’ [‘Committee of Defense of Culture and Democracy’];¹⁵ a ‘Week of Resistance Film’ (7-13 September 1964) – as part of the celebrations of the ‘Resistance year’¹⁶ – paying homage to the Greek and European

¹³ Notably *The Cranes are Flying* had the second highest Athens box-office sales in the 1958/59 season with 140,574 admissions [in the first place was the war melodrama *O Choros ton Kataramenon / The Young Lions* (1958, Edward Dmytryk) with 148,418 admissions (Kouanis 2001: 248)], while *The Ballad of a Soldier* was fourth in the 1960/61 season with 124,179 admissions, dominant among all the foreign films shown during that year.

¹⁴ Another example is Dimitris Psathas, a satirist and chronicle writer, who often expressed his antipathy to the communist movement and took issue with *Avgi* on particular subjects. He wrote in *Ta Nea* about *The Great Patriotic War* (USSR, 1965/1966, Roman Karmen): “It is a real masterpiece [...] so real, so human – a heart-breaking cry against the war and the brutal aggression of Hitlerism – that at certain moments made me weep. With films like this [...] cinema is elevated to such creative heights, that it becomes the highest of all arts [...]” (The extract had been reproduced as an advertisement in *Avgi* (2/2/1966). See also *I ‘Techni’ sti Thessaloniki* 2002: 124-125 and 139-141.

¹⁵ The Committee was formed after the assassination of Lambrakis by prominent figures of the cultural milieu (Mikis Theodorakis, Thalia Kolyva, Alekos Alexandrakis, Marios Ploritis, Leon Koukoulas, G. Saranti, Yannis Chainis, Zisis Skaros, Vasilis Mesolongitis, et. al.). Stratis Myrivilis attended the official opening of the Week, while Roviros Manthoulis and Vasilis Andreopoulos addressed the audience on the last day. The schedule, which comprised films that had been already screened at public cinemas, included: *A King in New York* (1957, Charlie Chaplin), *Mein Kampf* (1960, Erwin Leiser), *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962, Francesco Rosi), *Benito Mussolini*, (1962, Pascuale Prunas), *Tutti a Casa /Everybody go Home* (1960, Luigi Comencini), *Psila ta Cheria Hitler/ Hands Up Hitler* (1962, Roviros Manthoulis), and *Le Quattro Giornate di Napoli* (1962, Nanny Loy). The event was a great success: on the first day the box-office sales were 2,497 tickets, and by the end of the week, 15,623 tickets had been sold, although there was only one screening per day. For further information see *To Vima* (10, 11, 13/10/1963) and *Avgi* (10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 22/10/1963).

¹⁶ 1964 was officially regarded as the ‘Resistance year’. The campaign by the Left in the 1960s to gain official recognition of the National Resistance culminated during that year in a series of cultural events and demonstrations, including the ‘Week of Resistance Film’. This led in the autumn of 1964 to a strong public conflict between EDA and Georgios Papandreou, who was reluctant to provide the recognition (See Linardos 1986: 88-90).

Resistance was arranged at *Peroke* by EFEE (=National Union of Students);¹⁷ a ‘Victory Week’ (3-9 May 1965), releasing 6 Soviet films that celebrated the 20th anniversary of the surrender of Nazi Germany, was set up at *Esperos* by ‘Sov-export’;¹⁸ and on the national anniversary of 28th October, a day-tribute to “the Epic of 1940-41 and the National Resistance” was run by the ‘University Students’ Film Society of Athens’ (31 October 1965).¹⁹

The massive circulation of historical and war films both from Western and Eastern Europe, including old and new releases,²⁰ was not a reflection merely of the general growth of interest in history or the rise of the anti-war sentiment. Many of these films also provided cinematic substitutes for a repressed domestic history. Since their majority could be categorised as resistance, partisan or revolutionary films, they served the function of filling a gap in Greek cinema, namely the absence of direct cinematic treatment of the communists and the left partisan movement, offering positive images with which people on the Left could identify.

Reviewing *Un Giorno da Leoni / To Sabotage Ege Ximeromata* (1961, Nanny Loy), Fotos Lambrinos wrote in *Dimokratiki Allagi*:

We should all see this Italian film. To remember our own ‘protevousianous’; our own partisans; our own leaders. To remember and fight so that they gain the position they deserve. (*Dimokratiki Allagi*, 17/2/1964)

¹⁷ The program was: *Canal* (1957, Andrei Wajda), *Kozara* (1963, Delico Bulazic), *The Last Bridge* (1954, Helmut Kautner), *Tutti a Casa* (1960, Luigi Comencini), *Naked among Wolves* (1963, Frank Beyer) and *Un Giorno da Leoni* (1961, Nanny Loy). See *Avgi* (6/9/64) and Appendix in Kalandidis (1996).

¹⁸ See *Avgi* and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (30/4/1965).

¹⁹ See *Avgi* and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (30/10/1965).

²⁰ Analysis of the press of the period shows that in the 1960s not only the newly produced historical, resistance and war films were released but, in addition, a great deal of previously made films were screened for the first time or rereleased, especially Eastern European productions. The Greek film also *I Floga tis Eleftherias / The Flame of Liberty* (1952, Panayotis Spyrou) rereleased in 1963, after the victory of Georgios Papandreou, with the title *O Dromos tis Eleftherias / The Road of Liberty* (*Avgi*, 20/11/1963).

Under the title “Enthusiasm in *Peroke*”, Tonia Marketaki commented on the ‘Week of Resistance Film’:

The ‘Week of Resistance Film’ is a great success. [...]. Attendance [...] exceeds expectation. People of all classes, students, ordinary people are fused in one person. [...]. There is the sense of a collective ritual. [...] Memory is so strong, and the desire for the recognition of the Resistance so powerful, that our people are delirious at the very sight of foreign fighters. What would happen if our own fighters appeared on the same screen, our own heroes, our own songs? (*Dimokratiki Allagi*, 10/9/1964)²¹

Evidently there was a strong demand from the Left for films dealing with historical subjects and especially the Resistance. This is demonstrated by the large number of articles in the left-wing press concerning the Resistance in Greek films and its treatment in other European national cinemas, usually ending with statements such as the following:

The Greek Resistance is able to offer rich thematic material to cinema. Themes and films that will not only be a moral reward to those who

²¹ The commercial success and popularity of resistance, partisan and revolution films at the time of their release is hard to judge due to the lack of data from second-run cinemas, in which these films were repeatedly screened. Their massive circulation and impact on the audiences as described by the left-wing press is reminiscent of the post-Liberation period. (For the success of the Soviet films in the early post-Liberation era see Andritsos 2004: 22). Kostas Stamatiou points out in his review of the film *She Defends the Motherland / Me Fotia ke Atsali* (1943, USSR, Frederick Ehrmler,): “Many might have remembered – and will remember in the coming days while watching the film *She Defends the Motherland* – our scalding acquaintance with the grand Soviet cinema of Resistance in the first post-Liberation period. In the disquieted city of Athens of 1945, and also in the rest of Greece, which had been tormented by hardship, the profoundly real films that the Soviet filmmakers had made during the great patriotic war [...] were like balm to the hurt Greek souls [...] filling them with hope. [...] Go and see *She Defends the Motherland*. It reminds us of things that we must not forget”. (*Avgi* 11/10/1961)

struggled and died, but also the glory of Greece abroad. (Athanasios Tsouparopoulos)²²

The anxiety about preserving the history of the Left and the symbolic importance of the Resistance through film is also evident in the public discussion entitled ‘The Greek Resistance and Greek Cinema’, which was held as part of the ‘Week of Resistance Film’ to explore the reasons behind Greek cinema’s relative neglect of the subject. Organizations of Resistance fighters and filmmakers attended the discussion and the main speaker was Komninos Pyromaglou.²³ At the end of the event, a competition was announced for a screenplay about the Resistance.²⁴ Persistent calls for works about specific Resistance events also appeared in the pages of the left-wing press such as encouraging ‘young’ directors to make a documentary depicting the lowering of the Nazi flag from the Acropolis by Manolis Glezos and Apostolos Santas.²⁵

The Resistance was such an emotionally charged and politically problematic subject, and one inextricably linked to the contemporary political situation, that state censorship was particularly strict. For example, *Avgi* was taken to court, interestingly during the Papandreou period, for a piece on EAM;²⁶ the editor of *Matomenes Meres* [*Days of Blood*], which included Resistance songs, was prosecuted,²⁷ as were the writer

²² ‘Resistance in French Cinema’ (*Avgi* 25/10/1964).

²³ He was an officer in the Resistance movement of EDES (Organising Secretary of EDES and General Commander of EDEA-EDES). In 1958, he was collaborated with EDA and elected as a Member of Parliament.

²⁴ See *Avgi* (6, 9, 13, 15/9/1964), *To Vima* (27/8/1964) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (27/8/1964 and 10, 11, 14/9/1964). Also, in the period during which he was working on his Resistance film *To Bloco / The Round Up* (1965) and in collaboration with the Democratic Youth of Lamprakis, Adonis Kyrou extensively lectured on the Resistance and Greek film. See *Dimokratiki Allagi* (26/6/1965 and 21, 23/8/1965).

²⁵ See *Avgi* (13, 16/6/1964).

²⁶ See *Avgi* (21/10/1964).

²⁷ See *Avgi* (6/2/1965 and 21/9/1965).

and the editor of the Resistance book *Matomena Chronia* [*Bloody Years*].²⁸ Marios Ploritis wrote of the Occupation period:

A 'dangerous' era, because for thousands of very well-known reasons even the word 'Resistance' (which must have been sacred for anyone) had become in our days a 'suspect' theme. (1961)²⁹

The topic of the Resistance also faced indirect but nonetheless strong censorship from the Left. When *Laiko Theatro* [*Popular Theatre*], which was headed by the left-wing actor Manos Katrakis, staged the play *I Antigoni tis Katohis* [*Antigone of Occupation*] by the leftist Notis Pergialis in June 1960, it was attacked by the Left for falsifying history, mainly due to the sympathetic depiction of a German officer. For days there were protests from critics, readers of *Avgi*, the 'Union of Victims during the Occupation', and many others, causing even the intervention of the EDA parliamentary spokesperson I. Iliou.³⁰ All called for the play to be taken off: 'Hubris towards the National Resistance', 'The play must be stopped immediately',³¹ and a few days later it was. The Resistance was therefore a doubly censored theme. The official Left preferred more clear-cut and consciousness-raising heroic representations of the Resistance, highlighting the positive role of the Left.

However, internal ideological conflict within the Communist party shortly before its final split in 1968 gave rise to differing perspectives on the subject. Reviewing *Zoya* (1944, Lev Arnshtam), a Soviet war film about the martyr's death of a young partisan woman, Vasilis Rafaelidis attacked both the aesthetics of socialist realism and the

²⁸ See *Avgi* (5/8/1965).

²⁹ Reviewing *Stratiotes dihos Stoli / Soldiers without Uniform* (Dimitris Ioannopoulos) in *Eleftheria* (27/1/1961).

³⁰ See his letter published in *Avgi* (23/6/1960).

³¹ See *Avgi* (23/6/1960).

ideological perspective of the film. Articulating a critique of the Greek leftist past, he emphasized the ‘defeat’ as opposed to ‘heroism’ and offered an alternative view of history in the context of the ‘new’ cinema:

[This] palatable national-liberation propaganda – suitable and perhaps meaningful in that difficult era – [is] however absolutely nonsensical and inappropriate for the perceptiveness of the contemporary progressive spectator, who is fed up with heroism and deeds. (1967)³²

In response to negative reactions to his article he declared:

It is absolutely natural for those who fought at that time to be enthusiastic [about the film], just as it is natural for us who were brought up with the anxiety of uncertainty to feel disappointment. A degree of skepticism should be allowed, or at least treated with greater understanding by the older generation, from whom we expect a sensible explanation and persuasive interpretation of what they have “done”, and not condescending sweeping statements. We have the right to demand this from them because our own generation was brought up with the atrocious cold-war anxiety while, in contrast, their own generation has had, at least, the satisfaction of a given, honest and hard struggle.³³

Despite its mythologization and also the pressure posed by the official Left, there have been very few heroic depictions of the Resistance in Greek cinema from a leftist viewpoint, including the post-dictatorship period when censorship restrictions were eased and the Left-leaning NEK became the national film canon. The Resistance was in fact

³² *Dimokratiki Allagi* (3/1/1967).

³³ ‘Real and Artificial Heroisms’ in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (7/1/1967).

excluded from the thematic agenda of the post-dictatorship NEK, which gave priority to the Civil War and the defeat of the Left movement.

It was not only the Left that wanted to see the past explored in films, but history was widely considered to be a fitting subject and an imperative for Greek cinema.³⁴ The demand for dealing with Greek history was further intensified with the generalized and strong reaction against foreign films on Greek past and mythology, which were accused of distorting and denigrating the nation's history.³⁵ Such was the importance attributed to the subject that a relevant debate in the press elicited ministerial intervention.³⁶ Nevertheless, there are very few instances of the state approving of Greek films on historical themes: the Ministry of Education encouraged students to attend *Bouboulina* (1959, Kostas Andritsos)³⁷ and the Papandreou government intended to subsidize a film about the peasants' struggles at the beginning of the century.³⁸ Finally, the keen interest of intellectuals at the time in history and cinema is revealed by the essay 'History and Art in Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible' written by Pavlos Zannas and first published in two parts by the prestigious periodical *Epoches* (1964).³⁹

³⁴ See Nestoras Matsas 'I Ora toy Chreous' (*Theamata*, 7/12/1959) and 'I Psychi tou Genous' (*Theamata*, 1/2/1960).

³⁵ See 'Na Profylahti I Istorias mas apo ti Geliopiisi' ['Our History Must be Protected from being Ridiculed'] (Kostas Stamatiou in *Avgi*, 23/10/1960), 'O Gigas toy Marathonos' (review by Stamatiou in *Avgi*, 12/4/1961), 'Na Stamatisi o Diasyrmos tis Archeas Istorias mas' ['The Vilification of our Ancient History Must be Stopped'] (Stamatiou in *Avgi*, 14/4/1961), 'The Distortion of Greek History' (*Avgi*, 22/4/1961) and 'The Violation of our History by the American Cinema' (Stamatiou, *Avgi*, 25/4/1961). In 'Kinimatografika Anosiourgimata' ['Film Sacrileges'] it is also stated: "Unanimous protest at the violation of our history by Hollywood films. The entire press, intellectuals and other personages are outraged and demand such sacrileges to be banned" (*Epitheorisi Technis*, 1961, no. 76, p. 369).

³⁶ "The Minister of Industry issued a statement. [...]. He states that there are legal provisions binding [foreign producers] to respect our history and that measures against future distortions will be taken" (*Avgi*, 22/4/1961).

³⁷ See Matsas, 'I Psychi tou Genous' ['The Soul of the Nation'](*Theamata*, 1/2/1960)

³⁸ From a letter sent by Giorgos Karanikolas, author of the book '*Kileler*', to *Dimokratiki Allagi* (12/1/1966), in protest at the falsification of history in the film *To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land* (1965, Vasilis Georgiadis), we are informed that a year and a half earlier the sub-ministry of the Presidency of the Government, with the approval of Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou, decided to subsidize a historical film about the events of *Kileler* to honour the struggles of Greek peasants. He was invited by the sub-ministry to participate in an advisory committee responsible to ensure the historical accuracy of the film. Karanikolas was later involved in a trial against Damaskinos-Michailidis and Finos about the screenplay of the film.

³⁹ It was published as a book in 1977 by Kedros.

4.2 History and Greek popular cinema of the 1960s

The past, both as an iconographic and narrative principle, figures prominently in a wide variety of Greek popular films: in a small number of period comedies and costume dramas,⁴⁰ in the more prolific ‘mountain film’ genre (the so-called *foustanella*), in war adventures, war melodramas, or war comedies, in films about the War of Independence, films set in Ancient Greece or the Byzantine era etc. However, it has often been argued that pre-dictatorship Greek cinema suffered from strong historical amnesia since, as it has been most commonly accepted, the actual national history, both recent and distant, was of little concern, while the traumatic experience of the Civil War and its painful consequences were completely absent.⁴¹ Another common assertion is that the past degenerates into sentimental stories and, with a few exceptions such as *I Paranomi / The Outlaw* (1958, Nikos Koundouros) and *Psila ta Heria Hitler / Hands Up Hitler* (1962, Roviros Manthoulis), it is presented as the official version of history, ignoring the role played by the Left in the Second World War and distorting the actual facts. The limited treatment of historical themes and their depiction from the ‘nationalistic’ perspective are generally attributed to the poor financial and technical capabilities of Greek cinema that prevented historical reconstructions, the enforcement of the official ideology through strict censorship, the reluctance of the producers to risk prohibition and subsequent commercial failure, as well as the difficulty of dealing with a subject that was so divisive and controversial. Another widely held belief is that commercial films on historical themes – with propagandistic and melodramatic content – flourished during the dictatorship because the regime provided them with direct or indirect support (e.g. military equipment and

⁴⁰ E.g. *Vaftistikos* (1952, Maria Plyta), *I Doukisa tis Plekentias* (1956, Plyta), *Barba Giannis o Kanatas* (1957, Fixos Iliadis-Kostas Strantzalis), *O Mimikos ke I Mary* (1958, Grigoris Grigoriou), *Ime Athoos* (1960, Dinos Katsouridis), *Stin Porta tis kolaseos* (1960, Lila Kourkoulakou) etc.

⁴¹ See, for example, Kolovos 2002: 152.

extras) as part of its effort to promote nationalistic virtues and its own ideological discourse.⁴² In addition, it has been broadly argued that with NEK – e.g. the films of Theo Angelopoulos – the subject matter of Greek cinema had been finally historicized in a proper way, offering critical and oppositional narratives to the dominant version of history and articulating for the first time a leftist discourse on the past. Since commercial Greek cinema was accused of being oblivious to the past, superficial or distortive because it either ignored history or treated it inadequately, for a long time it was believed that only NEK had a legitimate and serious interest in history.⁴³

These established beliefs about history in Greek cinema can be challenged, in my view, on three main points: Firstly, the 1950s and 1960s do not constitute a homogeneous area of study, since there are considerable differences between the two decades. The subject matter of Greek cinema during the 1960s, in contrast to the 1950s, gradually and increasingly began to incorporate historical issues, broadening the horizons of the history-related film and reaching a high point during the dictatorship. What I suggest here is that the peak in history-themed films during the junta was not a sudden and exclusive to the dictatorship phenomenon that was originated in and confined to the socio-political and cinematic conditions prevalent during the junta, as it is widely argued. It was also a continuation of developments which had taken place in the 1960s. Secondly, the official interpretation of history is not as dominant in popular Greek cinema of the 1950s and 1960s and the Civil War is not such an atrophied theme as scholars tend to believe. In fact alternative perspectives on historical topics are fairly common and the Civil War trauma always present. Thirdly, the exclusive way in which the theoretical discourse on Greek film tends to define PEK and NEK obscures the fact that the historicization of Greek film –

⁴² For a detailed explanation of the rise of the historical film during the dictatorship see Theodoridis 2006: 191-231.

⁴³ For an overview of the arguments of scholarship on the relation of PEK to history see Fotini-Tomai (2006).

a process that took place during the 1960s – was a general phenomenon, occurred in the popular and art-house sector simultaneously, and that the main bulk of NEK films dealing with history followed the peak of PEK historical features. Therefore the presence of history in Greek cinema can be discussed in terms of continuity and correspondence, rather than difference. For example, during the dictatorship the rise of the subject of history in Greek cinema is manifest in films like *Sta Synora tis Prodosias / At the Borders of Betrayal* (1968, Dimis Dadiras) and *Papaflessas* (1971, Errikos Andreou), but also *Meres tou '36 / Days of '36* (1972, Theo Angelopoulos) and *Thiasos / Travelling Players* (1975, Angelopoulos).

This analysis focuses on films in which history provides a central narrative element, either by using historical issues in their plots, or a historically specific setting. This excludes the majority of ‘mountain films’ which usually depict a vague rural national past (mostly set in the 19th century) and avoid specific historical references.⁴⁴ In this context, it could be argued that after a brief blossoming of films in the 1940s about the Second World War,⁴⁵ for most of the 1950s (1950-57) there were considerably fewer films with historical content, with a few exceptions, for instance, *Matomena Christougenna / Bloody Christmas* (1951, Giorgos Zervos) and *To Xypolito Tagma / The Barefoot Battalion* (1954, Gregg Tallas), both dealing with the Occupation. A more frequent phenomenon was historical allusions in non-historical films, for example *To Organaki tou Attik / Attik's*

⁴⁴ For the relationship of the ‘mountain film’ with history, see Maria Stasinopoulou 1999: 151-152.

⁴⁵ Of films made in the 1940s dealing with history or set in the past, only 3 were not related exclusively to WWII: *Exormisis / Sortie* (1945, John Christian) which was an attempt to retell Greek history from the War of Independence until the Liberation (1944), *Marinos Kondaras* (1948, Giorgos Tzavellas) a pirate story based on an Argyris Eftaliotis short story, and *O Kokkinos Vrachos / The Red Rock* (1949, Grigoris Grigoriou) an adaptation of a Grigorios Xenopoulos novel. The films about WWII were: *Ragismenes Kardies / Broken Hearts* (1945, Orestis Laskos), *Katadromi sto Aigaio / Persecution in the Aegean* (1946, Michalis Karagatsis), *Adouloti Sklavi / Unfettered Slaves* (1946, Vion Papamichalis), *Mia Zoi Xanarchizi / A Life Starts Again* (1947, Kostas Gaziadis / Ilias Paraskevas), *Pedia tis Athinas or I Saltadori / Children of Athens* (1947, Takis Bacopoulos), *I Kriti stis Floges / Crete in Flames* (1947, A. Papadantonakis), *I Germani Xanarchonte / The Germans are Returning* (1948, Alekos Sakellarios), *Anna Roditi* (1948, Michalis Gaziadis / Yannis Filippou), *Ochiro 27 / Fortress 27* (1948, Mavrikios Novak), *Teleftea Apostoli / Last Mission* (1949, Nikos Tsiforos) and *Germaniki Peripolos stin Kriti / German Patrol in Crete* (1949, Antonis Papadantonakis)

Little Instrument (1955, Frixos Iliadis) and *Delistavrou ke Ios / Delistavrou and Son* (1957, Alekos Sakellarios), which made references to the Asia Minor disaster and the Resistance respectively.⁴⁶ This decline in the treatment of historical themes, especially of the Second World War, has been associated by scholars with a similar gap observed in the production of War and Resistance films during the 1950s in other European national cinemas, especially the Italian and the French.⁴⁷ However, apart from the widely accepted reasons, related to contemporary politics and the Cold War, this hiatus, as well as the re-emergence of the historical theme a few years later, can also be explained by the emphasis placed by the industry at different times on experimenting with new themes and genres.

The return of history as a theme in Greek cinema occurred in the late 1950s, when both the most recent and distant national past was explored. *O Anthropos tou Trenou / The Train Man* (1957/58, Dinos Dimopoulos), which revived Occupation memories, can be seen as the film which initiated the new tendency towards history-related subject matter. However, the 1958/59 and 1959/60 film seasons marked a real turning point, because there was an increase in films not only on WWII, but also the War of Independence and the

⁴⁶ Between 1950 and 1957, Greek cinema explored historical subject matter in a limited and fragmentary way. After the 1948/49 film season, in which there were three films (from a total of eight) about WWII (*Last Mission*, *Fortress 27* and *German Patrol in Crete*), two years passed without any film on a historical theme. History re-emerged in the 1951/52 season with two Occupation films (from a total of thirteen), which also enjoyed commercial success: *Matomena Christougenna / Bloody Christmas* (1951, Giorgos Zervos) and *I Floga tis Eleftherias / Flame of Freedom* (1952, Panayotis Spyrou), 1st and 9th in the annual box office sales respectively. However, the next year (the 1952/53 season) the only film dealing with the Occupation, the deeply depressive and pessimistic *Apo Exi Miname Dyo / Out of Six, Two of Us were Left* (1953, Stavros Hatzopoulos) was a commercial failure (21st in the box office sales from an output of 22). WWII as a film theme recovered immediately after, in the 1953/54 season, with the features *The Barefoot Battalion* and *I Ourani ine Diki mas / The Skies are Ours* (1953, Dinos Dimopoulos), after which it was entirely forgotten until the 1956/57 season when the Resistance emerged in the memories of the heroes in the comedy *Delistavrou ke Ios / Delistavrou and Son* (1957, Alekos Sakellarios).

⁴⁷ See Maria Stasinopoulou 2000: 44 and Nick Potamitis (Chapter 4, p.15). See also the observations made by Pierre Sorlin about the interruption in the production of Italian and French resistance films in the 1950s and the return of the genre in the 1960s (2004: 115-130). In addition, see Sorlin (1980: 190 and 204 / note 3) and Susan Hayward 2002: 189-190.

Ottoman past.⁴⁸ Maria Stasinopoulou attributes this resurgence of history to contemporary events:

The renewed interest in war themes was partly caused by the nationalist fervor provoked by the last phase of the Cyprus crisis before the London-Zurich agreement. In the case of films about the Second World War, one should also consider the Merten incident. (2000: 44)

However, in my view, the return of historical themes in Greek film production at this time is symptomatic of the general rise of history in the Greek public sphere, as previously discussed.

From 1958 until 1967 and more intensively during the dictatorship, an uninterrupted and growing interest in historical subjects emerged, which, year after year, was enriched with new thematic concerns from different periods of national history. Ancient Greece (through adaptations of Greek tragedies), Byzantium (*Kassiani*), the War of Independence and the era of the Ottoman rule (*Tsakitzis, o Prostatas ton Ftohon / Tsakitzis, the Protector of the Poor; Ta 40 Pallikaria / The 40 Brave Young Men; Pagida / Trap; Stavraeti / Eagles; I Exodos tou Mesolongiou / The Exodus of Mesolongi, I Ekdikite /*

⁴⁸ Films on WWII in the 1958/59 and 1959/60 seasons were *I Paranomi / The Outlaws* (Nikos Koundouros), *Miden Pende / Zero Five* (Yannis Petropoulakis), *Epistrofi apo to Metopo / Return from the Front* (Petropoulakis), *To Nisi ton Genneon / The Island of the Brave* (Dimis Dadiras) and *Stratiotes dichos Stoli / Soldiers without Uniform* (Dimitris Ioannopoulos). *To Potami / The River* (Nikos Koundouros) – which was shot in 1958 and screened in the first ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ in 1960, including, among other stories, a war incident – should also be seen as part of this output even though it was commercially released in 1965. The films that focused on the War of Independence and the Ottoman domination were *Zalongo, to Kastro tis Lefterias / Zalongo the Castle of Liberty* (Stelios Tatasopoulos), *O Ali Pashas ke I Kyra Frosyni / Ali Pasha and Mistress Frosyni* (Stafanos Stratigos), *Bouboulina* (Kostas Andritsos) and *I Limni ton Stenagmon / The Lake of Sighs* (Grigoris Grigoriou). The Ottoman rule is encountered for the first time in post-war Greek cinema in 1953 with the film *O Genitsaros / The Jenissary* (Kostas Dritsas). It is notable that the films about the Greek-Ottoman past followed the revival and success (since 1955) of the ‘mountain film’ genre, whose iconography was similar. There was also a relevant prolific theatrical production: *I Exodos tou Mesolongiou / The Exodus of Mesolongi* (1956, Gerasimos Stavrou), *Karaiskakis* (1957, Dimitris Fotiadis-Gerasimos Stavrou), *Amalia* (1958, Georgios Roussos) and *Mando Mavrogenous* (1959, Roussos). Byzantium also emerges at this time as a theme for Greek cinema (*Kassiani*, 1960, Ilias Paraskevas).

The Avengers), the peasant struggles for land ownership (*To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land, Asyniditoi / Unscrupulous*), the Balkan Wars (*Poliorkia / Siege*), the Asia Minor disaster in 1922 (*Diogmos / Persecution, Stegnosan ta Dakrya mas / Our Tears were Dried*), Cyprus' struggle for independence (*I Cyprus stis Floges / Cyprus in Flames, Antekdikisi / Act of Reprisal*), and finally the Second World War, which was the most dominant and multifaceted theme by far (e.g. the war against Italy in 1940-41, the extermination of the Greek Jewish population during the Occupation, the Resistance).⁴⁹

Historical themes can also be found in various other genres, such as crime films (e.g. *Eglima sto Kolonaki / Crime in Kolonaki; O Dolofonos Agapouse Poly / The Killer who Loved Too Much; Eglima sta Paraskinia / Backstage Crime*), melodramas (e.g. *Adistaktoi / Ruthless; I Ehtiri / The Enemies; O Krachtis / The Decoy; Choris Taftotita / Without Identity*) and 'quality' films (*Dama Spathi / The Queen of Clubs, Ekinos ki Ekini / He and She*) in which the Occupation is often woven into the narratives as a dark area in the past where shady secrets and ambiguous identities are hidden or still painful traumas are located. The diffusion of historical issues in the 'popular *melo*' genre is another noteworthy example.⁵⁰ The historical background offered an additional perspective on the heightened emotional pain conveyed by this kind of film, which by then resulted not only from fate, misunderstandings, family obstacles, illness, social injustice, but also from blows dealt by history, reflecting a popular collective consciousness of a painfully remembered national past. The popular *melos* '*O Katiforos mias Orfanis / The Fall of an Orphan Girl; Otan Symanoun oi Kampanes / When the Bells will Toll; I Zoi Mou Aniki se Sena / My Life belongs to You; Mas Kryvoun ton Ilio / They Deprive Us of the Sun*; and

⁴⁹ For a list of films dealing with the Occupation and Resistance in the pre-dictatorship Greek cinema, see Andritsos (2004).

⁵⁰ With the term 'popular *melo*' I am referring to a sub-genre of the Greek melodrama, which was mainly produced by medium-scale or minor film companies (e.g. Strantzalis). It was low budget and highly sentimental and characterized by loose narrative structure and often extensive use of popular songs, making a significant impact on working class and rural audiences.

Den Ime Atimasmeni / I am not Dishonored all raise questions about the war and Occupation. Other examples are the Klak film company *melos* starring Nikos Xanthopoulos, the most successful popular *melos* of their time, which gradually introduced historical settings into the plots, such as the Korean War (*Me Pono ke me Dakrya / With Grief and Tears*; *O Anthropos pou Gyrisse Apo ton Pono / The Man who Returned from Pain*) or WWII (*O Katatregmenos / The Persecuted*). This historicization of the thematics of popular *melo* reached its apogee during the first years of the dictatorship with films like *I Odisia enos Xerizomenou / The Odyssey of an Expatriated*, *Xerizomeni Genia / Expatriated Generation* or *Gia tin Timi kai ton Erota / For Honour and Love*, which are mournful melodramatic explorations of recent Greek history.

In the 1961/62 season *Psila ta Heria Hitler / Hands Up, Hitler* (Roviros Manthoulis) heralded the return of history to comedy after an absence of twelve years⁵¹ and the comedian Thanasis Vengos became a protagonist for the first time in a historical narrative,⁵² inaugurating a series of alternative comical-dramatic films with strong political overtones, most significant among which was *Ti Ekanes ston Polemo Thanasi? / Thanasis, What did you Do in the War?* (1971, Dinos Katsouridis).⁵³ In 1967 also, shortly before the junta came to power, the film *Kontserto gia Polyvola / Concert for Weapons*, (pr. Finos, w. Nikos Foskolos, d. Dinos Dimopoulos) introduced the spectacular war melodrama in colour, which, in several variants, proved a very prolific and popular genre during the dictatorship. Moreover *Concert for Weapons*, a romantic love story centered on a victimized, suffering female character (played by the prominent star Tzeni Karezi) shaped all the typical characteristics of the female war film, which in the following years became a

⁵¹ The previous attempt at a historical comedy was made in 1948 with the film *I Germani Xanarhonte / Germans are Returning*.

⁵² Vengos had previously played a supporting role in the Resistance film *I Avgi tou Thriamvou / The Dawn of Triumph* (1961, Filiphos Fylaktos).

⁵³ *Ena Asyllipto Koroido / An Unbelievable Sucker* (1969, Vengos), *Diakopes sto Vietnam / Vacations in Vietnam* (1971, Panos Glykofrydis), *O Thanasis sti Chora tis Sfaliaras / Thanasis in the Slap-land* (1976, Glykofrydis / Katsouridis) and *To Megalo Kanoni / The Big Canon* (1981, Glykofrydis).

smash success.⁵⁴ It is notable that this particular movie, which also introduced the theme of espionage (another popular topic during dictatorship) into the narratives, was the basis for the extremely successful television series *Agnostos Polemos / Unknown War* (1971-74).⁵⁵

Another important development that resulted from the relative liberalisation of social and political life following the electoral victory of the Centrists was the appearance for the first time in Greek popular cinema of the figure of the political refugee and prisoner. The comedy *Ie mou Ie mou / My Son, my Son* (1965, Grigoris Grigoriou), a remake of the 1957 film *Delistavrou and Son* (Alekos Sakellarios), underwent a last-minute narrative change to include the heroine's husband dressed in guerilla uniform returning after twenty years in exile in the Soviet Union. The heroine in *Oi Kyries tis Aylis / The Ladies of the Courtyard* (1966, Dinos Dimopoulos) sadly awaits the return of her political refugee husband, frustrated by repeated postponements and unable to start a new life. Furthermore, the central character of *O Drapetis / The Fugitive* (1966, Stelios Zografakis) is an escaped political prisoner, while the female protagonist of *I Istorია mias Zois / A Life's Story* (1965, Yannis Dalianidis) is the neglected daughter of a political refugee.⁵⁶

The rise of history in 1960s Greek cinema was not merely a result of the general historicization of the public sphere, the loosening of censorship mechanisms and the pressure posed by film criticism on producers and filmmakers. It also resulted from developments in the industry in response to strong market demands. Under the new market conditions, including domestic and international film festivals, the popular and highly respected theme of history – keep in mind the commercial and critical success of foreign

⁵⁴ *I Daskala me ta Chrysa Mallia / The Teacher with Golden Hair* (1969, Dinos Dimopoulos) *Ypolochagos Natasha / Lieutenant Natasha* (1970, Nikos Foskolos), *Mia Gyneka stin Antistasi / A Woman in the Resistance* (1970, Dinos Dimopoulos). On Greek war film see Lydia Papadimitriou (2004).

⁵⁵ See Delaportas (2004: 102).

⁵⁶ See also about the film *Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love* (1966, Giorgos Zervoulakos) in Chapter 3, p. 140 and p. 156.

historical and war films – was used by some producers as a way for raising the cultural prestige of their films, while maintaining their commercial appeal. The cultural prestige of the subject of history and its association with the notion of ‘quality’ film is revealed by the films aimed at the Thessaloniki or international festivals and the foreign markets. In that respect, neither the fact that eminent writers such as Aris Alexandrou (*Prodosia / Betrayal*), Antonis Samarakis (*Epistrofi / Return*), Grigoris Valtinos (*Epichirisi Doyrios Ippos / Ops Trojan Horse*) and Vasilis Vasilikos (*Epitaphios gia Ecthrous ke Filous / Epitaph for Friends and Enemies*) were hired as scriptwriters for commercially-made historical films, nor the prizes that history-related films won at the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ are accidental.⁵⁷ It is notable that between 1960 and 1966, films set in the past or with historical allusions dominated the competition program of the ‘Week of Greek cinema’.⁵⁸ Historical subjects were favoured in particular by ambitious producers and newcomers who were becoming established in the market and aspiring to international success, such as James Paris (*Adelfos Anna / The Monk Anna; Diogmos / Persecution; Xehasmenoi Iroes / Forgotten Heroes*) or Klearchos Konitsiotis (*Prodosia / Betrayal;*

⁵⁷ The history-oriented films which were awarded at the Thessaloniki Film Festival include: *I Tragodia tou Aegeou / The Tragedy of the Aegean; Poliorkia / Siege; Ouranos / Sky; Adelfos Annas / Monk Anna; Diogmos / Persecution; Prodosia / Betrayal; Epistrofi / Return; To Bloco / The Round-Up; Xechasmeni Iroes / Forgotten Heroes; Me ti Lampsi sta Matia / With Glittering Eyes; Ekdromi / Excursion.*

⁵⁸ 1960: From a total of four competing films, two (*To Potami / The River and Eglima sta Paraskinia / Backstage Crime*) incorporated historical issues. 1961: (Five films in total) *I Tragodia tou Aegeou / The Tragedy of the Aegean* was a historical documentary, while *Eroica / Our Last Spring* and *Antigone*, which were adaptations of a novel and a Greek tragedy respectively, were also set in the past. 1962: (Eight films) *Ouranos / Sky* dealt with WWII, *Poliorkia / Siege* with the Balkan Wars, *Pagida / Trap* referred to the Ottoman past and two films were adaptations of Greek tragedies (two versions of *Electra*). 1963: (Five films) *Adelfos Anna / Monk Anna* dealt with the Occupation and *Mikres Afrodites / Young Aphrodites* referred to a non-specific ancient past. 1964: (Six films) *Diogmos / Persecution* connected the Asia Minor Disaster and WWII, while *Prodosia / Betrayal* dealt with WWII issues. 1965: (Nine films) *Epistrofi / Return* and *To Bloco / The Round-Up* dealt with the Occupation and the Resistance, *Oi Adistaktoi / The Ruthless* and *I Istorია mias Zois / A Life’s Story* incorporated issues from the Occupation and the Civil War, while the documentary *I Ellas choris Eripia / Greece without Ruins* included segments of historical concern. 1966: (Eleven films) Three were Occupation and Resistance films (*Xehasmeni Iroes / Forgotten Heroes; Epichirisi Dourios Ippos / Trojan Horse; Me ti Lampsi sta Matia / With Glittering Eyes*), *Ekdromi / Excursion* unfolded its narrative during WWII, *Prosopo me Prosopo / Face to Face* commented directly on historical issues and *O Psarogiannos* incorporated a historical background. It is evident, I think, that a tendency towards historical subject matter was gradually developed in the body of the ‘quality’ film.

Epistrofi / Return;⁵⁹ *Epitafios gia Ehtrous ke Filous / Epitaph for Friends and Enemies*).

Thus a clearly identifiable historical thematic trend developed in the 1960s within the subgroup of ‘quality’ commercial films (as discussed in Chapter 3).⁶⁰

With the exception of *Prodosia / Betrayal* (1964, Kostas Manousakis), which was very positively received by the critics, and to a lesser extent *Diogmos / Persecution* (1964, Grigoris Grigoriou), the industry’s attempts to make historical ‘quality’ films were largely criticized on account of their conventional narratives and the ‘betrayal’ of the theme. Nevertheless, there was considerable experimentation, not only in formal and narrative terms, but in exploring alternative ways of bringing history into the films. In this sense, not only new themes were explored (peasant revolts, the Asia Minor Disaster, the post-war Berlin [*Epitafios gia Ehtrous kai Filous / Epitaph for Enemies and Friends*]), but also serious attempts were made to balance the Greek audience’s taste for melodrama and other popular genres against the critical demand for serious treatments of historical subjects.

The producer Klearchos Konitsiotis decided to introduce sobriety into melodrama, and to place *melo* in a European context. (Vasilis Rafaelidis commented, with a touch of irony, about *Epistrofi / Return*)⁶¹

The director avoids sensational solutions and consistently chooses to observe characters closely and capture the environment with austere realism. (Pavlos Zannas on *Diogmos / Persecution*)⁶²

⁵⁹ Co-production with Damaskinos-Michaelidis.

⁶⁰ Among the films that followed this trend I include *Psila ta Cheria Hitler / Hands Up Hitler*, *Pagida / Trap*; *Poliorkia / Siege*; *Amok*; *Adelfos Anna / Monk Anna*; *Prodosia / Betrayal*; *Diogmos / Persecution*; *To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land*; *Epistrofi / Return*; *Epitafios gia Ehtrous kai Filous / Epitaph for Enemies and Friends*; *Xechasmenoi Iroes / Forgotten Heroes* and *Epicheirisi Doyreios Ippos / Trojan Horse*. The films *I Paranomi / The Outlaws* and *Ouranos / Sky* could also be included as they were both supported by the industry, although they differ from the others in their lack of generic narrative devices.

⁶¹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (23/11/1965).

⁶² *To Vima* (24/9/1964).

The creators of the film accomplished a great achievement. They reduced the melodramatic principles and developed the elements about the endless trials of our people [...]. They encompassed in the film the two major dramas of Hellenism, the Asia Minor disaster and the German-Fascist occupation, free from any intention of cheap exploitation, with seriousness and responsibility. (Antonis Moschovakis on *Persecution*)⁶³

A common trait of the commercial historical ‘quality’ films was the personalized perspectives. History was identified mainly with the private and for this the films were strongly criticized, since critics were interested rather in collective history and impersonal processes.

The story is the focal point [...] to such an extent that the national struggle is in danger of remaining at the background. (Tonia Marketaki on *Diogmos / Persecution*)⁶⁴

These two major dramatic moments of Hellenism [the Asia Minor disaster and the Occupation] are essentially absent from the film. What remains is the individual adventure. (Marios Ploritis on *Diogmos / Persecution*)

In this film, which is supposed to be devoted to a people’s struggle, the people never emerge as a protagonist. The peasants are only figures, motion pictures behind the action of the real protagonists, the landowners. (Marketaki on *To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land*)⁶⁵

⁶³ *Avgi* (22/9/1964).

⁶⁴ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (21/9/1964).

⁶⁵ *To Vima* (12/1/1966).

There are, however, remarkable narrative and visual elements that distinguish these films from the conventional and 'school-like' approach to history, which is ascribed by several critical and scholarly works to 'Old Greek cinema'. Although these films treat history mainly as the stories of individuals, most of them attempt to relate the private stories to the historical context and to raise issues of broad concern through personal relationships and conflicts. In other words, the point of interest in these films is not simply to narrate a dramatic story, but to throw light on historical subjects. For instance, *Prodosia / Betrayal* gives insights into the idealistic, psychological and narcissistic foundations of the Nazi ideology and its continued existence in the present. *Diogmos / Persecution* attempts to connect different periods of national history, from the Byzantine period and the War of Independence to the Asia Minor disaster and the Occupation, offering a sense of continuity and timelessness, and making a statement about the long troubled Greek-Turkish relationship. *To Choma Vaftike Kokkino / Blood on the Land* comments on the moral aspects of the Civil War conflicts, and raises questions about the political polarization of Greek society and the effectiveness of the armed class struggle. Moreover, incidents from recent history which were usually excluded from the official historiographies of the period are also explored. Thus *Blood on the Land* takes for the first time the theme of the peasant revolts (part of the officially repressed history of the Greek socialist movement) and places Marinos Andypas, a real historical figure, who was not at that time an officially recognized national hero, alongside the fictional characters. Other topics suppressed by official histories also appear in popular films, such as the sea-crossing by resistance fighters destined for the Asia Minor coast and neutral Turkey (*Persecution*); prostitution during the Occupation and relationships between Greek women and German or English soldiers (*Return*); the fate of Greek Jews during the Occupation (*Amok, The Monk*

Anna, Betrayal); the ambivalent role played by the Allies (*Return, Persecution*); the ideological confusion of post-war Europe (*Epitaph for Enemies and Friends*). Ambiguous and anti-heroic narratives were also filmed without traces of nationalistic exaltation. In *Betrayal*, for example, the narrative follows the point of view of an anti-hero (a Nazi officer) treating him sympathetically and exploring his mental struggles until his final breakdown. Depictions of collective history and collective action can also be found, for instance the scenes of peasants in *Blood on the Land* (which recall images from Soviet films), the open-air bazaar and street theatre in the same film, the refugee camp in Turkey in WWII and the evacuation of the Greek population from the Asia Minor coast to the Aegean islands in *Persecution*,⁶⁶ the forced march of chained convicts in *Pagida / Trap*, and music venues during the Occupation evocative of *café Aman* and *café chantant* in *Return*.

It is evident, I think, that commercial ‘quality’ historical films – and also other less ambitious historical projects of PEK – attempted in the 1960s to erase the divisions between the intellectual / artistic and popular / mainstream approaches to history and introduced narrative and visual elements that disrupted the typical narrative and visual modes of ‘Old Greek cinema’. The point is that these elements, which were foregrounded by ‘New Greek cinema’, did not first appear in NEK films, as it is widely believed, but were present in the narratives and images of commercial movies, although often on the edges of the main story line. Therefore PEK’s historical films of the pre-dictatorship 1960s, which convey also strong anti-war sentiments, are radically different from the majority of historical extravaganzas made during the dictatorship.

⁶⁶ Another impressive scene of collective history occurs in the popular *melo Otan Symanoun oi Kampanes / When the Bells Toll* (1965, Stelios Tatasopoulos): the evacuation of people and animals from a Greek village during the Occupation.

Finally, another characteristic of the commercially-made historical films of the time was the extensive use of archive material – much appreciated by critics and audiences alike – which brought collective history into the stories of individuals and functioned as a pleasurable spectacle for the audience. Pierre Sorlin argues that this was a common practice in historical films of the 1960s⁶⁷, but in fact it can be traced back in the 1940s in Greece⁶⁸. Even the comedy *An oles i Gynekes tou Kosmou / If all the Women in the World* (1967, Nestoras Matsas) includes documentary war footage – which had been ordered from abroad⁶⁹ – to heighten the anti-war message, the respectability and the popularity of the film. The producer Klearchos Konitsiotis – who made a considerable contribution to the historical commercial ‘quality’ trend – was said to have been motivated to make historical films by the desire to exploit the archive material in his possession.⁷⁰ This was not about cutting costs, as it has been argued,⁷¹ for in the 1960s archive footage was seen as a valuable part of the narrative world of films. *Prodosia / Betrayal* is exceptional among attempts to combine stock documentary with fictional narratives. Although the director Kostas Manousakis objected strongly to the practice, *Betrayal* uses the footage in a highly skillful and inspired manner, accommodating some of its formal qualities in the construction of the fictional images, and using it not to interrupt the narrative flow, but as a fully integrated component of the narrative.

⁶⁷ Pierre Sorlin (2004: 105).

⁶⁸ See Stasinopoulou (2006: 256).

⁶⁹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (3/8/66).

⁷⁰ Gideon Bachman: *Epoches* (1965, no. 32, p. 66). See also the review of *Betrayal* by Ploritis in *Eleftheria*, (25/11/1964).

⁷¹ See, for example, Ilias Giannakakis 2005: 89.

4.3 The Civil-War trauma and alternative discourses on history in ‘Old Greek cinema’

a. The Civil War

Scholars and critics have associated the cinematic treatment of the Civil War and left-wing perspectives on history almost exclusively with NEK, since Civil War themes were a major preoccupation of ‘New Greek Cinema’ and its historical discourse was largely leftist. These aspects of NEK are seen in opposition to the historical and political orientations of PEK and are considered to be defining differences between the two models of Greek cinema.

‘Old’ Greek films have often been accused of “shutting their eyes to the Civil War” (Kolovos 2000: 151), pretending that they are “the products of another, blind, ahistorical era” (Kolovos 2000: 152). Statements of this kind are often accompanied by an outright rejection of PEK for being apolitical or subservient to the official ‘nationalistic’ ideology. Nevertheless, in the 1960s it was clear, even to film commentators on the Left, that commercial Greek cinema did not reinforce the state’s ideology, since it did not adopt the rightist rhetoric and the overt anticommunism, which characterised any kind of official discourse at that time.

Greek cinema had been lucky enough not to be officially involved in the intellectual values of the country. Thus it was affected by the problems of the cultural crisis which plagues our country, but in the main it did not become an ideological tool of the regime, which did not exploit

cinema ideologically, apart from a handful of propagandistic shorts made by various Ministries. (1967, Dimitris Stavrakas)⁷²

Retrospectively, however, the opposite conviction has prevailed, perhaps because of cinematic developments during the dictatorship, when the phenomenon of voicing state ideas and the nationalistic concept of history emerged in a set of films, especially in historical and war melodramas. As a consequence of this, Greek popular cinema of the 1950s and 1960s has been widely understood as a powerful ideological weapon of the political ruling class during this crucial period in Greek history.

The entertainment cinema of the [...] producers [...] had already embraced during previous decades when the leftists were persecuted, the absolute absence of political discourse. Furthermore, it took advantage of the incentives from the dictatorship for the promotion of an anachronistic jingoism. (Bacoyannopoulos, 2002: 11)

It seems that the ideology of the ‘winners’ of the Civil War, with the help of cinema, imposed passivity and immobility on the ‘defeated’, winning one more significant battle. (Kolovos, 2000: 160)

The idea that PEK consistently reproduced the official view of history also predominates. For example, discussing the treatment of the Occupation and Resistance in Greek Cinema from the post-war period to the dictatorship, Giorgos Andritsos concludes:

⁷² *Ellinikos Kin/fos* (1967, no. 3-4, pp. 5-12).

Throughout the period, the majority of films constructed an image of the Occupation and the Resistance that promoted the ideas of the winners of the Civil War about this crucial period, and obliterated the social dimension of the Resistance movement and the catalytic role played in its development by EAM and the Communist Party, completely reversing reality. (Andritsos 2006: 97)

However, recent scholarly work has countered these dominant ideas and challenged our understanding of ‘Old Greek cinema’ by demonstrating that PEK responded in definite ways to the sociopolitical realities of its time and also alluded to the Civil War.⁷³ It is a simplification of PEK’s relationship with the past and present to assert that commercial Greek cinema of the two post-war decades kept silent over or distorted recent history and propagated ‘nationalistic’ stereotypes. This approach neglects the fact that the Civil War trauma was extensively discussed in Greek popular cinema and that leftist and other alternative perspectives on history found expression in Greek popular films.

It is true that the Civil War was not literally or overtly depicted in commercial Greek cinema until the dictatorship, when there appeared openly right-wing representations of the subject such as *Sta Synora tis Prodosis / At the Borders of Betrayal* (1968, Dimis Dadiras) and *Grammos* (1970, Ilias Mahairas). The comedy *I Germani Xanarhonte / The Germans are Returning* (1948, Alekos Sakellarios), which was produced

⁷³ Nick Potamitis’ PhD thesis on Greek cinema of the 1950s (*National Identity and the Popular Greek Cinema of the Fifties: The Ideological Machinery of Star and Stardom*, unpublished) and also texts by Maria Stasinopoulou are both important examples of recent literature challenging the generally held view that the political events of the war and the post-war era did not impact upon the cinema of the period. Stelios Kymionis, with his analysis of the film *Afti pou Milisan ne ton Thanato / Those who Spoke with Death* (1970, Yannis Dalianidis) (2001: 89-105) and Vasilis Vamvakas’ discussion of the war comedies made during the dictatorship (2006: 89-100) have also contributed significantly to the recognition of alternative historical discourses articulated by ‘Old’ Greek films.

and released before the formation of the post-Civil-War establishment, is often cited as the only exception in the pre-dictatorship era (Delveroudi 1996: 154). *I Paranomoi / The Outlaws* (1958, Nikos Koundouros) intended not only for domestic but for international consumption, is another exception which was banned one week after its release. As regards the absence of left-wing perspectives on the Civil War, the main obstacles in both commercial and independent films were censorship and the threat of persecution, and therefore the practice of self-censorship should be considered seriously. New market and socio-political conditions were necessary to enable leftists to make films of this sort. When Theo Angelopoulos, for example, was shooting *Thiasos / Travelling Players* under the authoritarian regime of the Colonels, foreign markets were open to Greek art films and there was a strong anti-dictatorship feeling among European intellectuals. While taking the risk of making a film about recent history from a leftist perspective, Angelopoulos knew that there was a cinematic institutional framework (international film festivals and arthouse circuits) and a considerable audience for his work outside Greece.

The absence of direct rightist perspectives on the subject is perhaps more striking. Given the state's lack of interest in exploiting cinema for propaganda purposes, the main initiative was left to the producers. However popular films addressed by definition the widest possible audience and therefore needed to avoid causing offence.⁷⁴ Other important factors can be regarded the leftist background of many filmmakers and other professionals in the industry, and the fact that, as Kyrkos Doxiadis has shown, although *ehnikofrosyni* was the official ideology, it never became dominant in Greek society (Doxiadis 1993: 123-147).

The cinematic treatment of the Civil War should be also considered in the wider context of the collective perception of the traumatic event. In his discussion of the

⁷⁴ See also Delveroudi 1997: 146.

perception of the Civil War in Greek society in the subsequent decades, Angelos Elefantis, argues that a “murder” of the actual war occurred on both sides, which made it almost impossible to explore the subject (Elefantis 2003: 109-110). Illuminatingly, the right-wing establishment never used the term ‘Civil War’ (using instead the pejorative term *symmoritopolemos* / bandit-war), because otherwise it would have to accept that it represented only a part of the nation (Elefantis 2003: 105). The Civil War was also a taboo topic for the Left, which used the term for the first time in 1957 (Elefantis 2003: 107). The centrality, as we have discussed, of the Resistance to the Left’s political rhetoric illustrates that “the Civil War did not want to inhabit the Leftists’ collective memory” (Elefantis 2003: 109), which focused instead on repression and martyrdom (Elefantis 2000: 37). Oblivion was desired by both sides and a consensus of silence concealed the traumatic taboo, supporting a policy of national reconciliation.⁷⁵ It was very difficult to remember, let alone represent a past laden with guilt and mistakes.

My argument is that even though there was silence surrounding the actual events, the experience of the Civil War and its aftermath was nevertheless inscribed in the plots and the formal characteristics of the popular genres of the period. To explore the way in which this happened is a complicated and demanding task that cannot be accomplished in a few paragraphs. However, I shall pose some questions and use examples to support my assertion that Greek cinema in the 1950s and 1960s was preoccupied with the Civil War and it also made attempts to heal the trauma.

⁷⁵ From a Greek Communist Party’s declaration to the Greek people in February 1957: “It’s time to let go of the old hatred and passion, time for all Greeks to be reconciled, leftists and rightists, time for all patriots to unite. Incitements to hatred, intolerance and national conflict are becoming less popular among our people as time passes. The young generation that didn’t experience the civil war and was not poisoned by the hatred and passion for national conflict, is crucial to the task of bridging the gap which was formed during the years of the civil war [...] National division is harmful to our nation [...] Foreign imperialists aimed and will always aim to keep Greeks divided, to turn one part against the other, to organize movements and civil wars to reduce the nation’s resistance against them.”(Cited by Koulouris 2000:18, footnote 3).

In a discussion of censorship under Franco in *Spanish National Cinema*,⁷⁶ Nuria

Triana –Toribio argues:

Censorship did not bring about a total silence. Their [Hopewell's and Gubern's] approach emphasizes how the repression or censorship of offending political material was never complete, but the repressed matter found alternative modes of expression. In other words, their account of the political censorship of Spanish cinema of this period owes a great deal to the psychoanalytic account of psychical censorship and repression. In Freud's model of the unconscious, desires and drives which are incompatible with the dominant psychical system are pushed out of sight, censored by consciousness; however, these desires can never be fully eliminated, and return, after undergoing condensation or displacement, in distorted or unrecognizable forms. According to this scheme, then, political issues and themes which were excluded from Spanish cinema during censorship made their way back in other ways, through tortuous or figurative detours. (2003: 97)

This understanding of the relationship between films and suppressed political material can also be applied to 'Old Greek cinema'. Given the impossibility of approaching controversial historical realities or current political issues directly, methods of 'indirect' expression and 'disguise' involving symbolism, metaphor and allusion were developed. And due to the suppression of the memory of the Civil War, the subject was consciously or unconsciously interiorised both in the narratives and the formal structures of the films.

⁷⁶ I cite the example of Spanish cinema because of the shared experience of the Civil War, as well as the comparison made by Konstantinos Tsoukalas (1981: 102) between the Greek post-war nationalistic establishment with Franco's regime.

One of the most typical features of the Greek films of the 1950s and 1960s is the polarization of the fictional world into two conflicting camps, a deep schism afflicting the social domain in almost every single popular film of the period. This schism is often indicated or defined by the titles (e.g. *Makrykosteï ke Kontogiorgides / Tall-Kostas and Short-George*; *Laos ke Kolonaki / People and Aristocracy*; *Ftochadakia ke Leftades / The Penniless and the Moneybags*; *I Lisa ke I Alli / Lisa and her Double*; *O Emiris ke o Kakomiris / Emir and the Miserable*; *Beethoven ke Bouzouki / Beethoven and Bouzouki*; *Dichasmos /The Split*; etc.). This narrative scheme, which traverses generic forms from melodrama to comedy, appears in various forms: as class division and conflict, family vendetta, antagonism between neighbouring villages, professional competition, conflicts between family members etc. This could not be irrelevant to the fact that there is a strong tradition in Greek popular culture of constructing the fictional world around binary oppositions and in Manichean terms. A good example of this is the Greek shadow puppet theatre (*Karagiozis*), in which the division of the social field into opposed and conflicting camps is signified even before the story begins by the symbolically divided scene. In that respect, the polarized structure of the narratives of Greek popular films can be seen as belonging to and preserving a deeply rooted domestic popular tradition.

Nevertheless, the universality of this pattern and the emphasis which is placed on it, coupled with the rise of melodrama – which favours a Manichean narrative – as one of the dominant genres of Greek cinema, indicates something that goes beyond an ‘innocent’ recycling of tradition. In my view the schismatic construction of popular film narratives reflects the strong contradictions within the Greek social domain at the time, as well as the all-pervasive schismatic and Manichean construction of Greek political life.

Greek popular film narratives did not simply incorporate binary oppositions and dividing conflicts (a common theme encountered in all kinds of stories: rich versus poor,

old versus new, city versus village, evil versus good etc). Instead, the dichotomy goes to the core of the narrative and the fictional community, and forms the main point of concern in the films. The characteristics of the two sides, as they are typically depicted, are revealing. For instance, the conflict often takes place between identical entities: two villages, two brothers, two families, two boat owners, two musicians, or two identical persons played by the same actor. So the motif of the double is used to draw attention to the similarities and close relations between the conflicting sides. Furthermore, the schism usually divides those with authority, wealth and an established position in society from the disenfranchised, powerless, poor, and outcasts, those seeking a place within the social order, a respectable and stable position, which is, however, strongly denied to them. The cinematic models of intra-community conflicts are structured therefore either around sameness or opposition between those who are integrated in the social order as 'the privileged' and those who are excluded from it as the 'underprivileged and underdogs' or a combination of both motifs (e.g. *I Lisa ke I Alli / Lisa and her Double*).

In essence, the collective ideal with which nationalists (*ethnikofrones*) identify is simply the ideal of the winner: of 'the privileged (του «από πάνω»).' (Doxiadis, 1993: 128)

Apart from poverty, which was one of the main causes of marginalization and repression (and which by nature is a matter of political concern), the other major marginalizing and repressive factor in Greece at that time was the sociopolitical split between the 'winners' and the 'defeated' and the subsequent actual exclusion of a significant segment of the population, which was denied the right to belong to the nation, because the 'defeated' were regarded by the right-wing establishment as 'an alien body within the national family' (Elefantis 1994: 648). The fragmentation of the social domain,

intra-community conflicts and social exclusion in the films could therefore be invested with class and political connotations by an audience seeking points of reference and identification.

The notion of 'injustice' was central to the polarized narrative scheme. Titles such as *Eimai Athoos / I am Innocent* or *O Golgothas mias Athoas / The Calvary of an Innocent* or *Mas Kryvoun ton Ilio / They Deprive Us of the Sun* exemplify the key role of 'injustice' in the film narratives, against which the above titles are a cry of protest. Where 'injustice' (and the deep pain it causes) was not explicitly attributed to social causes, it is portrayed in oblique and ambivalent terms, enabling the audience to assume multiple interpretations. As Yanna Athanasatou observes, "injustice itself rarely is recorded openly. The reasons usually remain vague or allusive" (Athanasatou 2001: 347), while "the missing cause of injustice is the Civil War, the defeat of the social vision and the associated memories" (Athanasatou 2001: 348).

Furthermore, there is an array of recurrent motifs, which revolve around the notion of injustice, such as 'victimization', 'suffering', 'persecution', 'the good-thought-outlawed hero', the 'innocent prisoner', the 'orphan' or 'family-less', the 'long absence of the beloved person', the violent 'separation of the family or couple'. Especially, the focus on core social units under threat, such as the family or the couple, which form secure places of belonging, is particularly pertinent to the treatment of the Civil War trauma in Greek popular films, since families and couples function as microcosmic representations of the wider society and as metaphors for social unity.⁷⁷ Taking into account also the ability of melodrama to internalize political issues (Elssaesser), the Civil War can be seen as being deeply embedded in family and personal relations.

⁷⁷ On the romantic couple as a metaphor for social unity under capitalist modernisation, see Potamitis (2004, Chapter 6)

The interiorization of the Civil War trauma in popular films is manifest also in the typical resolution of the narratives, which seek to establish a social equilibrium and resolve intra-community conflicts. Although in most cases the opposition is constructed in Manichean terms and the conflict is stark and sometimes violent, the narratives usually move towards a resolution of peace and consensus. Often the ‘evil’ side comes to recognize its wrongs and embrace the disenfranchised hero/heroine, so that social cohesion is achieved and the two sides can coexist peacefully. In addition, films rarely condemn the villains outright, and the ‘enemies’/‘privileged’ partly are treated sympathetically and given some attractive characteristics or shown to be partly justified in their actions. The recurrent motif of the formation, through marriage, of a new family which unites the two conflicting sides and thus creates a new identity is closely connected to this kind of resolution. This obsessive concern of the films with harmless transgression of the intra-community schism reveals a deep desire for social cohesion, based not on exclusion but on unification and inclusion of both sides. In short, three main demands – articulated emphatically and in variant forms – linked to the Civil War and its consequences can be identified in popular films of the period: the removal of social injustice, restoration of social cohesion, and incorporation of the ‘disenfranchised’ into the social order.

The introductory scenes of *Madalena* (1960, Dinos Dimopoulos) are particularly revealing examples of the articulation of the Civil War through the schismatic film narrative, as they demonstrate the hidden connection between the polarized narrative scheme of popular films and the Civil War trauma. In a local café on a Greek island (the usual site for political discussions at the time), men discuss the division of the island into two opposite groups because of the competition between two boat-owners who ferry villagers in their boats. The situation is compared to past divisions of the nation and the island, particularly the National Schism between the Veniselists and the Royalists in the

pre-war period and past disputes between unspecified political parties. The national schism is transposed onto the microcosm of the island and petty local conflicts are cited, such as the island's split over two priests or two windmills, seen by the inhabitants as a highly problematic situation because it caused dysfunctions in the community. Despite a long list of past conflicts, both national and local, the recent Civil War is entirely forgotten. However, this absence is automatically recognized by the audience and becomes a strong presence: the Civil War is in fact the actual subject of the men's discussion. The film therefore consciously replaces the traumatic event by other, apparently less controversial and more remote historical periods and draws parallels with harmless everyday situations to allude to the painful past and the present. This diffusion of the internal schism to a wide spectrum of situations throughout national life, from politics (unspecified parties) and history (the National Schism) to everyday reality (priests, windmills and boats) makes clear that the Civil War trauma was not encompassed solely in the construction of the film narratives. The motif of internal schism formed a popular interpretative framework within which Greek identity itself was understood and defined. Therefore the apparently 'innocent' story about the conflict between two boat owners, the misfortunes of the impoverished orphan girl (Madalena of the title) who owns one of the boats, the happy end of her love affair with her rival's son and the final reconciliation, is located within the implied context of the Civil War.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ The film *I Arpagi tis Persefonis / The Abduction of Persephone* (1956, Grigoris Grigoriou), about a conflict between two neighbouring villages over the use of water from a stream, exemplifies the use of the polarized narrative structure in relation to the Civil War trauma. Because of the generally held view that this film is an exception in terms of content and style, I do not include it in my analysis, although I disagree with such an approach, because, in my view, the film has many of the typical characteristics of the average Greek popular film. However, I suggest reading the film in the context of the Civil War, paying particular attention to the armed conflict in the mountains, the careful construction of the class and political identities of the two conflicting sides, the use of right-wing and leftist rhetoric (e.g. the constant references to 'reconstruction' and the 'nation' by the privileged side, and to working class rights by the underprivileged side, or the rich villagers referring to the inhabitants of the poor village as *Vounisioi* [Mountain folk] and *zagaria* [bloodhounds], terms which were attributed to the communists by the 'nationalistic' discourse), the constant comic reminders of the relationship between the everyday life and politics, the relations of the rich village with the

Apart from the schismatic narratives and motifs of ‘injustice’, which are in my view conscious or unconscious embodiments of the Civil War trauma in the filmic fictional worlds, there are in many films numerous indirect allusions to the traumatic event and its consequences, usually in the background of the main storyline. Maria Stasinopoulou discusses socio-political allusions in particular genres:

Provided that we do not seek realistic representations of those problems, which could not have overcome the hurdles of censorship even if the intention to do so had been there, we encounter symbolic or connotative hints even in genres which have not attracted much attention regarding their political content, such as the ‘mountain film’ and melodrama. (1995: 427)

Genres which have only latterly been deemed worthy of attention by scholars, like popular *melo* and mountain film (both favoured by minor production companies and aimed at rural and working-class audiences) deserve closer scholarly scrutiny in relation to the presence of the Civil War. Mountain film narratives are particularly interesting, as they are set in an unspecified and remote past, which provides a safe distance from which to raise controversial sociopolitical issues, while their melodramatic structure allows social and intra-community conflicts to be depicted. Particularly fruitful subject for study is the mountain adventure, a sub-genre of the mountain film that draws on the popular bandit literature and focuses on the oppression of the poor, legitimizing “violence and armed conflict as a means of settling issues” (Kymionis 2000: 57).⁷⁹

government, references to history and national struggles (e.g. suggestions that the leader of the poor village participated in the Resistance) etc.

⁷⁹ For the division of the mountain film into two sub-genres, their origins, content and ideological perspectives see Kymionis 2000: 53-66.

Maria Stasinopoulou and Nick Potamitis both discuss the romantic figure of a fugitive hiding in the mountains in *Gerakina / Falconress* (1959, Orestis Laskos) as a reference to the persecuted Left.⁸⁰ Another noteworthy example is *Lafina* (1962, Laskos),⁸¹ which also includes, alongside the main storyline, the figure of the bandit Dimitros (Nikos Tzoyias) who is hiding in the mountains claiming amnesty. The direct reference to the communist guerillas, and by extension to the Left through bandits, is almost unavoidable, on the one hand because of the iconography (cartridge belts worn across the shoulder, beard, a mountain hideout etc.), and on the other due to the association established between bandits and communists through nationalistic rhetoric.⁸² The bandit's community, which is isolated from the rest of society and provides refuge to the persecuted heroine, is introduced in a scene showing the bandits singing in the dark a mournful song (by Markopoulos) expressing deep unhappiness and strong nostalgia for their home. Dimitros is distinguished from his comrades and depicted by the film with exceptional sympathy. What is emphasized is his status as an outlaw and victim of persecution, while only vague and indirect information is given about his crimes (he is called a 'fugitive' and once a 'killer'). Dimitros' bravery, honesty, kindness and sense of fairness are constantly stressed and the film makes a compelling plea for amnesty. It is Dimitros who uncovers the truth about the crime of which the innocent heroine had been accused and the film ends with the head of the local police, Dimitros' persecutor, granting him amnesty.

Displacement, ambiguity, symbol and metaphor are the main tools used in post-war Greek cinema to allude to the Civil War and its consequences. Films from the 1950s and their remakes in the more liberal period that followed the rise to power of the Centrists, reveal the significance of these devices. Take for example *Erotas stous*

⁸⁰ See Potamitis 2004, Chapter 4.

⁸¹ It was advertised as "the film symbol of the great persecuted" (*Avgi*, 25/2/62).

⁸² See Elephantis 1994: 649.

Ammolofous / Love in the Dunes (1958, Kostas Manousakis), a dark film about a persecuted fugitive who reaches the coast and meets a man and his daughter, and exchanges his clothes with a scarecrow. The treatment of the fugitive is sympathetic and the viewer is told nothing about his crimes. When in 1966 Stelios Zografakis films a similar story (*O Drapetis / The Fugitive*) the fugitive is clearly a runaway political prisoner. In *Delistavrou ke Ios / Delistavrou and Son* (1957, Alekos Sakellarios), a missing resistance fighter (Triffon) to whom his wife constantly refers, suddenly returns from an unspecified place when he regains his memory. By contrast, in the remake *Ie mou Ie mou / My Son, my Son* (1965, Grigoris Grigoriou) Triffon returns from the Soviet Union where he had settled as a political refugee. However the persistent references in the older version of the film to the absent fighter and his weary appearance when he returns allude to the prevalent political conditions at the time, a parallel which is made more overt by the remake. *Istoria mias Zois / A Life's Story* (1965, Yannis Dalianidis) also explains the cause of the heroine's neglect: her father is a political refugee. Thus motifs such as 'persecution', the 'absence of the beloved' or 'being an orphan', which haunt the narratives of 'Old Greek cinema', are overtly politicized in the films mentioned above, giving meaning to parallels which, though not openly articulated in other films, were deciphered by a particular section of the audience.

The presence of the Civil-War trauma in Greek post-war cinema informs not only the construction of film narratives, but also their formal traits. The hysterical pitch of both the dialogue and acting in many melodramas and popular *melos*, and the heightened emotions and sense of suffering could be considered expressions of hidden violence.⁸³ The violence and repression that afflicted Greek society could not be shown or spoken about openly, but whatever was said (bear in mind popular Greek cinema's dependence on verbal

⁸³ This style was especially, but not exclusively, cultivated by Nikos Foskolos.

expression) was conveyed in a violent and excessive way. In comedy, a similar hysteria marked the acting of Thanasis Vengos. His body, itself constantly subjected to cruelty, externalized the ‘unspeakable’ violence through hyperactivity and anxious movement, running around as he was constantly persecuted. In *Papatrehas* (1966, Errikos Thalassinos) Vengos goes anxiously up and down in a lift and gives an explanation of this hyperactivity: “Anerhome ke katerhome se poria diamartyrias” [“I am holding a demonstration to protest”].⁸⁴ It is not coincidental that Vengos was the comedian of PEK who latter had success in comic or dramatic politicized films in the 1970s and 1980s.⁸⁵

Let me turn now to a film that both supports and challenges the above statements. *O Katatregmenos / The Persecuted* (1966) is an intricately plotted male popular *melo* produced and directed by Apostolos Tegopoulos and written by Nikos Foskolos, with the protagonist played by Nikos Xanthopoulos, the most popular melodrama star of the era. The film revolves around a violent conflict between two men, Manos and Linos, who are in love with the same woman, Sofia, but unaware that they are brothers. Manos is a poor but proud and honest factory worker; Linos is the son of Sarioglou, the owner of the factory where Manos is employed, while Sofia is Sarioglou’s step-daughter. The film begins with Manos bravely defending Sarioglou’s property by preventing a robbery. Although Sarioglou and his son are in debt to Manos and know his integrity, they strongly oppose the union of Manos and Sofia. After their failed attempt to bribe Manos to stay away from Sofia, Linos devises various ways of terrorizing him and even attempts to kill him. Finally, Linos stages a robbery to entrap Manos and the innocent worker is brought to trial. At the end, it is revealed that the two men are brothers and that Sarioglou had been separated by his son Manos on a train journey when the family was split up during a war-

⁸⁴ See also Vamvakas 2006: 271. He argues that Vengos’s anxious running around is decoded in the film *Ti Ekanes ston Polemo Thanasi? / Thanasis, What did you do in the War?* (1970, Dinos Katsouridis), in which Vengos thinks he is being chased by the Nazis.

⁸⁵ See also Potamitis’ argument about the ‘ghostly quality’ of allusions to the Civil War (2004, Chapter 4, pp. 52-56).

time air raid. Manos' innocence is proven and his real identity is revealed. However, he rejects his identity and the possibility of a family reunion.

The film shows a society divided into two antagonistic worlds and emphasizes the huge distance separating them as well as their violent conflict when the weak side claims the right to equity. Manos constantly underlines the poor-rich (here proletariat-bourgeois) divide and his position in society. He explains to Sofia the impossibility of their relationship with the words: "A river runs between us. You are on the one side, I on the other. Despite our efforts, we will not find a bridge". The motif of the river as a dividing line and an obstacle⁸⁶ recurs later in the lyrics of a popular mourning song sung by Manos:

A deep, muddy river separates our worlds

When he introduces Sofia to his neighbourhood, Manos uses another metaphor to describe the schism as well as his own identity: "Our society is like a coin with two sides. This is the reverse side: the camps of the miserable". And the lyrics echo this image:

On my side of the world, the sun sheds no light

Another song adds one more crucial detail to the identity of 'the reverse side of the coin'. By repeating "Podarades and Kokkinia",⁸⁷ the refrain identifies the 'camps of the miserable', with the song constantly stressing the working class character of these

⁸⁶ According to Potamitis, the motif of the river as a reference to the political schism of the post-war Greek society is encountered also in *Gerakina* (2004, Chapter 4, 51).

⁸⁷ Podarades (Nea Ionia) and Kokkinia were working class neighbourhoods of Athens.

neighbourhoods. Composed by Apostolos Kaldaras, the songs play a significant role in the film not only by adding musical interest,⁸⁸ but by explaining what the film cannot articulate openly. The neighbourhoods named in the refrain were traditionally inhabited by refugees from Asia Minor and closely associated with the Left movement, as the name of one of them reveals: “Kokkinia” means the red (communist) neighbourhood. Moreover, social change is Manos’ deepest desire, which is expressed by a song that he dances to in front of the Sarioglou family.

Who can give me the strength to change this world? [...] To break
you with a blow, ah you world of glass and to make a new, different
society.

Class division therefore entails political division.

Manos belongs to the ‘camps of the miserable’, the outcasts and disenfranchised and he passionately defends his social status. However, this was not his original position in society. The war lies behind his misfortunes, as it caused the family to be divided and Manos to lose his real identity and adopt a new one. The trauma of the Second World War surfaces in film constantly, because Manos’ mother often suffers from partial memory and nightmarish hallucinations about the crucial moment of bombardment. In this sense, the war has not yet ended, but continues to haunt the present despite Manos’ attempts to persuade his mother that it is over. In the film, the war represents a dark and frightening past and also a living spectre in the present that has caused deep mental and physical trauma: the mutilation of the family and its division into two antagonistic and conflicting sides, which are blind to the blood ties that connect them, as well as the loss of Manos’

⁸⁸ On the use of musical numbers in popular Greek films, see Eleftheriotis 2001:187-188 and 2006.

identity and position in society. The Second World War gave rise to the Civil War and the deep schism in Greek society, as well as the marginalization of the Left and the reversal of its position within the sociopolitical order, from leaders and winners of the war to disenfranchised and defeated. And although the narrative specifies the year of the family's separation as 1941, this does not lessen the symbolical weight of the war as the cause of intra-family schism and social marginalisation.

Manos' treatment by the opposite side is highly significant. He is seen as 'an alien body' that does not belong to the family, although in fact he does, and as an external threat to be eliminated. Systematic attempts are made by Manos' antagonists to present him as a dishonest person. This is similar to the way in which the communists were treated by the right-wing establishment, as an external threat, alien to the 'national family' and morally corrupt. Manos' victimization, persecution and his endurance in suffering are central to the narrative. The illegal and immoral practices employed by Linos to frighten Manos clearly recall those used against the leftists by the para-state right-wing extremists. Manos is removed from his original job to hard labour, a fact which recalls penal servitude, and terrorized mercilessly. He is followed in the dark and threatened by paid henchmen, while Linos is kept informed of Manos' movements. Moreover, a three-wheeled motorbike tries to run Manos down and this is immediately followed by a similar attack by a lorry. This can be seen as an indirect reference to the assassination of Lambrakis, who so characteristically was attacked by a three-wheeled vehicle and killed by rightist extremists. Manos is beaten in the dark and left on the train tracks. Illuminatingly, the beginning of this scene is accompanied by the tune of Kaldaras' famous song 'Nychtose horis Fengari' ['It's getting dark without Moon'], which was composed in 1947 and was entirely identified in the public consciousness with the Civil War and political prisoners. In a reversal of Manos' deed of protecting the factory by preventing a robbery, Manos is

entrapped by Linos in a staged robbery, holding the suitcase of money that he rescued in the opening sequence of the film. During the trial, false witnesses by criminals are used to deny the real identity of Manos as a honest and brave person. This distortion of the actions and identity of Manos is comparable to the leftists' experience of being condemned as traitors and criminals rather than recognized as brave fighters and defenders of the country they considered themselves to be.

The resolution of the film is particularly interesting and also unusual because although Manos' innocence is proven and the actual family relations are uncovered, the family is not reunited. The film was made and released after the fall of the Papandreou government, a period when mass mobilization, social upheaval and political crisis reached a peak. At this time of violent conflict between *ethnikofrosyni* and the democratic forces, it seems that the film was unable to envisage a compromise solution.⁸⁹ However the words of the mother in the final sequence give hope for future forgiveness and forgetfulness and a healing of the trauma: "The time will pass quickly. The wounds will be healed. All of us we will forget and forgive."

b. Alternative discourses on history

This section will examine three commercial films made between 1958 and 1963 under strict censorship, which deal with the Occupation and Resistance. I will try to demonstrate that the commercial historical films of the 1950s and 1960s did not always present the official version of history, but also voiced alternative, oppositional and critical views, made references to the Civil War and even included images resonant with leftists. I

⁸⁹ It is not accidental that the same year, *Blood on the Land* also alters the usual resolution of compromise and consensus with the death of the villainous brother.

have chosen not to discuss films which have already been highlighted by scholars as politically alternative (e.g. *Psila ta Cheria Hitler / Hands Up Hitler*), or films produced by prominent film companies, which attract most scholarly attention. Instead I will explore films by minor producers and a popular *melo* film, a genre that is largely dismissed by critics and is rarely placed under scholarly scrutiny.

O Anthropos tou Trenou / The Train Man (1958, Olympos Film, w. Yannis Maris-Tsirimokos, d. Dinos Dimopoulos) is a female psychological melodrama about the lost love between an upper-middle-class woman and a Resistance fighter. Mando (Anna Synodinou), apparently happily married to an older man, enjoys a trip to Nafplio and Epidaurus and the glamorous life-style that her wealthy husband can provide. During the trip she encounters the man with whom she had a passionate wartime love affair, who she thought had died, a fact that causes internal turmoil and emotional struggle. Using a flashback structure, the narrative juxtaposes two periods, the Occupation and the present time, as well as two competing male figures and lifestyles (passionate love versus family), and emphasizes the strong dilemma in the psychical world of the heroine.

Stratiotes Horis Stoli / Soldiers without Uniform (1960, Ifa Film, w., d. Dimitris Ioannopoulos) is a melodrama set during the Occupation, which concerns a love affair between a Resistance fighter and a middle-class young woman. Alikí (Xenia Kalogeropoulou), fiancé of the collaborator Spyros (Andreas Barkoulis), shelters the Resistance fighter Christos (Michalis Nikolinakos) and soon becomes emotionally involved with him. Able to provide useful information to the Resistance, Alikí prevents the fighters from making mistakes and when Christos goes on a mission, she is entrusted with valuable documents. When her fiancé discovers them, Alikí has no choice but to shoot him. After Spyros' death, Alikí's health worsens and when Christos returns, she dies in his

arms. In despair, Christos is captured by the Nazis, but he soon regains his will to escape and continue the struggle.

Mas Kryvoun ton Ilio / They Deprive us of the Sun (1963, Andeos Film, w., d. Thanos Santas) focuses on the lower-class people of the countryside and their traumatic experiences from the Occupation and the war's immediate aftermath. The story concerns the misfortunes and trials of a young orphan girl (Keti Papanika), who loses her parents during the Occupation and has to make a living, take care of her brother and defend herself against a hostile society and unfair accusations. Although the film deploys a wide range of popular *melo's* generic features, it differs from a typical popular *melo* in its depiction of a heroine who is not passive, but active and even aggressive. Its striking use of realism is also atypical of the genre, as is its emphasis on the social environment.

One of the most provocative aspects of *The Train Man* is the Occupation's centrality to the present day as well as its depiction as a highly promising period. Recalled in flashbacks, the Occupation is not forgotten or left in the past, but it haunts the present. The flashback structure was used frequently in Greek films about the Occupation (e.g. *Barefoot Battalion* or *Hands Up Hitler*), but usually in a manner that suggested that this controversial period remained a self-enclosed uninterrupted whole, which belonged to the remote past. By contrast, *The Train Man* shifts between the past and the present, placing the Occupation directly within the contemporary reality on which it is shown to have a definite influence. The spectral manner also in which the Resistance fighter is depicted in the present-day sequences – appearing and disappearing suddenly, fleetingly, in the dark, amidst historical settings, like a shadow etc. – indicates his haunting presence in Mando's heart and mind. This is reminiscent of the haunting presence of both the Occupation and the Resistance fighter in left-wing political discourse of the time, which placed the Occupation and the Resistance at the centre of contemporary reality.

Furthermore, the Occupation appears as “an object of nostalgia and desire” (Hayward: 2006, 157). Mando’s nostalgia is revealed in the scene in which she returns to the hotel in Nafplio and attempts to re-enact the past. There is a fireworks display and Mando, in contemplative and melancholy mood, turns off the light in the room to be surrounded by the darkness and the noise of the explosions. But how is it possible to conceive the traumatic period of the Occupation as an object of nostalgia? The narrative offers an explanation: for Mando the Occupation was as a period of intellectual, moral and emotional growth because she met the Resistance fighter. So, there is no mention of hunger or sufferings, with the narrative focusing entirely on Mando’s relationship with the man, her sense of liberation and the expectation of a new life.

It was the second year of the Occupation. Back when our heads were full of dreams, ideas and expectation. Expectation for something that was about to come. (Mando)

During the Occupation, namely at a time when one’s entire life was condensed into a few hours. [...] Afterwards, what was left was the dream. (Mando’s husband).

These words reveal the importance attributed to the Occupation as a period of great developments, when the domestic resistance movement generated a sense of hope for a new society and better life, and suggest the frustration that arose in the aftermath of the war. The film depicts the Occupation as an era of emancipation and optimism. Looking for similarities between the man she loved in the past (the Resistance fighter) and the man she meets now (the fighter in the present) Mando says: “the difference is that [his face] is not happy as it was at that time”. The smiling face of the Resistance fighter, shown in the Occupation sequences, has been replaced by a melancholy, frozen expression bearing the

marks of loss and defeat. Similarly, Mando is never again as happy as in the flashbacks. During the Occupation she was a youthful student. Her first encounter with the man took place on her way home from a party,⁹⁰ when a round-up by the Germans forced them to seek shelter at the house of an old man. She met him in the street, a traditionally male space, away from the domestic sphere. “Which family...? I’ve forgotten my family”, says Mando to the fighter in excitement after making love, when he wonders if her family would be worried that she had not returned home. Moreover Mando is sexually independent, since it is she who initiates sex, exhibiting a very daring and unusual behaviour for a young woman at that time. This implies both the independence that women gained during the war, and the emancipation of the entire society, achieved through the mass resistance movement. By contrast, in the contemporary sequences we no longer see this rejection of the values of family life and domesticity; Mando is confined within the sphere of the family, which prevents her fulfilling her desire.

The official view on history is overturned by the film’s treatment of the Occupation as an object of nostalgia and a period of optimism, emancipation and hope. The romanticized present of modernization, prosperity, consumer culture, the picturesque landscapes and historical backdrops of Nafplio and Epidaurus, as well as Mando’s apparently perfect marriage and family life are all undermined.

⁹⁰ The film includes some images of the Occupation which are not part of the official historiographies and which seem unusual and even strange to the present-day spectator. For instance, the party after which Mando meets the fighter, and the scene in which she reads a magazine while waiting for a phone call. Such scenes of carefree life seem provocative considering that the period exists in the collective memory as one of the most painful in Greece’s recent history. However, in her book *Literature in the Troubled Decade 1940-50*, Agela Kastrinaki pays particular attention to this unexpected aspect of the Occupation. She argues that “cheerfulness as an antidote to harsh conditions [...] was one of the most characteristic manifestations of hard times” (119) and quotes an extract written by R. Roufos, which explains the reasons why this aspect of life during the Occupation was later forgotten:

[Athens] during the most dark days of the Occupation and hunger struggled, but also had fun, not only the ‘unscrupulous rich people’, but everyone. First and foremost, the young communists, who organized dance ‘parties’, took the opportunity to have fun, agitate and raise money. Only later, in the post-war period, in a retrospective effort to idealize the Occupation Passions, did many dispute these and forget that life is multifaceted. (Kastrinaki 2005: 119-120)

What is particularly interesting about *Soldiers without Uniform* is that it questions the myth of the united Resistance by picturing widespread collaboration. The film evokes a fractured and antagonistic social domain and suggests that collaboration and passivity were prevalent. The class divisions in Greek society are emphasized by the domestic settings, the clothes and references to food supplies, while the film also highlights the differing attitudes towards the German establishment and the debates about the necessity of resistance.

Aliki's fiancé, Spyros, an official in the Nazi authorities, is a man of power who ideologically supports the Nazis. His figure alludes to the quisling Greek government, which is an aspect of the Occupation rarely shown in popular films. Interestingly he uses the word "we" in describing the actions of the Germans against the Resistance, entirely identifying himself with the Nazi establishment. The film emphasizes the ideological nature of Spyros's motives: "He has his own ideas" says Aliki, apologizing to Christos (the Resistance fighter) on Spyros' behalf. These ideas include the duty of protecting the innocent population against resistance actions that caused reprisals. This was typical rightist rhetoric of the time, accusing communists of not caring about the people, who were being sacrificed for political purposes. Although the film does not share Spyros' convictions, it still portrays him as a sensitive, gentle man, who loves Aliki and takes care of her, especially when she is ill. Spyros is not an evil and morally corrupt person, and this characterization is strengthened by the casting of Barkoulis in the role. Collaboration therefore is a matter of ideology as Resistance is. This treatment of the subject distinguishes the film from other cinematic representations of both the traitor and the Resistance:

Resistance and collaboration are presented not as political or ideological positions but as moral and ethical ones, with collaboration portrayed as just one more example of a particular character's moral bankruptcy. (2004, Potamitis)⁹¹

Another collaborator figure is Michalis, a poor man who turns out to be a secret Resistance fighter (a narrative reversal common in Greek resistance films). His role as a traitor is in conflict with his apparently good character, but although he remains an ambiguous figure until the end of the film when his real identity is uncovered, the narrative conceals his actual role, suggesting that collaboration was widespread amongst all social classes and all kinds of people. Michalis justifies his actions by comparing himself to black marketers and arguing that collaboration is a means of surviving in extreme times. He is also involved in immoral activities, providing Greek young women as mistresses to German officers. It is interesting that some of the young women are keen to entertain the Nazis, while an older one from a poor neighborhood asks Michalis' wife to introduce her niece to the Germans. These are particularly daring and unconventional scenes, because they question the Greeks' behaviour during the Occupation and address aspects of the period rarely tackled by Greek cinema. The third traitor figure is a woman from Christos' village, who informs on him to the Germans. Her brother was a '*paliotomaro*' responsible for many deaths, including those of Christos' family. So collaboration is not only a matter of ideology and survival, but one of morality, existing both in the cities and the countryside. Alikis's mother in addition takes a position of compromise and passivity, and stays away from the Resistance. She fears and hates the Nazis, but she considers them an unavoidable evil, passively waiting for the occupation to pass. It is important to underline that these people are not outcasts, they are part of the community, loved and respected.

⁹¹ Chapter 4, pp. 25-27. See also Stasinopoulou 2000: 45-46.

The fragmentation of the social domain is echoed by Michalis' wife, who divides people in two categories: those she does not want to speak to and those she does. But her husband's involvement with the Germans means that she is despised by the people she respects and vice versa. Not even the Greek-Italian war – the recent historical region in which the entire nation could be imagined as united and triumphant – forms the basis for unification. When his wife is treated cruelly by a woman, Michalis angrily argues that at least he fought in the war in Albania while the woman's son did not.

There is also a scene in the film, in which Michalis and Spyros see Resistance slogans on the wall opposite the Commandature. The camera pans to reveal: "Long Live Freedom" signed by EDES (a nationalist armed resistance group, the second in power), "Death to the Huns" signed by IT (an unknown resistance group) and fleetingly "Bulgarians out" signed by EAM (the mass leftist resistance movement). The EAM slogan, half hidden behind a tree and with the letter M slightly deformed, is very unusual and daring at that time and must have passed unnoticed by the censors.⁹² It seems to refer to a rarely mentioned aspect of the actual Occupation, which was threefold (German, Italian and Bulgarian), but it could also be read as an attempt to distance the Leftists from nationalistic accusations of serving the Bulgarians.⁹³ This scene therefore presents an image of the Greek Resistance as varied but unified: it highlights the different subgroups, but brings them together on the same wall, all declaring their common purpose. Significantly it is the Greeks Spyros and Michalis who order the removal of the slogans.

Scrutiny of the figure of the Resistance fighter in the films under discussion reveals the ideological underpinnings of the films' discourse on history. In *The Train Man* the figure is ambiguous: he is attractive, but also mysterious and threatening. His body is

⁹² As far as I have found, this is the only direct reference to EAM in pre-dictatorship Greek cinema.

⁹³ Communists were characterised as "EAMO-Bulgarians" and accused as servants of the Bulgarians' interests in relation to Macedonia.

shrouded in darkness and when he first meets Mando he uses a lighter to reveal his face. The dubious nature of the man's identity is stressed by Mando. "What was this man, who laughed like a child and whose face suddenly became tough?" His clothing does not correspond to the image of the Greek Resistance fighter. He is more like an inspector or informer, a film noir hero. When he reveals his identity to Mando he says: "I am in Greece on a secret mission". "Have you come from there...?" Mando asks. This dialogue seems to represent the 'nationalistic' version of history that shifts the leadership of the Resistance from Greece to the Armed Forces Command in Egypt, the King and Alliances. However, the film avoids a clear-cut answer: "There..." an unnamed, open to imagination and prohibited place.

More complex is the treatment of the Resistance fighter in *The Soldiers without Uniform*. Christos is not a typical, recognizable resistance figure. He is a Greek army officer and is eventually called 'major' by other fighters. He goes to Egypt to receive orders and returns to fulfill them. This adheres to the official views on history. However, when Christos is associated with a resistance group of working-class people who meet in a basement, they call him 'captain', which is the term used by ELAS (= National Popular Liberation Army). Christos constantly changes clothes and alters roles. He appears as an ordinary man, as a plumber using colloquial language, as a sailor, or he is dressed like Spyros with a gabardine and hat. His only stable identity is that of a Resistance fighter.

Furthermore, the film emphasizes Christos' association with the mountains; he was born in *Makrynitsa*, a mountain village in *Pelio*, where he owns a big house. There are constant references to the village and to Thessalia (e.g. a newspaper entitled *Thessalia*), a Greek territory which played a significant role in the armed Resistance and in other socio-political struggles, for example the peasants' revolt for land ownership. Alike also goes to *Makrynitsa* to recuperate, so the action of the film is transferred to Thessalia and the

mountainous landscape where Aliko dies and Christos is captured. But the most provocative image that connects Christos with the mountains is the final shot of the film: after his escape from the Nazis he walks on a mountainside and his figure, back-lit by the sun, is framed in a way that recalls romantic images of Greek partisans. This final shot is accompanied by a voice over that promises a better world of peace and prosperity, associating the Resistance with the hope for a new society. The film therefore attempts to bring together several different resistance identities. It combines the partisan figure with the army officer, the urban and the mountainous landscape, and also the shore (evoking Egypt) and appeals therefore to a wide spectrum of viewers. This serves not only commercial purposes, but it is in keeping with the film's attempt to stand between two ideological poles, which is echoed in the non-committal title *Soldiers without Uniform*. "We are not soldiers" says Aliko's mother, trying to discourage her from becoming involved in resistance activities. "We are", replies Aliko, "even though we don't wear a particular uniform". This is also a response to the introduction which states that the film pays homage to those "who struggled and still struggle and offer their lives throughout the world to stop people living under a yoke, any kind of yoke" and ties in with the unknown resistant group IT whose slogan is on the wall between the rightist EDES and the left-wing EAM.

They Deprive us of the Sun departs most radically from official historical views in its depiction of the Resistance fighter. The identity of the fighter is multifaceted, but it does not include the typical nationalistic features of the Greek army officer. There is no mention of Egypt, the Greek army and allies, and the Resistance is seen as an entirely domestic phenomenon. The ordinary people, who suffered terribly under the Nazis, form the first image of the resistance fighter. The opening sequences show the extermination of forty men in a mountain village after a German round up. Interestingly the image of prisoners

moving stones and digging their own graves before their execution recalls the Greek ‘rehabilitation’ camps, where moving and breaking stones was a form of punishment. More explicit is the message of the song that the prisoners sing as they go for execution: “Pote tha kani xasteria” [“When will the night sky clear and the stars appear again?”], a song that alludes to the struggles of Crete against the Turks, but also to the contemporary political circumstances, because it was regarded a ‘suspect’ song.⁹⁴ This fusion of the past and present was, as seen, a leftist approach to history.

The second figure of a Resistance fighter is even more provocative. The young Rigas (a name that alludes to the War of Independence), with whom the central heroine is in love, leaves the village to walk to the city and continue his medical studies. In the mountains he encounters two partisans. One of them is the ‘captain’, a title used by ELAS. The framing of the captain’s figure shows respect and aggrandizement. By contrast, the other partisan is a comedy figure with a speech impediment. It might seem at first that the film ridicules the partisan, however, closer viewing reveals the importance of his words. He speaks about the society they will built after the Liberation, in which educated people be central, encouraging the captain to allow Rigas to continue his studies.

Captain: Where are you going young man?

Rigas: To the city.

Captain: Now, when everyone is coming to the mountains you are going to hide in the city?

Rigas: I am a student. I have exams.

Captain: And what? Aren’t there students among us?

Partizan: Captain. Scientists will be useful after the Liberation.

⁹⁴ In 1966 a group of young people were arrested for singing “Pote tha kani Xasteria”. See *Epitheorisi Technis* (1966, no.193-194), *Avgi* (1/10/66 and 18/10/66) and Gionis (2006).

Captain: Farewell my son. You cannot be a partisan by force.

This dialogue associates the partisans with EAM and ELAS by suggesting the social perspectives of the Resistance and the future society, and the presence of students, who were largely committed to EAM. It also evokes the mass participation of the people in the partisan movement and emphasizes its voluntary character responding to accusations that communists used force in recruiting. When the captain responds to the partisan's anxiety about the possibility of being betrayed by Rigas, with "and then, let's see how the motherland could be freed", the film implies that the partisan movement offers the only way of liberating the country. In addition the partisan's speech impediment can be seen as a means both of disguising words which would be unacceptable to the censors and also commenting on the articulation of leftist rhetoric. Rigas must decide whether to go onwards to the city or to stay and fight with the partisans. He is involved in a fight and he tends to the wounded captain. After defending his country and becoming involved in the Resistance temporarily, Rigas returns to his studies.

The next image of a Resistance fighter is equally interesting. In a scene that recalls the significant contribution of the young to the Resistance, a teenager writes slogans on the city walls ('Freedom or Death', another reference to the War of Independence), an activity closely related to the Left. Before completing the slogan the young boy is killed and Rigas, who is studying in the city and has been unfaithful to the heroine, is reminded of his values by the incident. He takes the brush and completes the slogan with the young boy's blood. The boy is put on a handcart and a char-woman closes his eyes, while an ex soldier and a prostitute place a medal and a carnation on his chest. This ritual is highly symbolic. The resistance fighter is valorized with the medal and is rehabilitated on an imaginary level, evoking the calls for the official recognition of the Resistance. The char-

woman represents the everyday, working-class people, while the prostitute with the carnation (a symbol of the Left), the morally corrupt outcast, is a clear allusion to the Left, which is recognized as belonging to the wider family of the people and nation. A group of people follow the cart in a dramatic and symbolic homage to the dead of the struggle.

The Civil War, as already evident, is a major theme in the three films, which shift from the conflict between the Greeks and Germans, to the struggles amongst the Greeks. The Germans do not appear in *The Train Man* and there is no direct confrontation between them and the fighter, although he is constantly followed by unknown men. Only once, is there an audio representation of the Nazis, when the viewer hears their steps, gunfire and sinister knocks on the doors. As the recognizable audio image fades, what comes to the fore is the real threat, the people following the hero. They are dressed identically to the fighter and they never speak, so the viewer does not know whether they are Germans or Greeks. However, the narrative establishes a strong bond between the hero and his followers, who finally shoot and apparently kill him. The struggle takes place between identical figures, the fighter and what we can consider the Greek collaborators and traitors. The hero is killed by his double, an allusion to the Civil war, the origins of which go back to long before the Liberation.

Although Mando witnessed the death of the fighter, she searched for him after the war: "I suffered for years", she tells to her best friend, but she finally gave up and married. In his final encounter with Mando, denying that he is the man she loves and hypothetically speaking, the fighter says: "And what would happen if I returned from the concentration camps and hospitals and I looked for you and found you married?" There is a gap between the time when Mando gives up and when the fighter returns from the concentrations camps and hospitals (another ambiguity of the narrative). The man returns too late, not after the

end of the war, but after the end of the Civil War when Mando, after years of suffering, had already got married.

In the present-day sequences the man appears like a phantom against the historical settings. Nafplio and Epidaurus are full of historical remains, evoking important aspects of a self-defined Greek identity that combines ancient past and the foundation myth of contemporary Greece, because Nafplio was the first capital of the Greek state after Independence. Bourdzi, the place where Mando and her friends stay, and the castle of Palamidi, repeatedly occupy the background of the frames. However, the historical settings in Nafplio recall not only a glorious national past, but also a hidden and painful aspect of history. Palamidi was the notorious place in which Colocotronis, the leader of the Greek war of Independence was imprisoned by the Greeks, a fact that evokes previous civil war conflicts. It was at Bourtzi that the executioners of the political prisoners lived after independence, and Akronafplia, the third castle in Nafplio, was also a prison for political prisoners, a legendary place of martyrdom for communists in the pre- and post-war period.⁹⁵ The characters of the film wander as tourists through Greece's painful past. While Mando, her husband and friend walk around the castle of Palamidi, the friend says: "These old castles feel like they are full of phantoms". At that moment, Mando catches sight of the romantic figure of the fighter framed by an arch, who disappears like a phantom when he sees the others. The man belongs to the past, he is one of those who occupy prisons and history.

The Train Man subtly constructs a deep schism between the past and the present with Mando being claimed by both the reconstructed Greek society of modernity and the consumer dream, and the passionate love of the past. However, as the final shot emphasizes, the fighter, a solitary figure with a suitcase moving into the depth of the

⁹⁵ It is not accidental that in another film, *Blood in the Land*, the central hero, a political prisoner, returns from the prisons of Nafplio.

frame, has no position in Mando's life and the present-day situation. The film can be seen as a disguised statement on the exiles and political prisoners who returned but could not find a place in society⁹⁶ and also as an allegory in which Greece, personified in Mando, turns painfully its back on its dreams and high ideals. Regardless of her continued feelings for the fighter, Mando now has a new life. In a melancholy way, the film comments on the tendency of Greek society towards conformity and oblivion, while its dreams fade away.

They Deprive Us of the Sun alludes to the Civil War from the very beginning when in its opening shots, after a sequence of archival footage depicting war destruction, a voice-over declares that the film is devoted to the orphans of both "the winners and the defeated all over the world". The film's entire narrative can be considered a disguised discussion of the consequences of the Civil war for the defeated, and an attempt to heal the trauma.

The film highlights the suffering, poverty, exploitation and persecution of the underprivileged and the rifts in society. The poor heroine, after losing her parents during the Occupation – her father was executed by the Nazis and her mother died soon later – she struggles to survive and educate her brother, she experiences the hostility of society and is arrested for the death of her fiancé's grandmother, who she accidentally hits with a stone. Her chief persecutor is a wealthy man who was a collaborator during the Occupation and now wields influence in society. During the protagonist's trial, a witness for the prosecution confesses to giving false evidence to the police because the collaborator threatened to dismiss her niece from her job. "His word counts", she explains to the judges, implying the privilege that collaborators enjoyed in the post-war period. During the trial the Prosecutor argues that the young heroine must be punished because "although her

⁹⁶ Although a considerable number of political prisoners and exiles still existed in the 1960s (in 1961 the political prisoners were 2000, while the exiles in the concentration camp of Ai Stratis, 250 [Avgi 21/12/61]), most of them allowed to return after the end of the Civil War and during the 1950s. For further information see Polymeris Voglis 2002.

father died from the violence of the occupiers, she continues the violence and crime”, and thereby by connecting the hostilities during the Occupation with the cruelty that followed in the post-war period, alludes to the Civil War. Commenting on the words of the Prosecutor, the advocate evokes the fate of the families of the Resistance fighters and the persecution of the Left after the war with the phrase “they blame us because the occupiers have killed our father”. He goes on to assert that “the dead themselves gave forgiveness; who is going to ignore the wish of the dead for love, forgiveness and unity?” voicing the call for amnesty and forgetting. In the final shot the heroine comments to her fiancé: “Rigas, the sun stings, but the walls of the prison deprived us of it” explaining the title of the film.

There are several other references to the Civil War and the rehabilitation of the trauma in *They Deprived Us of the Sun*. After the Liberation, a wedding is held in the village in a spirit of joy and optimism. However, the grandmother, who had been injured by the heroine, dies. Suddenly a dark atmosphere ensues as successive freeze frames immobilize action. The mother of the bride passionately implores the villagers to leave the dead behind and “go to meet the sun and life”. Moreover the dual symbols of the medal (the nation) and the carnation (the Left), which we discussed in the scene of the symbolical rehabilitation of the Resistance fighter, are echoed in the wedding celebrations, when a disabled veteran of the Greek-Italian war proudly exhibits a medal on one side of his coat and a carnation on the other.⁹⁷

Therefore, there are Greek popular films of the 1950s and 1960s which, although they efface historical accuracy, eschew the nationalistic or official views on the recent controversial past. Through symbolism and allusion they comment on prohibited aspects of the past and the present, they offer images which resonate with leftists and present critical

⁹⁷ On the Occupation and Resistance in *The Train Man*, *Soldiers without Uniform* and *They Deprive Us of the Sun*, see also Andritsos (2004).

and even oppositional perspectives on history. They also allude to the Civil War and its consequences for the people, and seek to heal the trauma. The Civil War is not absent from PEK, contrary to what scholarship largely argues, but Civil War trauma (with the national conflict disguised and transferred onto other conflicts) has an obsessive presence in the narratives of commercial cinema. Therefore NEK's preoccupation with the Civil War does not constitute a clear rupture between the two models of Greek cinema, but evidence of continuity. The main contrast between PEK and NEK lies elsewhere. The 'Old' interiorized the Civil war trauma, while the 'New' externalized it. In this sense, popular Greek cinema of the 1950s and 1960s offers rich material for a study of the symbolism through which the Greek population of the period discussed the Civil War.

The rise of history as a theme in Greek cinema of the 1960s occurred in both the mainstream and art sectors. From 1958, historical subjects became important in art and independently produced films. This trend begun with *I Paranomi / The Outlaws* (1958, Nikos Koundouros) about the Civil War and it was continued by *Ouranos / Sky* (1962, Takis Kanellopoulos) about the Greek-Italian conflict, *Me ti Lampsia sta Matia / With Glittering Eyes* (1966, Panos Glykofrydis), exploring the consequences of the Occupation for the ordinary people in a mountain village, and *Ekdromi / Excursion* (1966, Takis Kanellopoulos), set during WWII. It is no surprise that two artistic features made by political refugees examined the Greek Resistance: *To Stavrodromi* or *To Telos ke I Archi / The Crossroad* (1963), a Russian-language Mosfilm production scripted by Giorgos Sevasticioglou and directed by Manos Zacharias⁹⁸ in the Soviet Union, where they settled after the end of the Civil War (it was released in Greece in 1964) and *To Bloco / The Round Up* (1965) depicting an actual massacre of hundreds of inhabitants of Kokkinia in

⁹⁸ A major figure in the formation of the institutional framework of NEK in the 1980s and onwards.

August 1944, written by the leftist Gerasimos Stavrou⁹⁹ and directed in Greece by the surrealist theorist Adonis Kyrou, who found refuge in Paris after the war. Historical themes provide secondary narratives in a few other art features: *To Potami / The River* (1960, Nikos Koundouros) and *Tetragono / Square* (1964, Kokkolis / Ikonomou / Jacson / Tosiou / Katteris), two multi-episodic films, which include narrative strands about the war: in the first film, the death of a soldier by a river (based on a short story by Antonis Samarakis) and the friendship of two soldiers during the war (*Ta Charakomata / At the Front*)¹⁰⁰ in the latter. *Prosopo me Prosopo / Face to Face* (1966, Roviros Manthoulis), *Anichti Epistoli / Open Letter* (1967, Giorgos Stambouloupoulos) and *Kierion* (1967, Dimos Theos), films with contemporary settings, also evoke the past. In *Face to Face* the Occupation haunts the present, while in *Open Letter* it emerges as the landscape of childhood memory. In addition a contemporary version of the ‘Polk Case’¹⁰¹ provides the storyline for *Kierion*.

A defining characteristic of many of the above films is their attempt to discuss the recent Greek past and uncover the ‘real’ history, voicing alternative, oppositional and often openly left-wing views (e.g. *The Owl laws* and *The Round Up*) and also strong anti-war messages modeled on recent Eastern European anti-war films and the dominant spirit of the era.¹⁰² These films were also the first to explore thematic and aesthetic motifs that defined the historical consciousness of NEK in the following years. These motifs include

⁹⁹ A stage and script writer for commercial films (e.g. *I Vila ton Orgion / The Mansion of Orgies*, *Teddy Boy Agapi moy*), and also contributor to *Avgi*, *Dimokratiki Allagi*, *Epitheorisi Technis*, and other left-wing publications mainly as theatre critic, and commentator.

¹⁰⁰ Written and directed by Kostas Tosiou.

¹⁰¹ George Polk was an American journalist who was covering the Greek Civil War and murdered in Thessaloniki (1948).

¹⁰² This trend for anti-war films in the 1960s also exists in the commercial sector, as exemplified by *Hands Up Hitler*, *Betrayal* and *Persecution*. Their anti-war character distinguishes most of the pre-dictatorship resistance films from the majority of those made by the industry during the dictatorship, which prioritize action, spectacle, nationalistic values and melodrama. Typical of the spirit of the 1960s are independent films like *What did you do in the War Thanasis?* and *To Kanoni ke to Aidoni / The Cannon and the Nightingale* (1968, Iakovos Kampanellis) and also commercial films like *Afti pou Milisan me to Thanato / Those who Talked with Death* (1970, Yannis Dalianidis).

the group as protagonist, the foregrounding of the collective history, the conception of history as an actual and existential wandering, the treatment of landscape as the setting of history, as well as the preoccupation with the notion of defeat. They also developed several narrative and formal innovations, subjects that deserve separate detailed discussion.

Another significant development of the time was the rise of the Greek historical documentary. The feature-length documentary first appeared in the 1960s (until then documentaries in Greece were short films) and immediately became associated with historical content. In response to the plethora of the highly respected foreign historical compilations released in Greece at that time, *I Tragodia tou Aegeou / The Tragedy of Aegean* (1961, pr. /dir. Vasilis Maros), exploring the period between the Balkan Wars to the Civil War with special focus on the Asia Minor Disaster and *Eleftherios Venizelos* (1965, pr. / dir. Lila Kourkoulakou), examining the life and career of the pre-war politician, initiated historical non-fiction and compilation film, which became a cinematic and television genre of NEK in the following decades.¹⁰³

History also appears in the narratives of 1960s shorts: *100 Ores tou Mai / 100 Hours of May* (1964, Dimos Theos / Fotos Lamprinos) scrutinizes the past to uncover the origins of the present political situations, *Irini ke Zoi / Peace and Life* (1962, Adonis Kyrou), *To Alogo / The Horse* (1965, Kostis Zois) and *Hail Hitler* (1965, Rammos) convey anti-war messages, and *Elliniki Zoi / Greek Life* (1964, Leon Loisios) documents the Anniversary celebrations for Athens' liberation (in October 1964) and the destruction of the Gorgopotamos bridge (in November 1964) spoiled by a bomb explosion causing many deaths. *Gramma apo to Charleroi / Letter from Charleroi* (1965, Lambros Liaropoulos)

¹⁰³ A historical documentary in colour that was not completed but was widely discussed by the press of the time during its shooting process, *Sta Vimata tou Megalou Alexandrou / Following the Steps of Alexander the Great* funded by the Greek state and UNESCO, was directed by Roussos Koundouros with the ethnologist Prince Peter as chief advisor.

includes meaningful historical allusions, *Periptosis tou Ochi / Cases of NO* (1965, Lakis Papastathis, Dimitris Avgerinos, Rena Choime), the most obviously historical short film of the time, deals with the Occupation, and *Filiki Eteria* (1964, Antonis Vogiazos), made by a political refugee in the Soviet Union, deals with the secret organisation of the title. Importantly through these shorts the past emerges as a painful and raw memory, and a reality intertwined with the present.

5.

THE RISE OF THE SHORT FILM: *CLAIMING THE 'NATIONAL',
'POLITICAL', 'REAL', 'ARTISTIC', 'POPULAR' AND THE 'PERSONAL'*

The systematic production and cultural prominence of shorts – both documentary and fiction – were new developments in Greek cinema of the 1960s. The significance of this apparently marginal area of film activity is that short-filmmaking demonstrated a high degree of thematic, narrative and formal innovation and radical differentiation from the dominant production, distribution and exhibition practices. It gave also expression to left-wing and other oppositional ideas and was developed in a state both of dependency upon and conflict with state policies. By this token, and considering the definition of NEK given in the introduction of this study, short-film activity formed an important aspect of the NEK phenomenon of the time. It included the early works of some of the major figures of NEK (who at that time were labeled ‘young’ directors)¹ and established many of the thematic and formal concerns that were explored in the feature-length films of the ‘New Greek Cinema’ after 1970, demonstrating the continuity between the two decades.

This chapter attempts to map the relatively unknown and under-researched area of short-filmmaking of the 1960s (more precisely 1960-1967) with particular attention to its relation with NEK.

5.1 General Observations

During the 1950s, only a small number of shorts were made, the majority of them at the end of the decade. Two major events determined the development of short-filmmaking in this period: Firstly, the establishment by Roussos Koundouros of the

¹ The NEK-related individuals who made shorts in the 1960s are (in order of their appearance): (1958) Manthoulis, (1960) Kanellopoulos, (1961) Papakyriakopoulos, Tzimas, Ferris, (1962) Kollatos, Kyrou, Rafaelidis, Sfikas, Nikolaidis, (1963) Theos, Lambrinos, Tornes, (1964) Grigoratos, Mikelidis, (1965) Papastathis, Voulgaris, Panayotopoulos, Liaropoulos, Stamboulopoulos, (1966) Grivas, Hatzopoulos, (1967) Giorgos Karypidis, Marketaki, Panousopoulos, Stavrakas, Apostolos Cryonas, (1968) Angelopoulos.

‘Institute of Educational and Scientific Cinema’ (IMEK)² which developed short documentary activity (especially of scientific³ and ethnographic content), and secondly, from 1957, the systematic involvement of the state in the production of didactic, tourist or propaganda shorts. The state’s participation was of crucial importance since it gave significant impetus to the production of shorts not only in the 1950s but in the 1960s too.⁴ The establishment in 1960 of the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ marked an important turning point, as it provided the motivation and conditions for the rise of the short film. The ‘Week’, which included a competition for shorts, created a space for the screening and promotion of independent productions, generated an audience and critical attention as well as provided financial support and indirect funding through prizes. The establishment of state awards for shorts in 1964, and the emergence of the notion of the ‘worthy of protection film’, that established the compulsory exhibition of the ‘worthy of protection’ shorts in public cinemas before the screening of the features, were also important stimulating factors. Thus, while in 1959 only 7 short films were made, in 1960, the total production increased to 15 (2 of which were independent), and in 1961, a year after the first ‘Week’, to 25 (11 independent). The rapid development of the phenomenon is clearly reflected in the coverage of the ‘3rd Week of Greek Cinema’ in the newspaper *Eleftheria* (19/9/62), which declared that “Short films dominate the festival”. In contrast with the 1950s, during which only 44 shorts were produced – 33 of which were the work of one person (Roussos Koundouros) – the total output of the 1960/67 period was around 200. In this respect, it could well be argued that the rise of the shorts in the 1960s was closely associated with state policies and institutions.

² See Chapter 2, footnote 55.

³ Roussos Koundouros, being a doctor himself, made a series of shorts with clinical subject matter.

⁴ For further information about the history of the Greek short film in the 1950s see: Alinda Dimitriou (1993: 9-21), Soldatos (1990, vol. 3, pp. 98-104) and Stavrakas (1963: 622-28).

The year 1960 can be seen as a turning point also because it showed that short film could follow alternative ways from the hitherto usual practice, namely being a tool for scientific, didactic, propagandistic or touristic instruction. It became evident that shorts could also function as a means of artistic experimentation and personal exploration. Crucial to this development was the screening at the first ‘Week’ of the highly acclaimed short documentary *Macedonikos Gamos / Macedonian Wedding* – the directorial debut of Takis Kanellopoulos – which deeply impressed both critics and filmmakers with its artistic and aesthetic qualities.⁵ The enormous impact of the film both established the reputation of its creator (Kanellopoulos achieved immediate fame with his first short opening the way a little later for his first art feature) and raised the profile of short films in general. *Macedonian Wedding* set a pattern and opened a path for other ‘young’ filmmakers, who got involved in this activity as a way to articulate alternative cinematic and ideological discourses and hoping to establish themselves as directors. It is not accidental that, retrospectively, in the consciousness of some directors of the NEK generation (e.g. Kostas Ferris, Kostas Sfikas, Diamantis Leventakos) *Macedonian Wedding* defines the real point of departure for NEK.⁶

⁵ I am citing an extract from an interview given by Ferris to the writer, in which the sensation caused by *Macedonian Wedding* is clearly evident: “And in 1960 comes out of the blue the first, in essence, big impetus, *Macedonian Wedding*. [...] At that time, I work as an assistant editor [...] in *Never on Sunday* at ‘Studio A’. At the same time Stavrakas works at ‘Studio A’, in the other ‘floor’, as assistant of Grigoriou [...]. Sometime the projectionist comes to us [...]. ‘Hey gays, I have to screen now something that may you are interest in’. We go to the cabin upstairs and we see ... such landscapes ... Macedonian ... such shots ... such ... lateral travelling shots ... We are incredibly impressed [...]. We take a taxi [...] go to [Nikos] Koundouros [...] and bring him to ‘Studio A’. [...] He is astonished. He cries. ‘Who did make that’? ... ‘Don’t move!’ [...] Koundouros returns with Rozita Sokou [a well-known critic of the time]. [...] Rozita is amazed.” See also an alternative narration by Ferris of the same incident in Soldatos (1997: 83-84).

⁶ In interviews given to the author all three directors share the same conviction that *Macedonian Wedding* marks the starting point of NEK. Characteristic is the phrase of Ferris: “The first impetus, [...] for how we are able to come into terms and make ‘new’ cinema, is *Macedonian Wedding*”. (From the mentioned interview). Moreover Ferris declares: “In 1960, *Macedonian Wedding* [...] marks the birth of the New Greek Cinema.” (Frangoulis 2004: 21). Christos Vakalopoulos, a NEK filmmaker and critic of the younger generation also states: “[Kanellopoulos] had inaugurated modestly the history of the new Greek cinema with *Macedonian Wedding* and *The Sky*” (2005: 458).

Turning to production and funding practices, four categories can be distinguished that produced differing aesthetic results. These were a) short projects made by established film companies, b) short documentaries funded by foreign TV channels and other foreign organizations, c) shorts commissioned either by the state or private sponsors and finally and more importantly d) independent shorts.

The commercial industry showed some interest in producing short films, aiming primarily at the cultural prestige of a short documentary. However, this was a very marginal activity often combined with shooting a feature on location in the countryside, when the location was characterized by beautiful setting and rich historical background.⁷ International funding, especially for foreign television programs, was also common, since the 1960s saw the dramatic growth of the Greek tourist industry, and Greek landscape and culture was attracting considerable international attention. The most prominent figure working in this context was Vasilis Maros who made a series of remarkable short documentaries with ethnographic, tourist and cultural subjects for the BBC and German TV channels.⁸ However the two dominant production methods for shorts were, on the one

⁷ An example of this practice is the short *Ena Aspronisi tou Aigeou / A White Aegean Island* (1960, Giorgos Antonakis, pr. Finos Film), which deals with the island of Antiparos and was made at the fringe of the shooting of the film *Madalena*. Some other shorts funded by Finos are *Giannena* (1961, Errikos Thalassinos), *Nafplio* (1961, Thalassinos) and *Ilia, Gi Teon ke Anthropon / Ilia, the Land of Gods and People* (1964, Nikos Kavoukidis). See also Stavrakas 1963: 622-628.

I am citing also some initiatives related to short-filmmaking made by the commercial sector and published in the press, which should be seen in the wider context of the effort made in the 1960s by the popular industry of elevating its cultural status: "The film company Roussopoulos Bros/G. Lazaridis/Sarris/Psaras decided to establish an experimental production branch for documentaries. The aim of such an enterprise is the promotion of young people having qualifications in the art and technique of cinema, in order to have the opportunity to exhibit their skills in the area of documentary. The subjects of these films will be diverse. Ambition of the company is this effort to mark a starting point for the creation of a seedbed for the Greek cinema's future values" (*To Vima* 26/4/1964). "The film company Karagianis-Karatzopoulos having the intention of promoting new talents in film directing, announces a competition for short films awarded with 10,000 – 15,000 and 5,000 drachmas" (*Theamata* 15/7/1967).

⁸ Between the late 1950s and late 1960s Vasilis Maros made the following: *Kato apo toys Ouranoxistes / Under the Skyscrapers* (1957/58, Century Fox), *I Athina Horevi Rock en Roll / Athens Dances Rock en Roll* (1957, Konitsiotis / Maros, destined to the German TV), *Parthenonas / Parthenon* (1958, BBC), *Idra* (1958, BBC), *Katina Paxinou ke to Archeo Theatro / Katina Paxinou and the Ancient Theatre* (1959/60, BBC), *Rodos* (1962, BBC), *Kalymnos to Nisi ton Sfoungaradon / Kalymnos the Island of the Sponge-divers* (1964, Maros), *Ke o Orpheas Tragouda / And Orpheus is singing* (1965, Bavarian TV), *Heinrich Schliemann* (1966, Bavarian TV / BBC), *Anastenaria* (1967, Bavarian TV), *Athos, Pasha sto Agion Oros / Athos, Pasha in the*

hand, state subsidies, and on the other, independent production based mainly on self-finance and voluntary collective work. Consequently it could well be argued that short-filmmaking of the 1960s depended upon the two fundamental funding practices of the ‘New Greek Cinema’ of the following decades – namely state sponsorship and independent production – constituting in my view the first major appearance of the NEK production system.

Thus a large proportion of the short documentaries of the period, including the works of many of the ‘young’ directors, were state sponsored films, often subsidized directly by Ministries, especially the Presidency of the Government (Press and Information Office)⁹ or by state associated organizations.¹⁰ These documentaries celebrated a spirit of transformation and progress in a rapidly modernizing Greece, informed the audience about services provided by state patronized industries, companies and institutions, discussed current issues, and described the government’s achievements in public works or agricultural and economic policies. Others depicted a variety of visually pleasurable Greek landscapes and locations.

However the ‘young’ directors favoured independent production because the low budget of shorts made this possible. As Dimitris Stavrakas has stated “short film, meant the feasible film”.¹¹ The already low production cost of shorts was reduced further because the film stock used by the ‘young’ directors was usually remnants (*retalia*)¹² from features that the established producers and technicians had discarded or the ‘young’ directors had

Holy Mountain (1967, BBC / German TV) and *To Oros Sina / Mountain Sinai* (1968, BBC / German TV / NET).

⁹ And also by the Ministries of Education, North Greece, Public Works, Arm, Agriculture, etc.

¹⁰ E.g. EOT, DEH, OTE, EIR, National Bank of Greece, Royal Foundation “King Pavlos”, Statistics Department, National Industries, etc.

¹¹ See *Paraskinio / Backstage, Onira ‘mikrou mikous’ / Dreaming in Shorts* (2007, dir. Nikos Stambouloupoulos / Maria Chalkou, pr. Cinetic / ERT).

¹² According to Dimos Theos (in an interview given to the writer) the usage of film remnants (*retalia*) caused a variety of different qualities of film stock in the same short.

stolen,¹³ camera and other technical equipments were often borrowed or taken secretly,¹⁴ and negative film was developed for free in the laboratories of Finos Film – and other production companies as well – during the process of film development of a feature project. It is important to remember that many of the ‘young’ directors worked as assistants in the commercial industry and had direct access to such facilities. Furthermore, several methods of self-finance were developed. Some ‘young’ directors invested in short filmmaking their huge salaries they earned working as assistants on foreign productions,¹⁵ while others used family money¹⁶ or money gathered collectively.¹⁷ In addition there were cases when the contribution of an independent producer, occasionally associated with the commercial sector, was crucial. For example *Thasos* (1961, Takis Kanellopoulos) funded by Vasilisa Drakaki, the daughter of the established producer Antonis Zervos, or *Tzimis o Tigris / Jimmy the Tiger* (1966, Pantelis Voulgaris) which was produced with the contribution of Dinos Katsouridis, a distinguished cinematographer and director in the commercial industry.¹⁸ There were also attempts to form independent small-scale production companies focusing exclusively on short filmmaking such as ‘Argo’ and ‘Specta’ established by Roviros Manthoulis and Leon Loisios respectively, which however completed only a very limited number of short documentaries.¹⁹ Additionally, both the

¹³ According to Kostas Ferris (in an interview given to the writer), his short *Ta Matoklada sou Lamboun / Your Eye-lashes Shine* (1961) was shot with stolen stock film.

¹⁴ According to Nikos Nikolaidis, his short *Lacrymae Rerum* (1962) was shot during a weekend with a camera and technical equipment secretly taken by Finos Film. [See *Paraskinio / Backstage, Oneira ‘mikrou mikous’ / Dreaming in Shorts* (2007, dir. Stambouloupoulos / Chalkou, pr. Cinetic / ERT)].

¹⁵ E.g. Dimitris Stavrakas funded his short *Gazi / Gas* (1967) with the salary he earned working as assistant in the foreign production *Voski tis Symforas / Shepherds* (1966, Nikos Papatakis).

¹⁶ “Family contribution from then and onwards became of decisive significance for the Greek directors, either having the character of ‘addition’ to the budget of the future films or the character of moral support”. (Stavrakas 2001: 34).

¹⁷ According to Lakis Papastathis (in an interview given to the writer), his short *Periptosis tou Ochi/ Cases of NO* (1965) was financed by money gathered collectively by friends.

¹⁸ See Kolonias 2002: 108.

¹⁹ ‘Argo’ produced only one short *Acropolis ton Athinon / Acropolis of Athens* (1960, Iraklis Papadakis), while ‘Specta’ made *Psarades ke Psaremata / Fishermen and Fishing* (1960, Loisios), *I Zoi sti Mitilini / Life in Mitilini* (1960, Loisios), and *Lesvos* (1960, Loisios). A failed attempt for establishing an independent production company made also by Vasilis Rafaelidis and Stavros Tornes in 1961 (see *Cronologio in Theatro Sfondoni*, 1994: 8).

domestic and foreign film schools made noteworthy contributions to the production of shorts, since a great deal of the independent shorts of the period were student films with a considerable number of them being made abroad. Occasionally, however, film schools functioned as producers, such as in the case of the two documentaries *I Gounarades tis Kastorias / The Furriers of Kastoria* (1962) and *Vyzantino Mnimosino / Byzantine Requiem* (1962) directed by the film critic Vasilis Rafaelidis and funded by the Stavrakos Film School.²⁰

Of huge significance also was the development of various collectives, whose activity was not confined only to independent but also to commissioned short filmmaking. Most of these were groups of friends, who shared a common purpose, working for free as assistant directors, editors, production managers, cinematographers or actors.²¹ There were also two established units which created films: the ‘Group of Five’ (*I Omada ton 5*) and the ‘EDA element of Cinema’ (*To Stihio Kinimatografou tis EDA*). The ‘Group of Five’, which made a considerable number of commissioned shorts, was a documentary group created in 1960 by the filmmakers Roviros Manthoulis, Iraklis Papadakis, Fotis Mestheneos and Roussos Koundouros as well as the film critic Yannis Bacoyannopoulos. The ‘EDA element’ was a collective of people involved in cinema and officially committed to the left-wing political party EDA.²² Collective filmmaking was also taking place. Thus, for example, *Gi Aftes tis Iroides – I Ellinida Agrotissa / For these Heroines – The Greek Countrywoman* (1961, Nikos Tzimas / Grigoris Siskas), *100 Ores tou Mai / 100 Hours of May* (1963, dir. Dimos Theos / Fotos Lambrinos) and *Thiraikos Orthros /*

²⁰ For further information about the role played by film schools in the 1960s, see Chapter 2, pp. 79-80.

²¹ Worthy of attention is the supporting appearances made by the ‘young’ filmmakers in a great deal of the shorts of the period. Thus Voulgaris (who kept the leading role in his own film *O Kleftis / The Thief*), Angelopoulos, Konstantarakos, Vrettakos, Katakouzinis, et al. verify with their participation as actors the dominant at that period spirit of collectivity. In addition, Alexis Damianos, a major figure of theatre and a future legendary NEK filmmaker, made his debut in cinema as an actor in the short *The Thief* (1965, Voulgaris).

²² For the ‘EDA element’ see Chapter 2 p. 90, footnote 127.

Morning Service in Thira (1967, dir. Kostas Sfikas / Stavros Tornes) were works of two directors, while *Periptoseis tou OXI / Cases of NO* (1965, dir. Dimitris Avgerinos / Lakis Papastathis / Rena Choime) of three. This spirit of collectivity, which pervaded many aspects of the Greek cultural life of the period including the rising cinephile culture, also shaped the feature-length films made in the early years of NEK.

The low cost of shorts and the current international (especially Italian) trend of portmanteau films, led to the creation of two independent feature-length projects, *Tetragono / Square* (1964, Yannis Kokkolis / Stelios Jakson / Nikos Ikonomou / Kostas Tosios / Panos Katteris) and the highly acclaimed *Mechri to Ploio / Until the Ship Sails* (1966, Alexis Damianos). The intension of intervening in the cinematic terrain with collective portmanteau films is also manifest in two other abortive attempts: one planned by Pantelis Voulgaris, Kostas Ferris, Giorgos Katakouzinis and Kostas Lychnaras which resulted only in the fictional short *O Kleftis / The Thief* (1965, Voulgaris)²³ and another arranged by Voulgaris, Ferris, Katakouzinis and Theo Angelopoulos resulting in *Tzimis o Tigris / Jimmy the Tiger* (1966, Voulgaris) and much later *Ekpompi / Broadcast* (1968, Angelopoulos), which Angelopoulos had started shooting in 1966.²⁴ It is revealing also the fact the fact that initially, *Until the Ship Sails* was to be co-directed by the two ‘young’ filmmakers Giorgos Panousopoulos and Voulgaris and produced by Alexis Damianos. However due to the indecisiveness of the ‘young’, the film was eventually directed by Damianos (Soldatos 1993: 11, and 2004: 13).

As usual, budget limitations and poor technical equipment had a drastic impact on the content and style of shorts. Independent shorts were in black and white and often

²³ See Kolonias 2002: 71.

²⁴ See Themelis 1998: 28, and Soldatos (ed.) (2000: 9).

technically imperfect,²⁵ although some of them did not lack technical artistry since experienced and high qualified technicians, especially cinematographers from the commercial sector, often worked on independent shorts.²⁶ Budget constraints, however, were decisive in matters such as shooting on location, moving into the streets, using non-actors and non-synchronous sound, dealing with contemporary subject matter and developing documentary practices. The domination of the documentary over fiction short was also a consequence of this.

[We] turned to documentary, not because of a professional or aesthetic choice, but because documentary was the relatively cheaper kind of film to make. Documentary for us was a kind of a passport for a feature-length fiction film with actors. (Stavrakas 2001: 34)

Despite the above statement, the rise of the short documentary in the 1960s, although it did not become an established and coherent movement, it also reflected the current cultural prominence of documentary as a distinct cinematic articulation – note the huge success of the ‘First International Festival of Ethnographic and Sociological Cinema’ in Athens (September 1961)²⁷ – and also the centrality in public debates on Greek cinema of terms such as ‘contemporary reality’, ‘authenticity’ and ‘truth’, which were regarded as major prerequisites for the existence of a valued national cinema.

In the 1950s, Greek short film was entirely identified with documentary. In the 1960s, although the majority of shorts were still non-fiction, the fiction short gradually came to the fore, claiming a leading role in the domestic festival and attracting significant

²⁵ In contrast government sponsored documentaries, which were often benefited by huge budgets, marked by high technical standards, often were shot in colour, included impressive shots (e.g. taken from a helicopter) occasionally exhibiting a glossy texture. According to Manthoulis (in an interview given to the writer), the production value of the commissioned shorts he made during the 1960s was as high as of a feature-length film of the commercial industry.

²⁶ E.g. Dinos Katsouridis, Giorgos Panousopoulos, Grigoris Danalis, Dimos Sakellariou, et al.

²⁷ See Chapter 2, pp. 66-67.

critical and public attention. In 1966 the festival award was split into two different prizes, one for the best short documentary and another for the best fiction short, thus reflecting the need to establish a position for fiction shorts within the institutionalized context. However, the fact that the short film had long been associated with documentary caused significant confusion to film commentators, who often mistook fictional shorts (e.g. *Elies / Olive Trees*, *O Kleftis / The Thief*, etc.) for documentaries.²⁸

Confusion around the terms was also due to the fact that one of the most prominent and recurrent features of 1960s shorts was the fusion of documentary and fiction practices. 'Pure' documentaries often manipulated narrative to organize their filmic material, or included reenacted and staged scenes. Similarly, fictional shorts turned the camera to the surroundings, more often the streets and the urban environment, or included newsreel footage. These semi-documentary / semi-fictional practices reflected current ideas about the quest for 'authenticity' and 'truth' and the imperative to record 'contemporary Greek reality'. Thus documentary forms were appropriated by fictions in order to enhance a sense of realism and authenticity, while fiction was introduced into documentaries, to enrich or complete their 'truth' or make it more comprehensible. Documentary reality, however, was allied to the filmmaker's own viewpoint, and the leftist confidence of holding the 'objective reality' and 'truth' is pertinent here. An insubstantial domestic documentary tradition and an embryonic theoretical awareness of the potentials of non-fiction in combination with the widely expressed demand for the director's freedom and the already mentioned by Stavrakas aspiration for making fiction films also played a decisive role in the development of such hybrid forms.

²⁸ For example, see in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (23/9/64) the text written by Tonia Marketaki where the fiction short *Elies / Olive Trees* (1964, Dimitris Kollatos) is termed documentary.

Mixed practices are evident also in the choice of performers. Fiction shorts, for instance, occasionally employed popular professional actors in leading roles (memorable is the performance of Spyros Kalogirou in *Jimmy the Tiger* and the appearance of Mimis Fotopoulos in *Mias Dekaras Istoria / A Penny Story* (1965, Dimitris Nollas) thereby establishing a dialogue with the ‘Old’) and documentaries often used well-known voices for commentaries, practices that reveal the desire to gain popularity and maintain a bond with the wider audience. More often, however, either for economic reasons or due to a conscious striving for authenticity, shorts made extensive use of amateurs, or a combination of amateurs and professionals. The quest for authenticity also lies behind the dubbing of the male performers in *Elies / Olive Trees* (1964, Dimitris Kollatos) with the voices of ordinary people from Crete.²⁹

Turning to the subject matter, independent shorts – under the influence of the Bazinian theories – highlighted the significance of the everyday and opened a space to discuss real-life issues and socio-political concerns, forming one more cultural channel of the time in which leftist views were articulated. There emerged for the first time not only openly political films with left-wing perspectives (such as *Ekato Ores tou Mai / 100 Hours of May* [1963-1964, Dimos Theos / Fotos Lambrinos] about the assassination of Lambrakis), but, in an effort to uncover contemporary social and political reality, politics permeated all kinds of thematic material. Social themes such as poverty and emigration, rapid modernization and urbanization, the rising phenomenon of tourism, history and war, women’s position in society, existential questions and the problems of youth were all approached from a critical and political vantage point. Political upheavals in Greece were so inextricably linked with everyday experience, art and politics so interwoven and the ‘young’ directors so involved in politics – we should not forget that many of them joined

²⁹ From an interview given by Kollatos to the writer.

the Democratic Youth of Lambrakis or the ‘EDA element’ – that even shorts dealing with apparently ‘innocent’ subjects articulated hidden political discourses.

Another subject of great concern was the ‘true’ essence of Greek national identity, which was central to current debates around Greek cinema and domestic cultural life in general. This preoccupation with national identity is evident even in the titles of a significant number of shorts, notably not only of independent productions, but also of state sponsored, foreign subsidized or commercially funded films. *Macedonikos Gamos / Macedonian Wedding*, *Acropolis ton Athinon / Acropolis of Athens*, *Vyzantino Geraki / Byzantine Falcon*, *Perifani Ratsa / Proud Race*, *Anamnisis apo tin Ellada / Memories from Greece*, *Thiraikos Orthros / Morning Service in Thira*, etc. offer some illuminating examples. Preoccupation with ‘Greekness’, which was also manifest amongst feature-length films in both the commercial and art-house sectors, is indicative of the anxious search for nationhood and identity in a rapidly modernizing but culturally marginalized and in political and economic terms not autonomous Greece which oscillated between past and future, tradition and modernity, east and western cultural traditions and actual or sentimental links with the Western world and Eastern Europe. However, this search for nationhood and aestheticization of ‘Greekness’, which a great deal of independent shorts foregrounded, can also be seen as part of a striving towards an authentic national cinema, which by revealing ‘true’ ‘Greekness’ as opposed to the ‘fake’ which was believed to be promoted by the mainstream cinema, hoped to establish itself as a legitimate national art. In this respect Greek landscape, folk and other forms of ‘popular’ culture, rural life, traditional morals and customs, national symbols like the Parthenon, history, etc. became preferential spaces for this search for national identity.

An intense interest in ordinary people (especially proletarians) and the cultures surrounding their everyday realities was also central to the thematics of independent shorts.

This focus can be understood as a political choice of the ‘young’ filmmakers on the Left who sought to uncover the class construction of Greek society and picture the working conditions and quotidian life of the ‘people’. However, it also marks an attempt to reveal the ‘authentic popular’, not only in terms of audience attendance but also in terms of class origins, of “what derives from and belongs to the ‘people’”. Introducing the ‘popular’ into ‘high art’ was a major aspect of domestic cultural policies in the 1960s, as we have discussed. Thus by adopting working class subjects and dealing with several manifestations of people’s everyday culture, short films made manifest their intention to address popular audiences and court ‘popular authenticity’, which as we have seen were major concerns of the domestic ‘new’ cinema. This focus on the ordinary working class character formed a strong thematic trend in ‘New Greek Cinema’ in general – e.g. the features *Mechri to Plio / Until the Ship Sails* (1966, Damianos), *Anaparastasi / Reconstruction* (1970, Angelopoulos), *Evdokia* (1971, Diamanos), *To Proxenio tis Annas / The Engagement of Anna* (1972, Voulgaris), *Lavete Thesis / Get Ready* (1973, Theodoros Marangos), *Di Asimanton Aformi / For Trivial Reason* (1974, Tasos Psaras), *To Vari Peponi / The Heavy Melon* (1977, Pavlos Tasios), etc. – which coexisted with another equally important theme of the individual in crisis.

An alternative version of combining ‘high art’ with the ‘popular’ and also a reflection of the vitality in the domestic arts at that time were several exchanges between short films and other spheres of cultural life. There is a series of shorts that drew inspiration from contemporary Greek literature, either adapting short stories and poems written by established writers and poets,³⁰ or employing rising ‘young’ writers as

³⁰ For example, *To Alogo / The Horse* (1965, Kostis Zois) is based on a short story by Zacharias Papantoniou, while *O Giannis ke o Dromos / John and the Road* (1967, Tonia Marketaki) adapts a story by Menelaos Loudemis. Moreover *Cyprus ou m’ ethespisen* (1964, Ninos Fenek Mikelidis) is based on the poems *Eleni [Helen]* and *Salamina tis Cypru [Salamina of Cyprus]* of the nobelist Giorgos Seferis (interestingly the narrator is the poet Nikos Gatsos), the experimental *Lacrymae Rerum* (1962, Nikos Nikolaidis) is inspired by

scriptwriters.³¹ This interest in literature, which was seen as a means of elevating the cultural status of Greek film in general, marked a noteworthy although marginal trend when, over the following decades, significant literary works were adapted by the NEK filmmakers, and major contemporary writers made occasional contributions to scripts. The popular song, which experienced an enormous flourishing in the 1960s, enjoying high cultural prestige and conveying strong socio-political messages, also gave rise to short filmmaking. For example *Savvatovrado* [*Saturday Night*] by Mikis Theodorakis and two *rebetiko* songs were adapted to short films by Panos Papakyriakopoulos and Kostas Ferris respectively. The strong links with popular song and the influence of personalities like Theodorakis and Manos Hadjidakis on the generation of the NEK filmmakers is further confirmed by the NEK features *O Megalos Erotikos / The Great Love Songs* (1973, Voulgaris) based on the eponymous work of Hadjidakis and *Rebetiko* (1983, Ferris) which encapsulates the history of the *rebetiko* music, as well as the popular TV series *To Minoretis Avgis* (1983-84, Fotis Mesteneos). Other art forms also attracted the interest of short filmmakers in films like *I Parastasi Teliose / Performance is Over* (1962, Minas Christidis), dealing with theatre or *Irini kai Zoi / Peace and Life* (1962, Adonis Kyrou) which took as its point of departure an art exhibition. Short-filmmaking also was a cross-cultural field in which future successful individuals who, in the following years, have established themselves in other aspects of domestic cultural life were experimenting with film in a period when cinema emerged as a new, influential, revolutionary and promising art form (e.g. Minas Christidis, an actor and future successful stage critic or Dimitris Nollas a future established writer). The close affiliation between film theory and practice,

a romantic poem of Lambros Porfyras, *I Anasa tis gis / The breath of Earth* (1964, Sakis Metsimenidis) deals with a poem by Elytis and *Irini ke Zoi / Peace and Life* (1962, Adonis Kyrou) includes poems of Elytis.

³¹ E.g. *Apousia / Absence* (1963, Giorgos Zervoulakos) was based on a short story of Kostoula Mitropoulou. Likewise the voice over of *Prespes* (1966, Takis Hatzopoulos), *Psarades ke Psaremata / Fishermen and Fishing* (1961, Leon Loisios) and *Anemi / Winds* (1967, Apostolos Cryonas) was written by Mitropoulou, Dimitris Kehaidis and Giorgos Kitsopoulos respectively.

which marked NEK as a whole in the following years, was also established in the domain of short-filmmaking since critics such as Michelidis, Bacoyannopoulos and Rafaelidis made short films and short-filmmakers like Manthoulis, Angelopoulos, Marketaki, and Alexis Grivas wrote critical or theoretical texts.

The Greek mainstream, which was largely a cinema of manners and situations, rather rarely scrutinized complex feelings and existential problems. The individual's psychological complexities and internal experiences were foregrounded in some shorts [e.g. *O Yannis ke o Dromos / John and the Road* (1967, Tonia Marketaki) and *Athina Poli Chamogelo / Athens a City of Smile* (1967, Lambros Liaropoulos)], in contrast both to the mainstream and also the dominant trend in the shorts that demanded a focus on the social or the group. The personal, however, came strongly to the fore from another direction: through an intensive interest in the cinematic form and a quest for the individuality of the filmmaker.

In the shorts of the 1960s, formal experimentation with visual and audio aspects of the film emerges as a response to current developments in European art film and 'new' movements, as well as a challenge to the Greek mainstream. A general retrospective view shows that realist tendencies were dominant, which is not surprising, since realism as a form of representation prevailed in current critical debates. However, this inclination towards realism did not exclude modernist and experimental approaches (e.g. *Lacrymae Rerum* [1962, Nikos Nikolaidis]). Thus a wide range of representational styles is encountered in documentaries, from the highly idiosyncratic 'poetic' modernism of Kanellopoulos to more observational and direct approaches of Sfikas and Tornes (e.g. *Anamoni / Waiting* and *Thiraikos Orthros / Morning Service in Thira*). A similar variety of styles exists in fictional shorts, with realism (e.g. *Tzimmis o Tigris / Jimmy the Tiger*) and modernism (e.g. *O Yannis ke o Dromos / John and the Road*) coexisting. Retrospectively,

some of the NEK filmmakers themselves declare that two distinguishable trends existed within the new generation of film directors: on the one hand, there was a tendency closer in spirit to Neo-Realism and Italian cinema, and on the other, a tendency towards modernism and French New Wave.³² One could assert that the shorts of the 1960s already reveal the split that the ‘New Greek Cinema’ experienced in the following years between oblique formalistic modernism and more comprehensible realism. However as commonplaces in this variety of formal experimentations one can trace a persistent emphasis on the space (surrounding settings and aural environment) and its actual elevation to the position of the protagonist of the cinematic image. Rejection of speech or reexamination of the way with which verbal expression was used, unconventional editing, deconstruction of narrative, de-dramatization as well as open ended and ambiguous stories were also prioritized by the ‘young’ directors.

Although the official Left favored a consciousness-raising, optimistic art, and a spirit of optimism was justified by the vast improvement in welfare, the rise to power of the Centrists, the spectacular growth of the mass movement and also the cultural explosion of the 1960s – all developments that had a great effect on Greek society – and although humorous or optimistic shorts were made (e.g. *Athina X Ψ Ξ / Athens X C J*, *Mias Dekaras Istoría / A Penny Story*, *O Tzimmis o Tigris / Jimmy the Tiger*, *Ta Matoklada sou Lampoun / Your Eye-lashes Shine*), the dominant mood of shorts was that of melancholy and grief. This grief articulated as a deep awareness of social injustice, political repression, rapid modernization, loss of identity, existential deadlock, alienation and lack of hope. Melancholia, in the following years, came to dominate NEK films, even NEK comedies, forming one of the most significant thematic and aesthetic traits of NEK.

³² See Voulgaris and Theos in *Paraskinio / Backstage*, *Oneira ‘mikrou mikous’ / Dreaming in Shorts* (2007, Stambouloupoulos / Chalkou).

Apart from the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ that was the main venue for screening and promoting shorts and also public cinemas in which a noteworthy number of short films were screened before the features, other important channels of exhibition were film societies, where shorts often premiered and repeatedly screened, and also various cinematic events organized by cultural or political groups.³³ Circulation at international film festivals was also part of the short filmmaking culture. The opportunity to go abroad was another stimulating factor for making shorts, since many of them traveled extensively around the world, often winning significant distinctions and awards.³⁴

As already seen, short film activity received significant motivation from government policies. Nevertheless short films often came into conflict with the political establishment, principally about censorship. Although censorship was loosened during the 1960s, especially after the Centrists came to power, and oppositional shorts emerged, censorship mechanisms remained a large obstacle to the exhibition of shorts. The first confrontation between shorts and censorship took place in 1961 when the films *Savvatovrado / Saturday Night* (Papakyriakopoulos), *Ta Matoklada sou Lamboun / Your Eye-lashes Shine* (Ferris), *Gi Aftes tis Iroides – I Ellinida Agrotissa / For these Heroines – The Greek Countrywomen* (Tzimas / Siskas) and *I Zoi sti Mitilini / Life in Mitilini* (Loisios) were excluded from the competition program of the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’, and shortly after *Saturday Night* and *Your Eye-lashes Shine* were banned from all screenings inside and outside the country. Many explanations were given for this ban, e.g. a scene included in *Saturday Night* in which the left-wing newspaper *Avgi* appears³⁵ or the hashish culture around *rebetiko* music (*Your Eye-lashes Shine*).³⁶ However the official explanation was that the films “through systematic picturing of the worst kind of social degradation and of

³³ For further information, see Chapter 2, p. 73.

³⁴ E.g. *Lacrymae Rerum*, *Cyprus ou m’ ethespisen*, *Jimmy the Tiger*, *The Furriers of Kastoria*, etc.

³⁵ See Kostas Stamatou in *Avgi* (23/9/1961). For further information, see also *Avgi* (30/9/1961).

³⁶ See Stavrakas in *Paraskinio / Backstage*, *Oneira ‘mikrou mikous’ / Short Film Dreams* (2007, Stambouloupoulos / Chalkou) and Fragoulis 2004: 85.

the slum neighbourhoods damaged the image of the country” (Papakyriakopoulos 1961: 498-500). It was the same period during which censorship prevented – for similar reasons – the screening of the feature film *Sinikia to Oniro / A Neighborhood Called Dream* (1961, Alekos Alexandrakis) causing waves of protest in the press. Moreover in 1964 the bold treatment of a woman’s sexual exploitation within a traditional Greek family in *Elies / Olive Trees* (1964, Dimitris Kollatos) caused the Public Prosecutor to intervene in the festival and ban the film, though it still won the first prize. Meanwhile, after long wrangling with the censors during the pre-dictatorship period – including the Papandreou era – *100 Hours of May* (1963-1964, Theos / Lambrinos) was finally given a release much later at foreign festivals as part of the anti-Dictatorship protest movement. In addition, the documentary *750.000* (1966, Grivas) which deals with emigration was screened at the festival but banned from other public screenings.

The reactions of the ‘young’ filmmakers to the decisions of the jury at the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’ constitute another aspect of the contradictory relationship of the shorts with state institutions. When in 1965 the commissioned short *Anthropi ke Thei / Of Men and Gods* (Manthoulis / Papadakis), funded by the private New York tourist company *Hermes en Grece* and dealing with the ancient remains around Greece, received the first prize for a short film, there was a strong reaction from independent ‘young’ filmmakers. That year the jury decided not to award prizes to the ‘best feature film’ and ‘best film direction’ due to the low – according to the jury’s assertions – quality of the features, and instead to share out the sum between three shorts in acknowledgement of their “nationally important contribution to the cultural status of the Week of Greek Cinema”³⁷. These shorts were *Gramma apo to Charleroi / Letter from Charleroi* (1965, Lambros Liaropoulos), *To Alogo / The Horse* (1965, Kostis Zois), and *I Sinantisi / The Encounter* (1965, Mika

³⁷ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (30/9/1965).

Zacharopoulou). However, after the prize was announced, Liaropoulos refused the money in protest at the Festival awarding a commissioned film:

I believe that to reward a short indicates the acknowledgement of the hard effort that a young filmmaker made to create this film. I was eager to applaud any of my colleagues who made his [sic] film like me, waiting and begging at the corridors of film laboratories or buying negative on trust in order to make something that expresses himself. But I regard it as an offence against the institution [of the Festival] to reward a commissioned film [...] something that does not happen in any other Film Festival in the world.³⁸

Counter-festivals, which were an important way of conflicting with the Thessaloniki Film Festival, protesting against official policies as well as promoting films and alternative cultural policies and ideas in the NEK period, were also established for short-filmmaking. Thus in 1961 after the banning of the shorts *Saturday Night, Your Eyelashes Shine* and *For these Heroines – The Greek Countrywomen*, Papakyriakopoulos, Ferris and Tzimas organised the first counter-festival.

The first confrontation with censorship takes place and the first counter-festival is organized. [...] We regard it as a counter-festival because the real festival is here. We organize the screening right opposite the venue [of the official festival] ...and the banned films are screened here. The enterprise is headed by [Nikos] Koundouros, who broke the door [of the cinema]. We didn't have a projectionist, and Danalis, who did this job in

³⁸ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (30/9/1965).

the past, screened the films. ... In the audience were Theodorakis, [Nikos] Koundouros ... Great excitement! (Ferris)³⁹

Moreover, in 1965, as part of the reaction against the jury's decision to award *Of People and Gods* with the first prize, six short film directors (Dimitris Avgerinos, Liaropoulos, Nollas, Papastathis, Voulgaris and Zois) who regarded themselves as being unfairly treated by the festival, issued a manifesto in the press⁴⁰ and organized a "meta-festival" or a "para-festival" (in the words of *Dimokratiki Allagi*)⁴¹ at the cinema *Rodon* in Athens exhibiting their films: *A Letter from Charleroi*, *The Horse*, *Cases of NO*, *The Thief* and *A Penny Story*. The screening attracted considerable audience and attention from critics as well as individuals of the commercial sector (e.g. Klearchos Konitsiotis and Dinos Katsouridis).⁴²

This particular conflict with commissioned films and the institution of the festival marks also the first rupture within the body of the NEK filmmakers, since Manthoulis, the director of the winning short, was also a major figure amongst the 'young' directors of the time, being widely involved in NEK culture. This internal rupture in NEK was twofold, since the influential 'new' film critic Rafaelidis, in contrast with other 'new' critics (e.g. Marketaki), wrote a piece in *Dimokratiki Allagi* in support of the Manthoulis film, condemning *Charleroi* and *The Horse* as artistically weak.

[*Letter from Charleroi*] is a rather insignificant little film, which excuses neither the noise nor the arrogant attitude. (Rafaelidis)⁴³

³⁹ From an interview given to the writer. See also Fragoulis 2004: 87.

⁴⁰ See *Dimokratiki Allagi* (1/10/65).

⁴¹ See *Dimokratiki Allagi* (1/10/65) and (8/10/65).

⁴² See *Eleftheria* (3/8/66).

⁴³ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (4/10/1965). See also *Dimokratiki Allagi* (12/10/1965).

[*The Horse*] is a naïf and colourless bubble. (Rafaelidis)⁴⁴

Neither I nor my colleagues ask for charity. But critics should take into consideration that we made our debut working on hard, contemporary, humanist and anti-melodramatic subjects, and that we saved up for years just to make a short film. Mr Rafaelidis' bitterness ignored them. (Kostis Zois)⁴⁵

This encounter reveals another aspect of the NEK phenomenon, namely the often militant internal conflicts, that came to shape the attitudes developed by the 'New Greek Cinema'.

The rise of the short film was broadly discussed at the time as a significant development that, according to texts published in the press, indicated that a new kind of cinema and a new generation of filmmakers were about to come into existence. Thus, although in terms of figures – both of productivity and audience attendance – shorts remained in the margins of Greek cinematic activity, they were strongly associated with the long-anticipated renewal of Greek cinema and attracted an exceptional critical and journalistic attention. The developments in short film were noted and praised not simply by the 'new' generation of film critics who were closely associated with the 'new' cinematic tendency, but also by older film commentators as well as individuals involved in the commercial sector. Article titles as 'The Promise of the Short Films' (Bacoyannopoulos)⁴⁶, 'The Young Promise' (Bacoyannopoulos)⁴⁷ and also phrases like

⁴⁴ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (4/10/1965)

⁴⁵ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (8/10/65). See also the Rafaelidis' review of the short *Of People and Gods* in *Dimokratiki Allagi* (11/10/65).

⁴⁶ *Epoches* (1965, vol. 31, pp. 60-62).

⁴⁷ *Eleftheria* (13, 20, 27/7/66 and 3/8/66).

“the momentum of the young” (Antonis Moschovakis)⁴⁸ are representative of the impact of short films and the expectations with which they were loaded by the critical discourse.

Bearer of the renewing forces of our cinema is the short film. (1963, Rafaelidis)⁴⁹

Where the flourishing of Greek cinema really proves to be surprising is the marginal, until recently, genre of documentary. It is most touching and remarkable that the majority of these documentaries are created by young filmmakers, who are well educated and gifted with talent and good taste. They are the new driving force of our cinema, those who will open new paths for the seventh art of our country. [...] The time of Greek cinema has come! (1964, Nestoras Matsas)⁵⁰

In this respect, it is not accidental that the 1965 para-festival organized at *Rodon* gave rise to an article written by Rafaelidis in *Dimokratiki Allagi* entitled ‘Ellinikos Kinimatografos: Etos Proton’ [‘Greek Cinema: the First Year’],⁵¹ suggesting that 1965 was the first year of the Greek national cinema due to the massive impact of the shorts. Likewise, the term ‘New Greek Cinema’ was first applied to short films of the 1960s.⁵²

5.2 State sponsored and other commissioned shorts

The two major creative figures working on commissioned shorts were Roussos Koundouros and Roviros Manthoulis. In the 1950s Koundouros was the leading force in state subsidized short film activity and in the 1960s he continued to play a significant role

⁴⁸ *Avgi* (26/9/64).

⁴⁹ *Epitheorisi Technis* (1963, vol.104, p. 250).

⁵⁰ *Theamata* (30/9/1964).

⁵¹ *Dimokratiki Allagi* (4/10/65).

⁵² For the birth of the term ‘New Greek Cinema’, see Chapter 2, pp.96-97.

both in directing short documentaries and in determining state policies governing them. Koundouros, brother of the highly acclaimed film director Nikos Koundouros, was an influential and respected, though controversial, personality who, due to his upper-class social status and the powerful political background of his family, enjoyed the confidence of the state, regardless of his communist past.⁵³ He was widely involved in cinematic activity outside the sphere of the official Left, although he cooperated with a considerable number of leftists. He established IMEK, which, as we have seen, played an important role in stimulating short filmmaking and participated in the Royal Institution of King Pavlos which subsidized short films. In 1961 he briefly headed the department of propaganda of the Ministry of the Presidency under the Karamanlis government, presiding over state newsreels.⁵⁴ During his term of office at the Ministry – as well as in other posts – Koundouros hired several filmmakers to make short documentaries, among them the future prominent NEK director Stavros Tornes, as well as Grigoris Grigoriou, who was one of the most respected commercial directors.⁵⁵ Moreover, he made significant contributions to the funding for several documentaries.⁵⁶

Manthoulis, who had participated in the Resistance during the Occupation, was similarly employed to organize the documentary department of the Ministry of the Presidency in 1958. In addition, with John Grierson in mind, he established the ‘Group of

⁵³ Roussos Koundouros during the Occupation joined the forces of ELAS and until the late 1940s was a member of the Communist Party. He was also one of the cofounders and later dissidents of EDA. (From the interviews given to the writer by Loisis and Bacoyannopoulos).

⁵⁴ A significant contribution of Roussos Koundouros to the state newsreels was the elevation of their technical standards and the enrichment of their subjects with sport and cultural topics. [See *Avgi* (11/4/62), *Ta Nea* (3/12/63) and Neofotistou (2008).

⁵⁵ Stavros Tornes directed between 1963 and 1964 *Mycenae* and *Cyclades* funded by EOT, while Grigoris Grigoriou, *Arcadia* (1961, pr. Ministry of the Presidency / Press and Information Office) and *Laiki Techni / Folk Art* (1961, pr. Organization of Greek Handcraft). For further details about the shorts made by Grigoriou see Grigoriou (1996, vol.2, pp. 71-73).

⁵⁶ For example, after interventions by Roussos Koundouros, the Film Department of the Ministry of the Presidency, aiming at the promotion of Greek tourism abroad and at financial support of the production of the Greek documentary, bought a limited number of shorts which took Greece as their subject and were produced outside the Ministry’s scope. These documentaries were: *Psarades ke Psaremata / Fishermen and Fishing* (Loisis), *Rodos* (Maros), *Thessaloniki* (Roussos Koundouros), *Istioploia stin Ellada / Sailing in Greece* and *Mycenae* (Ermis Vellopoulos), *Idra* (Rozolis), *Skiathos* (Yannis Panayotopoulos) (See *To Vima* 17/1/1962).

Five’, whose main goal was to promote documentary activity in Greece (organizing lectures and screenings) and to secure funding. The ‘Group of Five’ found sponsors and worked collectively (with directing, editing and cinematography being shared between Manthoulis, Fotis Mestheneos and Iraklis Papadakis), and made a remarkable series of state sponsored and business-subsidized shorts.⁵⁷

It may sound surprising today, but the involvement of a considerable number of ‘young’ filmmakers on the Left with state-related organizations and propaganda mechanisms was mutually accepted in leftist cinematic circles, since state sponsored shorts provided work and valuable experience and also offered ‘young’ filmmakers the opportunity to establish themselves as directors. Moreover the involvement of ‘young’ directors in these activities was sanctioned by the facts, first, that commissioned shorts, with their educational and realist tendencies, were often seen as alternatives to the commercial sector and, second, in current debates about Greek cinema, state financial and institutional support was considered essential to the creation of a valued national cinema. Occasionally, however, criticism of the situation was expressed in the left-wing newspaper *Avgi*:

⁵⁷ The films made by the ‘Group of Five’ were the following: *Lefkada, to Nisi ton Piiton / Lefkada, the Island of Poets* (1958, dir. Manthoulis, pr. Ministry of the Presidency); *Acropolis ton Athinon / Acropolis of Athens* (1960, dir. Papadakis, pr. ‘Argo’), the only one independent production of the group focusing on the history of Parthenon and its surroundings; *I Pio Megali Dinami / The Biggest Power* (1963, dir. Manthoulis and Papadakis, pr. National Institute ‘King Pavlos’) shot on location at Zagorochoria and dealing with the development of the rural communities; *To Proto Vima / The first Step* (1963, dir. Fotis Mestheneos, pr. National Institute ‘King Pavlos’) treating the necessity of the tourist development of the traditional village Molyvos in the island of Lesbos and the importance of the local community’s participation; *Prasino Chrisafi / The Green Gold* (1965, dir. Manthoulis, Mestheneos and Papadakis, pr. Ministry of Agriculture) and *Fragma II / Dam II* (1965, dir. Manthoulis, Mestheneos, Papadakis, pr. Ministry of Agriculture), both dealing with forests; *To Fragma tou Acheloou / The Acheloos Dam* (1965, dir. Manthoulis, Mestheneos, Papadakis) focusing on the construction of the eponymous dam; *Mia Elpida gia Avrio / A Hope for Tomorrow* (1965, dir. Manthoulis, Mestheneos, Papadakis, pr. USIS) treating the benefits of the Marshall Plan for domestic agriculture; *Anthropi kai Thei / Of Men and Gods* (1965, dir. Manthoulis and Papadakis, pr. *Hermes en Grece*); *Kaliteri Organosi, Ligoteros Kopos, Perisotero Isodima / Better Organization, Less Effort, More Income* (1966-1967, Manthoulis, Papadakis, pr. Ministry of Agriculture and National Institution “King Pavlos”); *Gia Ena Kalitero Nikokirio / For a better Housekeeping or Ikiaki Ikonomia / House Economy* (1966-1967, dir. Manthoulis and Papadakis, pr. Ministry of Agriculture and National Institution “King Pavlos”); *Anadamos / Redistribution of Land* (1966-1967, dir. Manthoulis, Mestheneos and Papadakis, pr. Ministry of Agriculture).

We admit that we were very distressed by the news circulating in film circles: three young directors, who want to reach the heights of Art are currently shooting state newsreels on behalf of the government, in which on account of the forthcoming elections, the Karamanlis' 'miracle of prosperity' is promoted. ('Propagandists or Filmmakers?' in *Avgi* 5/9/61)⁵⁸

Although the author has been able to view only a few of these shorts commissioned in the 1960s, it is clear, firstly, that prominent individuals in cinematic and wider cultural circles were involved in state or privately sponsored films,⁵⁹ and, secondly, that commissioned shorts embodied much aesthetic experimentation and formal innovation. It is revealing that many of the shorts directed by the 'Group of Five' were garlanded with awards, such as the first prize for short film at the Thessaloniki Film Festival,⁶⁰ and the 'worthy of protection' honour, as well as they were sold and exhibited abroad. Moreover many of the films made by Roussos Koundouros and the 'Group of Five', exploring socio-cultural and Greek subjects in educational and formally experimental manner, responded to central concerns articulated in public debates of the time about cinema. In this respect they received extensive critical approval and were praised for their "scientific reliability and educational value", "promotion of ethnographic elements", "analysis of sociological problems and theoretical positions in a purely cinematic fashion", "employment of cinematic language", "poetic sensitivity", "visual

⁵⁸ See also *Avgi* (22/10/61).

⁵⁹ For example, the modernist composer Iannis Xenakis and the painter Yannis Svoronos worked on the short *Diethnis Ekthesi Thessalonikis / International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki* (1960, Roussos Koundouros, pr. ITF).

⁶⁰ *I Pio Megali Dinami / The Biggest Power* (1963, Manthoulis / Papadakis) and *Anthropi kai Thei / Of Men and Gods* (1965, Manthoulis / Papadakis) awarded with the first prize for short film in the 4th and 6th Week of Greek Cinema respectively.

rhythm”, “unconventional use of editing” and other outstanding technical and artistic qualities.⁶¹

What is impressive [in the film] is not only the effective use of visual experimentation, but, for the first time in Greece, the subject is treated in a way that is complex and goes beyond the facile exploitation of antiquities. In *Of Men and Gods*, the shots showing present-day Greek life [...] are juxtaposed against those of the monuments, offering a new dimension to the film which finally surpasses its simple tourist purpose. [...] Of course it is not a masterpiece and it does not fully explore the possibilities that the juxtaposition of ‘then’ and ‘now’ offers. Nevertheless [...] it is the first Greek film to demystify [...] the museum-like conception of our monuments, to make them part of life, to place them within the historical process and deal with them in a dialectic way. (Rafaelidis in his review of *Of Men and Gods*)⁶²

Aluminio tis Ellados / Aluminum of Greece (1965, pr. Greek Company of Aluminum), the last short made by Roussos Koundouros, exemplifies the aesthetic and formal experimentation encountered in 1960s commissioned shorts. This black-and-white industrial documentary – reminiscent in many respects of Alain Resnais’s *The Song of Styrene* (1958) – was intended to show the construction of the company’s plants and explain the process of manufacturing aluminum. However, Koundouros broke with traditional modes of advertising and propaganda, making instead an unconventional modernistic film which went far beyond the original intentions of the sponsors. Firstly, he rejected the voice over, which at that time was the most common way of conveying

⁶¹ As representative examples of the critical approval that commissioned films enjoyed, see the reviews of *Diethnis Ekthesi Thessalonikis / International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki* (1960, Roussos Koundouros, pr. ITFT) by Kostas Stamatiou (*Avgi* 22/9/60) and Kostis Skalioras (*To Vima* 21/9/1960). See also *I Techni* 2002: 192.

⁶² *Dimokratiki Allagi* (11/10/65).

information and communicating messages in educational or propagandist shorts. Instead he used a soundtrack of modernist music, alien to most of the audience, comprising mechanical sounds evocative of the industrial environment and the futuristic atmosphere of the film, while graphics and sketches provided some explanations of the industrial processes.

The film's visual style is characterized by abstraction, minimalism, an emphasis on composition, elaborate camera movement and deep focus. The camera explores the lines and volumes of the industrial space in a hypnotic manner, with abstract close-ups that often recall modern painting, geometrical long shots, lengthy tracking and slow crane shots.⁶³ There is a preoccupation with and an aestheticisation of the monumental buildings, the huge factory machines at work and the heavy vehicles, which all seem to have a life of their own. The repetitive patterns, shapes and movements inside and outside the factory are also aestheticised. At the same time the workers, swallowed up by the industrial environment, are faceless, tiny figures against the gigantic machinery, in which they themselves are a cog. Nature gives also way to modernity with the idyllic landscape making way to modern houses for the factory workers.

Koundouros' gaze is distancing and unsentimental, and the effect of the image underlined by the anguished atonal music, is disquieting. Gradually the viewer witnesses the construction of an inhospitable and dehumanized world which recalls science fiction and dystopian films such as *Metropolis* (1927, Fritz Lang). *Aluminum* does not explore the working conditions of the proletarians articulating a class-conscious discourse, which was a major preoccupation of independent shorts [e.g. *Gazi/Gas* (1966, Stavrakas) and *750,000*

⁶³ *Aluminum* includes the most impressive and highly elaborate lengthy tracking shot of the Greek cinema of the 1960s in which camera being put on a crane passes, in a mesmerizing way, across identical huge drilling machines, creating a weird effect.

(1966, Grivas)] but instead it examines the vast industrial space, ambivalently admiring the miracle of industrialization while simultaneously expressing a deep angst about the geometrical, inhuman and repetitive world of machines and anonymous powers. While other commissioned shorts made by Koundouros celebrate the rapid transformation of Greece,⁶⁴ in *Aluminum* the propaganda purpose of the film is undermined by an ambivalence about the implications of the industrial society.⁶⁵ The visual innovativeness of *Aluminum* – an aesthetic experiment with avant-garde origins ahead of its time, in the context of the Greek cinema at least – makes it a complex and sophisticated art work and one of the first examples of modernistic cinema in Greece. In this respect it deserves an exceptional position in the history of the Greek art cinema.⁶⁶

5.3 Independent shorts

However, in this period, it is independent shorts that constitute the ‘richer’ and most interesting area of short-filmmaking in terms of the individuals involved, the variety of subject matter, range of formal experimentation, expression of oppositional political and ideological discourses, and conflicts with the state. In the majority of cases the ‘young’ directors had control of the production process and their target audiences were primarily film festivals and film societies. Therefore, free from serving the sponsor’s purposes and creatively unconstrained by commercial pressures, they were responding to the widely expressed demand for alternative, oppositional and artistic works.

⁶⁴ E.g. *Thessaloniki* (1962) or *Diethnis Ekthesi Thessalonikis / International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki* (1965)

⁶⁵ The existence or not of alternative or oppositional ideological discourses in commissioned shorts is a matter of question, since the subject is under-researched.

⁶⁶ See also the discussion of the film by Pagoulatos 2001: 46-47.

If we approach the diverse field of independent shorts in terms of thematic categories, five predominant themes can be traced: a) rural Greece, b) the city of Athens, c) politics,⁶⁷ d) emigration and industrial workers,⁶⁸ e) history and war.⁶⁹ The following section will focus on the first two categories, which are the foremost themes in terms of numbers of films and which encompass the main thematic, formal and narrative concerns of the ‘young’ filmmakers.

a) The countryside: a site of ‘Greekness’

Since Athens was the centre of film production, financial limitations made it less appealing for the ‘young’ directors to shoot on location in the countryside. However, despite budget constraints, rural Greece has held a privileged role in independent shorts of the 1960s, forming a preferential space for locating ‘authenticity’, the ‘real popular’ and the ‘true national’. The Junta (1967-1974) employed and almost institutionalized folklore and tradition for its own ends, associating them, since then, in the consciousness of the majority, with ‘nationalistic’ conceptions of ‘Greekness’. However, as already seen, in the 1960s folk culture was important to the cultural policies of the Left, as left-wing rhetoric valorized folklore and tradition as the ‘authentic’ culture of the Greek ‘people’. Considering that the majority of the ‘young’ directors were leftist intellectuals, fascination

⁶⁷ *Ekato Ores tou Mai / 100 Hours of May* (1963/64, Theos / Lambrinos), *Elliniki Zoi / Greek Life 1 and 2* (1964, Loisios) which were newsreels funded by EDA, *Poria pros to Lao / Towards the Public* (1962, Zervoulakos, Dan Film) and *O Neos Anendotos / The New Unrelenting Struggle* (1965, Giorgos Zervoulakos, Dan Film).

⁶⁸ *Gamma apo to Charleroi / A Letter from Charleroi* (1965, Liaropoulos), *O Achilleas / Achilles* (1965, Aimilia Provia [Milly Giannakaki]), *750,000* (1966, Alexis Grivas) and *O Stefanos pai sti Germania / Stefanos Goes to Germany* (1967, Ermis Velopoulos) about emigration and also *Gazi / Gas* (1966/7, Stavrakas) about the life of the workers of a gas factory in Athens.

⁶⁹ *I Periptosis tou Ochi / Cases of NO* (1965, Avgerinos / Parastathis / Choime), *Irini ke Zoi / Peace and Life* (1962, Kyrou) and *To Alogo / The Horse* (1965, Zois).

with folklore and tradition in shorts can be seen as representing, on the one hand, a reaction against rapid modernization and urbanization (major achievements of the right-wing establishment), and on the other, left-wing nationalism.

The portrayal of folklore and landscape both by the popular industry and international hits such as *Never on Sunday* and *Zorba the Greek* was extensively condemned by critics for shamelessly falsifying and exploiting national characteristics for commercial purposes.⁷⁰ Short filmmakers made a conscious attempt to define the ‘authentic national’ and distance their work from such criticism by using alternative means. The ‘national’ was approached through realism (often mixed with romanticism and symbolism) as well as historical, intercultural and inter-textual perspectives, in which folk culture manifested a contemporary link with Greek past. Short films emphasized the continuity of Greek history and civilisation, which was a commonplace both in Greek historiography (leftist and ‘nationalist’ alike) and in everyday discussions of nationhood. In the following decades such approaches of the ‘national’ come to form the ‘Hellenocentric tendency’ of NEK, as it has been termed by Bacoyannopoulos (2002: 24-25), as well as to predominate in several other feature-length films of ‘New Greek Cinema’.

The most influential of the shorts dealing with traditional rural life and celebrating national heritage was *Macedonian Wedding* (1960, Takis Kanellopoulos) which introduced and encapsulated important aspects of the formal, aesthetic and thematic concerns that were to define the work of many NEK filmmakers. *Macedonian Wedding* is an ethnographic documentary about the customs of the traditional wedding in a Greek West Macedonian mountain village called *Velvendos*. It is not a direct record but a poetic and nostalgic reenactment by the villagers of the core customs: match-making, the baking of

⁷⁰ See Chapter 1, pp.57-58.

bread rolls, laying out the bride's dowry, shaving the groom, the dressing of the bride, etc.⁷¹

Not only was it all reconstructed for the camera, but action was also directed according to the structural and aesthetic demands of the shot and the frame. The reenacted events allowed the director to construct poetic images, aestheticising the action within the frame. The camera movement is slow and smooth, with the extensive use of tracking shots, especially lateral ones, and deep focus. The predominant long and extreme long shots occasionally alternate with close ups, while camera angles, camera movement or movement within the frame produce symmetries and contradictions between shots. However, visual simplicity and formal austerity is maintained. Cinematography is also a matter of prime concern. Kanellopoulos, rather surprisingly, employed an amateur photographer called Iakovos Pairidis who worked as a dried-fruit seller and had never even used a cinematic camera, because he had been captivated by Pairidis' romantic photos.⁷² The result was black-and-white cinematography of misty and melancholic images, and was without precedent in Greek cinema. The profound concern for form and technique, the emphasis on the visual, the pictorial quality and highly personalized style of the film are some of its most outstanding traits.

Macedonian Wedding responded to the current demand for auteurism by foregrounding formal concerns, but it also responded to the call for 'Greekness' by placing the question of national identity at its core. The theme of 'Greekness' is asserted in the opening credits and inter-titles, which are written in ancient characters and inform the viewer that the purpose of the film is to show "a fragment of the customs, legends and

⁷¹ The depicted customs are re-enactments of both surviving and lost at the time practices. (See *I Techni*, 191).

⁷² See Zervoulakos (*Akadimias* 96-98, p.1, unpublished).

traditions of the great Greek people”, adding that “in the Greek villages, when people speak about the face, they show the heart”. Placed in the wider context of the traditional village, it is at the point where the greatness of Greek history from antiquity to the present intersects with the greatness of the Greek soul that Kanellopoulos locates the essence of national identity.

Throughout the film there is a strong sense of the continuity of a glorious history and of an outstanding ancient culture which survives until today. In this context, as part of the wedding customs, the Greek flag – which plays a prominent part throughout the film – is hidden by the villagers, a practice originating, as the voice-over implies, in the years of the Ottoman Occupation when the villagers wanted to protect it from the “barbarians”. Likewise the traditional dance (“Sygkathistos”), performed by the local women, is, as the voice-over explains, “an ancient war-dance, which was first performed when women were involved in battle”. Moreover archaic and pagan forms of worship and ritual from the pre-Christian era coexist alongside Christianity. Thus both the groom’s mother and the bride are seen praying to the sun, while a prayer to the Christian God is said during the kneading of bread-rolls.

The film celebrates the local folk culture in several ways. The camera lingers on traditional artifacts, tapestries, rugs, costumes, musical instruments and domestic objects, the bare stones of the streets and walls, as well local houses and its roofs, while an emphasis is put on the traditional dances. Even the descriptive and poetic spoken commentary, which at times conveys the feelings and thoughts of the people involved, borrows or imitates phrases from folk poems, while the soundtrack comprises original music and folk songs sung collectively by female voices.

In *Macedonian Wedding*, village and folk culture offer an ideal form of collective living and community, substantiating a socialist utopia. Significantly, the 'people' are presented without class distinction and images of wealth or poverty are totally absent. Likewise, the film does not show the representatives of power, the mayor, the clerk and the village teacher, the traditional authority figures in Greek provincial life. Instead, the natural order prevails: children, young men and women, and the respected old. The 'people' are portrayed as an abstract, united and homogeneous entity living in a community free from internal conflicts and repression, while collectivity is a fundamental of their life. Collectivity is emphasized both by the cinematic image, which focuses on group activity (with only a few exceptions, almost every single action in the film is performed collectively) and the voice-over commentary which stresses that the whole community participates and nobody is excluded. Moreover the bride and groom, by token the protagonists of a wedding, occupy only a limited part of the filmic time and are not the dominant characters. There is not even a single close-up of the groom's face. In contrast, it is the entire community that is the main protagonist of the film. Kanellopoulos aestheticizes and glorifies the rural common people in their collectivity, stressing the purity of their heart, their braveness, generosity, modesty, simple dignity and sense of communality, establishing simultaneously a strong link between 'Greekness' and the 'people', between the 'national' and the 'popular'. The image of peasants celebrating around the Greek flag is the visual leitmotif of the film, which most clearly encapsulates this association of the 'national' with 'popular'. Kanellopoulos' celebration of the collective, as well as aspects of the film's aesthetics (e.g. its lyricism and the romanticism of the landscape), draw on the Soviet cinematic tradition, which was an important ingredient in Kanellopoulos' cinematic imagination.

Ritual also occupies a prominent part in the film since the narrative is structured around successive small ceremonial acts. The title refers to the ceremony of the wedding, although the actual event is never visualized, and each event in the film is ritualistic. The various rituals of the traditional wedding, in the microcosm of the local society, provide a mechanism for participation and communication as well as a vehicle for personal accomplishment and social cohesion and at the same time a means of reconnecting with the past and the roots of the nation. With its pagan exaltations and contemplative moments, ritual is invested with significant symbolic and diachronic value. It is integral to the identity of the local culture and a vital means of preserving collectivity and cultural continuity. In this respect it manifests an important assertion of 'Greekness'.

Greek nationhood is also articulated in the film's portrayal of landscape. Landscape has been widely used as a signifier of nationhood across international art forms, and as far as Greece is concerned, it represented a nationally charged space for the 'generation of the 1930s', which considerably impacted on domestic cultural life in the 1960s. Since the physical space of Greek Macedonia was politically central, because it was both subject of territorial and minority claims and a key element in official anticommunist rhetoric,⁷³ Kanellopoulos, by employing it as a metaphor of Greek identity, made a statement of ambiguous and emotionally charged national and political value. In *Macedonian Wedding* and his following feature-length film *Ouranos / Sky* (1962), he brought into Greek art cinema the iconography of the misty and wintry mountains of northern Greece, thereby challenging the dominant aesthetics of sunny Mediterranean seascapes and shifting attention to another 'Greekness'. The emphasis on dawns and twilights and the melancholy wintry light are core components of this alternative

⁷³ Greek communists were accused by the 'nationalist' rhetoric as being traitors of their own country, because, according to this point of view, they served the territorial interests of Slavo-Macedonians.

iconography of 'Greekness', which was established by Kanellopoulos and later became associated with the work of Theo Angelopoulos.

Kanellopoulos' poetic style emphasizes the aesthetic and spatial relations between the human body and its environment. Actors are often framed as tiny figures against immense landscapes and the apparently empty long shots of natural settings – inhabited by groups or individuals – become psychic reflections filled with awe and melancholy. Human figures are thereby fused with their environment, underlining the organic link between the local people, whose lives are in direct contact with and totally dependent on nature, and their place of origin. The film draws particular attention to this bond and sense of unity and belonging, which encompasses not only people and nature, but also history, culture and the whole universe. Mountains, earth, trees, animals, rivers, stones, walls, roofs, smoke from the chimneys, craft objects, customs, rituals, dances, songs, tales, legends, gods, fairies and national symbols all become protagonists in the film and coexist peacefully. This inherent – according to Kanellopoulos' view – to traditional culture unity and harmony is another manifestation of the essence of 'Greekness' and is further underscored by *mise en scène*: the deep focus and slow tracking shots unite everything.

However, the formal sophistication and alienation devices employed by Kanellopoulos in *Macedonian Wedding* prevent it from becoming nationalistic. The treatment of the actor as a distant figure, a simple component of the frame's composition, often with the back turned to the spectator, combined with the aestheticization of group activity, results in the de-dramatization of the filmic image. Furthermore, the wedding ceremony itself is completely absent. This evasion of the actual event of the wedding

overturns the audience's expectations and adds to the de-dramatization,⁷⁴ while a persistent sense of melancholy further undermines any nationalistic euphoria. The film's fascination with folk culture, landscapes and traditions that are untouched by modernity represents a strong nostalgia for something which was gradually collapsing since the rapid modernization of Greek society swept away local cultures, old values and landscapes. In the midst of the festivities and celebrations, the film sounds a note of quiet melancholy for the destruction of traditional rural life and loss of national identity.

Its highly idiosyncratic style, elaborate form and the search for authenticity and national specificity in folk tradition and rural landscape place *Macedonian Wedding* firmly within the wider domestic modernistic tradition, expressed primarily by the 'generation of the 1930s'. Moreover, one can recognize in the film some of the major thematic, narrative and visual motifs that blossomed fully in what it is known as 'New Greek Cinema' in the following decades. The self-conscious poetic and modernistic visual style, the emphasis on cinematography and composition, deep focus long takes and distant framing, slow tracking shots, the treatment of the group as a character and the individual as a subordinate to landscape silhouette, the conception of landscape as a site of historical and national yearning, characteristically Balkan locations of the misty mountainous northern Greece, the aesthetization of 'Greekness' and articulation of it through a diachronic relationship with history and past cultures, the use of ritual as an aestheticized event and narrative vehicle, wintry early morning or afternoon light, the contemplative mood, melancholy, de-dramatization, etc. all these shape the cinematic universe of Theo Angelopoulos, as well as a great deal of NEK films.

⁷⁴ Evasion of the wedding ceremony is in compliance with the initial title of the film *Wedding's Customs in West Macedonia / Ethima tou Gamou sti Ditiki Macedonia* before being reduced by the newspapers to *Macedonian Wedding*.

The impact of *Macedonian Wedding* was to rejuvenate and fortify an already existing trend in Greek documentary towards themes that celebrated and romanticized rural Greece and its cultural heritage.⁷⁵ Furthermore, *Macedonian Wedding* served as a model for a small group of related shorts – *Thasos* (1961, Kanellopoulos), *Prespes* (1966, Takis Hatzopoulos) and *Anemi / Winds* (1967, Apostolos Cryonas) – that share not only its thematic concerns and visions of ‘Greekness’ but also the ‘reconstruction’ method of making documentary, a particular emphasis on *mise-en-scène* and poetic form, a symbolically charged use of landscape as well as a melancholic and contemplative mood. These shorts were products of Kanellopoulos and his pupils, all residents of Thessaloniki. Hatzopoulos and Cryonas who had both been assistant directors to Kanellopoulos – Cryonas also had been assistant director on *Prespes* – developed individual cinematic styles that owed a lot to Kanellopoulos’ work.⁷⁶

Thasos (doc., 1961, Kanellopoulos),⁷⁷ a poetic meditation on the nature and the everyday life of the eponymous island, can be seen as a restatement and further exploration of thematic and formal motifs established by *Macedonian Wedding*. It also pursues further the director’s interest in the everyday. From the film’s opening, the context of the folk culture is established with folk songs – seen as the authentic expressions of people’s collective voice – which dominate the soundtrack and function as the main narrative vehicle (action structured around the lyrics). The natural cycle of a day – morning, midday, twilight, night, and again morning – provides an additional narrative axis, giving rise to philosophical insights into the transience of time. Around this unusually loose – for the

⁷⁵ *Megaritikos Gamos / Wedding in Megara* (1961, Dimis Dadiras), *Vlachicos Gamos / Vlach Wedding* (1965, Giorgos Zervoulakos) and *Leidinos* (1966, Evgenia Asmani) are a few examples of this thematic trend. *Leidinos* examines the eponymous ancient custom taking place at the island of Aegina, according to which a man of straw is made and buried by the local women to symbolize the decline of vegetation with the arrival of autumn.

⁷⁶ Interestingly the newspaper *Tharros* argues about the existence of a Thessaloniki cinematic school. (Kerkinos 2003: 10).

⁷⁷ Assistant director: Dimos Theos.

current Greek cinema – narrative structure, Kanellopoulos created a rather melancholic and impressionistic film.

The island of Thasos, like the village in *Macedonian Wedding*, stands as a microcosm of the Greek nation. Kanellopoulos explores the essence of national identity – the “psyche of the island” as an opening inter-title claims – celebrating, aestheticizing and romanticizing landscape and village culture (artifacts, music, dances, etc.). Particular emphasis is given to the purity of the peasants’ manners, Greek cultural continuity (e.g. the camera pans across ancient remains and the head of a sculpture is directly followed by the head of a fisherman) and the rituals of daily life (e.g. fishermen pulling nets). The film restlessly constructs poetic images of authenticity, collectivity, beauty and serenity. Likewise, the formal concerns introduced by *Macedonian Wedding* are further explored here: the potentials of deep focus, long takes and tracking shots, explorations which precede the cinematic vocabulary of several NEK filmmakers after 1970. Kanellopoulos also introduced new formal elements, drawing attention to the presence of the camera, which has a life of its own, functioning independently from an assumed coherent narrator’s point of view (the camera, for instance, repeatedly tracks forward and back from a tree, “making love with it”, as the director has explained).⁷⁸

A new dimension in the visual style and thematics of *Thasos* is the shift away from the aestheticization of collective action towards the aestheticization of the individual’s inner life. Group activity is not absent – indeed the film often highlights collective everyday work and dance – but the individual emerges more clearly as a solitary and motionless figure, often with the back turned to the viewer, placed against a stunning landscape and deep in contemplation. Throughout the film collective and individual

⁷⁸ See Dermetzoglou (ed.) (1997: 95). *Thasos*’ intensive concern with formal experimentation and visual style caused – at the time of the film’s first release – accusations of formalism and formal narcissism. (See *Avgi* 23, 26/4/61 and *Eleftheria* 15/2/61)

experiences alternate – a feature also of *Ouranos / Sky* (1962, Kanellopoulos) – prefiguring an important trend in NEK films.

Likewise *Anemi / Winds* (1967, Cryonas), which was also shot on location on Thasos, takes as its starting point folk songs, specifically those of Vosporos about the migration of the local young men. Here Cryonas pushes the reconstruction style to the limits: The custom of bidding farewell to the young sailors leaving the island – with which the documentary deals – is an invention of the director drawing on the just mentioned folk songs and customs which once existed around Marmaras,⁷⁹ while the film's visual style is based on an absolute control over composition.

Cryonas's reworking of Kanellopoulos' visual patterns formed a pictorial style characterized by de-dramatization, the aestheticization of the action within the frame, theatrical staging and choreographing of the nonprofessional actors (local villagers), deep focus long or extremely long shots, lengthy tracking shots, the use of landscape as an aesthetic internalized setting, and the subordination of the human body to the environment. Motionless and expressionless female figures more often contemplating the sea and usually with their back turned to the viewer form the film's major narrative and visual leitmotif which can be recognized later in the motionless and theatrically arranged figures in the films of Angelopoulos.

The narrative follows a group of musicians wandering through the village and announcing with their music that a ship is about to set sail, urging the young men to leave. As the musicians pass, the young men throw a scarf from the balconies of their house to show that they are emigrating. Simultaneously, another ritual inspired by ancient ceremonies is enacted by a group of local women on the shore. Holding olive branches and

⁷⁹ See Kerkinos (2003: 4-6).

jugs of wine or oil, the women propitiate the sea, while in full frame the ship stands motionless, in a dream-like manner. A series of other small ritualistic acts (e.g. prayers, purification of the hands of a young man, the kneading of bread, a family meal, a young man receives a knife, etc.) complete the narrative.

The film carefully constructs poetic images of ‘Greekness’ with a particular focus on the harshness of the landscape, the wilderness and expansiveness of the sea, the colorfulness of folk culture (emphasis is placed on elaborate traditional costumes, objects, musical instruments, handmade rugs, etc.) and the dignity of the people in their collectivity. At the same time ancient rituals and theatricality suggest a parallel between the local women and a Greek chorus, while the olive branches, wine, the sea and the ship in the ritual on the shore are obvious symbols of ‘Greekness’. These ancient rituals and diachronic symbols – as well as phrases in the voice-over such as “do not forget the smoke of your home”, an indirect allusion to the *Odyssey* – assert the continuity of the Greek nation’s trials, history and civilization. Moreover the domestic interiors are filled with Byzantine icons and prayers, while the bell rings inviting the women to church. According to the film’s implications therefore, nature, antiquity, the Byzantine past, folk culture, paganism and Christianity as well as endurance in suffering are all intrinsic components of Greek national identity.

A new element, and also a departure from Kanellopoulos’ view, is the overwhelming dominance not of melancholia but grief. *Mise en scène*, voice-over commentary (a mother’s farewell to her son), the rituals, music and landscape work to structure the sense of loss and mourning that the narrative involves. The film does not simply reconstruct a custom but explores the major social problem of emigration and its consequences, the rupture in the family, the loss of the community’s cohesion, the neglect of the countryside and the subsequent decline of rural cultures. De-dramatization is

employed to add dignity to the communal grief: everything happens in silence and with expressionless faces, while the voice over conveys the despair. Shots of the village implying absence and solitude (e.g. empty stairs, shut doors, close windows, a dead fireplace) alternate with shots of the moving sea, underlining the sense of abandonment, confinement and loss that the villagers experience: “My son, remember your return. If you forget it, then it will become a desert.” The pessimistic concluding shot – in which a group of villagers watch the sailing ship – that tracks forward to a freeze frame of a boy’s face being held tightly by an old man, forecasts the future. The boy will become the next emigrant.

Prespes (1966, Takis Hatzopoulos) is another stylized poetic documentary that prioritizes the visual and constructs its narrative as an impressionistic account of the everyday. It deals with the quotidian activity of the people inhabiting the isolated borderland of Prespes, a cluster of lakes that was at that time shared by Greece, Yugoslavia and Albania. The film is concerned not simply with the purity and authenticity of Greek rural cultures or the beauty of the Greek landscape, but also with issues of emigration, the abandonment of the countryside, the consequences of the Civil War and the defeat of the communist movement. Preceding Angelopoulos’ exploration of the same themes, it raises questions about the national borders and border-crossing, relations between the neighboring countries, and the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic communities. As well as exploring the repetitive and ritualistic nature of daily life, it questions the very notion of time.

It is important to keep in mind that, at the time the film was made, to reach Prespes, going there as a visitor, one had to pass three outposts. An internal passport was needed. At that time Prespes was a blocked zone because it was from there that the exodus of a major part of the guerrilla

army of the Civil War took place, towards Albania and Yugoslavia.
(Hatzopoulos)⁸⁰

The territory of Prespes is introduced by the voice over as “a small piece of Greece next to the borderline that divides the lake into ethnicities” and it is the notion of the national that is central to the film. The national is placed alongside the inaccessible ‘Other’, the ‘Iron Curtain’ of the neighbor, with whom Greek nation shares the lake and also the people who crossed the borders. The artificiality of the frontier and the proximity of the different ethnicities are highlighted:

Once there was no border. People learned it through the words. They say ‘good morning’ in three languages. Occasionally they forget about this. [...] Those who fish in the lake are always aware of the border, not to cross it. They have placed it somewhere in the middle of the lake.
(Voice-over)

Frontiers are invisible, dividing and at the same time as uniting, existing in the mind of the people. The lake is a whole and simultaneously fragmented space like the national and universal body. A suppressed desire for the transcendence and removal of the borderline is quietly articulated by the film. However, political questions appear not overtly in the narrative, but as indirect and ambivalent comments in the poetic commentary written by Kostoula Mitropoulou:

Those who left went via the lake. The lake was the path. Ten thousand went abroad. A few stayed behind. With the lake in their days. [...] With the borderline between those who wait and those who remember. [...]

⁸⁰ From an interview given to the writer.

The people keep the path in their memory, the faces and God in their heart, silence in their days.

The film is characterized by an overwhelming sense of stillness and exclusion: the static camera, the lake's motionless water, the daily rituals conducted at a slow pace, an emphasis on the old people, waiting for a letter from the emigrant / refugee, the empty spaces inhabited by lonely figures, the dominant presence of nature, the huge rocks, the surrounding mountains, the lack of horizon in the frame, all create a sense of immobility, enclosure, alienation and neglect. Symbolic images also imply a sense of entrapment and suffocation (e.g. a fish is captured in fishing nets and later suffocates). However, the all-pervasive tranquility and beauty of the landscape, the vitality of the children, the self-respect of the local people and their deep bond with the divine do not allow a mourning effect, but instead give rise to a lyrical melancholic tone which is also reflected in and intensified by the film's music.⁸¹ The soundtrack is crucial in structuring the dominant mood and shaping the rhythm of the film which is edited, in the words of the director, "at the pace of a prayer".⁸²

While the lyricism of Soviet cinema was the major point of reference for the works of Kanellopoulos and his followers, the British documentary film movement was the point of departure for the committed to the 'EDA element' documentarist Leon Loisios, who developed a more realist visual style without formal eccentricities. In 1961, with the independently funded film company 'Specta' which worked outside the commercial

⁸¹ The religious sentiment implied in the totality of Kanellopoulos' films here is overtly articulated. Religious icons (e.g. Crucifixion, the death of Virgin, etc.) intervene in the narrative flow implying cultural continuity, the trials of the people and also a sense of belonging to a universal community.

⁸² From an interview given to the author.

system,⁸³ Loisos made three shorts on location at Lesvos: *Psarades ke Psaremata / Fishermen and Fishing*, *I Zoi sti Mitilini / Life in Mitilini* and *Lesvos*.⁸⁴ Members of the ‘Group of five’ were involved in the project: Fotis Mestheneos as cinematographer, Roviros Manthoulis as editor and Yannis Bacoyannopoulos who wrote, with Dimitris Kechaidis, the voice-over for *Fishermen and Fishing*, spoken by Stavros Tornes.

Following the model of Grierson’s *Drifters* (1929), and also Grierson’s notion of “the creative treatment of actuality”,⁸⁵ Loisos was planning a short about the work and life of the Greek fishermen. Lesvos was recommended by the oceanographer Kostantinos Ananiadis as the place where the majority of traditional fishing practices still survived. However, the rich natural and cultural life of the island became the subject of two more shorts: *Lesvos* deals with the natural landscape, industrial infrastructure and history of the island, while *Life in Mitilini* examines folk festivities and different kinds of local occupations (pottery, saddle-making, cart-making, collecting olives, working in textile factories, etc.).

The most accomplished among Loisos’ shorts is *Fishermen and Fishing*, which depicts its subject with a clearly educational intent. The film’s simple narrative portrays with careful accuracy the traditional fishing techniques, occasionally recreating forbidden practices, such as using dynamites. *Fishermen and Fishing* is the first Greek documentary that takes as its protagonists ordinary people, who are not valorized as bearers of an ancient

⁸³ According to an interview given by Loisos to the author, ‘Specta’ was established by a group of friends from Corfu (including Leontas Avdis, Yannis Kalatzis, Mimis Katsimis and others) who, as students, published a local periodical entitled *To Proto Skali* [*The First Step*]. They founded *Specta* in Athens, intending to make educational films that would explore cultural subjects. They were interested not only in the domestic market, but also – if not primarily – taking Greek subject matter abroad.

⁸⁴ According *To Vima* (25/10/1960) ‘Specta’ was about to prepare two more documentaries, which however were never made: *Skiathos, the Island of Papadiamantis* (with a commentary written by I. M. Panagiotopoulos) and *Folk Architecture of Aegean*. The idea was to make, together with Dimitris Pikionis, a documentary about the refugee houses in Nea Ionia which according to Pikionis bear a great deal of folk architectural patterns. (From Loisos’ interview)

⁸⁵ From an interview given by Loisos to the author.

national culture (as in *Macedonian Wedding*), but as working-class characters earning a living. The distancing and occasionally poetic gaze of the film expresses its empathy for the fishermen of Molyvos, paying particular attention to the hardships of their work, their daily struggle with nature and their strong sense of community, implying also their poverty and absolute reliance on fishing for their survival. The scenes depicting the fishing techniques are interrupted by details of everyday life and the melancholy time spent in traditional cafes while waiting for the sea to grow calm. Kostis Skalioras noted in his account of the film when it was screened in the 'First International Festival of Ethnographic and Sociological Films' in Athens (September 1961):

[The film] does not give way to easy exaltation of the natural charm of the island, but narrates with modesty, which does not exclude pictorial beauty, the hard life of the fishermen. Loiosios does not remain on the surface. In the images he has chosen there is also a third dimension: the truth. The lengthy rounds of particularly enthusiastic applause that followed the film's screening have no other meaning. The viewers recognized their land and their people. (*To Vima* 5/9/1961)

Thiraikos Orthros / Morning Service in Thira (1967, Kostas Sfikas / Stavros Tornes) was made on the island of Santorini, one of the most highly celebrated Greek tourist destinations, just before the junta came to power and not during the junta as it is widely believed.⁸⁶ It was co-directed by Sfikas and Tornes, while Giorgos Panousopoulos and Panos Papakyriakopoulos worked on camera and editing respectively.⁸⁷ In terms of its

⁸⁶ According to Sfikas, from an interview given to the author.

⁸⁷ According to information given by Sfikas, Tornes was impressed by the location where he had worked as an assistant director in a foreign production and he suggested to Sfikas making two films, one by each director. Tornes was also the producer, as he had invested money from an inheritance in the film. He also made an agreement with Samiotis who provided the film stock and film development. However, the second film was never made since they run over budget and the dictatorship came to power. Tornes was forced into

aesthetics and method, this documentary is a radical departure from both Kanellopoulos' style and from that of the majority of Greek documentaries of the time, since it rejects reconstruction in favour of a cinema direct approach.

The film provides a rather impressionistic description of the island's everyday realities. Deconstruction of conventional narrative is a matter of prime concern. The highly elaborate and complex editing organize loosely the visual and audio material: the local community enacting an ecclesiastic ritual involving a religious procession, shots from car windows as they travel along the barren island's dirt roads, the arrival of a ship bringing foreign tourists, the arduous ascent of the villagers leading foreigners, all form leitmotifs within the non-linear narrative structure. These images alternate with glimpses into daily activities, hard work and depressing poverty.

Articulating a discourse of authenticity, Sfikas and Tornes do not aestheticize the landscape or make it picturesque, rather they emphasize its materiality and the neglect of the island: derelict houses, abandoned buildings with locked doors, crumbling walls and lonely tiny figures of old men and women against the awe-inspiring volcanic landscape construct an image of desolation. Moreover, the arduous work and exploitation of the working-class people are central to the film's concerns. The camera focuses on industrial, agricultural and mining work highlighting the workers' bodily effort and everyday toil against a dry and dusty environment. Poverty is manifest in the villagers' ragged clothes, while starvation is reflected in their emaciated bodies and the eyes of the children who, through windows, watch the adults eating. The scene depicting the peasants selling *fava* bean to an emotionless wholesaler again reveals the impoverishment and subjugation of the island's inhabitants. Furthermore religion is presented not as an element of the nation's

self-exile in Italy because he was involved in left-wing unionist activities. So the directors co-signed the film since both of them had been involved in its making. (Also Theos contributed to the pre-production process).

cultural continuity, but rather as a tool for controlling the poor, with the richness of the local church in a sharp contrast to the general poverty.

In contrast to other shorts depicting rural Greece which focus on communities untouched by modernity, *Morning Service in Thira* shows an island undergoing transformation. Modernism has already reached Santorini in the form of industrial activity and primarily of tourism which gradually replaces the agricultural economy and brings with it banks, money and incomprehensible foreign languages. The directors juxtapose the poor locals against the prosperous and eccentric foreigners arriving en masse. The repeated image of the peasants on foot escorting the tourists who ride the mules up a steep slope emphasizes the subjugation of the villagers – the film ends with a freeze frame of a peasant running uphill, implying the endless suffering of the poor – making the tourists who visit this land of neglect and poverty seem alien and cruel. *Morning Service in Thira* demystifies the Greek tourism spots, showing them not as sensual lands of love, celebration and sunshine, but as a wasteland. The film reveals the dark side of Greek reality, employing a distancing and de-dramatized gaze and completely rejecting any melodramatic element.

The film's aesthetic is also shaped by the restless movement of the hand-held camera and the plurality of viewpoints. It is not clear whose gaze is visualized since the camera sometimes observes from a distance and at other times moves up close to the villagers' dry faces – establishing connections between them and the barren landscape of the island – employs the optical point of view of a peasant or a mule going up the slope, mingles with the crowd or moves suddenly without obvious reason. In addition, the film's soundtrack (a work that exclusively belongs to Sfikas), which was post-recorded during the first months of the dictatorship, is also crucial to the overall aesthetic, enhancing the sense of realism and de-dramatization. Sfikas, a non-professional violinist, had a great interest in

formal work on sound. Avoiding using voice over, he created a complex soundtrack score from psalms (chanting by the father of Pantelis Voulgaris), natural background noises (wind, sea waves, cicadas), fragments of speech (e.g. the voice of a shepherd narrating stories from the 1912-13 war)⁸⁸ and the sharp sound of horseshoes on the paving stones. This apparently realist but at the same time highly stylized sound assaults with its materiality the spectator forcing him to listen, foregrounds the background environment and creates expressive tensions with the image.

Other 'young' directors turned for inspiration to their birthplaces in rural Greece to explore a nostalgic 'Greekness' or working-class subject matter.⁸⁹ *Gi Aftes tis Iroides – I Ellinida Agrotissa / For These Heroines – The Greek Countrywoman* (1961, Nikos Tzimas / Grigoris Siskas)⁹⁰ was a docudrama shot on location in the village *Mega Dentro* (the birthplace of Tzimas) in *Epiros*, which is close to *Zaloggo* and *Souli*, areas that are tightly bound up with national pride and resistance during the War of Independence. The film was made when Tzimas (who was officially committed to EDA but he was not a member of the 'EDA element') studied in Ioannidis School, and iterates the leftist discourse about the Greek 'people'. The popular actresses Malena Anousaki (whose background was in melodrama) and Afroditi Grigoriadou were cast in the leading roles along with the director's mother, grandmother and other villagers. The film aimed to depict the everyday toil of the countrywomen, who despite their life of hard work (working in lime-kilns and carrying wood) and daily sacrifice for the well-being of their families, managed nevertheless to maintain their spirit and optimism. A young Athenian teacher takes her

⁸⁸ From an interview of Sfikas given to the writer.

⁸⁹ For instance *To Vyzantino Geraki / Byzantine Falcon* (1961, Giorgos Zervoulakos) set in the Peloponnesean village named *Geraki*, *Oi Gounarades tis Kastorias ke I Techni tous / The Ferriers of Kastoria* (doc. 1962, Vasilis Rafaelidis) and *Vyzantino Mnimosino / Byzantine Requiem* (doc. 1962, Rafaelidis).

⁹⁰ Since the film no longer exists, the description of the story is based entirely on the interviews given by the director to the author.

Greek-American cousins to the Acropolis and recounts her experiences in a remote mountain village where she discovered another Greece, bearer of a rich local culture, strong moral values and impressive spiritual vitality. When one of her pupils, a seven-year old girl, does not come to the school, the teacher goes to look for the girl and finds her washing dishes with ashes and looking after the baby. The girl had stayed at home so that her mother could go to work. Meanwhile, the baby falls sick. While the girl goes to find the mother, the teacher realizes why these women had sacrificed themselves at Zaloggo. The film, which was initially banned from the festival, was finally released in a cut version, reduced from 35 to 18 minutes.

Elies / Olive Trees (1964, Dimitris Kollatos), a fiction short based on a short story by Kollatos, is an anomaly amongst the shorts of the period, as it demystifies the manners and values of the rural society and challenges the narcissistic national stereotypes encountered in both the mainstream films and art-house shorts which, as we have seen, largely expressed nostalgia for rural life and respect for the traditional community. The film deals with 'the marriage of the sister', a subject which, in several variations such as the marriage of the daughter, had been widely discussed in Greek popular films. This social obligation of the male members of the traditional Greek family was often the theme of comedies, which focused on the comic difficulties faced by the brothers as they tried to arrange the marriage of their sisters in order free themselves to make their own family. In addition, the patriarchal structure of Greek society and the lack of self-determination of the woman, who had to obey her father or brother and marry the man who they had chosen for her, the link between family and financial relationships, the out-moded institution of dowry and the wedding as a means of elevating an individual's status, all were also thematic motifs often employed by dramas and melodramas. However, what makes this film radically different from other dealings with the same issues is the provocative and raw

realism of the approach as well as the deconstruction of the usual social and narrative stereotypes and the institutions themselves. In the mainstream films the social institution of family is never entirely undermined, since the films more often conclude with a happy marriage and the creation of a new family based on love rather than financial interest.

The story is set in a village on Crete, a region that bears particularly strong connotations of national honour, recalling heroic battles against the enemies of the nation. The film opens with a dinner where two brothers and the brutal Giorgis, the rich suitor, eat and drink in a repulsive manner. The sister, who is neither beautiful nor very young, is dressed in black with a black scarf covering her head, and stands in silence, anxiously observing the men and patiently waiting to take orders. The brothers had previously tried to marry her to another villager, but the wedding was canceled as they were unwilling to give a field of olive trees as a dowry. However the sister had to get married while the olive trees still belonged to the family. Thus, according to the brothers' plan, when Giorgis becomes drunk, he is carried to a room and the sister is forced to join him in order to have sex. In the next morning, according to tradition, he will be bound to marry her or die. The woman reluctantly obeys and enters the room, but Giorgis is too drunk and falls asleep.

What is particularly interesting about this film is that the entire narrative is from the point of view of the repressed woman. Her repressed condition is emphasized by her clothing and especially by her repressed voice. The spectator follows the voice over that represents the internal speech of the heroine, but, although she explains her own thoughts and feelings, she uses the third person as if describing a separate woman. In addition, in the entire film she articulates openly only a few words. Her silent condition and lack of voice – an indication of lack of authority and repressed desires – is further emphasized when she is forbidden from speaking by her brother while ordering her to enter the room: “Tsimoudia” [“Keep silent”]. The woman's sufferings are compounded: on the one hand, she is treated

in a violent and humiliating way and is forced to act against her will, and on the other, the social conventions and the wishes of her brothers make her feel guilty. “If she didn’t exist, she, the ill-fated, the old maid, Nicolis [(the brother)] would have already got married”, the inner voice says.

In the room, with her brother waiting outside the door, and under the gaze of Byzantine icons and a picture of a brave ancestor, the woman is treated once more in a brutal and humiliating manner, this time by Giorgis, who wipes his nose with his hands, vomits, and asks her to help undress him. When the woman bends to help him take off his boots, he knocks her onto her back and orders her to undress. Here Kollatos provides a provocative reference to women’s repressed sexual desires: “Seeing the donkeys copulate she has the sudden wish to go out and find a man” the inner voice of the heroine declares. There is ambiguity about the real desires of the woman: she is repulsed by the behavior of the man while also wanting to have sex with him. “He would only have sex with her when he was drunk” she thinks bitterly. Repulsion, desire and obligation are intertwined and when the man falls asleep, she cries silently and ambivalently. With simple form and narrative, realistic setting, dark photography, prolonged scenes in which apparently nothing happens, playing with gazes, gestures, short dialogue and diegetic silence, the film structures a claustrophobic world as it is experienced by the traumatized female.

Olive Trees incensed the critics and authorities, leading to the intervention of the Public Prosecutor in the festival, the banning of the film, as well as the refusal of the head of the jury and academic Ilias Venezis to award prizes to the winners and make a speech at the end of the festival.⁹¹ What was considered particularly offensive was the overt ‘Greekness’ and ‘popular authenticity’ as well as the raw ‘realism’ of the short. The choice of Crete, the use of traditional costumes, the olive trees, the wine at the dinner, the figure

⁹¹ *Ta Nea* (29/9/64).

of the woman reminiscent of ancient tragedy, the byzantine icons and the picture of the warrior on the room's wall, even the noise of cicadas in the soundtrack, can all be seen as ingredients of a self-described Greek national identity. Moreover the theme of the woman as an object of financial exchange and sexual exploitation within the context of the domestic sphere was taboo, as traditional family was regarded as a prime source of moral order and the brothers as the guards of their sister's virginity. The emphasis also on the disgusting and violent behavior of the male characters – a criticism of the stereotype of traditional Greek masculinity (*Palikari*) – was considered by many critics to be unacceptable in art. The film came into conflict with the puritanism of both conservative and leftist film critics, such as Stamatiou and Moschovakis,⁹² who reacted strongly. They asserted that it was necessary to analyze the social framework that supported such phenomena, while also doubting that such things occurred amongst the Greek 'people'. By contrast, 'new' critics such as Zannas and Marketaki recognized the innovation, artistry and the audacity of Kollatos' work.⁹³

b) Athens: modernity and the urban landscape

While the countryside, with its traditional ways of life and untouched natural landscapes, emerged as the first major subject matter of the short films of the 1960s, the city of Athens – the focal point for Greek modernity – and the changing urban landscape formed the other major thematic concern. For the 'young' filmmakers, Athens did not simply provide the backdrop against which individual stories were told (which was rather the canon in the mainstream), but it became either the central protagonist – since it was the city itself which was filmed and discussed – or of equal importance to the characters. After

⁹² See *Avgi* (23, 30/9/64) and *Ta Nea* (25/9/64).

⁹³ See *To Vima* (24/9/64) and *Dimokratiki Allagi* (23/9/64).

all, the majority of the ‘young’ directors lived, studied and worked in Athens, which offered them the most accessible material for documenting and investigating. The camera, which due to financial constraints was forced to be carried outdoors, recorded this lived relationship with the cityscape, creating a group of films that can well be seen as wanderings around the city and characterized as a ‘cinema of the streets’ that challenges the dominant studio-based aesthetics of the popular film.⁹⁴

It was the slum areas of Athens that were first documented in 1960s shorts, providing the subject for two independent projects, *Savatovrado / Saturday Night* (1961, Panos Papakyriakopoulos) and *Ta Matoklada sou Lampoun / Your Eye-lashes Shine* (1961, Kostas Ferris). Both films were based on pre-existing popular songs and were made in the same year as the feature *Synikia to Oniro / A Neighborhood Called Dream* (1961, Alekos Alexandrakis) that also focused on a slum neighborhood. These shorts can be seen as a response to the innovations taking place in popular music as well as to the critical call for a national cinema that would follow the pattern being set by the popular song, namely a fusion of ‘high’ and ‘popular’ art. The growing interest of the left-wing intellectuals in working-class subjects and the belief in the link between the ‘authentically national’, the ‘authentically popular’ and also the ‘real’⁹⁵ can also be seen as crucial motivating factors.

From the first day [...] I believed in the work of Theodorakis [...] and more precisely that this work corresponded to the imperative demand of our times, namely the use of the popular (*laiko*) element in Art in such a

⁹⁴ Wandering around the city’s streets and leisure spots was an important part of the lives of the ‘young’ directors, as revealed in the following words: “Like the other ‘young’ filmmakers, we didn’t stay at home – we didn’t even have room at home because we lived in small houses with our families – which means that we were in the streets, traditional cafés, bookshops and cinemas” (Voulgaris, from an interview given to the writer). “1965 was a period during which, if we were 15 hours in the streets – the rest we slept and stayed at home – from among them 5 hours we edited the film [The Cases of NO], 5 hours we joined demonstrations and 5 hours we were at traditional cafés with our girlfriends and friends” (Lakis Papastathis, from an interview given to the writer)

⁹⁵ For the discussions about these issues, see Chapter 1, pp.41-62.

way that it would no longer be non-Greek and unreal, only of tourist and exotic interest. (Papakyriakopoulos 1961: 23)

*Saturday Night*⁹⁶ was based on the eponymous song by Theodorakis and Tasos Leivaditis and was shot on location in two of the poorest neighbourhoods of Athens, *Dourgouti* and *Perama*, using local residents and other non-professional actors. The film's narrative centers on the love story of a young working-class couple, "a core social unit" that illustrates, according to Papakyriakopoulos, the social discrimination suffered by the young, also representing "the feelings of the group" (Papakyriakopoulos 1962:137). In line with the dominant model, the film makes extensive use of documentary modes to celebrate the freedom that proletarians enjoy on a Saturday night when free from work participate in leisure activities. The Saturday night is seen as "a piece of time that belongs to the people, but is unfortunately too brief" (Papakyriakopoulos 1961: 23).

It is a hot summer afternoon and the neighborhood looks lifeless, but when the siren of the local factory announces the end of the last shift, everything springs into life. As the young worker returns home, the camera explores every corner of the neighbourhood: wretched streets, humble hovels, small yards full of pots of basil, open spaces where children play football, men playing backgammon on the pavements, old women sitting on their front steps. "At the corner of a street, close to his house, [the worker] stares at the young girl who waters her flowers. Their gazes cross. He looks at her with admiration; she looks at him with shyness and fondness" (Papakyriakopoulos 1961: 22). The camera also enters the poor houses, revealing the poverty and struggles of working-class domesticity. Later the couple spends the night at a bouzouki tavern along with the whole community,

⁹⁶ Since the film is inaccessible, its discussion is based exclusively on interviews and detailed texts of the period. For further information see: 'To Savvatovrado' in *Dromi tis Irinis* (November 1961, pp. 22-24), 'Mia Mikri Tenia me Megales Peripeties' in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1961, no. 83, pp. 498-500) and 'Pos Doulepsa to Savvatovrado' in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1962, no. 85, pp.136-137).

where both the authenticity of popular culture and collectivity are celebrated. The music, dancing and plate-smashing become frenetic, functioning as a means of release after the day's hard work, as well as a counter-cultural form of resistance to poverty and capitalist exploitation. The frenetic celebration suddenly cuts to silent shots of broken plates being swept away and to the final melancholy long shot of the young couple as they emerge onto the street, "counting every step and moving away [...] becoming little spots, as if they had been swallowed up [...] by the depth of the street" (Papakyriakopoulos 1961:23).

The film articulates 'Greekness' through images of the 'people's' daily lives and leisure activities. Intertwined with 'popular authenticity', 'Greekness' is etched on the scenery, which is beautiful despite the poverty (e.g. pots of basil). It is manifest in the vitality and dignity of the proletarians, the purity of their manners and feelings, their collectivity and optimistic spirit. The film valorizes and recycles a series of stereotypical images, including working-class masculinity and femininity, and traditional values echoing nostalgia for village culture which is still preserved in the slums. These stereotypes were largely used by popular cinema and song, crossing the lines between 'high art' and commercial works. Despite the obvious misery, the slum area is seen as a place of hope, while the lack of opportunities for the poor and their exploitation is implicitly criticized in the sudden interruption of the Dionysian celebration in the tavern and the overwhelming melancholia of the final shot.⁹⁷

Similarly, Kostas Ferris planned to make a short based on the *Epitaph* by Theodorakis. However, due to the reluctance of the composer, Ferris turned for inspiration to two older *rebetiko* songs, *To Minore tis Avgis* (Peristeris) and *Ta Matoklada sou*

⁹⁷ The ban of *Savvatovrado* finally lifted in March 1963.

Lampoun (Vamvakaris).⁹⁸ It was a time when a whole generation of young intellectuals was becoming deeply interested in *rebetiko* music. Ferris and other ‘young’ filmmakers (e.g. Liaropoulos and Voulgaris) by making extensive use of *rebetiko* songs in the soundtracks for their shorts were actively taking part in the current public debates about *rebetiko*, defending the ‘Greekness’ and ‘popular authenticity’ of this kind of music.

Ta Matoklada sou Lampoun / Your Eye-lashes Shine (1961, Kostas Ferris) is shot in *Dourgouti* and its narrative is inspired by the lyrics of the just mentioned *rebetika* which dominate the soundtrack. The film uses a circular and opaque, psychologically motivated narrative: a beautiful young woman wakes up and recollects her flirtation with a young man outside her house and later, realizing that nobody is waiting for her there, tears come to her eyes. The narrative circle is defined not as much by the story as by the repetition of actions and shots at the beginning and end of the film. Ferris experiments with form: the editing is based on the rhythm of the music and juxtaposes close-ups of the woman’s blinking eyes and face inside her house with long shots depicting the life of the neighborhood outdoors. By using camera movement or movement within the frame, Ferris establishes a variety of contradictions between shots, and with extensive use of lateral tracking shots reveals the influence of Kanellopoulos.⁹⁹

The purpose of the film was not so much to document the poverty and misery of the slum area as to present it as a site of ‘Greekness’ and also of the anarchic spirit inherent to *rebetiko* music. All these are exemplified by the sensuality of the woman and her shining eyes, the pot of basil with which she is repeatedly associated, the mutual affection of the couple, the *mangikos* dance performed by the young man and his friends, the bold female behaviour (she takes part in the characteristically male dance and also kisses the

⁹⁸ From an interview of Ferris given to the writer. See also Frangoulis 2004: 83-87. Shortly later, Ferris and Theodorakis planned making a feature film based on the *Epitaph*, but the film was never accomplished.

⁹⁹ In an interview given to the author, Ferris recognises his debt to Kanellopoulos’ work. See also Frangoulis 2004: 83-87.

man publicly), the innocence and vitality of the children, etc. Beauty, optimism and breaking the rules are placed at the heart of the poor neighbourhood where love can flourish, the children run happily, the beautiful girls gaze from the windows and the birds fly. Folk culture is also present in the background of the opening credits, which suggests a handmade rug with folk motifs that are echoed by the motifs of the rug on which the girl awakes in the opening shot.¹⁰⁰

To Koritsaki ke to Radiofono / The Girl and the Radio (1963, Nikos Tzimas)¹⁰¹ also explores the limited opportunities and the poverty of the slums. Tzimas took inspiration from a Bolshoi performance which had deeply impressed him¹⁰² and made him wonder about what would happen to a poor Greek girl if she had the talent of the ballet's protagonist. The film was shot on location in *Peristeri*, another poor Athenian neighborhood, with non-professional actors, a real construction worker (the father), a real char-woman (the mother) and a twelve-year-old girl who lived with her parents in a hut and sold ice. The film relates the passion and talent of the girl through dance, her desire to join a dance school and buy a radio so she can dance to music. All these are shown through her dreams, from which she awakes disappointed. The music from *Limelight* (1952, Charlie Chaplin), which the girl hears over a radio from a neighbouring house, offers some hope, but when the music stops, the girl's devastation is shown in freeze frame.

The short *Egkenia / Baptism of Fire* (1962, Kostas Sfikas), combining fiction and documentary, traces a trajectory from the slums to the crowded and noisy center of Athens. Since the film no longer exists, we can only follow the words of Sfikas and the reviews of critics:

¹⁰⁰ On the film see also Frangoulis 2004: 83-87.

¹⁰¹ Since the film no longer exists, the description of the story is based entirely on the interviews given by the director to the author.

¹⁰² Bolshoi performed in Greece with smashing success for a first time in the early 1960s when a change in Soviet-Greek diplomatic relationships took place, made particularly evident in cultural exchanges.

The camera enters a poor house, one of those that at that time had neither electricity nor running water, in Agios Dimitrios, which was like a rubbish tip. [...] The camera enters the only room of this house and there is a woman, a mother waking a boy. Outside the door there is a lottery-ticket seller who collects the boy. The next shots show both of them in the streets of Athens where they wander around supposedly selling lottery-tickets, but the child plays. [...] At the end the boy has to answer for his takings. In front of his mother he takes the coins from his pocket and puts them on the table. (Sfikas)¹⁰³

A wonderful subject: a boy beginning to earn a living, his confrontation with the hardness of life and his first success [...]. The first part is marvelous with the juxtaposition of the small thin creature and the massive buildings and the movement of the indifferent crowd. The rapid and anarchic editing creates an over-powering result. However, in the second part the director falsifies things. It is not the child who adjusts to life, but life to child. A generous lady caresses the boy, buys lotteries and suddenly the indifferent crowd is transformed into a kind crowd that buys the tickets. [...] In its neorealist way, however, *Baptism of Fire* is undoubtedly an important work (Moschovakis).¹⁰⁴

Athina X Ψ Ξ / Athens X Y J (1962, Dimitris Kollatos), an entertaining semi-documentary with a simple fictional narrative, focuses exclusively on the city centre. A young French tourist is sight-seeing when her glasses are broken, forcing her to explore Athens from another point of view. Kollatos strives to show Athens from the inside, removing his heroine's symbolical glasses, but retaining the enthusiasm and clarity of her first gaze. Absorbed by the crowd, the heroine moves through the chaotic Athenian

¹⁰³ From an interview given to the author.

¹⁰⁴ 'The Third Week of Greek Cinema' in *Epitheorisi Technis* (1962, no. 94-95, p. 500).

cityscape with a sense of freedom, collecting fragments of vivid impressions like the scattered letters of the Greek alphabet in the film's title which echo the disorder of the city.

The film, through a satirical point of view, focuses on the anarchy of the crowded noisy streets and the chaotic traffic, the anarchic way that Greeks drive (a man stops his car in the middle of the street, causing chaos), the queues at the bus stops and the packed buses, the street lights, the busy traffic policeman, the people walking quickly along. The camera also emphasizes the equally anarchic rebuilding of the city by workers with pneumatic-drills and bulldozes and the startling juxtaposition of huge newly-built apartment-blocks against old neo-classical buildings. Athens is presented as an amalgam of modernity and tradition with glamorous hotels, modern cars and shop windows coexisting with street-sellers, horses-drawn carts, pushcarts and traditional food (*gyros*). Glimpses are offered also into the cultural life of Athens with the camera focusing on pictures from staged ancient tragedies, while on the soundtrack someone lists the titles of the films showing in the cinemas.

Typical Greek manners and attitudes are also satirized: a man makes a phone call from a kiosk and doesn't pay the bill, a shoe-shiner and his client discuss about the entry of Greece into the E.U., a worker flirts with the French tourist, a man feels proud of his identity ["Do you know who I am? Pa-pa-do-pou-los" (the most common Greek name) suggesting the egoism of even the most insignificant Greek],¹⁰⁵ the Greeks' reluctance to accept defeat even in a game (the film opens with a close-up of a backgammon game and concludes with the backgammon board being slammed shut by an angry player), gossip, a mother hits her daughter, a couple quarrel publicly about the man's infidelity, men stare at women, people give *moutzes* (a rude gesture), etc.

¹⁰⁵ This phrase caused the banning of the film during the dictatorship, since the name of the dictator was Papadopoulos. (Interview given to the author by Kollatos).

All this happens under the majestic Acropolis and the frozen gaze of the statures of ancient gods, philosophers and the country's leaders. The ignorance of the Athenians who do not know even where this important national symbol is, despite living in such proximity to it, and their alienation from their ancient past are underlined: "Where is the Parthenon?" a tourist asks. Hands point with confidence or uncertainty in different directions. The Acropolis and the church of 'Kapnikarea' echo the ancient and Byzantine roots of the new Greek civilization, while the Greek tourist guide with its monotonous voice relates in French information about the glory of the monuments, asks for tips or notes the slippery path.

Unlike the shorts with their dominant melancholy or grief, the film's narration is humorous, both commenting on and celebrating the way the urban space is organized and the people inhabit it, the anarchy, freedoms, contradictions and liveliness of Athens. The centrality of tourism in the film offers the opportunity to juxtapose the foreigner against Greek domestic culture. The emphasis on the way that heroine's life and even leisure time are organized, and the sense of freedom found in the streets of Athens, offer a celebratory picture of modern 'Greekness' as opposed to 'Europeaness'. The poem *Alexandreia* by Kavafy, which is included in the soundtrack, further emphasizes the need for facing the loss of the glorious national past with dignity and the need to re-examine modern Greek identity in positive terms. Humour is also manifest in the form of the film, the quick editing, practices drawn from silent cinema (acceleration, repetitions) and freeze frames. The soundtrack comprises scraps of everyday city sounds, music and fragments of speech to emphasize the sense of chaos and anarchy. The entire form of the film highlights the discontinuity, rapidity, confusion, and the fragmentation of experience inherent in citylife itself, occasionally recalling the playful style of René Clair's films or *Zazi at Metro*.

I Roda / The Wheel (1964, Theodoros Adamopoulos),¹⁰⁶ like *Athens X Y J*, employs a fictional trick to motivate narrative and provide critical insights into the city of Athens. It follows the trajectory of a car-wheel, a symbol of modernity, rolling around independently before it returns to its original position. The wheel rolls around the city offering views of the Acropolis and other ancient sites and landmarks, showing the traffic chaos, the movement of the crowd, the rebuilding and rapid transformation of Athens, and also the tourists, the crowded city beaches, abandoned cars, the Festival of Athens and the slums with their poverty and misery. There are also staged comic scenes on the flat roofs. Occasionally the narrative flow is interrupted by advertising posters and the titles of Greek popular *melo* and foreign films or handwritten intertitles providing brief commentary to the image. The camera's tour of the city is accompanied by an ironic voice-over, which, by quoting statistics, raises questions about the phenomena of the modern city: alienation, anxiety, boredom, failed human relationships, pollution, and the alienation of Greeks from their past ("1 out of 2 has never visited the Acropolis"). The film does not celebrate Athens but presents it as a suffocating and inhospitable place, with Athenians as cogs in a huge machine. In addition, politics is present in the opening credits of the film: between the hand-written names of the film's contributors are words and phrases such as "democracy", "violence", "electoral fraud", "demonstration", "work", "rise of salary", "strike", "anarchy", and "Z" (alluding to Lambrakis), clearly reflecting the socio-political upheaval of the time and the calls of the mass movement, demonstrating also the political commitment of the 'young' filmmakers. Thus from the very beginning, the *Wheel* places itself in the context of the wider democratic movement and political debates.

¹⁰⁶ The present-day manager of the 'Greek Film Archive'.

In contrast to other shorts that examine either the slums or the centre of Athens as separate areas, Kostas Sfikas brings proletarians and their living conditions into the chaotic centre of the city and in direct contact with modernity (note also *Baptism of Fire*). *Anamoni / Waiting* (1963, Sfikas)¹⁰⁷ is a documentary set around Kotzia square, where poor building workers and painter-decorators wait to be hired for a day's work. An old painter-decorator, who is apparently the protagonist of the film, waits all day long but does not get a job and finally falls asleep. However, the main concern of the film is the chaotic movement of people and cars around the square and not just the personal story of the old man who is mostly filmed from a distance as a bowed motionless figure that waits or sleeps.¹⁰⁸

Realism, a distancing gaze and complete de-dramatization are the prime characteristics of this observational documentary, which often recalls Free Cinema works. Distance is not only a visual device but also a narrational one, achieved by the disorientation of narrative focus. The film follows the day from the early morning to the time when the first lights of the city turn on. With the hand-held camera and lengthy tracking shots filmed from vehicles, careless framing and anarchic editing, the film circles the square documenting the City Hall, the open air vegetable market of Athens, huge buildings under construction, dirty streets, buses, cars and motorbikes in constant movement, and a noisy crowd of by-passers, workers and street sellers. Connections are made between employers and workers, people quarrel and a street performer jumps over a row of chairs as people gather around him. All these construct an image of poverty, misery and disorder. As night falls the square empties, but the old worker still waits. A short text

¹⁰⁷ Assistant director: Tornes. Editing: Stavrakas.

¹⁰⁸ According to Sfikas, in an interview given to the writer, when the worker realized that he was being filmed became angry. That's why they had to be careful in filming him. Consequently, this distance was not a pure aesthetic choice but it was also imposed by the circumstances.

on the screen informs the viewer that the man is 62 years old. He works just twice a week as his clients are only those who come late. His colleagues avoid him because they know that they will be in his own position tomorrow. The text and the concluding pessimistic shot of the old man waiting underline the grim present and the gloomy future.

One of the most interesting characteristics of this film is the use of the aural material. There is no voice-over but a soundtrack comprising natural and artificial sounds, the source of which is not always recognizable in the frame. Thus, there are cacophonous sounds of vehicles, people shouting or speaking, pneumatic drills (emphasizing the extensive construction taking place across Athens), the whistles of traffic policemen, the calls of the street-sellers, while a beggar thanking someone is accompanied by the music of his harmonica, forming a powerful aural leitmotif. All these are combined with other everyday noises to create a sense of realism and chaos, and adding to the sense of alienation. This emphasis on and realist approach to sound material (similar to that of *Morning Service in Thira*), shifts the focus onto the surrounding environment and foregrounds the off screen space.

The two fiction shorts made by Pantelis Voulgaris, *O Kleftis / The Thief* (1965) and *O Tzimmis o Tigris / Jimmy the Tiger* (1966), are clearly motivated by the major cinematic challenges of the time: ‘contemporary reality’, ‘popular authenticity’, ‘art’ and ‘Greekness’. Voulgaris responds to the call for Greek realist ‘popular’ works of art by drawing on the Italian neorealist tradition, depicting everyday characters and balancing entertainment with artistic merit. The protagonist of *The Thief*¹⁰⁹ is a policeman (Alexis Damianos) who has just received his salary to pay the medical bills of his ill child and other pressing family needs. Getting on a bus, he notices a young pick-pocket (Voulgaris) at work. After chasing and capturing him in the streets of Athens, the policeman offers the

¹⁰⁹ Cinematographer: Panousopoulos, editor: Kavoukidis,

pick-pocket a coffee and listens to his problems. Sympathizing with the young man's tale, he releases him, only to find that he has stolen his wallet.

Both main characters, the policeman and the pick pocket, are ordinary men of the lower classes, although the former is a lower middle-class civil servant and the latter a lumpen proletarian. Voulgaris underlines the ordinariness of the policeman by depicting him not as a bearer of power and a mechanism of state oppression, but as a bread-winner and father, depended on the state bureaucracy and the conventions and needs of everyday life. He faces financial problems, holds a second job, queues at the IKA,¹¹⁰ uses the packed public transportation – all details that function as criticism of the way the Greek state and quotidian life is organized. Also from the opening sequence, Voulgaris highlights the policeman's humanity by showing his sympathy for the arrested people. Moreover the police station is presented as an ordinary working place: its employees wear civilian clothes, are cheerful and familiar to the audience. They discuss football or popular cinema and deal with minor business like payments of salaries, recruitments, arrests for tax debts, and other everyday trivialities. Although the 'nationalistic' character of the police is indicated (the film opens with the pictures on the wall of those who died 'for the motherland'), Voulgaris' portrayal of the policeman is distinct from both the stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream cinema of the time and (despite Voulgaris being a leftist) the left-wing view of what a policeman represents. The director explains his portrayal of the policeman:

When my father was young, he worked as a policeman. This was a problem that haunted my youth. Perhaps through the behavior of the policeman in the film I tried to refer to my own problem.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Insurance Fund Organisation.

¹¹¹ From an interview given to the writer. See *Paraskinio / Backstage, Oneira 'mikrou mikous' / Dreaming in Shorts* (2007, Stambouloupoulos / Chalkou).

Thus the film moves beyond stereotypes and good versus evil polarizations and from the opening, the viewer is encouraged to sympathize with the policeman. Later however and contrary to the light-hearted atmosphere of the film, we see that there is a constant police-presence in the public space: the non-uniform policeman is observing people. At the street café where the pick-pocket narrates his story, the policeman fulfils his professional role in a public space and the café becomes a place of informal interrogation. At this moment, the viewer's sympathies shift to the young man.

The young man's tale – his leftist imprisoned father (the father's leftist standing is implied by his habit of writing poems for his children, in keeping with the romanticized image of the political prisoner), unemployment, poverty, starvation, his failed dreams of becoming an actor, migration as the only outlet – provides insights into the social problems of contemporary Greece. The sensitive policeman is touched by the thief's story and releases him. However, the image of the young man as a social victim is immediately overturned. The real victim turns out to be the policeman, who loses his money which he needs so much. Who is the victim and who the victimizer? Where does the truth lie? Certainties about reality become as fragmented as the subjects themselves. The ambiguous 'cretin' that the policeman utters at the end of the film, is addressed both to himself and the thief.

Jimmy the Tiger is based on the popular real figure of the strongman Jimmy who performed in Monastiraki square in Athens. A young female German tourist asks to photograph Jimmy (Spyros Kalogirou) against the Acropolis. Their long wanderings around the city culminate in sleeping together in a hotel, for which they get arrested and Jimmy is publicly chastised by his wife and his brother-in-law.

Voulgaris emphasizes the sensitivity of his leading character – manifest in the tenderness with which he caresses his child – and also his low social status, the poverty of his home, the lack of warmth between husband and wife. Jimmy's occupation also belongs to a pre-modern 'popular' tradition of entertainment. Although he still gathers a crowd, they do not admire as much as mock him. Only the young tourist is really thrilled by his show, seeing it as part of the 'local attractions'. This is therefore yet another short which brings a foreigner into confrontation with the contemporary Greek, but without showing tourism as an external threat, a form of exploitation and cultural invasion (e.g. *Morning Service in Thira*). Voulgaris allows the viewer to share the tourist's viewpoint through the photographic lens of the young woman: Jimmy proudly displays his muscles against the Acropolis, reproducing stereotypical images of 'Greekness' that comprise bodily robustness and classical antiquity. The image of the short and unattractive man in a vain pose against the glories of antiquity underlines Jimmy's own lack of a real link to this past and satirizes the tourist's gaze. Despite the obstacles of language, a kind of communication is achieved between Jimmy and the tourist, giving the young woman an exotic adventure and offering Jimmy a temporary sense of accomplishment, freedom, respect and an outlet for his tenderness.

As in *The Thief*, there is a police presence in both public and private spaces. The hotel manager informs a police-officer of the incident of extra-marital fornication – Voulgaris uses a non-uniformed man to suggest the invisible policeman – and adds his suspicion that the tourist has been robbed. Family becomes involved as an institution more strict and censorious than the police, enforcing its values and restoring order through physical violence and public humiliation.

In both films, the camera captures real outdoors locations and the urban landscape is documented in realist terms: the Acropolis, Monastiraki, crowded open-air markets,

isolated industrial suburbs with muddy roads, noisy avenues, shops, automobiles, trams and trains. Public transport is foregrounded with train stations and bus stops marking point of flux, arrival and departure. In *The Thief* a sequence takes place in the queue and the interior of a cramped bus, a microcosm of Greek society, while a night journey across the city by train in *Jimmy the Tiger* underscores the emotional fluidity and the sense of freedom experienced by Jimmy. The camera enters real interiors: a house, a tavern, a barber's shop, a police-office, a cheap hotel, which all enhance the film's sense of authenticity. At times the camera shifts away from the protagonists to offer glimpses into the lives of the anonymous crowd. For long non-narrative periods, the screen is occupied by the cityscape and the anonymous citizens allowing Voulgaris to keep a distance from his characters and de-dramatize the image. Momentarily, anonymous individuals are given their own significance and voice, revealing aspects of Greek everyday reality: people quarreling at the bus queue, a priest chatting with two old women, a couple flirting, the bus conductor giving instructions, a soldier mocking Jimmy, the silent bus driver etc. This importance of the surrounding space and human environment is stressed by the soundtrack of diegetic sound. The two films are filled with sounds of everyday life: a mother calls her child, a radio broadcasts football games, a rebetiko and a mambo song are heard in the tavern, typical conversations between people take place, a train passes, all shifting attention to the off-screen space and creating tensions with the image. The individual is juxtaposed against the city environment and there is a constant shift between fiction and documentary. Moreover events are staged in order to document people's genuine reactions. For example, when Jimmy performs, the audience surrounding him is made up of real people observing Kalogirou performing while the camera documents their real reactions. The overhead long shot at the end of the film shows Jimmy and his brother-in-law fighting in the middle of a busy crossroads, causing real chaos in the streets of Athens, with cars

stopping and real people getting out to help. The real space invades the screen to highlight the presence of a complex socio-cultural and historical framework existing beyond the film's protagonist. The surrounding environment becomes therefore a powerful character in the films. This new freedom in the portrayal of the environment around the characters is unique in Greek cinema of the time.

Voulgaris maintains the link with popular Greek cinema – his narratives are plot-driven (although interrupted by periods without action), he emphasizes the bodies and faces of the actors (extracting from Kalogirou a performance different from his usual public persona in the popular films), focuses on the characters and the everyday dialogue – while simultaneously acknowledging the achievements of international art cinema. He constructs a cinematic universe of rather insignificant people and small acts, where simple and seemingly meaningless gestures, gazes and other rituals of daily routine are elevated to the status of great importance, adding psychological depth to his characters. An all-pervasive humanism and compassion for the film's heroes are also chief characteristics of these two outstanding shorts.

A small number of fiction shorts, mostly at the end of the period under discussion, introduced a new figure that also appears in some commercial and independent art-oriented features of the time: the young, educated, middle-class hero.¹¹² The fabric of the narrative is always Athens, which here is seen primarily as a site of alienation and self-exploration, inextricably linked to existential questions and modern anxieties. Politics are a major aspect of the urban experience, with personal lives and problems being closely interwoven with the socio-economic and political realities of the urban space. The two main examples

¹¹² E.g. *I Evdomi Mera tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation* (1967, Vasilis Georgiadis), *Agapi pou de Svini o Chronos / Eternal Love* (1966, Giorgos Zervoulakos), *I Nei Theloun na Zisoun / The Youth Wants to Live* (1965, Nikos Tzimas), *Prosopo me Prosopo / Face to Face* (1966, Roviros Manthoulis), *O Thanatos tou Alexandrou / The Death of Alexander* (1966, Dimitris Kollatos), *Anichti Epistoli / Open Letter* (1967, Giorgos Stambouloupoulos), *Kierion* (1967, Dimos Theos).

of this tendency are *Athina, Poli Chamogelo / Athens, a Smile City* (1966-67, Lambros Liaropoulos) and *O Yannis ke o Dromos / John and the Street* (1967, Tonia Marketaki). Both directors studied cinema in Paris at the peak of the *nouvelle vague* movement and this clearly influenced the films' themes and forms (camerawork, editing and use of sound). Both films were shot just before the dictatorship came to power and reflect the socio-political climate and the cultural concerns of the period.

Athens, a Smile City,¹¹³ follows the dominant pattern, swinging between fiction and documentary in its depiction of urban life, cultural realities and political upheaval. Its narrative explores the painful psychological trajectory of a young couple undergoing an abortion. Liaropoulos shifts interest from the story and action to the audio-visual texture and structure of the film. The narrative is fragmented and episodic, comprising scattered impressions, flash backs and photographs arising from the heroes' inner world. Action is secondary to personal emotional experience and the environment becomes a projection of the character's subjective world, especially that of the woman who holds the narrative. Thus the cityscape as well as the interiors reflect, and at the same time intensify the internal deadlock, deep alienation and anxiety experienced by the protagonists in their moments of crisis. The city becomes a dark labyrinth, shot mostly at night on hand-held camera and often from cars. Athens is viewed as a modern, faceless city: cars, flickering traffic lights, traffic policemen, banks, supermarkets, shop windows, neon lights, televisions, hotels, escalators, restaurants all represent the materialistic culture of the consumer society. Foreign signs (e.g. American Bank) appear frequently, suggesting an economic, political and cultural colonization of Greece. These mobile camera shots of Athens, accompanied by music, fragments of speech and dialogue on the soundtrack seem to be the character's observations as they passively move through the city. Athens becomes

¹¹³ It is incorporated into the feature-length film *To Allo Gramma / The Other Letter* (1975/6, Liaropoulos).

therefore a spectacle, further underscoring the character's alienation from the city they inhabit.

The former glory of Athens is evoked with shots of the Parthenon. However, since the heroine works in a tourist agency, this national symbol is seen through the veil of economic interest. As a tour-guide at the rock of the Acropolis, she contemplates the passing time and aimless rambling in cinemas and coffee shops, while crowds of tourists wander round the Parthenon. The conception of Greek culture and landscape as commodities for tourist consumption is developed further when the heroine announces in English the prices of tours, day-trips and *rebetiko* music performances, while the camera focuses on the list.

The youth culture enjoyed by the protagonists (gatherings of friends, the music of Bob Dylan, political commitment etc.) is also seen in terms of alienation and meaninglessness. Another implied consequence of modernity, the fragmentation of families (divorced parents, lack of communication between parents and children) is at the core of the young woman's anxieties. And all these take place against the sounds of massive demonstrations and with stills taken from newspapers – depicting police violence, the Royal family and despairing faces at the burial of Sotiris Petroulas¹¹⁴ – becoming part of the narrative flow, alluding to the explosive sociopolitical situation of the time and enhancing a sense of grief.

In this hostile sociopolitical and cultural environment, the couple is constantly striving but failing to communicate. The agony reaches its apogee in the abortion sequence, during which the female protagonist is entirely absent (a sequence edited in an innovative manner for Greek cinema). Her subjective point of view shots (the cold

¹¹⁴ See Chapter 1, p. 20.

gynecological surgery, surgical tools, the unbearably strong light) alternate with shots of the male character waiting in agony at a noisy billiard room. Documentary-like shots in the billiard room where a working-class man dances a *rebetiko* tune played on a jukebox and boys play table football are intercut with shots in the surgery to create a nightmarish abortion sequence.

After the abortion the couple searches for peace away from the suffocating atmosphere of the city in an open air café where a group of friends sing the song *Accordion* by Manos Loizos which refers to the Occupation and Resistance. At the end the young woman joins in, with a melancholic, enigmatic face singing “Fascism will not pass”. So in the midst of despair and grief the film suggests the possibility of hope through political awareness and resistance, demonstrating the inextricable link between the personal and the political and reflecting current left-wing ideas about the prominence of the notion of Resistance at the time.

O Yannis ke o Dromos / John and the Street (1967, Tonia Marketaki) is based on a short story by the writer Menelaos Loundemis, who was a political refugee. One of his poems is also used, while a line of verse by Yannis Negrepointis, “Loneliness is a matter of self-sufficiency” – superimposed over the opening sequence of the film in a manner reminiscent of Godard – announces the theme of modernity and alienation. John (played by the young journalist Giorgos Votsis) has lost his beloved to a factory owner, whom she is to marry and wanders the rainy streets of Athens distraught and alienated.

John’s wanderings are presented through an episodic, discontinuous and arbitrarily motivated narrative fusing memory, fantasy and reality. His journey is an internal one of existential agony, echoed by the fragmentary, dark, and almost nightmarish cityscape. The shot of the small, lonely figure of John sitting on the long empty *Exarchia*

steps that dominate the frame, which is directly followed by a close-up of Johns' face gazing into the camera, encapsulates the sense of the city as an inhuman, sterile, internalized space. The city is both the source and the mirror of Johns' fears. It is chaotic and cacophonous, while beauty and innocence, which unexpectedly find a way in this hostile environment, are immediately defiled. When John finds a marble on the street, a sign of innocent play, a car drives through a puddle, splashing water in his face. The failure to communicate is also a central motif. The hero distances himself from people, unable to communicate or share their joy. He observes others from the darkness, balances on street lines reflecting his internal uncertainty, recalls memories of relationships and has fantasies in which he escapes in open spaces. He only speaks about himself and his problems to a working-class man, a traditional tavern owner.

Politics, interwoven in daily urban life, contribute to John's existential anxiety. Recalling Godard's fascination with printed word and popular culture, headlines of newspapers displayed in front of a kiosk – surrounded by popular magazines with their nudity, football and pulp fiction – inform about the Lambrakis trial, the Kennedy assassination, the Vietnam war, the space race (part of the cold war antagonisms). Politics also in the form of documentary footage suddenly invades the screen interrupting narrative: demonstrations, police violence, 1-1-4 movement, slogans such as *Fascismo no passaran*, Vietnam war, the self-immolation of a Vietnamese Buddhist monk evoke domestic and international political upheaval and locate Greek politics in a broader political context.

The generation gap is also seen in political terms. John is haunted by the presence of vulnerable and at the same time threatening figures of old people, who move slowly or cannot walk without support. They present the generation of John's parents – and also the past itself – who lived through the war and its immediate aftermath. In one enigmatic scene John encounters an old beggarwoman sitting on the front step of a house, dressed in black

and with a scarf on her head. She raises her arms towards John in a threatening gesture of supplication. Suddenly pamphlets proclaiming “Communism is your major enemy” fall down, covering the face and body of the woman. The past of defeat, obscurantism and anticommunist propaganda is an unbearable weight for the youth. The scene is immediately followed by documentary images of demonstrations for freedom and an end to fascism, like a powerful wave coming to sweep away the dark past.

The street leads nowhere and John returns back to the *Exarchia* steps. So, having wandered through a landscape scarred by politics and modernity, the marginalized and sensitive individual is left empty. Mixing documentary and fiction, poetry, realism and modernism, the film emphasizes the sterility of the city and modernity, such as a documentary scene of childbirth where the screams of the woman are followed by a long shot of ugly and inhospitable Athens. In the final shot John addresses camera and bows theatrically, while in the background an ambulance siren wails, suggesting death (John’s suicide?), and anticipating the dictatorship, the ‘clinical’ situation which will afflict Greek society in the next seven years.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Other shorts exploring the city and modernity, alienation and existential angst include the Antonioni-inspired *Apousia / Absence* (1963, Zervoulakos), a wandering through the streets of Athens at night, the poetic *Peripatos / Day Trip* (1964, Aimilia Provia [later Milly Giannakaki]) about a couple seeking peace away from Athens but being followed by a sense of alienation and emptiness and *Nei Keri / Modern Times* (1963, Takis Meremetis) about transport in Athens. *Mias Dekaras Istoria / A Penny story* (1965, Dimitris Nollas), which describes the efforts of a penniless young man to use a penny, *Kyriaki / Sunday* (Nikos Panayotopoulos), a Sunday in Athens, and *Irini ke Zoi / Peace and Life* (1962, Adonis Kyrou) are three other shorts that discuss the city.

CONCLUSION

Greek scholarship on the 1960s has tended to deal with 'Old Greek Cinema' at its artistic, technical and commercial peak, and to explore questions of genre, content, ideology, stardom and spectatorship. In this thesis I have moved beyond the high point of the 'Old' to consider the period that gave birth to 'New Greek Cinema', and, rather than focusing on dividing lines and differences, to explore the continuities and interrelations between the 'Old' and the 'New' during this period of flourishing and transition.

Four major forces can be discerned behind the rise of an indigenous art-house film culture and, by extension, NEK in the 1960s. First, the 1960s themselves with their political upheaval, creative cultural flourishing both in Greece and internationally (which brought new ideas and forms into art and cinema) and the growing role of the youth in social, political and cultural developments. The spirit of the 1960s rejected established forms of culture and entertainment, and sought new ones to express the problems of the youth and the era. Second, the state intervention in cinema and new legislation, which, although were criticized by critics at the time, as well as by contemporary scholars as inadequate and hostile to Greek film, proved instrumental in the growth of an art-house sector within Greek cinema. One important outcome of the state cultural policies was the establishment of the 'Week of Greek Cinema' in Thessaloniki, where 'quality' and 'art' films were screened and promoted, incentivizing therefore the production of art-house films, creating a new audience and generating debate about Greek cinema. The 'Week', state awards for both features and shorts, and the 'worthy of protection' label provided financial support for art films and for the first time institutionalized Greek cinema placing 'quality' films at the heart of official national cultural values. In addition the popularity of Greece as a location for foreign films in the 1960s, which was encouraged by state

policies, offered young assistant directors and other film technicians, the opportunity to encounter methods of filmmaking used in other countries. Third, the highly productive popular domestic film industry provided a vital training ground for film practitioners, the necessary infrastructures for the development of art film activity, and also the model against which 'new' cinema could define itself. The fourth crucial factor was the lively national debate about the need for 'quality' Greek national cinema, which exerted a considerable influence on film production. Scholars are familiar with the debates of the 1960s regarding *rebetico* music, the 'poetry of defeat', 'realism' and 'abstraction' in Fine arts. However, one of the most lively, widespread and sustained cultural debates was that regarding Greek national cinema, which established a framework of expectations about how this cinema ought to be. It raised questions of artistic quality, European standards, authorial creativity, 'high art' subjects, authentic national specificity ('Greekness'), 'popular authenticity', and 'realism' as a mode of representation of contemporary and historical realities.

The Greek national cinema debate reveals the problematisation of sociopolitical and cultural subjects in the 1960s, but also the impact of the growing domestic cinephile culture. An extensive cine club network developed, initially in the two biggest cities of Greece, Athens and Thessaloniki, and from 1961 in several provincial areas. An impressive number of art films – including landmarks of film history, the work of great authors and national cinemas – were screened by film societies during the period. A vast number of film weeks, devoted to a range of subjects and especially to the cinema of the former socialist countries, were organized by a variety of organizations and institutions. Foreign art and new wave films were screened not only at film weeks and cine clubs, but also at popular venues, where they were often commercially successful. This led to the creation of the first art-house cinemas in Greece. Seminars on film were also popular,

while film journalism expanded. A new generation of young left-wing and militant critics came to the fore: Rafaelidis, Bacoyannopoulos, Mikelidis, Angelopoulos, Marketaki and others, who promoted art and 'new' cinema and criticized domestic popular production, particularly in the left-wing press and periodicals. There was a shift of interest in journalism from foreign to Greek cinema, which furthered the national cinema debate, and attempts to establish specialized periodicals on the model of European film journals culminated in the publication of *Ellinikos Kinimatografos*. While cinephile activities became increasingly associated with politics, a community of leftist cinephiles was formed which controlled almost all aspects of the 'new' culture surrounding cinema (cine clubs, film weeks, writing and lecturing on cinema, independent filmmaking) and influenced the taste of the educated and young audiences.

The film industry was significantly affected by the sociopolitical upheavals and cultural creativity of the 1960s, the new legislation regarding film, the growth of a cinephile culture and the national cinema debate. Commercial cinema was much more responsive to the demands and changes of the 1960s than is generally believed, and it initiated developments more often associated with NEK. The commercial sector reorganized the popular film product and adapted to the new market conditions, which were marked by strong internal and external competition. It modernized the content and form of commercial movies, shifting areas of film production towards more cinematic and critical articulations and creating a 'quality' sector. The industry strove to raise the cultural status of commercial film so that it could attract international audiences and compete with foreign films in the domestic market, satisfying the growing expectations of the Greek public. There were three major streams of 'quality' popular films: adaptations of ancient Greek letters and myths, adaptations of contemporary Greek literature and those on historical subjects. Sociopolitical concerns (the problems of youth, poverty, lack of

opportunities, migration, mass and union movement, taboo social themes, modernity and alienation) provided themes for many commercially-made ‘quality’ movies. A remarkable degree of formal experimentation was also encouraged. Qualities which are present in popular films of the 1960s, such as an emphasis on visual style, mise-en-scène refinement, realist and documentary practices, de-dramatisation, loose narratives revolving around existential and drifting characters, ambivalent protagonists, subjectivity, reveal the influence of European art and new wave films on the Greek mainstream. Moreover the industry adopted from art cinema subjects and attitudes that were popular with the public, like the realistic depiction of sexuality. By employing genre conventions to deal with serious subject matter and combine the concerns of the individual with historical issues or contemporary sociopolitical realities, the industry created its own version of ‘quality’ national cinema. Major achievements of the commercial ‘quality’ trend include films of established *auteurs* such as *Electra* (1962, Cacoyannis) produced by Finos and *Young Aphrodites* (1963, Nikos Koundouros) by Anzervos, films made by newcomers such as Kostas Manousakis, Errikos Andreou and Giorgos Skalenakis and films made by well-known commercial directors like *Kokkina Fanaria / Red Lanterns* (1963) and *I Evidomi Mera tis Dimiourgias / The Seventh Day of Creation* (1967) by Vasilis Georgiadis or *Diogmos / Persecution* (1964) by Grigoris Grigoriou. A considerable number of these films were successful at foreign festivals and won international recognition, gaining access therefore to international markets and paving the way for the development of a new kind of cinema which employed the thematic and formal conventions of the international art film.

Historical themes, which are usually associated with NEK or with dictatorship-era PEK, can in fact be found in several films of the 1960s, both in the commercial and art sectors. There was great interest at that time in historical subjects since the recent past, especially the Civil War, still exerted a strong influence on state policies and the everyday

life of much of the population. The political climate of the 1960s was coloured by the centrality of the notion of Resistance to leftist political rhetoric, the links between the Occupation and the current political situations, and the pressure on the Centrist government from the Left to recognize the Resistance. Historical films, especially those from Eastern European countries about the Resistance and WWII, were very popular with Greek audiences and attracted considerable critical attention. Being both highly respected and popular, historical subjects provided mainstream films with cultural and political legitimacy, while preserving their commercial value. A noteworthy number of ‘quality’ history-related films, often set during the Occupation and with anti-war and anti-heroic content, were produced like *Amok* (1964, Dinos Dimopoulos), *Prodosia / Betrayal* (1964, Kostas Manousakis) and *Diogmos / Persecution* (1964, Grigoris Grigoriou). An important characteristic of most of the commercial historical films of the pre-dictatorship 1960s is that they do not reiterate ‘nationalistic’ views on history, but often provide alternative perspectives on the past, explore unconventional subjects, and also construct images with which people on the Left could identify. Moreover the Civil-War trauma is present in popular films of the 1960s in a disguised form, and not only in films with historical themes. The Civil War is transposed onto other kinds of conflicts, concealed in the forms and narratives of popular movies, evident in the schismatic presentation of the social milieu and also in symbols, metaphors and allusions. In this respect NEK’s preoccupation with the Civil War does not constitute a break from the ‘Old’ model of Greek cinema but an example of continuity. Instead the main disparity between the two models lies in the ‘internalization’ and ‘externalization’ of the subject.

The expansion of short film production was a new phenomenon in the 1960s. Short filmmaking of the time, which includes the early work of several NEK directors (Sfikas, Ferris, Nikolaidis, Theos, Tornes, Voulgaris, Papastathis, Marketaki,

Panayotopoulos), demonstrated strong creativity and experimentation, both thematic and formal. Its development was stimulated by state policies and the ‘Week of Greek Cinema’, and funding was either from state subsidies or independent sources. It is therefore in the field of short filmmaking that NEK’s production system was first developed. In 1960 *Macedonian Wedding* illustrated the artistic potential of short films and, alongside the establishment of the Festival, produced a flood of documentary and fictional shorts with artistic aspirations. They were formally varied, employing both realist and modernist practices, while their most common characteristic was their mixture of fiction and documentary forms. In terms of content, they explored a wide range of contemporary subjects and themes that became preoccupations of NEK in the following decades: politics, history, national identity, the working-class, poverty, unemployment, emigration, the abandonment of the countryside, tradition, modernity, existential problems, the problems of youth, the transformation of the urban space, etc. Censorship problems often occurred and some shorts were banned, such as *Savvatovrado / Saturday Night* (1961, Panos Papakyriakopoulos), *Elies / Olive Trees* (1964, Dimitris Kollatos) and *100 Ores tou Mai / 100 Hours of May* (1963-1964, Dimos Theos / Fotos Lambrinos).

Apart from shorts and commercially-made ‘quality’ films, in the 1960/1967 period there was also a remarkable series of independent films or films made on the margins of the industry, which exemplified a desire for art and oppositional cinema. They were made either by individuals who had worked in the commercial sector [e.g. Alekos Alexandrakis (*A Neighborhood Called Dream*), Panos Glykofridis (*With Glittering Eyes*), Roviros Manthoulis (*Face to Face*)] or by newcomers who emerged in the 1960s (Takis Kanellopoulos, Dimitris Kollatos, Alexis Damianos), some of whom had particularly strong ties with the current cinephile culture (Roviros Manthoulis). Greek diaspora

directors such as Adonis Kyrou, Nikos Papatakis and Manos Zacharias also contributed to this tendency.

Erotas stous Ammolofous / Love in the Sand Dunes (1958, Kostas Manousakis) and *I Ekti Mera / The 6th Day*¹ (1960, Christos Theodoropoulos), were early attempts at independent artistic films. The former was written and directed by the 23-year-old Manousakis and it is a dark and psychologically complex narrative with intense formal concerns and cryptic political allusions. The latter is the first black-and-white wide-screen film in Greece, scripted by the leftist writer Andreas Frangias and directed by Theodoropoulos, who was a teacher at the 'Ioannidis Film School'. It explores the social problems crippling Greek society such as poverty and unemployment, while drawing formally on contemporary European art film in its attention to urban space.

In 1961 *Synikia to Oniro / A Neighborhood Called Dream*, which depicted slums and poverty, caused a political scandal when police interrupted its first screening and censors banned the film. The press (not only on the Left) reacted vociferously and eventually forced the government to permit its screening and exportation. *A Neighborhood Called Dream* is a film of great significance in Greek artistic and political cinema, not for its thematic and formal concerns, which were strongly questioned by the critics of the time,² but for its attitudes to ideology, production and promotion policies which came to define NEK. It was entirely made by individuals with close affiliations with EDA (Alekos Alexandrakis, Aliko Georgouli, Tasos Leivaditis, Kostas Kotzias, Manos Katrakis, Tasos Zografos, Dimos Sakellariou) who sought to express left-wing ideas on film. It was

¹ Alternative titles: *To Megalo Kolpo / The Big Trick* or *To Merokamato tis Eftyhias / The Day-work of Happiness*.

² See, for example, the letter about *A Neighborhood Called Dream* sent by Theos and Lambrinos to *Epitheorisi Technis* (1961, no. 83, pp. 491-492), challenging its Neo-Realist qualities and treatment of reality.

independently produced and the result of collective voluntary work, a defining characteristic of early NEK. It aimed to challenge the commercial sector with its themes and its formal borrowings from European art cinema, particularly Neo-Realism. It came into conflict with censorship and state policies and developed a promotion policy based on various texts in the press (both in the period before and after its first release). It used the conflict with the state as part of its promotion process, a practice which was widely employed by NEK films in the following decades (e.g. Theo Angelopoulos' works). Such conflicts with censorship had occurred earlier, for instance, the banning of *The Outlaws* (1958, Nikos Koundouros). However, this did not attract as much press and political interest or have as great an impact as the banning of *A Neighborhood Called Dream*.

Ouranos / Sky (1962, Takis Kanellopoulos), a highly idiosyncratic and poetic anti-war film about the Greek-Italian conflict, was produced on the margins of the commercial industry. It was greatly indebted to the Thessaloniki festival, since it followed the sensationally successful *Macedonian Wedding* of the first Week. In this sense *Sky* is the feature that signalled the rise of a new generation of filmmakers whose career began with Thessaloniki (a defining characteristic of NEK). Apart from *Sky*, there were several independent documentaries and fiction films with historical themes. *I Tragodia tou Aegeou / The Tragedy of Aegean* (1961, Vasilis Maros) and *Eleftherios Venizelos* (1965, Lila Kourkoulakou) introduced the feature-length documentary, as well as the historical compilation film which became popular with NEK filmmakers in the following decades. *I Paranomi / The Outlaws* funded by Finos, *Sky*, *Ta Cheria / The Hands* (1962, John Contes), *To Bloco / The Round Up* (1965, Adonis Kyrou), *Me ti Lampsi sta Matia / With Glittering Eyes* (1966, Panos Glykofridis), *Ekdromi / Excursion* (1966, Takis Kanellopoulos) and the *To Stavrodromi / The Crossroad* (1963, Manos Zacharias), were independent anti-war films, often with a clearly leftist view point (*The Outlaws*, *The Round*

Up, The Crossroad). Some of these films contain the first examples of thematic and aesthetic motifs that later proliferated in the historical narratives of NEK, such as collective history, the treatment of group as a character, the perception of history as an actual and existential wandering and the landscape as the setting of historical yearning.

Tetragono / Square (1964, Yannis Kokkolis / Stelios Jakson / Nikos Ikonomou / Kostas Tosios / Panos Katteris), a portmanteau film comprising shorts by five young student directors from 'Ioannidis Film School', was another independent film screened at the Festival. There was also a remarkable group of independent features whose narratives concentrated on confused and desperate young people and their relationship with modernity, exploring the urban space and contemporary realities and making political, usually leftist, references: *I Nei Theloun na Zisoun / The Youth Wants to Live* (1965, Nikos Tzimas), *Prosopo me Prosopo / Face to Face* (1966, Roviros Manthoulis), *O Thanatos tou Alexandrou / The Death of Alexander* (1966, Dimitris Kollatos), *Dafnis and Cloe* 1966 (1966, Mika Zacharopoulou), *Anichti Epistoli / Open Letter* (1967, Giorgos Stamboulopoulos) and *Kierion* (1967, Dimos Theos). Most of these films as well as some independent shorts of the period, which in formal and thematic terms are strikingly similar to the commercially-made 'quality' film *The Seventh Day of Creation* (1967, Vasilis Georgiadis), have loose narratives and focus on young existential characters, closely connecting the sociopolitical with the personal. *The Death of Alexander* and *Dafnis and Chloe* (by the 23-year-old Mika Zacharopoulou) deal with personal anxieties, death and sexuality, while the other films emphasize the suffocating sociopolitical context in which the characters' crises develop. They explore class discrimination and social injustice, poverty, unemployment, working-class problems, exploitation of peasants, limited opportunities and lack of choice, migration, the subordinated position of woman in society, suppression of desires, the demand of the young for education, political corruption. They

highlight generational differences, criticize middle and upper-class morals, raise issues of the past, allude to the mass movement and police violence, and document the transformation of Athens and the arrival of modernity. *Kierion*, which like *Open Letter* and *I Voski tis Symforas / Shepherds* (1967, Nikos Papatakis), was made just before the junta came to power and was finished during the first days of the dictatorship, stands out among the features of the time because it is the most openly political one. It is a companion piece to the political short *100 Hundred Hours of May* about the assassination of Lambrakis. By using the narrative forms of a European film noir to investigate the motives behind the assassination of an American journalist and uncover the hidden truth behind the fabricated one, it presents politics as a dark field of intrigue and conspiracy. It also deals with the radicalized student movement of the time, para-state activity, police violence, international politics and modernity. In addition, demystifying accounts of Greek provincial life are provided in *Mechri to Plio / Until the Ship Sails* (1966, Alexis Damianos), *Shepherds* (1967, Nikos Papatakis) and *The Youth Wants to Live* (1965, Nikos Tzimas), which takes place partly in the countryside. Passions, domestic violence and repressed desires are intertwined with the patriarchal structure of Greek society, women's issues, the flood of migration and the neglect of the agricultural society.

Independent films made between 1960 and 1967 reveal the influence of contemporary European cinema, from French, British and Czech new waves to Italian and Soviet films. They experiment with both modernist and de-dramatised realist practices, non linear and flash back narrative structures, and mixing fictional and documentary modes. Most of them are driven by the notion of 'popular authenticity' and the need to appeal to the wider audience, motivations which later were less important for NEK filmmakers, although some (e.g. Damianos, Voulgaris, Tasios, Ferris and Stambouloupoulos) still sought a bond with the public. Generic forms (e.g melodrama in *The Youth Wants to Live* or film

noir in *Kierion*) and popular actors (e.g. *The Round Up*, *With Glittering Eyes* or *Kierion*), were still in use, although most independent films made in the 1960s avoid specific generic categories and cast anti-stars actors and amateurs.

In terms of production, some films had foreign funding (*The Round Up* and *The Shepherds*), some made by producers either related or entirely unrelated to the commercial industry (*Sky* and *With Glittering Eyes* respectively), others relied on collective money (*Face to Face*), self financing (*The Death of Alexander*) and voluntary work (*Kierion*). The spirit of collectivity and voluntary participation is reflected in *Kierion*, to which almost the entire NEK generation contributed as actors, assistances, writers, editors, cinematographers and co-directors (e.g. Sfikas, Ferris, Tornes, Nikolaidis, Marketaki, Kostandaracos, Angelopoulos, Voulgaris, Panousopoulos, Papakyriakopoulos and others).

The production of independent artistic films reached a peak in 1966, when eight independent features competed at the Thessaloniki Film Festival: *Face to Face*, *Excursion*, *With Glittering Eyes*, *Until the Ship Sails*, *The Death of Alexander*, *Dafnis and Cloe*, *The Hot Month August* (Socratis Kapsaskis) and *Short Break* (Dinos Katsouridis). The festival was the source of a conflict that year between ‘quality’ commercially-made films and independent films because the prize for the best film (and prize money of 200,000 drachmas which was first introduced that year) went to *Xechasmeni Iroes / Forgotten Heroes*, a resistance film directed by the cinematographer Nikos Gardelis and produced by James Parris. Writing in *Dimokratiki Allagi*, Rafaelidis suspected political motives and governmental intervention, and debate in the press was heated.³ However the Festival jury, including prestigious figures such as Bacoyannopoulos, Hadjidakis, Tsarouchis, Elli Lambeti and Grigoriou, could come to no arrangement on the independent films. Lambeti’s vote swung the decision in favor of the commercial model and the prize was

³ See *Dimokratiki Allagi* (3/10/66).

given to Parris. Independent filmmaking came also into conflict with state policies after censors intervened to cut scenes from *The Death of Alexander* and a governmental committee barred the films that had appeared at the festival from competing at international festivals.

Soon after, the birth of Greek national cinema was announced by ‘new’ critics in the editorial of the journal *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* under the title ‘1967: National Cinema, the first year’. This was a restatement of Rafaelidis’ article in *Dimokratiki Allagi*, ‘Greek Cinema: the First Year’, which was a response to the shorts of the 1965 ‘Week of Greek cinema’ (*The Thief, Letter from Charleroi, The Horse, The Cases of NO, A Penny Story, Encounter*).⁴ The journal elucidates the factors that had led to this announcement:

Considering that the term national [...] could not be conceived [...] without the participation [...] both of those who make the films and those who demand a cinema that depicts in artistic terms the problems of their everyday life, we believe that for a first time we have in Greece what it is called ‘national cinema’. [...] The establishment of the ‘Union of the Greek Film Critics’ is another fundamental factor that determines and actively participates in the formation of the notion of National cinema.⁵

The forces involved in this development were in fact numerous between 1960 and 1967. First, the production of a considerable number of either commercially-made or independent features and shorts which explored historical and contemporary subjects and took their inspiration from European art and new wave films. These works engaged

⁴ Eleven years earlier, in January 1956, Antonis Moshovakis in *Epitheorisis Technis* (1956, no.13, pp. 119-122) made a similar statement: “Greek Cinema: The First Year” due to a range of important developments that took place in 1955.

⁵ *Ellinikos Kinimatografos* (1967, no. 5, pp.3-5).

audiences in an 'alternative' domestic cinema. There was also a remarkable flourishing of critical film writing which created a supporting framework for art and new wave films and introduced the term 'New Greek Cinema'. An alternative exhibition network was established by the 'Week of Greek Cinema', cine clubs and the first art-house venues, which contributed to the growth of a cinephile and youth audience. Through the Thessaloniki festival a new generation of independent filmmakers, including Kanellopoulos, Kollatos, Manthoulis, Damianos and Voulgaris, came to the fore. In addition, several feature and short films, which were deeply engaged with the recent controversial past and questions of national identity, emerged, and independent film culture (film making, film writing, film exhibition and attendance) became politicized with strong left-wing associations. As a consequence of these, conflicts between independent films and state censorship became common.

It is apparent therefore that all the elements and attitudes that came to define NEK, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis, already existed in the pre-dictatorship 1960s, and in this respect we can accept that the period 1960-67 was the first phase of 'New Greek Cinema'. We can identify 1960, the year of the first 'Week of Greek Cinema' and the exhibition of *Macedonian Wedding*, as a symbolic turning point, while the year 1966-67 as a highpoint due to the congruence of a number of different factors: the renewal of the Thessaloniki festival which under the directorship of Pavlos Zannas became international (placing Greek film in an international context and promoting 'new' cinemas); the large number of independent art feature and short films (and also of distinguished commercially-made 'quality' films such as *The Seventh Day of Creation*); the strong conflict with Festival, state policies and censorship; the creation of the periodical *Ellinikos kinimatografos*; the establishment of the 'Union of the Greek Film Critics' (closed down by dictatorship); and the expansion of the art-house network and

cinophile events. Moreover it becomes evident that many developments of the 1970s, such as politicized and historical content in films, had their origins in the 1960s and prominent NEK figures were already active.

The dictatorship interrupted the impetus of this trend momentarily and only apparently. Although in the beginning it enforced a short hiatus it gave rise to a new period of NEK, because independent film activity was further politicized (both in terms of content and cinophile culture), and the prestige of NEK films in foreign festivals was increased as part of the Europe-wide anti-dictatorship movement: films such as *Face to Face*, *Kierion*, *Open Letter*, *Shepherds* and *100 Hours of May* were shown extensively abroad, opening the way for *Anaparastasi* (1970, Theo Angelopoulos) and other films of the 1970s. In fact the dictatorship accelerated the growth of an art-house, occasionally cryptic, and politicized left-wing cinema. Furthermore, a remarkable number of film directors moved abroad during the dictatorship (e.g. Ferris, Theos, Tornes, Stavrakas, Manthoulis, Nikos Koundouros), while others such as Angelopoulos, Marketaki and Panayotopoulos had already studied in Europe. This brought them into closer contact with European film developments and the events of May 1968 (the majority of the émigré directors settled in Paris), which further influenced the formation of a 'new' film culture based on the values of the European 'new' cinemas and on left-wing political radicalism.

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