

The Cinematic Work of Nikos Nikolaidis and Female Representation

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Abstract

This thesis examines the work of Greek postmodern filmmaker Nikos Nikolaidis with a specific focus on female representation. I examine Nikolaidis as an auteur and I trace elements throughout his oeuvre that contribute to the formation of his authorial signature. Nikolaidis's work is autobiographical and highly political. Nikolaidis's cinema does not abide by the traditional theories of 'Greekness', and his main influences are American cinema, and specifically for film noir, rock 'n' roll culture and his antiauthoritarian ideology. All these elements are combined together within his work through the use of pastiche.

I examine Nikolaidis's work according to Richard Dyer's notion of pastiche. Through pastiche he expresses nostalgia for rock 'n' roll culture and film noir, but also he expresses his concern for the future. Nikolaidis pastiches a selection of film genres and specific films in order to appropriate the elements that interest him. His pastiche work shows that the filmmaker addresses cineliterate audiences that would ideally understand his dialogue with the different genres and films he pastiches.

With regards to female representation in Nikolaidis's films, women are given leading roles, exhibit varying degrees of agency, and are presented as stronger and more powerful than men. However, their representations remain paradoxical, complex and misogynistic. While on the one hand, women are portrayed as powerful, independent, and able to subvert patriarchy, on the other hand, they are often used as props, rendering their representation inconsistent and problematic. Nikolaidis differentiates and juxtaposes two types of women throughout his work: the powerful women versus the unimportant women. Those who do not conform to the powerful female characteristics are characterised within the second category. Since Nikolaidis was highly influenced by film noir, his female protagonists pastiche the classic film noir figure of the femme fatale.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is the result of my own work. The research upon which it is based was carried out in the Theatre, Film and Television Department of the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Professor Dimitris Eleftheriotis and Dr Ian Goode during the period of January 2011 until October 2014.

Permission to reproduce the material from Bartholomew's private archive has been granted by Marie-Louise Bartholomew.

Translation from Greek sources is by the author.

Abbreviations

AG (American Graffiti)

AHITEOM (A Hit in the Eye of Montezuma)

BDJ (Belle de Jour)

BH (Body Heat)

BJ (Blackboard Jungle)

BPA (Bartholomew's Personal Archive)

BR (Blade Runner)

CF (Cape Fear)

EBA (Euridice BA 2037)

GFC (Greek Film Centre)

HHSC (Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte)

HNM (Here No More)

JG (Johnny Guitar)

LD (Les Diaboliques)

LR (Lacrimae Rerum)

LTA (Loser Takes All)

MP (Morning Patrol)

NEK (New Greek Cinema)

PEK (Old Greek Cinema)

PITA (Pigs in the Air)

RG (Ruby Gentry)

SB (Sweet Bunch)

SEK (Contemporary Greek Cinema)

SS (Singapore Sling)

SYIHMD (See You in Hell, My Darling)

TFF (Thessaloniki Film Festival)

TMWTGA (The Man with the Golden Arm)

TSLP (Tirez sur le Pianiste)

TWASS (The Wretches Are Still Singing)

TWB (The Wild Bunch)

TWLAC (Those Who Loved A Corpse)

TZY (The Zero Years)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Origins and Aims

My first encounter with Nikos Nikolaidis (1939-2007) was in 2002 when I watched *Loser Takes All* in the cinema. At the time I was in high school and I used to go to the cinema with a friend every Friday. We mostly watched Hollywood films; we actually had no choice since there were only four cinema rooms in my hometown at that time, and there was only one when I was growing up. Thus, when my friend suggested that we should go see ‘a Greek film’, I hesitated because I had not seen any recent ‘decent’ Greek films nor had I seen many Greek films on the big screen. At the time, I knew nothing about Nikolaidis, and I did not have internet access at home in order to look him up. But my friend persuaded me to give this film and Greek cinema a chance.

Although now *Loser Takes All* is Nikolaidis’s film that I appreciate the least, when I came out of the cinema that night, I felt as if a new ‘world’ of Greek cinema had opened up to me. I saw a type of Greek cinema that I never knew existed. At last I was not seeing a film with a happy ending, or a film that glorifies the Greek landscape and Greek culture, but rather a Greek film that comments on societies and presents a dark future. And although female representation in this film is extremely problematic, at the time to seventeen-year-old me, it seemed ‘unconventional’ and ‘new’. These elements, I realised later on, stem from Nikolaidis’s pessimism for a dark Greek future, for a dark future for humanity in general, and for the death of cinema, all qualities that are linked to a postmodernist stance to which the filmmaker abides.

When, within the next weeks, a newspaper gave copies of *Sweet Bunch* away for free, I was very curious to see what else Nikolaidis had created. Seeing *Sweet Bunch* helped me realise that there is indeed something ‘special’ about this filmmaker. What I felt was more special about his cinema was that his films did not look Greek. I had the impression that I was watching an American film in Greek language. When in 2005, as I was still studying for my undergraduate degree, I saw *The Zero Years* at the 48th Thessaloniki Film Festival (with Nikolaidis present at the screening) I knew that his case was a very particular one. This film was like nothing I had seen so far in Greek cinema, both in terms of the political dimensions of the film and female representation. This is when I knew that I would like to eventually research his work.

Thus, when I had to decide on the topic for my MSc dissertation in Film Studies in 2009, I immediately thought of Nikolaidis. I started researching the filmmaker, both online

and in various libraries in Greek Universities, but I could only find some interviews, some ‘requiems’ for his relatively recent death and a few references to his name in some books. As a result, I decided not to limit my dissertation to Nikolaidis out of fear of not having much to write about his work. However, when I finished my dissertation I realised that there is an abundance of things to write about with regards to Nikolaidis’s cinema that only a PhD could cover (and arguably, even with the length of a PhD, other facets of Nikolaidis’s work are left unresolved). Therefore, realising that there is something unique about this filmmaker, I felt compelled to go on and do a PhD on his work.

Nikolaidis, apart from being a postmodern filmmaker, was also a writer and had worked in advertising for many years. Nikolaidis perpetuated his influences and obsessions throughout his oeuvre, and he created a very personal and introverted body of work. His work is autobiographical, not only because he bases his oeuvre on real-life incidents, but because he perpetuates his ideas and fixations about the forthcoming catastrophic future. His work is highly political; however, due to the placelessness and timelessness of the majority of his films, his antifascist and antiauthoritarian ideology target any given fascist society and are not limited to Greek society – which Nikolaidis perceived as fascist. Consequently, Nikolaidis’s cinema does not abide by the conventions of ‘Greekness’ and his films can be taken outside of a Greek context. At the same time, Nikolaidis does implicitly speak about Greece. Nikolaidis’s main influences that become key topics of his work can be said to be his longing for American cinema and specifically film noir, his nostalgia for rock ‘n’ roll culture, and his antiauthoritarian ideology. All these elements are combined together in his films through the use of pastiche.

With this project I intend to produce literature on a filmmaker who has been widely neglected and marginalised in Greek critical discourse mostly for being ‘Americanised’ and thus for not directly reflecting on Greece. Nikolaidis has been considered an important filmmaker of the period of ‘New Greek Cinema’, but is also one of the most controversial ones. However, no single published academic article has been entirely dedicated to his work. My thesis thus aims to address this gap and examine Nikolaidis as an auteur, as well as to analyse female representation in his work. In order to do so, I will trace his influences and obsessions as they appear across the whole body of his work, including his novels and his advertisements, since these contribute to the construction of his authorial voice. I will examine his films, and through textual analysis, I will analyse his style, the common elements throughout his filmic work, and conclude by questioning what makes him an auteur and what he aimed to do with his work.

Although Nikolaidis has been acknowledged as a postmodern filmmaker,¹ his work has not yet been analysed as pastiche. Examining Nikolaidis's work as pastiche is one of the main aims of this thesis. All of Nikolaidis's filmic work is pastiche, including his advertisements. Nikolaidis's great admiration for popular culture in general and rock 'n' roll in particular, as well as his appreciation of classical Hollywood cinema and the Golden Age of Hollywood (from the late 1920s until early 1960s), and film noir specifically, are explicitly projected in his work, which pastiches the aforementioned elements. Through his films, Nikolaidis recreates the cinema and the rock 'n' roll cultures that fascinated him.

However, Nikolaidis alters the meanings of the pastiche films and appropriates them to express his own concerns and ideas, adding layers of meaning to the film text. Nikolaidis's pastiche does not show a stylised past through void nostalgia. On the contrary, Nikolaidis's nostalgia for the past is always accompanied by his anxiety for the bleak future, a future rendered desolate by authoritative regimes that discourage any sort of rebellion. Therefore, another basic aim of this thesis with regards to pastiche is to examine how Nikolaidis's work contradicts Fredric Jameson's notion of pastiche² while abiding rather to Richard Dyer's understanding of pastiche.³

Nikolaidis's cinema can be said to be elitist⁴ since cine-literacy is a basic prerequisite for fully comprehending and appreciating Nikolaidis's films. This thesis shows how Nikolaidis used popular culture elements in order to create rather unpopular films in terms of their reception. In each of Nikolaidis's films, I aim to examine how the filmmaker pastiches popular culture which results in a new filmic text. And although *The Wretches are Still Singing* and *Sweet Bunch* were very popular films in late 1970s, early 1980s, Nikolaidis's following films found a very small audience. As part of this conversation about the popular, I aim to examine Nikolaidis's relation to rock 'n' roll culture and to film noir.

Furthermore, since gender representation in general and female representation in particular in Greek cinema is extremely neglected,⁵ I aim to attempt to bridge existing gaps in gender representation in Greek Film Studies. However, Nikolaidis's representation of women differs significantly from the majority of Greek cinema, mainly because most of his films take place in imaginary worlds, in contrast to the majority of the Greek films.

¹ More about this to follow in Chapter 3.

² Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', in *New Left Review* (I/146, July-August, 1984).

³ Richard Dyer, *Pastiche*, (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴ For Dyer, pastiche can be considered elitist, as the filmmakers exclude a part of the audience that does not understand the dialogue that the filmmaker constitutes with the original films or genres. Richard Dyer

⁵ As will be examined in Chapter 3.

Thus female representation is another important element in this consideration of Nikolaidis's cinema as auteur cinema. Female representation goes hand in hand with pastiche, since through women Nikolaidis pastiches classic film noir's femme fatale. Although I claim that misogynistic elements are traced in Nikolaidis's strategies of female representation, this fact does not annul the filmmaker's great talent, and the fact that his films are worth to be examined; indeed I claim that there is no other similar filmmaker in Greek cinema. His methodical use of pastiche is unique for Greek cinema, and I wish to draw out this uniqueness and inform more people about this understudied filmmaker.

1.2 Methodology and Thesis Structure

This thesis will examine Nikolaidis as an auteur, who is very consistent in terms of style and topics, but highly inconsistent in the way he represents himself to the press and to the public. I will also examine how the filmmaker represents women in his films, as I claim that women play a paramount role in his work and contribute to the formation of his authorial signature. I argue that in order for Nikolaidis's work to be fully comprehended, his oeuvre should be examined as a whole (his films, books and advertisements) but also, his background and personality should be taken into account. Since his work is highly autobiographical, I will undertake a kind of psychobiographical approach to Nikolaidis's work in order to disclose biographical elements of the filmmaker that shed light into his filmmaking choices, as well as help towards a better understanding of Nikolaidis's objectives. The objective of psychobiography is the understanding of the people under examination as creative, complicated, contradictory individuals, such as artists, writers, and politicians.⁶ Psychobiography can focus on psychological and psychoanalytic aspects (and it has been used as an approach to psychology), but it is also a research approach to creativity, and focuses on the subject's overt behaviours. In the same vein, I argue that, although my aim is not to create a biography on Nikolaidis, a kind of a psychobiographical approach will allow me to investigate biographical elements, which are vital for the understanding of the filmmaker's oeuvre.

Therefore, this thesis will focus on Nikolaidis's eight feature films, but I will also very briefly examine his books and some of the television advertisements he has created, in order to bring together elements that showcase both his above-mentioned consistency and inconsistency. In addition, I will use some extra-textual material, such as Nikolaidis's interviews, interviews of others about the filmmaker, reviews, and reports, in order to

⁶ William Todd Schultz, *Handbook of Psychobiography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 3.

highlight his views and comment on his controversial persona. For the purpose of this study, I chose to include all of Nikolaidis's feature films, but to leave out his short film *Lacrimae Rerum* (1962), his medium length film *Anef Oron/Unconditionally* (1968) and *To Koritsi me tis Valitses/Sugar Three* (1993), a television film he made for ANT1 channel, as part of a project for improving the programme of Greek television. I will also leave out the theatrical play *Ta Efta Koutia tis Pandoras/Pandora's Seven Boxes* he directed.

The films and the play that I have omitted from my study share characteristics with Nikolaidis's feature films, but there are several reasons why I have chosen to not focus on these pieces of work. *Lacrimae Rerum* is an experimental film with no narrative, thus it diverges from the rest of Nikolaidis's filmography and cannot be categorised in any of the sections of this thesis. Though it could be combined with *Unconditionally*, which is Nikolaidis's second filmic work, *Unconditionally's* copyright belongs to Nikolaidis's ex-wife, who has refused to circulate the film. *Sugar Three* is a film that also differs from the rest of Nikolaidis's filmography because it includes specifically televisual aesthetics that are not found in his other films. Furthermore, Nikolaidis has characterised this film a mistake.⁷ *Pandora's Seven Boxes* will not be analysed in this thesis not only because it is a theatrical play and not a film, but because the script was not written by Nikolaidis, but by Vasilis Ziogas, and it is his only piece of work where Nikolaidis did not have full control. Some of this work will be mentioned selectively in my thesis in an effort to strengthen my arguments with regards to the commonalities in Nikolaidis's oeuvre. However, I will consider them as a possible site for future research.

I will be analysing eight feature films: *Evridiki BA 2037/Euridice BA 2037*⁸ (1975), *Ta Kourelia Tragoudane Akoma/The Wretches Are Still Singing* (1979), *Glykia Simoria/Sweet Bunch* (1983), *Proini Peripolos/Morning Patrol* (1987), *Singapore Sling* (1990), *Tha Se Do stin Kolasi, Agapi Mou/See You in Hell, My Darling* (1999), *O Chamenos Ta Perni Ola/Loser Takes All* (2002) and *The Zero Years* (2005). I have chosen not to analyse the films in chronological order, since I argue that Nikolaidis's work resists chronology, but to approach them thematically.

When Nikolaidis was creating his films, he did not have it in mind that he was making separate sections of work.⁹ Nevertheless in 2006, after having filmed all of his

⁷ 'The Girl with the Suitcases', Nikos Nikolaidis, Viewed 20 September 2014, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/mainenglish/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=4.

⁸ The title most frequently appears as *Euridice BA 2037* instead of *Euridice BA 2037*, but I use the latter because this is how it is heard in the film.

⁹ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Ilias Fragkoulis, YouTube video, Viewed 1 September 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u4PbFZmNUs>.

films and after having announced that he was tired and would not be making films anymore¹⁰ (which indeed happened since he died in 2007) he categorised his work in thematic sections.¹¹ The first trilogy is *To Schima tou Efialti pou Erchete/The Shape of the Coming Nightmare* and consists of *Euridice BA 2037*, *Morning Patrol* and *The Zero Years*. The diptych *Aftoi pou Agapisan Ena Ptoma/Those Who Loved A Corpse* consists of *Singapore Sling*, which is subtitled *O Anthropos pou Agapise Ena Ptoma/The Man Who Fell in Love with A Corpse*, and *See You in Hell, My Darling*, subtitled *Ena Nekroromantzo/A Necroromance*. Finally, the last trilogy, *Ochi Pia Edo/Here No More*, consists of *The Wretches Are Still Singing*, *Sweet Bunch* and *Loser Takes All*.

I have structured my thesis according to these sections. This allows me to draw out thematic and stylistic commonalities through my analysis of these films. Although the films are categorised in two trilogies and a diptych, since this categorisation was not intended from the very beginning, the films also stand independently. The films in the sections do not share actors, but common elements are traced in all of them. I further argue that the films are referring to each other.

In order to examine the films, I will engage with close textual analysis in order to highlight their main points, and to find commonalities within Nikolaidis's body of work. I will further address these commonalities by linking them together in my conclusion. Because the films are a pastiche of film genres, styles, and particular films, I will provide comparisons between the pastiche films and Nikolaidis's new filmic texts, in order to stress Nikolaidis's use of pastiche, to elucidate its use and to link this to my arguments regarding his distinctive filmic style and his strategies of female representation.

This introductory chapter, Chapter 1, outlines the origins, aims, structure and methodology of this research project. Before proceeding to my individual case study chapters, I include two chapters that provide a historical mapping of Nikolaidis's cinema, examine the filmmaker's stance towards Greek cinema and cinema in general. These two contextualising chapters will provide the framework for analysing Nikolaidis's work and mapping out his authorial signature. Specifically, Chapter 2 aims at locating Nikolaidis's work within the Greek cinematic discourse. A brief history of Greek cinema is provided, in order to give an overview of Greek cinema and help locate Nikolaidis's work within it. In this history, I choose to stress elements that are linked to Nikolaidis, such as the history of the Thessaloniki Film Festival and of the 'Second Balcony', which will allow me to offer a

¹⁰ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Dimitra Economou, *Cinemainfo*, Viewed 1 September 2014, <http://www.cinemainfo.gr/directors/interviews/nikosnikolaidis/index.html>.

¹¹ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with The Movieworld Team, 9 February 2009. BPA.

more concise and complete profile of the filmmaker and his work, including those consistencies and inconsistencies as mentioned earlier.

Chapter 2 also briefly provides information regarding Nikolaidis's background, which is significant since his work is largely autobiographical. I then situate Nikolaidis within the Greek Film Studies by engaging with debates surrounding his style and cinema by various scholars and critics, and by examining the influence of American culture on his work. I also examine the importance of 'Greekness' in Greek cinema and reveal how Nikolaidis's films are not characterised by this brand of 'Greekness'. The significance of funding in Nikolaidis's work is also explored in conjunction with his views on advertising, since the filmmaker worked in advertisements in order to fund his films. The connections between advertising, 'New Greek Cinema' and 'independent' Greek cinema are also highlighted. Finally, Chapter 2 examines Nikolaidis's TFF experience in order to shed light on his contradictory persona but also to stress my arguments for understanding Nikolaidis's work in terms of notions of authorship.

Chapter 3 initially locates Nikolaidis's influences in his novels and advertisements in order to stress the interdependence of his oeuvre. References are made to the rock 'n' roll culture that has shaped his work, and it is examined in order to trace its elements within Nikolaidis's work. In Chapter 3 then I explain why I use a psychobiographical approach over other approaches to auteur cinema, and then I provide a literature review that focuses on Nikolaidis's style. In this literature review, I examine how Nikolaidis's pastiche work does not follow Jameson's notion of pastiche but rather abides by Dyer's understanding of pastiche. A literature review on the sources on Nikolaidis's work and on female representation in Greek cinema follows, together with an overview of female representation in the filmmaker's work. The latter shows that the existing literature on female representation in Greek cinema cannot contribute to my research, since it mostly addresses national cinema, which I argue is not formative of Nikolaidis's work; thus I then offer a literature review of the bibliography I will be using for my research, which is mainly linked to the *femmes fatales* of classic noir.

In Chapter 4 I begin my film analysis with the trilogy *TSOTCN*. Following the chapter's introduction, the thesis takes the form of three analysis subchapters for the three films. I begin by analysing *EBA* followed by *MP* and *TZY*. In each of the film analyses, I provide subsequent subchapters that identify the main points of the films, starting with a discussion about the style of each film and ending with female representation. As early as this chapter it starts becoming clear that Nikolaidis perpetuates and recycles certain props and motifs, and his use of pastiche becomes explicit.

Similarly, in Chapter 5 I examine the diptych *TWLAC*, and the thesis here takes the form of two analysis subchapters to examine *SS* and *SYIHMD*. Again, my analysis of each film is framed through the use of subsequent subchapters that identify the main points. In this diptych, because of the great commonalities of the films and because each film pastiches two original films from the 1940s and the 1950s, the subchapters are based on similar features, allowing me to pinpoint the common elements of these two films. Female representation in this diptych is one of the films' main topics, thus the subsequent subchapters mainly focus on the relationship of the films' protagonists.

In Chapter 6, I analyse the *HNM* trilogy, and the thesis again takes the form of three subchapters, one for each film: *TWASS*, *SB*, *LTA*. Each film is again divided into subsequent subchapters according to the key topics encountered in the films. This trilogy differs from the rest of Nikolaidis's films because the narratives take place in more tangible worlds than the fictional worlds that the previous chapters describe. This point of difference has an impact on female representation as well as the way pastiche is used in this trilogy.

Chapter 7 consists of my conclusion, which will bring together all of the threads identified in the chapters and will encapsulate Nikolaidis's style, provide my arguments about his use of pastiche altogether, and finally combine the instances to show that Nikolaidis's female representation is indeed contradictory and misogynistic.

Chapter 2: Nikolaidis in Context

2.1 A Brief History of Greek Cinema

2.1.1 Early Cinema in Greece and the ‘Old Greek Cinema’

The beginning of Greek cinema can be said to coincide with the birth of cinema more generally. The first film created in Greece was a short film of the Athens 1906 Intercalated Games. Early Greek films dealt mainly with either simple romantic stories or familiar topics, and were aimed at being easily identifiable by Greek audiences. The first Greek feature film, *Golfo* (Kostas Bachatoris, 1914), was a ‘foustanella’¹ film about the love-story of a rural couple. Films dealing with topics related to the Christian religion, for instance *O Anifiros tou Golgotha/The Uphill of Golgotha* (Dimos Vratsanos, 1917), were common as well as films based on ancient Greek tragedies, such as *Promitheas Desmotis/Prometheus Bound* (Dimitris Gaziadis, 1927). The influences of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton can also be seen in the prominence of the slapstick comedy in early Greek cinema.²

Until the end of World War II, the Greek film industry did not produce many films nor films of high quality, and this is attributed to a lack of funds and technical knowledge. Only after 1945 did the Greek film industry begin to take shape with the rise of the so-called ‘Old Greek Cinema’ (‘Palios Ellinikos Kinimatografos’ or PEK as it is widely referred to). Until 1943, approximately two films were produced per year. In 1963, there was an increase of up to 70 Greek films per year.³ The 1960s are considered PEK’s ‘Golden Age’: there is evidence of a significant increase in film production from 1958, when only 24 films were produced, to 1960, when 62 films were produced, to 1968, when there was a peak in film production with 192 films.⁴

¹ Foustanella is a traditional male skirt worn in Greece until the 1890s. The ‘foustanella’ films were the mountain films dealing with either real or fictional rural heroes, or with rural families’ troubles. [Christos Dermentzopoulos, ‘Paradosi ke Neoterikotita ston Elliniko Kinimatografo: I Tenies Orinis Foustanelas’/‘Tradition and Modernity in Greek Cinema: The Mountain Foustanella Films’, in *Ksanavlepontas ton Palio Elliniko Kinimatografo/Rewatching the Old Greek Cinema*, (Athens: Kentro Optikoakoustikon Meleton, 2002), 82]

² Villar and Michail Michail of Michail were its main representatives.

³ Dimitris Stavrakas, ‘Poria ke Prooptikes tou Ellinikou Kinimatografou’/‘Course and Perspectives of Greek Cinema’, in *Ellinikos Kinimatografos/Greek Cinema*, no. 3-4 (January/February 1967), 5-12.

⁴ *Statistics on Film and Cinema 1955-1977*, (Paris: UNESCO, 1981), 32-33.

PEK was not financially supported by the state. The censorship and the adverse legislation, were additional burdens to its progress.⁵ PEK was widely perceived to form a public spectacle rather than a national identity.⁶ This harsh accusation for the ‘traditional cinema’, or ‘commercial cinema’⁷ of PEK being restricted to a form of entertainment was quite common among film critics. At the same time, it is clear the PEK has been instrumental to the formation of a public culture in Greece.

The majority of the films after the 1950s were the product of film production companies. The producers held absolute authority and the right to get involved in every detail of the film. The director was either also the producer, or was receiving part of the money the film would be making, or was getting a fixed salary.⁸ The majority of the companies were producing five colour films per year, which were expensive, and seven black and white ones; the money from the black and white ones would cover any losses that the colour ones might make.⁹ These films were largely genre cinema, since the producers had identified that genres were quite popular to the Greek audience. They tended to use well-known stars to attract viewers and they are characterised by commonality and homogeneity in topics and aesthetics.¹⁰

Finos Film was one of the most important film production companies in Greece. From 1943 to 1977, Finos Film produced a total of 186 films which were largely successful, both financially and in terms of public reception. Finos Film was producing fourteen films per year, which were musicals, melodramas and comedies, in order to appeal to a broad public and make large profits.¹¹ People who worked in Finos considered their work to be a form of schooling, since there they were able to learn and practise their filmmaking skills.¹² In 1968, Finos Film and Karagiannis Films¹³ were controlling 50% of the films screened in Greece;¹⁴ however, in 1968 and 1969, ticket sales dropped dramatically, and this paved the way for the forthcoming change and the rise of a new wave in Greek cinema. This decrease in cinema-going was mainly due to the emergence of

⁵ Christos Demertzopoulos, ‘O Ellinikos Laikos Kinimatografos: (1950-1975)’/‘Public Greek Cinema: (1950-1975)’, in *Utopia* 90 (2010), Viewed 29 October 2011, <http://u-topia.gr/issues/90/141>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Theodoros Angelopoulos, ‘Poria pros Ena Aveveo Mellon’/‘Course to an Uncertain Future’, in *Syγχρονos Kinimatografos/Contemporary Cinema*, no. 3, (November 1969), 20.

⁸ Takis Papagiannidis, ‘Ta Standar tou Ellinikou Cinema’/‘The Standards of Greek Cinema’, in *Syγχρονos Kinimatografos/Contemporary Cinema*, no 4 (December/January 1969-1970), 7.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ ‘Paraskinio’, *Digital ERT Archive*, Viewed 10 October 2011, <http://www.ert-archives.gr/V3/public/main/page-assetview.aspx?tid=0000068944&tsz=0&autostart=0>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Another big film production company.

¹⁴ Papagiannidis, ‘Standards Greek Cinema’, 9.

television in Greece,¹⁵ which became a central form of entertainment for Greek audiences and replaced their dependence on the cinema. This shift in the prominence of cinema led to the emergence of the ‘New Greek Cinema’.

2.1.2 The Rise of the ‘New Greek Cinema’

After 1950, there emerged an independent kind of cinema that did not depend on private companies for funding and promotion, but was initially self-funded, and dealt with socio-political problems facing Greece at that time. PEK’s borders with this new kind of cinema, the ‘New Greek Cinema’ (‘Neos Ellinikos Kinimatografos’ or NEK, as it is widely referred to) are not clear, and it can be claimed that the two film currents co-existed for some time. For instance, *Pikro Psomi/Bitter Bread* (Grigoris Grigoriou), and *Kiriakatiko Ksipnima/Windfall in Athens* (Michalis Cacoyannis) were filmed in 1951 and 1953, respectively, at the same time that PEK films were still being produced. However, these two films move beyond the entertainment focus of PEK to portray Greece of the time. With these films as precursors to a ‘quality’ cinema with a more realistic approach, the filmmakers shifted Greek cinema-goers’ expectations. This allowed NEK to take on a hegemonic position within the Greek film industry in the early 1970s.

A significant step towards this change was the publication of the *Ellinikos Kinimatografos/Greek Cinema* magazine in 1966 by a team of directors and film critics.¹⁶ The magazine was aimed at familiarising people with the cinemas of other countries and with popular film theories that were emerging at the time.¹⁷ It was also intended to open up a discourse surrounding the perspectives and the future of cinema in Greece, and to give new directors the opportunity to write about art.¹⁸ The editors claimed that the problem in Greek cinema was the lack of objective information about the trends of world cinema.¹⁹

In 1967, the political scene of Greece changed dramatically with the imposition of the Military Junta of 1967-1974. Many filmmakers of this time left Greece because they were unable to endure the restrictive regime. Filmmakers that stayed in Greece wanted to express their resistance and discomfort towards the political situation. They desired to make films that presented current-day Greece in realistic settings, devoid of the

¹⁵ See for instance Maria Chalkou, ‘A New cinema of ‘emancipation’: Tendencies of Independence in Greek Cinema of the 2000s’, *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture*, no. 3.2 (2012), 246.

¹⁶ The team consisted of Fotis Alexiou, Pavlos Zannas, Ninos Mikelidis, Yannis Bakoyannopoulos, Vasilis Rafailidis.

¹⁷ Introduction to *Ellinikos Kinimatografos/Greek Cinema*, no. 1 (October 1966), 1-2.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

‘embellishment’ that the PEK’s ‘commercial films’ were subjected to.²⁰ Due to the lack of funds, these filmmakers started working in teams in order to create short films, helping each other and undertaking different roles in a form of labour exchange. As Papagiannidis writes, the appearance of these ‘quality’ short films introduces a division between ‘commercial’ films – the PEK films – and ‘free’ films – the independent work of the new filmmakers.²¹

As a result, the topics and the aesthetics of Greek films started to change. These changes followed the emergence of cinematic movements and trends that were taking place more broadly with regards to European Cinema, such as the Nouvelle Vague, and the cinema of Antonioni and Pasolini, thus suggesting that Greek filmmakers were influenced by them. However, the focus in NEK was on the ‘national’. NEK films aimed to present history as ‘national time that is enlightened by the troubles of today so as for an identity, a historic trust and a historic vision to be created.’²² Although the urge for historical and political reflection had started in 1967, with Dimos Theos’s *Kierion* (1967/1974), the dictatorship’s censorship banned it with the result that it was only screened after the fall of the Junta. The collaboration between many new Greek filmmakers, regardless their stylistic differences, signifies the importance of *Kierion* in Greek cinema history.²³

Angelopoulos’s *Anaparastasi/Reconstruction* (1970) aims to present history as accurately as possible and is regarded to note the transition from PEK to NEK, although the border between the two phases remain vague. *Reconstruction* has been considered to signify the rise of a new cinema, the most significant characteristic of which was ‘the absolute dominance of the director-creator over their product which is now thought to be highly artistic.’²⁴ After *Reconstruction*, more filmmakers started creating films that focused on political, social and existential topics, especially after the fall of the Junta.²⁵

A noteworthy change in the 1980s that is significant with regards to the Greek film industry was the transfer of the responsibility of the institution of cinema from the Ministry of Industry to the Ministry of Culture. Through this shift, cinema began to be officially treated as a cultural institution rather than an industry.²⁶ The Greek Film Centre (GFC) also began to award grants that were aimed at the ‘protection, support and development of the

²⁰ Takis Papagiannidis qtd. in Yannis Soldatos, *Istoria tou Ellinikou Kinimatografou/History of Greek Cinema*, vol. 4, (Athens: Egokeros, 1991), 10.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Dimos Theos, qtd. in Soldatos. Ibid.

²³ Filmmakers such as Angelopoulos, Voulgaris, Tonia Marketaki, Nikolaidis and many more, assisted in *Kierion*’s shootings and appeared as supporting actors.

²⁴ Ibid., 102.

²⁵ Such as Alexis Damianos (*Evdokia*, 1971) and Voulgaris (*To Proxenio tis Annas/The Match-Making of Anna*, 1974).

²⁶ *Greek Film Centre*, Viewed 20 September 2012, http://www.gfc.gr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=77&Itemid=43.

cinematic art in Greece', as well as at the 'projection, spread and promotion of the cinematic production both in Greece and abroad.'²⁷ Although the NEK films regenerated Greek cinema's topics, Greek cinema remained second to television, which started being accessible in Greece during the second half of the 1960s and started transmitting films and series in the beginning of the 1970s.²⁸

2.1.3 From the 'New' to the 'Contemporary Greek Cinema'

The critics in the beginning of the 1970s celebrated the NEK films and considered them 'quality' cinema.²⁹ Yet mainstream audiences failed to identify with this new auteur cinema. Consequently, the public stopped going to the cinema, leading to a dramatic drop in ticket sales. The NEK filmmakers thus decided to revive the 'commercial' films by returning to genres. The films that were originally produced followed genre conventions both in terms of style and theme. However, their efforts to bring the audience back into the cinemas remained largely futile.

Only a few films were produced in the 1980s, mainly by the already well-established filmmakers of the previous decade. The public seemed not to be interested in this new kind of cinema and along with the gradual appearance of the private television channels and the noted rise in films released exclusively in VHS maintained that the audience stayed away from the cinemas.³⁰ The 1990s bore witness to on-going efforts for the building of a cinema that would attract audiences while also showing a concern for highlighting issues in contemporary Greece. This cinema, so-called 'Contemporary Greek Cinema' ('Sygchronos Ellinikos Kinimatografos', referred to as SEK), is a 'narrative-centred, genre-based and thematically accessible cinema.'³¹ However, as Lydia Papadimitriou writes, 'the term 'contemporary' to characterise this period is undoubtedly problematic as this is clearly a temporary temporal designation – what is contemporary now will soon cease to be so.'³²

Many films have been produced since the early 1990s, the majority of which were low budget since the GFC usually awarded higher funding grants to films that were

²⁷The GFC was established in the 1970s and was working under the name 'General of Cinematic Enterprises' as a subsidiary company of the Hellenic Industrial Development Bank, subsidising an extremely limited number of films. Ibid.

²⁸ See Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of Greek Cinema* (London: Continuum, 2012), 192.

²⁹ As seen for instance Angelopoulos, 'Uncertain Future', 23.

³⁰ See Karalis, *History*, 192.

³¹ Lydia Papadimitriou. 'Greek Film Studies Today: In Search for Identity', in *Kambos: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek*, no. 17, (2009), 70.

³² Ibid., 71.

guaranteed to be commercially successful before even being filmed.³³ The filmmakers whose scripts were not approved by the GFC looked for alternative ways to fund their films. The most common of these was to find funding through the advertising industry, a common practice since the 1970s. Private television stations also started funding films. The first film of the 1990s to be considered a ‘blockbuster’ for the Greek market was *Safe Sex* (Thanasis Papathanasiou, Michalis Reppas) in 1999, was not funded by the GFC, and had over one million ticket sales.³⁴ Since *Safe Sex*, there have been many successful Greek films with high ticket sales, the majority of which are comedies that address at the national market. These films were funded by television channels, satellite channels, the state television channels, and distributors/exhibitors who branched out into production, and small private Greek companies.³⁵

Just before the break of the Greek financial crisis in 2009, Yorgos Lanthimos’s *Kynodontas/Dogtooth*, and later Athina Rachel Tsangari’s *Attenberg* (2010), signalled the beginning of a new wave in Greek cinema. The wave has been firstly characterised by Anglophone film reviewers as ‘Weird Greek Cinema’,³⁶ and has been named ‘New Greek Current’³⁷ by Greek reviewers. The minimal or non-existent budget of state sources for funding films led the filmmakers of this wave to collaborate in order to produce their films, and this can be compared to the NEK filmmakers’ labour exchange system. The ‘weirdness’ in this wave lies, I argue, not so much in the films’ topics (familial and societal crisis), but mostly on their aesthetics. These films, which are co-productions, circulate to international film festivals worldwide, and are available internationally in many digital forms, has put Greek cinema ‘on the map’ – a fact that can be confirmed by *Dogtooth*’s Oscar nomination in 2010.

2.1.4 The Thessaloniki Film Festival and the ‘Second Balcony’

The Thessaloniki Film Festival (TFF) plays a central role in the history of Greek cinema since it is the oldest and most significant film festival in Greece. The festival and the ‘Second Balcony’ also play an important role in comprehending Nikolaidis’s contradictory persona and his stance in the Greek cinematic discourse. In 1960, for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Thessaloniki International Fair, a series of

³³ As for example Angelopoulos’s and Voulgaris’s films.

³⁴ Lydia Papadimitriou, ‘The National and the Transnational in the Contemporary Greek Cinema’, in *New Review of Film and Television Studies* (2011), 498.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Steve Rose, ‘*Attenberg*, *Dogtooth* and the Weird Wave of Greek Cinema’, *The Guardian*, 27 August 2011, Viewed 2 April 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/aug/27/attenberg-dogtooth-greece-cinema>.

³⁷ Michael Demopoulos, ‘Neo Ema Kyla stis Fleves tou Ellinikou Cinema’/‘New Blood Flows in the Veins of Greek Cinema’, *Cinema*, 219 (2011), 52.

cultural events dedicated to cinema in Thessaloniki, entitled 'Week of Greek Cinema', was launched in collaboration with the Cinema Club of the Macedonian Artistic Company 'Art'.³⁸ This event occurred after Pavlos Zannas, the club's president, had suggested that the foundation of a Greek and international film festival that would have an explicitly Greek character, would be recognised as international and would be the 'best projection of our cinema production abroad'.³⁹

The first year of the festival had a competition section for Greek feature and short films and a retrospective on Greek cinema from 1955 to 1960. In 1962, a number of foreign films were added to the festival programme but did not participate in the competition. This remained the case until 1966, when 'Week of Greek Cinema' was renamed 'Greek Film Festival'. The foreign films became part of the competition scheme, but were entered into a different competition than the Greek films were in. This was because, as Zannas claims, this was the only way to project Greek cinema abroad.⁴⁰

The year 1967 was historically crucial for Greece due to the imposition of the dictatorship. The 8th Greek Film Festival was strongly affected by this dictatorship, which censored the films and limited the number of film entries.⁴¹ The disapproval of the overall situation during the Junta was mainly expressed by the people sitting in the 'Second Balcony' ('Defteros' or 'B Exostis') of the theatre of the Society of Macedonian Studies that hosted the festival at the time. Due to its nonconformity, the Second Balcony became an inseparable part of the history of the TFF.

The Balcony's audience consisted mainly of filmmakers, students and young people since the tickets for these seats were cheaper. The Balcony's reactions initially were a spontaneous expression of the people's political concerns, and thus the spectators sitting there were often referred to as 'rude, uneducated and ungrateful'.⁴² However, they gradually gained power and were able to demand rights as an audience for the festival to the organisers. The Second Balcony's most important period can be said to be 1974, when the Greek Film Festival was on two months after the fall of the Military Junta, and the banned films were finally screened. This particular festival is known as the 'Festival of Rebellion'⁴³ since the filmmakers reclaimed their rights and the audience demanded rights.

³⁸ Despoina Mouzaki, ed., *50 Years Thessaloniki Film Festival, 1960-2009*, (Thessaloniki: Ianos Press and Thessaloniki Film Festival, 2009), 107.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 125.

⁴¹ *Thessaloniki Film Festival*, Viewed 2 April 2014, <http://www.filmfestival.gr/default.aspx?lang=el-GR&page=650&tiff=8>.

⁴² Mouzaki, *50 Years*, 185.

⁴³ Karalis, *History*, 170.

This rebellion returned in the festival in 1975. That year, the Balcony's audience protested for a 'People's Festival', demanding uncensored films⁴⁴ and cheaper tickets.⁴⁵ The Balcony revolted and obstructed the screening of a short film being projected when the police arrested a member of the Balcony's audience.⁴⁶ With the transition from PEK to NEK, the Second Balcony targeted left-wing filmmakers whose films openly and repeatedly addressed their political leanings. According to Nikos Zervos,⁴⁷ the people of Balcony were politically independent and were reacting against the obsession with the political parties.⁴⁸ The circulation of the fanzine *CINE 7* that the people of the Balcony published themselves played a paramount role in the formation of the Balcony's identity. Their cinephilic exuberance generated a second fanzine in 1987, *Exostis*, which was distributed for free.

The gradual dissolution of the Second Balcony started in 1988 during the 29th Greek Film Festival, when people resorted to extremities, such as lowering scarecrows and coffins symbolising the death of the Greek cinema.⁴⁹ *CINE 7* assumed responsibility, and agreed on conditions for the amelioration of the relationship between the festival and the Balcony.⁵⁰ The end of the Second Balcony, though, was not far, as in 1992 the festival became international, which left little room for reactions.

After the festival changed its name to Thessaloniki International Film Festival in 1992, Greek and foreign films participated alongside one another in the same competition scheme. An extra competition was added for only Greek films.⁵¹ A series of sub-competitions appeared in the following years that categorised the festival films according to their topics or their country of origin.⁵² Moreover, the first Cinema Museum in Greece was founded in Thessaloniki, and more cinema theatres were constructed for the festival, named after three NEK filmmakers – Frida Liapa, Tonia Marketaki, Stavros Tornes – and after John Cassavetes.

⁴⁴ Despoina Pavlaki, 'Eksostis B: To Limma pou Simadepse to Neoelliniko Kinimatografiko Leksiko'/'Second Balcony: The Lemma that Marked the Modern Greek Cinematic Dictionary', *Cinema*, Viewed 16 April 2014, <http://www.e-go.gr/cinemag/summary1.asp?catid=10169&subid=2&pubid=617891>.

⁴⁵ Soldatos, *History*, 260.

⁴⁶ Pavlaki, 'Second Balcony'.

⁴⁷ A filmmaker starting his carrer at the time.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Mouzaki, *50 Years*, 157.

⁵² Such as *New Horizons* (1992) and *Gazes at the Balkans* (1994).

2.2 Nikolaidis and the Greek Cinematic Discourse

2.2.1 Nikolaidis's Background

Nikolaidis's background is directly linked to his introverted cinema. His ideology and political ideas, largely shaped by his adolescent years, have influenced his oeuvre and can be traced across his books, films and advertisements. Nikolaidis's generation was a troubled generation since it went through a plethora of socio-political transitions and was restricted by the orthodox religion, the family and the state. Nikolaidis experienced World War II, the Greek Civil War of 1946-1949, the Greek Military Junta of 1967-1974, the Turkish Invasion in Cyprus in 1974, and the *Metapolitefsi* after the fall of the Junta. Therefore, the filmmaker believed that 'it is simply a matter of well positioned unfortunate coincidental events'⁵³ for someone to belong to his generation, which was born already old.⁵⁴

Nikolaidis was born in 1939 in Exarchia, Athens, just before World War II broke out. He has stated that he has been scarred for life by the images of war and murder that he witnessed from his own window.⁵⁵ Moreover, the area where he was born and brought up is an avant-garde neighbourhood that always hosted intellectuals and political radicals, and was a place where anti-fascists and anarchists gathered. Nikolaidis's mother died when he was four years old⁵⁶ and the filmmaker and his younger brother were left under their father's protection,⁵⁷ who was passionate about literature and cinema, and transferred these passions to the filmmaker.

Nikolaidis's body of work is highly influenced by his personal experiences and political ideologies. Nikolaidis claims that his cinema is mostly autobiographical because he is a weak scriptwriter and unable to fabricate stories.⁵⁸ His adolescent years have shaped his political beliefs, and I believe that this is where his influences that he would later on infuse into his oeuvre originate, a fact that leads me to adopt this psychobiographical approach to Nikolaidis's work. Antifascism, rock 'n' roll culture and American films have influenced Nikolaidis as a filmmaker and as a writer, and he has incorporated these elements in his novels, films and advertisements. His antifascist ideology is not related to a specific regime, but is a general antiauthoritarian ideology against any kind of authority. In

⁵³ Nikos Nikolaidis, *Pigs in the Air*, (Athens: Athens Voice, 2011), 239.

⁵⁴ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Antonis Kokkinos, in Mimis Tsakoniatas, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, (Athens: Egokeros, 2007), 38.

⁵⁵ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Nikos Kavvadias, in *Odos Panos/Panos Street* (May/June 1991), 100.

⁵⁶ His books frequently mention his mother's death. For instance, in *PITA*, Nikolaidis describes the protagonist's mother's death by cancer (Nikolaidis, *Pigs*, 210-211). The description is based on how Nikolaidis's mother died (Marie-Louise Bartholomew, in discussion with the author, December 2011).

⁵⁷ A public servant in the Ministry of Coordination.

⁵⁸ Nikolaidis, interview with Kavvadias, 104.

EBA the target becomes explicitly the Greek Military Junta, since it was filmed during this period of time, but the rest of Nikolaidis's films target any given authoritative regime.⁵⁹ Therefore, when I refer to the state and fascism in Nikolaidis's films, I will be referring to authoritative regimes in general, and not to specific authorities, unless otherwise stated.

In 1959, Nikolaidis finished high school and went to Graz, Austria, to study architecture. However, he abandoned his studies as soon as he realised that he should be making films instead.⁶⁰ Upon his return to Greece, he studied fine arts in the Vakalo School, as he believed that drawing and cinema are interconnected in terms of framing, lighting and colour. Nikolaidis claimed that he could not create a film without drawing first.⁶¹ Simultaneously, he studied filmmaking at Stavrakou Film School, one of two schools in Greece at that time where students were able to study cinema.

Nikolaidis started his film career in the 1960s. His first experience with the camera was in 1961, when he worked as a general assistant for film director Vasilis Georgiadis on the film *I Katara tis Manas/The Mother's Curse*. Nikolaidis resigned from his post due to a disagreement with the crew, but he stayed on the set to watch how the film was made, as he was learning more through this process than he ever did from the film school.⁶² In the 1960s, he worked on his own films, *Lacrimae Rerum* and *Unconditionally*, and also published his collection of short stories *I Timvorichoi/The Grave Diggers* (1964). During these years, he worked as an assistant director for films such as *Diamanto, I Ponemeni Tseligopoula/Diamanto, The Miserable Rich Shepherd* (Panayotis Konstantinou, 1961), and wrote the screenplay for Finos Film's *Agapi gia Panta/Love Forever* (Vasilis Georgiadis, 1969). The experience of working for film companies turned him against these companies and he decided to make films that were not related to them.⁶³ In the meantime, he was married and divorced twice. His third marriage was to Marie-Louise Bartholomew

⁵⁹ Nikolaidis in his interviews used to characterise the state, regardless of the political party in power, as an enemy. See for instance Nikolaidis, interview with Tsakoniatis, in *Nikolaidis*, 34; Nikolaidis, interview with Kokkinos, in *Nikolaidis*, 229; Nikolaidis, interview with Triantafyllidis, *Billboard*.

⁶⁰ As he claims, he watched *Mr. Hulot's Holiday* (Jacques Tati, 1953) and his ability to read its hidden messages urged him to become a filmmaker; so he 'packed up and left for cinema.' Nikolaidis, interview with Tsakoniatis, in *Nikolaidis*, 47.

⁶¹ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Yannis Soldatos, YouTube, Viewed 16 June 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXdjusl0xr0>.

⁶² This experience is narrated in *A Hit in the Eye of Montezuma*, where he writes that in order to earn money, he worked as an assistant in a 'bucolic' or 'foustanella' drama. Nikos Nikolaidis, *A Hit in the Eye of Montezuma*, (New York: Greekworks.com. 2008), 378.

⁶³ Nikolaidis, interview with Kavvadias, 103.

in the early 1970s, who from then onwards was the Art, Set and Costume Director for all of his subsequent films as well as the producer on many of them.

After his two short films, Nikolaidis created his eight feature films and *Sugar Three*. He also wrote the novels *O Orgismenos Valkanios/The Angry Balkan* in 1977, *Ta Gourounia ston Anemo/Pigs in the Air* in 1992 and *Mia Stekia sto Mati tou Montezouma/A Hit in the Eye of Montezuma* in 2007,⁶⁴ and directed *Pandora's Seven Boxes*. He also directed over 200 advertisements, which provided the main source of funding for his feature films.

2.2.2 Nikolaidis in the Greek Cinematic Discourse

Nikolaidis has been active throughout the three distinctive periods of Greek cinema. *LR* and *Unconditionally* were filmed during PEK, *Euridice BA 2037*, *The Wretches Are Still Singing*, *Sweet Bunch* and *Morning Patrol* during NEK and the rest of his films during SEK. However, I argue that Nikolaidis's cinema does not fit well within these categories, due to the fact that he covered different topics and had distinctive aesthetics that were not shared by other films emerging at the same time. His introverted work differs significantly from the oeuvre of the rest of the Greek film auteurs, and bears no resemblance to any other work of his contemporaries, diverging from 'national' Greek cinema.⁶⁵ Papadimitriou argues that the notion of national Greek cinema has been connected to 'national self-designation and recognition, and a resistance to culturally imperialist models and industries (most specifically Hollywood).'⁶⁶ The notion of a 'national cinema' was the only accepted form of Greek cinema by film critics. Since there was no film education before the 1970s, the *Greek Cinema* magazine attempted to theorise national Greek cinema. The editorial board⁶⁷ described the 'quality' films as 'national Greek cinema' and considered 1967 to be its starting point, because, according to the board, the 1966's Week of Greek Cinema was the first time that a 'cinema-image' of the filmmaker's everyday problems was presented in 'quality' films through teamwork.⁶⁸

The strength of Greek cinema, which would allow it to flourish locally and internationally, was located in its ability to describe 'Greek reality', to return to people's

⁶⁴ Published post-mortem.

⁶⁵ For discussions about 'national cinemas' see Andrew Higson, 'The Concept of National Cinema', in *Screen* 30, no. 4 (1989); Susan Hayward, 'Framing National Cinemas', in *Cinema and Nation*, eds Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie, (London: Routledge, 2000), 88-102; Stephen Crofts, 'Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, no. 14, vol. 3, (1993), 49-67),

⁶⁶ Papadimitriou, 'National and Transnational', 493.

⁶⁷ Which consisted of intellectuals and filmmakers, like Rafailidis, Sfikas and Angelopoulos.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

roots, to be inspired by history and to reflect everyday ideas, problems, situations.⁶⁹ Maria Chalkou points out that national cinema had four prerequisites. It had to be ‘quality’ in terms of content and technique as well as authorial view; ‘real’ in its thematics and representational style; ‘popular’ in its content and familiarity to the audience; and finally ‘Greek’ in its theme and [...] form.⁷⁰

Thus, it becomes apparent that national cinema was in search of ‘Greekness’ at the time. Although the notion of Greekness has been significant, has been addressed repeatedly and has been connected to national identity, it remains a difficult term to define. Adamantia Pollis notes that “‘Greekness’ is considered an immutable given, an official ideology that articulates clear national boundaries.”⁷¹ She adds that protecting the survival of the ‘*éthnos*’ (nation) has become a distinctive Greek characteristic since Greece’s independence from Ottoman rule.⁷² Dimitris Tziovas notes that the term ‘Greekness’ started being used in 1851, however, the discussion about the notion of Greekness was introduced in the 1930s, when the so-called ‘Generation of the 30s’ emerged,⁷³ a term that refers to a group of modernist and avant-garde Greek writers.⁷⁴ Though Greek culture was always concerned with the ‘*éthnos*’, language and tradition,⁷⁵ the ‘Generation of the 30s’ gave a new meaning to Greekness, and started considering it as ‘an aesthetic convention that encourages the conversation between past and present, and combines the archaic myths with the historicity of the present.’⁷⁶ This type of Greekness aims to promote a Greek archetype with various facets, which however changed through time: from the mythic archetype in the 1930s to the historic archetype after World War II,⁷⁷ a shift has been noted that, as Tziovas claims, stems from the wartime hardships.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁰ Maria Chalkou, ‘Towards the Creation of ‘Quality’ Greek National Cinema in the 1960s’, Ph.D diss., The University of Glasgow, 2010, <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/id/eprint/1882>, 62.

⁷¹ Adamantia Pollis, ‘Greek National Identity: Religious Minorities, Rights, and European Norms’, in *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, no. 2, vol. 10 (October 1992), 178.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Dimitris Tziovas, ‘Ellinikotita & Genia tou ‘30’/‘Greekness & ‘30s Generation’, in *Cogito*, no. 6 (May 2007), 6.

⁷⁴ As for instance Odysseas Elytis, Giorgos Seferis, Yannis Ritsos, Nikos Kavvadias, and many more.

⁷⁵ Dimitris Dimitriadis, qtd in Gregory Jusdanis, ‘Is Postmodernism Possible outside the West? The Case of Greece’, in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, no. 11 (1987), 86.

⁷⁶ Tziovas, ‘Greekness’, 8.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

The end of World War II brings the quest for Greekness in Greek cinema.⁷⁸ As Achilleas Dellis notes, although there was a bifurcation into Greek left wing film critics and right wing critics, after 1948 both these oppositional groups of critics started commenting on and searching for Greekness in Greek films.⁷⁹ Dellis observes that the use of the term Greekness by the film critics at the time was quite ambiguous and vague, but the majority of the film reviews that referred to it were mostly commenting on the depiction of the Greek landscape – as for example the sea and the islands – combined with quaintness and a look to the past.⁸⁰ The critics⁸¹ of the time further insisted on the projection of the Greek psyche, pain, and desire through Greek films, while at the same time, they stressed that imitating Hollywood topics should be avoided, since Greece has a rich pool of dramatic topics to feature in films.⁸²

The critics' problematic perception of 'authentic' Greekness is clearly demonstrated in reviews of Jules Dassin's *Never on Sunday* (1959),⁸³ where they appear to internalise Dassin's cinematic Greekness without questioning it. As Vasiliki Tsitsopoulou claims, film critics, like for instance Yannis Bakoyannopoulos and Nikos Kolovos, uncritically 'assume that there is a timeless, essential, emblematic Greekness' and they consider that 'Greekness in Dassin's films is unmediated by representational conventions and is therefore "authentic".'⁸⁴ By claiming that, she argues that Dassin offers an 'ironic critique of the tendency to associate Greekness exclusively with antiquity and as a celebration of the ethnocultural specificity of Greek modernity.'⁸⁵ Although Tsitsopoulou refers to Bakoyannopoulos's and Kolovos's reviews from 1993,⁸⁶ Bakoyannopoulos already in 1965

⁷⁸ Nikos Leros, 'Carnivalized Greekness: Stavros Tsiolis' *Please, Ladies Don't Cry*', in *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities*, ed. Lydia Papadimitriou and Yannis Tzioumakis, (Chicago: Intellect, 2012), 178; Achilleas Dellis, 'I Diamorfosi ke i Ekseliksi tis Kinimatografikis Kritikis ke Theorias stin Ellada (1950-1980)'/ 'The Formulation and the Evolution of the Greek Criticism and Theory (1950-1981)', (Ph.D diss., University of Aegean, 2009), <http://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/handle/10442/27555>, 217.

⁷⁹ Dellis, 'Formulation and Evolution', 217.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 217-218.

⁸¹ Such as Yannis Bakoyannopoulos, Babis Atsoglou, Marios Ploritis. Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 218.

⁸³ The film presents two opposite types of Greekness: the 'ideal', which is associated in the film with the past and antiquity, and it is represented by an educated, Grecophile American; and modern Greekness, which is depicted as non-educated, sexually liberated and naive, through the face of a Greek prostitute.

⁸⁴ Vassiliki Tsitsopoulou, 'Greekness, Gender Stereotypes, and the Hollywood Musical in Jules Dassin's *Never on Sunday*', in *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, no. 1, vol. 8. (May 2000), 80.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 81.

⁸⁶ When the 34th Thessaloniki Film Festival hosted a tribute to Dassin and published a

relates Greekness with ethnography (ithographia), and shows that he indeed considered Greekness in *Never on Sunday* as 'authentic', since he embraces the fact that more ethnographical elements portrayed in the film should be featuring in Greek cinema.⁸⁷

With the emergence of NEK, and during a time that the opposition between left and right wing is crucial due to the Military Junta, Greekness starts being associated with social reality and realism, especially by the left wing critics, who revisit the notion of Greekness as perceived by the 'Generation of the '30s'. Left wing film critic Manolis Koukios seems to be in line with the 'Generation of the '30s' as far as the vagueness of the definition of Greekness and its connection to aesthetics is concerned. In 1975, just after the fall of the Junta, Koukios attempts to map Greekness in his article 'For a theory of Greek Cinema: Greekness, an Ideological and Aesthetical Problem of Greek Cinema',⁸⁸ in which he attempts to 'give the first stimuli on the creation of a theory on Greek Cinema.'⁸⁹ Koukios presents four parameters for the theorisation of Greekness and auteurism in Greek cinema, but being too much influenced by his political orientation, he limits the notion of Greekness to class divisions in Greek society.

The first parameter is the impression of Greekness, meaning people's ability to ideologically recognise Greece and its images through the film.⁹⁰ Second, and stronger parameter than the first, the Greekness of a film is determined by the ideology that, each time, controls the media of production which convey the impression of Greekness.⁹¹ Third, a film's Greekness is determined by the current prevailing urban ideology, which, by controlling the signifying practice of the film, manages to control the production of impressions of Greekness.⁹² Fourth, the presentation of 'another' Greekness that is

book on the filmmaker.

⁸⁷ 'In cinema we can only offer quaintness: antiquities, tragedy, ancient ruins in "Greek light", "primitive" or uncultivated Mediterranean nature, rustic life that has not been "contaminated" by "civilisation", "wide blue sea" and cloudless sky, blinding sun above white Mykonian houses or naked hills with thistle and thyme, a "beauty" in local outfit, peasant on a donkey and many more. And after *Never on Sunday* they ask from us even larger portions of bouzouki, folk atmosphere, feast and joy of life. A chosen people that knows how to enjoy and have fun under the feet of Acropolis' (Bakoyannopoulos qtd in Dellis, 'Formulation and Evolution', 219). Also, Leros notes that, based on several reviews on filmmaker Stavros Tsiolis, 'authentic' Greece is identified with rural spaces and tradition (Leros, 'Carnivalized Greekness', 179).

⁸⁸ Manolis Koukios, 'Gia Mia Theoria Ellinikou Kinimatografou: H Ellinikotita, Ena Ideologiko kai Esthitiko Provlima tou Ellinikou Kinimatografou'/'For a Theory of Greek Cinema: Greekness, an Ideological and Aesthetical Problem of Greek Cinema', in *Syghronos Kinimatografos*, no. 5 (1975), 23-32.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

determined by the ideology of the labour class, presupposes a suitable work on the signifying practice of Greek Cinema.⁹³

Koukios's article leaves many questions unanswered.⁹⁴ There have been no attempts to address these questions, and the notion of Greekness remains unclear. In Koukios's article, as also in many other articles hosted in *Contemporary Cinema* magazine, it becomes obvious that the left wing reviewers deny the ability to detect Greekness in the 'commercial' PEK films, and thus they assign the task to NEK auteur filmmakers, as discussed in the brief history of Greek cinema above.

Nikolaidis's work does not follow the above theories and assumptions of national cinema and cinematic Greekness. Nikolaidis never promoted a national Greek identity and the only obvious sign of Greekness in his films is the Greek language. Moreover, Nikolaidis himself was against the idea that a Greek filmmaker should imperatively be creating national cinema and claimed that the need to create this kind of cinema was dictated by foreign festivals who choose what is Greece for them.⁹⁵ Nikolaidis believed that Greekness was 'a weapon in the hands of a resistance', which was used by certain people in order to accommodate their work.⁹⁶

Regardless of these issues, Nikolaidis's films are made by Greeks, for Greeks, in Greece, (mainly) with Greek actors, with Greek funds, and Greek-related topics.⁹⁷ Being highly influenced by American popular culture, Nikolaidis camouflaged these Greek-related topics with American pop cultural elements, concealing signs of Greekness, and featuring a forthcoming 'nightmare' for cinema, (Greek) society, and humanity in general. In this sense, his work is personal and idiosyncratic. Simultaneously, the influence of American cinema and culture, the anonymity of his films' locales and the timelessness of the films take his cinema outside the Greek boundaries.⁹⁸ According to Nikolaidis, those

⁹³ Ibid., 25.

⁹⁴ For further information see Dellis, 'Formation and Evolution', 229-231.

⁹⁵ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Nicolas Triadafyllidis, in *Billboard*, Viewed 20 September 2012, <http://billboard.com.gr/romance-treatment/i88>.

⁹⁶ Ibid. Nikolaidis was constantly attacking film critics that promoted the idea that Greekness should be an inseparable part of Greek films. For instance in his 1970 article 'Babelismoi'/'Babelisms', he attacks an article by Iakovos Kampianellis that highlights the importance of Greekness in Greek cinema. (Nikos Nikolaidis, 'Babelismoi'/'Babelisms', in *Syγχρονos Kinimatografos/Contemporary Cinema*, no. 7 (June-July 1970), 17).

⁹⁷ Nikolaidis has claimed that he created films about Greece (see Nikolaidis, interview with Triadafyllidis, in *Billboard*).

⁹⁸ In fact, for example *SS* has had an audience outside Greece, when in Greece it could not find distribution. For instance it was played on 'Scala' cinema in London for two years (*Roxy Bar & Screen*, Viewed 20 June 2014, <http://www.roxybarandscreen.com/listings.php?event=2135>).

who considered national cinema as the only cinema were mainly left-wing critics, interested solely in projecting elements that characterised them and their work, and whatever did not comply with their parameters was considered reactionary and ‘American’.⁹⁹

In the beginning of his career, Nikolaidis was perceived by the critics of the time in similar terms with other emerging filmmakers, such as Theo Angelopoulos. Angelopoulos’s films are prevalent both nationally and internationally, and is considered as the ‘ambassador’ of Greek cinema abroad, highlighting his diametrically opposite position to Nikolaidis. Due to the two filmmakers’ modernist influences and to the fact that neither of them had evolved their ‘trademark’ style at the beginning of their career, it could be claimed¹⁰⁰ that *Unconditionally* stylistically and thematically resembles Angelopoulos’s *The Broadcast*, and that the two films’ narratives complement each other.¹⁰¹ Their participation in the 9th Week of Greek Cinema, in conjunction with the trend of the time to create short films, was the initiative for their common mention in a 1969 article.¹⁰² In this article, both men are portrayed as examples of young filmmakers thought to be ‘doomed’ to invisibility, since no one trusts, funds or counts on them, and therefore, will have no future.¹⁰³ Angelopoulos is characterised as a distinct filmmaker with great theoretical and applied film education. Nikolaidis as an original cinematic talent, ‘the most vivid, the most ‘angry’, and at the same time, the most pessimistic member of the ‘Youth Group’’: pessimistic for believing that Greek cinema was not heading anywhere, and its death is

⁹⁹ Nikolaidis criticises the differentiation between Greek filmmakers who were deported by the Junta for being communists, and those who were not (like himself), and stresses that the former were characterised as ‘pure patriots’ when the latter as ‘rockers’ and ‘coming from America’. He criticises the team of *Contemporary Cinema* magazine for being subsidised by Ford Foundation and for deciding the conditions for national cinema. ‘Even if it was Kolokotronis [a national hero of 1821] or a recent political story, or a strike in a factory, it was “national cinema”. Anything that was not abiding by that, for them it was work of cannabis users [chasiaklides], it was revolutionary, and of course American’ (Nikolaidis, interview with Triadafyllidis, *Billboard*).

¹⁰⁰ This is an assumption since I have not seen the film.

¹⁰¹ In *The Broadcast* a man is selected by a radio show as the ‘ideal man’, is awarded with an evening with a star, and faces a hoax since he is used for the actress’s promotion. In *Unconditionally*, a cover girl who tries to make her living in the star system contemplates her void life. The model could have been the star in *The Broadcast*, and this could be her side of the story.

¹⁰² Maria Papadopoulou, ‘I Nei Skinothetes Agonizonte gia Mia Thesi ston Elliniko Kinimatografo’/‘The New Directors Fight for a Place in Greek Cinema’, *Ethnos*, 5 Feb 1969, BPA

¹⁰³ Ibid.

certain.¹⁰⁴ This first trace of Nikolaidis's pessimism is his first allusion to the 'nightmare' that he anticipated and which formed his cinematic oeuvre.

Although both filmmakers were treated as equal in the beginning of their careers, when they started making their feature films this changed. A significant difference between them that determined both the quality and the reputation of their films was in their unequal resources for filming. While Nikolaidis was looking for funding for his first feature film, *EBA*, which was finally filmed when Vera Tschechowa agreed to play and co-fund it,¹⁰⁵ Angelopoulos had already accepted a grant from the Ford Foundation. The Ford Foundation in Greece started funding artists and scientists in 1967, and in 1968 it limited the grants to organisations and individuals that had no institutional connection to the dictatorial state.¹⁰⁶ Around 1974, Greek intellectuals and journalists¹⁰⁷ started accusing the Foundation of being connected to the CIA and the U.S. government.¹⁰⁸ This accusation was based on the fact that the American government, which had contributed to the imposition of the dictatorship in Greece, was now attempting to control the cultural and intellectual action of the country and, at the same time, to prepare the transition to the *Metapolitefsi*.¹⁰⁹ The Greek Ford Foundation branch eventually closed down in 1975, resulting in the filmmakers having to look for alternative resources to fund their films. For instance, Angelopoulos, already known abroad for his first feature film and having studied in Paris and become acquainted with the market there, successfully established transnational collaborations.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, Nikolaidis did not have any connections abroad, and he therefore did not attempt to have another transnational collaboration after *EBA*.

After *TWASS*, Nikolaidis was identified as a filmmaker influenced by American culture. This influence was seen as both positive, since it was seen as an effort to communicate the problems of Greek Cinema internationally,¹¹¹ and negative, for his films

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Tschechowa, of German-Russian descent (Anton Chekhov's granddaughter), was married to the actor-director Vadim Glowna when Nikos Perakis – a filmmaker starting his career at the time – brought Glowna in touch with Nikolaidis, agreeing Tschechowa to play in *EBA*, and Glowna to co-fund the film with German resources. The film was shot in English and it was then dubbed in to Greek (Katie Imbrochori's voice) (Christos Chouliaras, interviewed by Nestor Poulakos and Yannis Dirakis, *SevenArt*, Viewed 19 September 2011, <http://www.sevenart.gr/news-detail.php?catid=4&id=1012>).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ As for instance Marietta Rialdi, Rozita Sokou and more.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ For more information see Papadimitriou, 'The National and the Transnational', 508.

¹¹¹ Kitsa Bontzou, 'Mia Tenia Requiem Gia Tous Epanastates'/'A Film Requiem for the

not being representative of the time and for focusing on minority groups rather than on the problems of the wider public,¹¹² which was the purpose of ‘national’ cinema. However, his films are reflections of his life, influences and vision, which were formed in Greece; hence I argue that his films constitute his own version of Greece, and therefore an appropriated form of ‘national cinema’, that highlights the vague definition of national Greek cinema described above. As he states in an interview about the use of the past in his films,

when there is no memory, there is no history. I wrote my own story of a part of 1950s generations through my memories of the past and of my future. Every generation does not express a single one-sided view. Our past and our intervention in the history of this country ought not to be drowned. That’s what I did, for personal reasons only.¹¹³

Nikolaïdis was often characterised as a filmmaker of the margin,¹¹⁴ but was praised for being a competent director, whether his work was appreciated or not.¹¹⁵ Pavlos Kouanis categorises Nikolaïdis’s films under the cult film spectrum, defining cult films as films that gain a specific group of audience that turns the film into a kind of worship, and note ‘a small, but stable and diachronic consumption.’¹¹⁶ Filmmaker Yannis Economidis agrees with Kouanis, although he does not characterise Nikolaïdis’s cinema as cult. Instead, Economidis states that, in his view, only Nikolaïdis and himself from all Greek filmmakers managed to gain a loyal audience that follows the filmmakers’ work devotedly.¹¹⁷ This is indeed the case for Nikolaïdis, since his films were (and still are) followed by a specific audience that praises his films. In this sense, it can be claimed that his work is indeed cult.¹¹⁸

However, I refrain from characterising Nikolaïdis’s work as cult because of the definitional confusion that the term creates, but also due to the ambiguous use of the term

Revolutionaries’, BPA.

¹¹² Yannis Bakoyannopoulos, ‘Meta apo tin Kinonikopiisi, Epochi Prosopikon Apologismon’/‘After Socialisation, The Era of Personal Resolutions’, BPA.

¹¹³ Nikolaïdis, interview with Kokkinos, 232.

¹¹⁴ Mikela Chartoulari, ‘Nikos Nikolaïdis’, *Ta Nea*, 11 August 1990, 17, BPA.

¹¹⁵ This fact finds expression in the Thessaloniki Film Festival Awards, as it will be discussed next, where Nikolaïdis got the Best Direction award many times, but was never awarded for Best Film.

¹¹⁶ Panos Kouanis, *I Kinimatografiki Agora stin Ellada: 1944-1999/The Greek Cinematic Market: 1944-1999*, (Athens: Finatec-Multimedia, 2001), 90.

¹¹⁷ Yannis Economidis, interview with Ilias Fragoulis, YouTube Video, Viewed 30 March 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GtTDcHZ5bA>.

¹¹⁸ Nikolaïdis’s impact can be seen in various manifestations: his fans’ Facebook page is an example (‘Nikos Nikolaïdis’s Cultural Inheritors’ on Facebook, Viewed 6 August 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/14097837041/>); in young artists [such as The Boy who composed the song ‘Cut the Hand’ for Nikolaïdis; Stergios Paschos whose first feature film is named *Pigs in the Air*]; his films’ titles have been recreated in various forms (graffiti, song names and more).

in Greek cinema. There have been numerous attempts to define cult cinema and still the term remains quite vague. The basic characteristic that the majority of the cult cinema definitions identify and comment on is low-budget productions,¹¹⁹ the ‘badness’ of the films,¹²⁰ the examination of audience reception and the communication between film and viewer.¹²¹ Though Nikolaidis ‘consciously design[s] films to include transgressive, exotic, offensive, nostalgic or highly intertextual narratives of styles’,¹²² he never ‘used audiences’ management of their “cult attitude”.¹²³ Also, although his films are not of a high budget, they arguably cannot be characterised as ‘bad films’; thus Nikolaidis’s cinema seems to contradict some of the main characteristics of cult cinema. Moreover, in Greece cult films are considered B-movies, ‘VHS trash’,¹²⁴ that were filmed quickly and with no attention to detail, with simple technical means, with no skilled crew, badly written scripts and bad acting, as Triantafyllidis, the founder of the Cult Greek Film Festival states.¹²⁵ This definition excludes Nikolaidis’s cinema from the Greek cult film spectrum.

Nikolaidis’s name is repeated in lists of NEK directors, as one of the new filmmakers who contributed to the change of the Greek film industry during the transition to the NEK. Nikolaidis categorised himself amongst the NEK filmmakers for the same reason.¹²⁶ Mentions of the filmmaker comment on his difference from other directors, even from the very beginning of his career.¹²⁷ For example, scholar Yannis Skopeteas argues that NEK’s ideology was included in two image technique systems: one based on auteur cinema, and another that is close to classical cinema and to PEK, and could be renamed ‘New Classical Greek Cinema’.¹²⁸ But he claims that Nikolaidis’s cinema does not follow any of the two

¹¹⁹ See for instance Mark Shiel, ‘Why Call Them “Cult Movies”? American Independent Filmmaking and the Counterculture in the 1960s’, in *Scope* (2003), Viewed 5 February 2015,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20130623142737/http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=may2003&id=260§ion=article>.

¹²⁰ Mark Jancovich et al, *Defining Cult Movies: The Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 2.

¹²¹ See Ernest Mathijs & Jamie Sexton, *Cult Cinema*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

¹²² Ibid. 8

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Nicolas Triantafyllidis, ‘Muddy Diamonds in Cult Greek Film Festival’, *Clickatlife.gr*, Viewed 5 February 2015, <http://www.clickatlife.gr/cinema/story/13251>.

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Nikos Nikolaidis, ‘Simiosis Pano stis Schesis Neou Ellinikou Kinimatografou ke Diafimisis’/‘Notes on the Relationship between New Greek Cinema and Advertising’, BPA.

¹²⁷ As for instance in Papadopoulou’s review mentioned above.

¹²⁸ Yannis Skopeteas, ‘I Aisthitektiki kai oi Technes tis Eikonas’/‘The Image’s Aesthetics and Techniques’, in *Opsis tou Neou Ellinikou Kinimatografou/Views of New Greek Cinema*, (Athens: Optikoakoustiki Koulтура, 2002), 95.

systems, as ‘Nikolaidis’s case is extremely unique.’¹²⁹ This view is also shared by Yannis Zoumboulakis who writes that the filmmaker was the only representative of a morbid, pitch-black cinema, ‘something like a genre on his own,’¹³⁰ which is an argument I share.

Nikolaidis arguably resembles some European and international filmmakers. For instance, Nikolaidis’s films could be compared to Lars von Trier’s work because both filmmakers make use of pastiche and of a plethora of cinematic, literary and music references. Nikolaidis’s treatment of women could be related to the work of Dušan Makavejev and Claudio Assis, as all three filmmakers convey their personal and political comments through women’s bodies and representation. However, Nikolaidis resemblance to these filmmakers stops there. Von Trier for example, has no fixed style as he experiments with the film form, while Nikolaidis has a very characteristic cinematic style. Makavejev’s cinema is much more activist and political than Nikolaidis’s and his antifascism is more targeted than Nikolaidis’s. Assis’s cinema uses film noir and the femme fatale in response to a national Brazilian agenda, when Nikolaidis does not abide by national cinema standards. Therefore, I view Nikolaidis as a maverick, and I believe that his case is indeed unique.

I by no means suggest that Nikolaidis is exceptional in the sense that he is better than other filmmakers, but I argue for the difference of his very personal oeuvre to the work of other filmmakers. There are other cases of filmmakers in Greek cinema that differ significantly from the majority of Greek filmmakers. Panayota Mini¹³¹ for instance examines Takis Kanellopoulos as a cinephile filmmaker ‘who communicated with his contemporaries in eastern and western art cinema.’¹³² Mini states that perceiving Kanellopoulos as a precursor of NEK, as some critics have argued, downplays the filmmaker’s work, and at the same time, considering him an autonomous entity detaches his work from its artistic background.¹³³ I believe that this otherwise very valid comment cannot be applied to Nikolaidis’s case. Nikolaidis’s work does not communicate with his contemporaries, but with classical Hollywood in order to create a ‘necrophilic’ piece of extremely introverted, personal piece of work, which can only be decrypted with the help of Nikolaidis’s biographical information.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Yannis Zoumboulakis, ‘Nikos Nikolaidis: O Antras pou Agapouse tis Gynekes’/‘Nikos Nikolaidis: The Man Who Loved The Women’, *Vima*, 27 May 2011, Viewed 14 August 2014, <http://www.tovima.gr/culture/article/?aid=403101>.

¹³¹ Panayota Mini, ‘Reflections on Pain, Loss and Memory: Takis Kanellopoulos’s Fiction Films of the 1960s’, in *Greek Cinema: Texts, Histories, Identities*, ed. Lydia Papadimitriou and Yannis Tzioumakis, (Chicago: Intellect, 2012).

¹³² Ibid. 251

¹³³ Ibid., 242

I claim that the categorisation of Greek cinema in terms of NEK and SEK is problematic since filmmakers that started creating films in NEK still create films nowadays in SEK. Moreover, after PEK, the films of the newly emerged auteur cinema had some common characteristics, but at the same time each filmmaker created idiosyncratic films and developed their own cinematic style, thus challenging any attempts to define generalised characteristics that could be applied to Greek auteur cinema as a whole. Based on the regeneration that auteur cinema production effected after PEK, and considering that Nikolaidis was one of the filmmakers that suggested a different cinematic approach at the time, it could be claimed that, if his films had to be located in the span of Greek Cinema discourse, they could possibly be categorised in NEK.

Vrasidas Karalis's characterisation of Nikolaidis is the most accurate one in this sense and the closest to my reading of his work.¹³⁴ Karalis writes that Nikolaidis is a

unique voice[...] raised in opposition to the dominance of the political over the existential. Throughout [his] career [...] [he] shaped new forms of oppositional aesthetics that were to disrupt the post-Restoration optimism about what constituted cinematic language and the role of the cinema in contemporary societies. More importantly [...] together with other experimental creators, [he] 'problematized' the dominant narrative about reality by constructing 'non-logical' narrative idioms, performed by the surrealist 'marvellous' and by a special concern for non-linear forms of representation.¹³⁵

I read Karalis's characterisation of Nikolaidis as an experimental filmmaker here as an outcome of the fact that Nikolaidis "'problematized" the dominant narrative',¹³⁶ through the form of his films, his non-linear narratives and distorted reality. However, although Nikolaidis's *LR* is indeed an experimental short film, it cannot be claimed that Nikolaidis is an experimental filmmaker, but rather that he 'construct[ed] "non-logical" narrative idioms',¹³⁷ through postmodernism. Nikolaidis has indeed a 'unique voice', whose multileveled political films stress existential factors as well. His cinema denies any optimism about the future of Greek cinema and society. Moreover, through pastiche, Nikolaidis created a bulk of work that has received controversial criticism, characterised as popular in the case of *TWASS* and *SB*, as well as occult, personal, elitist and cinephilic for the rest of his films. Thus the world that Nikolaidis creates through his films is a reflection of his ideology, his eccentricity, and his contradictory and resentful persona. His work

¹³⁴ Although I disagree with the connection of Nikolaidis with oppositional aesthetics, as will be discussed further on.

¹³⁵ Karalis, *History*, 174

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

needs to be examined as a whole in order for the complexity of his films to be fully grasped.

The name that Nikolaidis got for himself is highlighted by his refusal to make transnational films. Nikolaidis had agreed with Costas Gavras and Eurimages to adapt Nikos Kasdaglis's novel *To Tholami/The Bowstring* (1987) for the big screen.¹³⁸ The shooting would take place in Peloponnese, and Lee Marvin had agreed to play the leading role. However, Nikolaidis broke the deal because Gavras did not pay for Nikolaidis's plane ticket to Paris where they would further discuss the film.¹³⁹ Combining this fact with Takis Spyridakis's claim that Nikolaidis was idle and that he would not enjoy leaving the comfort of his home to shoot in Mani,¹⁴⁰ Nikolaidis's own claim of being idle,¹⁴¹ and that he only created personal films and did not work with other people's scripts, I claim that Nikolaidis enjoyed being considered marginalised.¹⁴² He also enjoyed maintaining the idea of a resentful person, complaining about funding, something that he would lose if he made such a step in international cinematography.

By refusing to work in transnational collaborations, Nikolaidis was restricted to Greek funding. From the mid-1980s, filmmakers were offered the opportunity to apply for grants at the GFC, thus challenging the notion of independent cinema that the filmmakers aimed to produce after PEK. The GFC funded, and still funds, many filmmakers; however, the grants vary according to personal estimations and political issues, since the GFC is a government institution. In the case of Nikolaidis, the GFC allocated grants to all of his films¹⁴³ but the funds he received did not cover the full costs of his productions.¹⁴⁴ When for example the GFC funded Angelopoulos with a total of 3,648,111,73€, ¹⁴⁵ Nikolaidis was granted a total of 498,853,78€ (Table 1).

¹³⁸ Bartholomew, 2011.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Takis Spyridakis, interview with Kostas Karderinis, *MIC Music Portal*, 9 May 2014, Viewed 24 July 2014, <http://www.mic.gr/interview.asp?id=42614>.

¹⁴¹ Nikolaidis, interview with Soldatos.

¹⁴² This is confirmed when Kokkinos in their interview mentions that the people's idea of Nikolaidis is that he is secluded in his house, watching film noir and listening to rock 'n' roll music. Nikolaidis accepts the characterisation (Nikolaidis, Interview with Kokkinos, 235).

¹⁴³ Except for *EBA* (filmed before the reformation of the GFC) and for *TWASS*.

¹⁴⁴ Most films were granted after being filmed (Bartholomew, 2011).

¹⁴⁵ Anna Kasimati, Greek Film Centre, email to author, 13 March 2013. Angelopoulos is an exception in the Greek cinema discourse. But there are other filmmakers, like Voulgaris, who have received great amounts of money from the GFC. However, it cannot be claimed that GFC's grants suffice for the funding of any Greek filmmaker's films.

Grants from the GFC for Nikos Nikolaidis's films		
Year	Film Title	€
1983	<i>Sweet Bunch</i>	16,189,81
1987	<i>Morning Patrol</i>	50,411,74
1990	<i>Singapore Sling</i>	47,842,11
1999	<i>See You in Hell, My Darling</i>	117,388,11
2002	<i>Loser Takes All</i>	227,022,01
2005	<i>The Zero Years</i>	40,000
Total Amount		498,853,78

Table 1 Amount of money Nikolaidis was granted by the GFC

It is likely that the government was unwilling to subsidise Nikolaidis's films because of their antiauthoritarian content and ideas that undermined the state. However, Nikolaidis rarely geographically and temporally places his narrative. When he did so in *LTA*, he received more funding from the GFC than ever before, because it was meant to be a commercial film and to bring profit to the Centre.¹⁴⁶ This fact highlights the ambiguity with which Nikolaidis was treated. His marginalisation continued following his death in 2007, when the GFC gave two of Nikolaidis's films for screening on ERT, without requesting copyright from Nikolaidis's family. This action was frequently repeated by sending his films to film festivals.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, Nikolaidis's persistence in applying for funding from a governmental funding body, when he had always been attacking the state, further stresses his controversial persona.

In order to raise money for his films, Nikolaidis turned to advertising early in his career and this became his main source of income. This choice was common practice for

¹⁴⁶ More information in Chapter 6.3.

¹⁴⁷ Bartholomew was unaware of the fact that 'Filmhouse' cinema in Edinburgh screened *SS* and *The Zero Years* in 2008, and informed me that she had faced similar incidents with the GFC before, and that they are in court for this reason. Also, after circulating Nikolaidis's remastered DVD collection, which was entirely funded by the family, GFC requested a percentage of the profit (Bartholomew, 2011).

many filmmakers who started creating films with their own means after the collapse of the film companies in the early 1970s. Whereas other filmmakers considered the act of turning to advertising as selling-out,¹⁴⁸ Nikolaidis perceived it as a way out of the state's imposed oppression and an opportunity to film.¹⁴⁹ In 1973, Nikolaidis, together with filmmakers Yorgos Panousopoulos and Nikos Panayotopoulos, co-founded the advertising production company 'Bachtse Film'¹⁵⁰ (Fig2.2.1). As Panousopoulos claims, the three filmmakers believed they could make a difference in the advertising world, as they considered themselves to be the best filmmakers of the time.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Angelopoulos considered the ethical result of making a commercial film and of making an advertisement to be the same. Angelopoulos, 'Uncertain Future', 25.

¹⁴⁹ Nikolaidis, *New Greek Cinema and Advertising*.

¹⁵⁰ Bahtches means garden. The filmmakers refer to the Greek expression 'ap'ola echi o bachtse', literally meaning 'you can find everything in the garden', noting variety.

¹⁵¹ Yorgos Panousopoulos, in *Directing Hell* (Christos Chouliaras, 2011), a documentary about Nikolaidis created by Nikolaidis's assistant director and Nikolaidis's daughter).



Fig2.2.1 1973 'Bachtses Film' company poster (BPA)

The poster satirises some filmmakers' disapproval of working in advertising by stating that they had already 'unashamedly' made more than 500 advertisements. The poster also criticises the filmmakers funded by Ford Foundation, as it reads 'P.S. Bachtse Films is not funded by Ford'. At the same time, the poster stresses the new form, style, topics and ideas that the three filmmakers introduce to advertising, as well as their emphasis on quality and not quantity, a claim that is contradicted by their statement that they had made more than 500 advertisements. The company eventually shut down in less than a year's time, due to the filmmakers' lack of awareness of the difficulties of running such a company.¹⁵² Nikolaidis worked between popular and 'art' media, with one informing the other. His involvement in the advertising industry and the unconditional freedom he was often granted in creating advertising films make his advertisements an inseparable part of his oeuvre and a complement to his films.¹⁵³ As Nikolaidis claims, he created a kind of 'cinophile advertising', since he was borrowing his topics and aesthetics from films.¹⁵⁴ It can thus be argued that his advertisements are pastiche as well, and this suggests continuity in terms of his style throughout his body of work.

Nikolaidis's ideas about advertising help shed light on filmmaking in Greece at that time. The filmmaker writes that before the 1970s, advertisement producers did not have the experience or the knowledge to run advertising productions properly; they therefore relied on the director's experience.¹⁵⁵ The producers' insufficient ideas led them to address the newly emerged NEK filmmakers in order to refresh advertisement films.¹⁵⁶ Due to the large amounts of money spent in advertising and the director's freedom in scriptwriting, aesthetics and ideas, many filmmakers got involved in ads in order to practise their art; thus they faced advertising as a field of research and experimentation.¹⁵⁷ As Nikolaidis writes, 'without the advertisers suspecting us, we were learning how to do cinema. Advertising was NEK's 'secret school.'¹⁵⁸

Nikolaidis underlines the pivotal contribution of this experimentation to Greek cinema since film crews were given a chance to practice their craft. According to

¹⁵² Bartholomew, 2011.

¹⁵³ The 2011 retrospective on Nikolaidis (Greek Film Archive, Athens) screened all his feature films, *Sugar Three*, *Lacrimae Rerum* and some advertisements that Nikolaidis had directed. This fact shows the interconnection of his oeuvre, and connects cinema to his televisual work. For the programme of the retrospective see *Greek Film Archive*, Viewed 7 August 2014, http://www.tainiothiki.gr/v2/tain_new/view/169.

¹⁵⁴ Nikolaidis, *New Greek Cinema and Advertising*.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 'Secret School' ('Krifo Scholio') refers to the illegal schools during the Ottoman empire in Greece between the 15th and the 19th century, that are thought to have been teaching children Greek culture and spreading the Greek Orthodox religion.

Nikolaidis, advertising's most important contribution to Greek cinema was that it became the only source of money for many filmmakers. In this way, they could avoid the 'unpleasant contact with various centres of political and cinematic authority that intermingled in the field and formed the cinematic image of the time'.¹⁵⁹ Nikolaidis writes:

it is not accidental that the greatest part of the so-called independent Greek Cinema worked in advertising... To prevent any misunderstanding, 'independent' does not mean a-political. It is certain though, that the directors' engagement with advertising helped their detachment from the art-political complex, a fact that allowed the creation of a pure and independent cinema; that is an auteur cinema, a cinema that the director has the complete control over all the stages of production, imposing, apart from their themes and their perspectives, the way the film was advertised and where it would be screened.¹⁶⁰

Nikolaidis therefore links advertising with NEK and notes a simultaneous regeneration of the NEK and the advertising film's topics and aesthetics and highlights the importance of being independent. Working in the advertising industry not only allowed filmmakers to practice and experiment in ways that they could later incorporate more successfully into their own films, but also provided them with a source of income not tied to any particular funding body that would then have control over the films. The NEK filmmakers' advertisements were mainly influenced by American cinema and were recreating already known American films,¹⁶¹ therefore creating popular short advertisement films. The popularity of Nikolaidis's advertisements informed his unpopular films. Nikolaidis's claims challenge some filmmaker's views on advertising and on the power structures in it as he stresses the importance of independent cinema. At the same time, the fact that filmmakers like Panousopoulos and Panayotopoulos were receiving grants from the GFC to fund their NEK anti-American films, while their advertisements were highly influenced by American films, reveals a general contradiction that characterises Greek culture as a whole.

2.2.3 Nikolaidis's Thessaloniki Film Festival Experience

By examining Nikolaidis in relation to the TFF and the Second Balcony demonstrates both his marginalised position within discourses of Greek cinema, as well as his uncompromising yet contradictory personality. When Nikolaidis first started his career, he was in favour of film festivals, as he considered them to be the best way for the work of

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

the whole film crew to be projected and promoted.¹⁶² He believed that festivals offered an opportunity for Greek films to be compared and contrasted to films from countries with more developed cinemas, and to be reviewed by international film critics.¹⁶³ For these reasons, Nikolaidis participated in film festivals abroad as well as the TFF. However, after participating in the 46th TFF in 2005 with his last film, he stated that the festival is ‘just a cinema room where they play your film, make some money and give you nothing.’¹⁶⁴

In his opinion, the TFF was corrupt and a fake display.¹⁶⁵ He believed that films were given awards based on the opinions of festival critics rather than the public, since these films were unpopular outside the festival. He further claimed that these particular unpopular films were kicking people out of the cinema.¹⁶⁶ In order to change this situation, he claims that he often tried to convince filmmakers to withdraw their work from the festival¹⁶⁷ and helped co-organise anti-festivals that were aimed at screening films that addressed the public.¹⁶⁸ At the same, he participated in the festivals himself and declared that he disliked big audiences and that he was not content with the wide appeal that *TWASS* and *SB* had.¹⁶⁹

Nikolaidis is further contradictory in that despite his opposition to the festival, all his films participated in it. As he repeatedly stated, it was the film crew’s chance to showcase their work.¹⁷⁰ The filmmaker was awarded for Best Film Direction in every TFF he participated in, except in 1999 for the 40th, but he never received the award for Best Film because the critics constantly claimed that they agreed with his style and aesthetics but not with his message.¹⁷¹ This fact further contributed to the formation of Nikolaidis’s reputation and to his resentment towards the festival’s critics and the ‘quality’ films that those critics praised. Panayotis Timoyannakis in his review for *See You in Hell, My Darling* notes the contradictory reviews the filmmaker gets by the critics and writes that these critics enter the ‘Guinness Book of Records for the absurd’ for awarding him for Best Direction four times¹⁷² and never for best film.¹⁷³ However, this contradiction as well as

¹⁶² Nikos Nikolaidis, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, Viewed 7 August 2014, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15&Itemid=11.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Ipan Gia to Festival’/‘They Said About the Festival’, *Proto Plano/First Shot*, no. 181 (27 November 2005), 16.

¹⁶⁵ Nikolaidis, interview with Economou.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Vassilis Sotiropoulos, *Cine.gr*, Viewed 2 April 2012, <http://www.cine.gr/article.asp?id=761>.

¹⁶⁸ Nikolaidis, interview with Economou.

¹⁶⁹ Nikolaidis, interview with Antonis Kokkinos, 234.

¹⁷⁰ Nikolaidis, interview with Economou.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Four times until 1999, followed by a fifth time in 2002 (*LTA*).

¹⁷³ ‘See You in Hell, My Darling Reviews’, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, Viewed 2 April 2012, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39&Itemid=17.

Nikolaidis's contradictory views on the festival have not been further commented on, until he became jury member of the festival, as will be discussed next.

Nikolaidis's controversial relationship with the festival began simultaneously with the start of his career. *LR* participated in the 3rd Week of Greek Cinema in 1962 and although it was not awarded any prize, the critics considered it an astonishing effort for a first film and commented on the filmmaker's promising future.¹⁷⁴ The Minister of Industry, Yorgios Drosopoulos, stated in a letter to the newspaper *Allagi* that they considered the film 'protected heritage', because it presents artistic and spiritual elements and it is even in technical aspects.¹⁷⁵ He further obliges the owners of cinemas to screen four 'protected' short films every three months.¹⁷⁶ When Nikolaidis asked the owner of two cinemas in Athens to screen his film, the owner refused, claiming that he was unable to find other short films to match it with and that the screening would bring no profit.¹⁷⁷ Because the film was characterised as protected by the law and the authorities could therefore intervene, Nikolaidis threatened the owner that he would call the police if they refused to screen it,¹⁷⁸ despite having himself always been openly against authorities. The owner replied that the police would not be of any assistance because they would stop receiving free tickets.¹⁷⁹ Despite Drosopoulos's letter, the film was never screened, and Nikolaidis was already faced with marginalisation from his first attempt at filmmaking and distribution.

In 1968, *Unconditionally* was screened at the 9th Week of Greek Cinema. The censorship of the Junta was already manipulating the festival, limiting the number of festival entries. At the end of the festival week, there was a general disapproval of the fact that the critics were ignoring the festival's short films and favouring the feature films instead. It was then when Nikolaidis started campaigning for the festival to be shut down, since it could not operate objectively.¹⁸⁰ Nikolaidis participated in the Week of Greek Cinema in 1974, a few months following the fall of the Junta; however, he participated as an actor with a supporting role in *Kierion*.

In 1975, Nikolaidis participated in the 16th Week of Greek Cinema with *EBA*. The film was competing against Angelopoulos's *O Thiasos/The Travelling Players*, which was awarded the majority of the prizes at the festival. Nikolaidis received the award for Best Directorial Debut, as the critics aimed to show 'the filmmaker's amazing dominance over

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Kostas Karderinis, *MIC Music Portal*, 17 November 2002, Viewed 16 June 2014, <http://www.mic.gr/cinema.asp?id=21516>.

film aesthetics and the need to encourage a cinema of internal mythology.¹⁸¹ *EBA* also received awards for Best Sets and Costumes (Bartholomew) and Best Editing (Andreas Andreadakis), and received the Greek National Ministry of Culture Award and the Athens Film Critics Association Best Picture Award. In this festival the reactions to the general Greek cinematic situation, including the disapproval for the ticket price increase that discouraged the audience, and particularly the Second Balcony to attend, were culminated. Nikolaidis participated in demonstrations for the ‘People’s Festival’ against the interruption of films that sold only a few tickets (Fig2.2.2).



Fig2.2.2 Nikolaidis is on the right of the sign, which reads ‘End of Censorship. 1975. Long Live the Public Festival’ (BPA)

The 20th Week of Greek Cinema in 1979 showcased *TWASS*. The film received awards for Best Film Direction, Best Acting (Christos Valavanidis), Best Sound (Marinos Athanasopoulos) and Best Editing (Andreadakis), and also received the Athens Film Critics Association Best Picture Award. The 20th festival was characterised as the ‘festival of revealing new filmmakers,’¹⁸² and in the festival’s press conference Nikolaidis, Panousopoulos and Zervos stressed that, although they collaborate with others, their styles and ways of expressing their viewpoints differ.¹⁸³ Moreover, a team of new filmmakers, which include Nikolaidis, Ferris, Zervos, Tasios and Thomopoulos, announced a proclamation-complaint against the festival critics, blaming them for Greek cinema’s inability to flourish.¹⁸⁴ This accusation signalled the official rivalry between the directors and the critics, and highlights the uncompromising nature of Nikolaidis.

¹⁸¹ Yannis Bakoyiannopoulos, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, Viewed 16 June 2014, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=12.

¹⁸² Mouzaki, *50 Years*, 185.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

In 1983, Nikolaidis presented *SB* at the 24th Greek Film Festival. Before the awards ceremony, Nikolaidis, along with Ferris and Stambouloupoulos, initiated a public protest against the ‘balanced’ way of dispersing the awards. *SB* received awards for Best Cinematography (Aris Stavrou), Best Sets and Costumes (Bartholomew), Best Editing (Andreadakis) and Best Sound (Athanasopoulos). In addition, one of the film’s protagonists, Takis Spyridakis,¹⁸⁵ received a Special Actor’s Award for ‘the excellent path [he] paved in Greek Cinema with [his] acting.’¹⁸⁶ *SB* also received the Athens Film Critics Association Best Picture Award, but not the Best Picture Award (an act that would be repeated throughout the following years until it seemed to be intentionally aimed against Nikolaidis).

In 1987, Nikolaidis joined the 28th Greek Film Festival with *MP*. The Second Balcony caused various unpleasant incidents, which led to the projection of the films under bad conditions.¹⁸⁷ This occurred because the Balcony disapproved of the majority of the Greek films, and especially the films favoured by the GFC, because as the Balcony claimed the GFC misuses Greek people’s money.¹⁸⁸ However, one of the few films that were approved by the Second Balcony was Nikolaidis’s film. Subsequently, the film’s screening faced no trouble, as was the case for the majority of Nikolaidis’s films’ screenings in the festival.¹⁸⁹ According to Nikolaidis, the Second Balcony’s approval of his films stem from the fact that they could see their reflection in his work.¹⁹⁰ Nikolaidis’s approval by the Balcony was further demonstrated with the inclusion of an article about *MP* in *CINE7* fanzine in September 1987 and by hosting a film still of Spyridakis on the cover (Fig2.2.3). Nikolaidis’s approval was further shown through the hosting of a cover page article about the film in the inaugural *Exostis* issue in November 1987. Because the Balcony’s audience frequently supported Nikolaidis, it was many times referred to as ‘Nikolaidis’s Balcony’.¹⁹¹ Nikolaidis was one of the few filmmakers at the time who was creating political films without supporting any political party; hence, those young people who had gone through various socio-political transitions and had lost faith in political parties were looking for a kind of revolt and attack against the system and could find themselves identifying with Nikolaidis’s attack against the status quo. For Nikolaidis, the

¹⁸⁵ Along with Antonis Kafetzopoulos for *Revanche* (Nikos Vergitsis, 1983) and Nikos Kalogeropoulos for *Rembetiko* (Kostas Ferris, 1983).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 203.

¹⁸⁷ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview to *CINE7*, BPA.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Nikolaidis, interview with Tsakoniatis, 38.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

festival's 'death' came when the Second Balcony was silenced in 1992 since the Balcony was the only form of resistance to the festival.¹⁹²

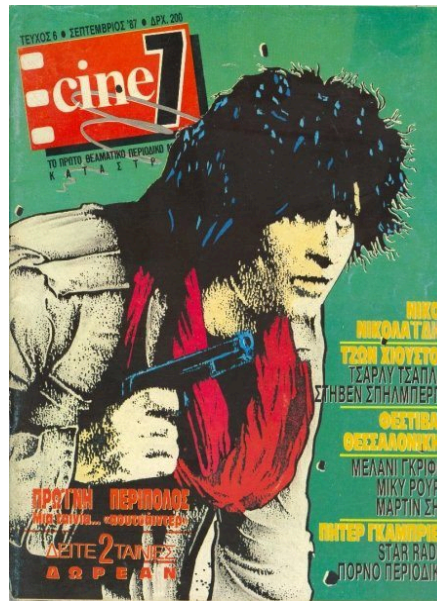


Fig2.2.3 CINE7 cover featuring *MP* (BPA)

In the 28th festival, Nikolaidis was co-awarded the prize for Best Direction alongside Nikos Vergitsis. However, both filmmakers refused the award, claiming that it was a consolation prize and that 'the awards are not a tray of baklavas to disperse it to whomever they want in order to keep a balance. Only one film could have had the best direction.'¹⁹³ *MP* was also awarded prizes for Best Cinematography (Dinos Katsouridis) and Best Art Direction (Bartholomew). The removal of the short-film competition from the Greek Film Festival, and the official foundation of the Drama Short Film Festival led to various reactions by the filmmakers; for instance some took part in an anti-festival in the cinema 'Alexandros' in Thessaloniki, with Kostas Tachtsis as the president and Nikolaidis as a member of the anti-festival committee.

Singapore Sling's raw imagery and provocative narrative greatly disturbed the audience of the 31st Greek Film Festival in 1990. Part of the audience screamed out that Nikolaidis belongs to a mental hospital or that he should be taken to the prosecutor.¹⁹⁴ Kanellis wrote that 'a judging panel doing its job properly would have sent this film to be

¹⁹² Nikolaidis, interview with Kaderinis.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 40.

¹⁹⁴ For SS reviews see Nikos Nikolaidis, Viewed 20 June 2014, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36&Itemid=16.

projected to Thessaloniki's public toilets instead of the festival.'¹⁹⁵ Despite these reactions, the film's style and aesthetics presented a challenge to the rest of the competing films and highlighted Nikolaidis's use of pastiche. Subsequently, it received awards for Best Direction, Best Actress (Meredyth Herold), Best Cinematography (Stavrou), Best Set and Costume Award (Bartholomew) and Best Editing (Andreadakis).

After many years of festival experience as a competitor, and having reached the conclusion that the festival was corrupt and unethical, Nikolaidis was called to be on the judging panel of the 35th TFF. He claims that he accepted this challenge in an effort to change the situation in the festival.¹⁹⁶ Nikolaidis received severe criticism for accepting this position and he was blamed for having a contradictory stance and for being part of the system he once acted against.¹⁹⁷ In answer to these accusations, Nikolaidis stated that he accepted the role in order to support specific films that he thought that they deserved a prize, since some critics had decided on the award results before attending the festival.¹⁹⁸ He claimed that there was a festival committee in Athens that had agreed that the best Greek films would enter the international competition while the rest of the Greek films would stay in the Greek competition, in which the best Greek films would participate as well.¹⁹⁹ After realising that, Nikolaidis was about to resign, since the winning films had already been decided, and he encouraged the rest of the critics to do the same.²⁰⁰ In response, the president of the festival admitted that Nikolaidis was right and promised to change the system in the following year, persuading the critics to stay on. Nikolaidis urged the filmmakers participating in the competition to write a letter condemning the festival in order to destroy it, but no one agreed.²⁰¹

In 1999, Nikolaidis participated in the 40th TFF with *SYIHMD*, but was not awarded any prize. His next film, *LTA*, was co-awarded the prize for Best Film Direction in the 43rd TFF in 2002 alongside Katerina Evangelakou. However, Nikolaidis did not attend the ceremony, as he had decided not to share awards. The film also received an award for Best Cinematography (Costis Gikas). In the 46th TFF in 2005, *The Zero Years* received the prize for Best Art Direction Award (Bartholomew). In this festival, Nikolaidis, along with Zervos, were openly posed against the festival's director, Despina Mouzaki, because she competed with two films she produced. Nikolaidis sent a letter of disapproval to the newspaper *Ta Nea*, in which he accuses Mouzaki of placing the rest of the

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Nikolaidis, interview with Sotiropoulos.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

competitors in a disadvantaged position.²⁰² He also adds that he was further annoyed because the festival committee left the screening of *TZY* in the first ten minutes, and asks that the Ministry of Culture dismiss the committee and hire a new one, the members of which will have the right to vote only after they have watched all the candidates' films.²⁰³

The 48th TFF in 2007 organised a retrospective on Nikolaidis with screenings of all of his feature films; however, the filmmaker died before attending it. In conjunction with the screenings of his films, the Cinema Museum of Thessaloniki organised the exhibition 'Nikos Nikolaidis: The Times of Cholera' which showcased film props and film costumes, and hosted screenings of films which he was influenced by. That same year, the film festival's press company published a book on Nikolaidis.²⁰⁴ Through this examination of Nikolaidis's stance on the festival, his eccentric and contradictory personality becomes evident and works as a framework for an analysis of his films highlighting their personal nature.

²⁰² 'Kinimatografistes Enantion tou Festival Thessalonikis'/'Cinematographers Against Thessaloniki Festival', *Ta Nea* (November 2004), BPA.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Tsakoniatis, *Nikolaidis*.

Chapter 3: Research Context

3.1 Authorship and Nikolaidis

The discussions concerning authorship since the 1950s shifted their focus between the author and the spectatorship, in an effort to develop a film theory. Despite their differences, the currents that discussed authorship in cinema agreed on some basic ideas: ‘a film, though produced collectively, is most likely to be valuable when it is essentially the product of its director [...] in the presence of a director who is genuinely an artist [...] a film is more than likely to be the expression of his individual personality [...] this personality can be traced in a thematic and/or stylistic consistency over all (or almost all) the director’s films.’¹ In the early 1950s *Cahiers du Cinema* ushered in the discussion of ‘*la politique des auteurs*’, through which they argued that the director has the central role as the author of the film, and he is the exclusive producer of meaning. Moreover, the critics of the *Cahiers* gave emphasis to the mise-en-scène as the stylistic ‘signature of the director’² since it was he who was in control of the style of the film: through the mise-en-scène the director appropriates their material and thus, ‘the auteur writes his individuality into the film.’³ The importance of the mise-en-scène for these critics can also be seen in the fact that they differentiated the auteur from the ‘metteur en scène’, arguing that the former expresses their own obsessions consistently, while the latter might be a competent filmmaker who however lacks consistency, a fact that does not allow their personality to be inscribed on the film.

The ‘*politique des auteurs*’ though makes no reference to the audience and to ideology. The ‘*politique des auteurs*’ was translated by Andrew Sarris in the 1960s in the USA as ‘auteur theory’. Sarris recognised that the industrial structure of cinema interfered with the auteur’s personality that structured the ‘interior meaning’ of the film,⁴ and considering that the personality of the director is vital, he claims that ‘[t]he whole point of a meaningful style is that it unifies the *what* and the *how* into a personal statement (emphasis on original text).’⁵ Sarris used ‘auteur theory’ in order to talk about national cinema and the director’s individuality as measures of cultural values. The ‘auteur theory’

¹ John Caughie, *Theories of Authorship*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), 9.

² Ibid., 12.

³ Ibid., 13.

⁴ Ibid., 61

⁵ Andrew Sarris, ‘Toward a Theory of Film History’, *Theories of Authorship*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), 66.

was criticised by some⁶ for not being an actual theory, but it was considered more of ‘an attitude, a table of values that converts film history into directorial autobiography.’⁷

The second phase in theories of authorship was auteur-structuralism, which appeared in the 1960s, although structuralism dates back to the structuralist linguistic theories of the early twentieth century. The impact of structuralism led the critics to think film in terms of structure, giving emphasis on the narrative and offering a scientific approach to authorship and film criticism. Auteur-structuralism aimed to found structures for authorship that would show that the films made by an auteur might have consistencies; however, the auteur/director is not the only creator with intentions in a film.⁸ For auteur-structuralism, the director was thus displaced from the centre of the films and was considered as one of film’s structural elements. This fact allows other structures, the ‘differential elements’⁹ of the film, such as linguistic, social and institutional structures, to be taken into account.

The structuralist approach brought questions of spectatorship and ideology into the discourse. Therefore, auteur-poststructuralism in the 1970s, together with the impact of psychoanalysis and feminism, came to examine the text, the author of the text and the relation between these two, as well as the spectator in relation to the text and its author, noting that ‘the birth of reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author’.¹⁰ In poststructuralism ‘authorial intertextuality’,¹¹ the meaningful connection between texts, becomes important. Questions of subjectivity outside the textual subject start to be considered, ideology and production start to be examined in conjunction with each other, and the film authors appear as ‘transmitters of cultural knowledge.’¹² The ‘death of the Author’ however, brought questions of agency, ‘leaving the author [...] without an adequate place in theory: if the author is not at the centre, he is nowhere.’¹³

From the 1980s on, discussions of auteurism took a different turn, focusing mostly on empirical authorship. The author is brought ‘back to life’, and questions on the collaborative films and the commercialisation of the author’s name were brought into discussion. The author’s ‘intention’ behind the film becomes a crucial element for the

⁶ Mainly by British critics, as for instance from Edward Buscombe.

⁷ Ibid., 65.

⁸ John Caughie, ‘Auteur-structuralism’, *Theories of Authorship*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), 124.

⁹ Peter Wollen qtd in C. Paul Sellors, *Film Authorship: Auteurs and Other Myths*, (London: Wallflower, 2010), 26.

¹⁰ Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, *Theories of Authorship*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), 213.

¹¹ John Caughie, ‘Fiction of the Author/Author of the Fiction’, in *Theories of Authorship*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), 205

¹² Virginia Wright Wexman, *Film and Authorship*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 12.

¹³ John Caughie, *Theories of Authorship*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), 2.

investigation of film authorship. At the same time that the intentionality of the filmic text is discussed, the fact that a film is a collaborative process is also stressed. The fact that the majority of the films produced are highly collaborative is discussed in the sense that this collaboration greatly affects the film since all forces working on the film leave their personal mark. The notion of ‘control’ over authorship is also introduced in the early 1990s as a basic component of the intentional activity of the author.¹⁴

In line with this intentionality of the auteur, the name of the author was thought to be used as a ‘brand name’, that is as marketing technique to label and sell a film and of ‘orienting expectations and channelling meaning and pleasure in the absence of generic boundaries and categories.’¹⁵ On the same note, auteurism has also been considered as ‘a commercial strategy for organizing audience reception, as a critical concept bound to distribution and marketing aims that identify and address the potential cult status of an auteur.’¹⁶ Extra-textual material, such as interviews of the filmmakers, have been considered part of these commercial strategies since the auteur is promoting a specific image of their intentional selves.

Each of all the aforementioned approaches offers a distinct outcome and provides researchers with various frameworks for examining an auteur. In the case of Nikolaidis, the stylistic consistency between his pieces of work is a major argument of this thesis; however, extra-textual inconsistency and controversy are also important aspects of his work that should be taken into consideration. In order to bring to light consistencies and inconsistencies, extra-textual material, and mainly interviews, are taken into consideration. It is undeniable that Nikolaidis was using his name as a ‘brand’, not so much to promote his films, but rather in order to promote his intentionality as a director, by talking about his influences as well as his resentment for the state of contemporary Greek society, thus aiming to maintain his audience who abided by his views. Due to his inconsistencies, his interviews cannot always be used as a trustworthy source and they need to be cross-referenced with other material.

In terms of collaboration, as seen earlier in the discussion about his experience with TIFF, Nikolaidis consistently collaborated with certain people. As a result, Nikolaidis’s films are, to a certain extent, a ‘family business’, not only because he collaborated with his wife and son,¹⁷ but also because he created a ‘cinematic family’ with the crew and the

¹⁴ Sellors, *Film Authorship*, 114.

¹⁵ Neale qtd in Catherine Grant, ‘www.auteur.com?’, *Screen* 41:1 (2000), 102.

¹⁶ Ibid., 103.

¹⁷ Marie-Louise Bartholomew is the most substantial and significant contributor to Nikolaidis’s work since, apart from being the producer of many of his films, she worked on all of his films (except for the two short ones). Nikolaidis collaborated with his son, Simon Nikolaidis, who is a musician, in *SYHMD* (for

actors during the filming.¹⁸ However, as many actors describe,¹⁹ this kind of collaboration stopped as soon as they started shooting, when Nikolaidis turned into an authoritative, dogmatic, demanding person who desired to have full control over his work and whom the actors frequently sarcastically called ‘cannibal’.²⁰ This change of behaviour was owed to Nikolaidis knowing exactly what he wanted his films to achieve; according to Katsouridis, Nikolaidis had already ‘seen’ the films before shooting them²¹ and paid great attention to detail in order to achieve his desired outcome. His friends and colleagues state that Nikolaidis lived within his films, and his films were his life,²² confirming the introverted and personal nature of his oeuvre.

Considering all the above information, I argue that the most suitable way to examine Nikolaidis as an auteur is a psychobiographical methodology, which is inclusive and can bring together elements from the aforementioned approaches, while at the same time it refers to biographical elements that are very significant in the case of Nikolaidis. Since psychobiography ‘brings various findings to bear on single lives, discovering what works and what doesn’t,’²³ using a psychographic approach to Nikolaidis’s work will allow me to reveal his consistencies and inconsistencies. As Skip Dine Young writes, in psychobiography, an artist’s creative work is approached as if it was a set of projective tests for psychological assessment where this work is expected to be a reflection of the artist’s self.²⁴ Young further adds that when psychobiography is applied to film, it ‘assumes that all the symbolic elements (dialogue, costumes, even camera movements) represent the psychological makeup of the people who created them. Psychobiographers go beyond the “what” of a filmmaker’s career to ask “why?”’.²⁵

For instance, in his psychobiography for Alfred Hitchcock, *The Dark Side of the Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock* (1983),²⁶ Donald Spoto draws parallels between

sound recording), in *LTA* (musical composition, lyrics for a song, acting), and in *TZY* (musical composition).

¹⁸ Actors state in interviews that the cast would stay on set overnight, which in many occasions was Nikolaidis’s own house, thus turning the shooting set into a type of home. Spyridakis says that Nikolaidis accommodated his actors to live in the atmosphere that he wanted his film to have, and any scene rehearsal would be an outcome of living in this atmosphere (Takis Spyridakis in *Directing Hell*).

¹⁹ Tzeni Kitseli and Angelakas in *Directing Hell*, Valavanidis and Tzoumas in Nikolaidis’s retrospective in the Greek Film Archive.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Katsouridis, in *Directing Hell*.

²² Panayotopoulos, Masklavanou, Simon Nikolaidis (*Directing Hell*).

²³ Schultz, *Handbook of Psychobiography*, 4

²⁴ Skip Dine Young, *Psychology at the Movies*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 65.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Donald Spoto, *The Dark Side of the Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*, (London:

Hitchcock's life and films, and explores the origins of the filmmaker's obsessions. In order to examine Hitchcock's life in parallel to his films, Spoto uses articles and interviews, and notes that the filmmaker did not keep diaries, journals or notebooks, a fact that Spoto argues, shows the filmmaker's inarticulateness. As Spoto writes, 'Hitchcock's films were indeed [themselves] his notebooks and journals and [...] his almost maniacal secrecy was a deliberate means of deflecting attention away from what those films really are: astonishingly personal documents.'²⁷

In a similar manner, Joseph McBride's psychobiography *Steven Spielberg: A Biography*²⁸ examines the filmmaker's life and his Jewish upbringing, connecting it with his films. McBride writes that he had asked the filmmaker's permission to compose his biography, however, Spielberg declined, claiming that he was preparing his autobiography.²⁹ McBride though notes that he was not discouraged, since 'by talking endlessly about his life in press and television interviews, Spielberg already has given us an autobiography of sorts, albeit a scattered, fragmentary, and sometimes misleading one.'³⁰ Therefore, McBride started combining the pieces of the puzzle together in order to compile a psychobiography when Spielberg decided to create *Schindler's List* (1993), 'once he mustered the courage to confront the Holocaust and his Jewish heritage, [and] the conflicting impulses of his life and work began to resolve themselves in a way that provided dramatic shape and resolution for a biography.'³¹

Spoto and McBride maintain that psychobiography was the only way for them to approach their subjects' films, since their films are a projection of these two filmmakers' lives. In the same vein, I argue that a psychobiographic approach to Nikolaidis's career will contribute to the understanding of Nikolaidis's work. Although I am not compiling a biography, I claim that Nikolaidis's films are reflections of his life, and my approach could resemble more Spoto's research on Hitchcock rather than McBride's on Spielberg, since in Hitchcock's case his films are mostly projections of the filmmaker's obsessions and fears, just like in Nikolaidis's case. Therefore, combining Nikolaidis's biographical elements and textual analysis that will focus on specific consistent and inconsistent elements, will help me compose Nikolaidis's profile, both of his persona and his films.

Muller, 1983).

²⁷ Ibid., 2.

²⁸ Joseph McBride, *Steven Spielberg: A Biography*, (New York: Faber and Faber, 1997).

²⁹ Ibid., 449.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

3.2 Nikolaidis's Influences and Style: Books and Advertisements

At this point I wish to provide a brief overview of Nikolaidis's novels and advertisements in order to highlight the interconnection of his oeuvre and the consistency of his style and influences. Looking at Nikolaidis's work as a whole also contributes to the research and comprehension of female representation in his films. Since Nikolaidis's novels are based on autobiographical elements, they constitute a starting point for tracing and examining his influences, which can then be identified in his advertisements and films. Subsequently, these influences can be considered as recurrent motifs, topics and style that constitute his authorial signature.

Apart from *The Gold Diggers*,³² Nikolaidis's three novels focus on a revolutionary young man's life in Athens between the 1950s and the 1970s. This uncompromising young man represents Nikolaidis himself as he narrates stories of life, love and politics. He claims that while the characters in his novels can be seen as fictional, they are in fact compositions of actual people and real life situations that the filmmaker encountered in the time span from his adolescent years up to the Junta.³³

All three novels are narrated in the first person and are written in a descriptive, almost cinematic, language that reveals great attention to detail and that conjures up images for the reader. In fact, *The Angry Balkan* was initially written as a script, but it was too expensive to become a film, so Nikolaidis turned it into a novel.³⁴ Nikolaidis's novels narrate stories corresponding to the real world, which might seem to contradict his fictional postmodern cinematic style. However, the novels share narrative elements and structure with the *Here No More* trilogy, and in many cases, they blur the line between the description of the actions of the characters and the actions of heroes in films narrated by the characters. Apart from the three novels and the collection of short stories, Nikolaidis has two unpublished novels, *The Kids of Kiveli Street* and *Simon and Julious in Hades*, which were written in the 1950s,³⁵ and their stories are amalgamated into his three novels and in *TWASS* script.

TAB is the story of a young boy named Fanis in Athens in the 1950s, who is fed up with the overall socio-political situation in Greece and openly opposed to the police. Fanis expresses his condemnation towards the society through his participation in rock 'n' roll culture. When Fanis meets Tereza, who, according to Bartholomew, represents Loizou,

³² Which is collection of short stories, written in abstract and poetic language.

³³ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Nicolas Triantafyllidis, *Cinema*, BPA.

³⁴ Nikolaidis, interview with Kokkinos, 230. Nikolaidis also claims that before he wrote the *Angry Balkan* in 1977, he could not make films because he was unable to find producers with whom he could collaborate, thus he decided to learn cinema through writing, 'because literature is about creating images'. Nikolaidis, interview with Triantafyllidis, *Billboard*.

³⁵ Nikolaidis, interview with Triantafyllidis, *Billboard*.

Nikolaïdis's second wife,³⁶ they start a new life. *Pigs in the Air* refers to the 1950s, the 60s and the 70s with the use of flashbacks. Within the novel's present in the 1970s, the unnamed main character finds his father dead when he returns home after separating from his wife, and this recalls Nikolaïdis's own experience of finding his father dead.³⁷ The protagonist then locks himself in a room and recalls his life in the 1950s and 60s and contemplates on his present life during the troubled times under dictatorship. His past comprises of incidents with friends, family and girlfriends, as well as his failed marriage with Agni, who is modelled after Loizou, as Tereza in *TAB* was. Similarly, *A Hit in the Eye of Montezouma* narrates 'Sporos's'³⁸ story, adventures and love life, as well as his first filmmaking experience in Athens of the 1950s and 60s.

In his novels, Nikolaïdis does not precisely describe the actual political situation in Greece; at the same time, by identifying and referencing the regimes under which the characters live, he narrates his characters' antifascist acts against the Greek political scene. Nikolaïdis states that during his adolescence he was frustrated by the quotidian violence and unbearable pressure that the state put the citizens through, and that the only revolutionary act citizens could undertake was fight against the police and everything that it stood for.³⁹ His novels address this frustration by targeting the authorities and the Junta; for instance, *AHITEOM* describes the coup d'état of April 21, 1967 and recounts how 'Sporos' and his friends attacked the police with potatoes stubbed with razors.⁴⁰

Nikolaïdis's novels bear witness to the filmmaker's fascination with classical Hollywood. For instance, *PITA* starts with a description of a Humphrey Bogart scene in *Dark Passage* (Delmer Davis, 1947) as if Bogart was the novel's protagonist. The novels widely mention the films that Nikolaïdis watched during his adolescent years, but also name all the cinemas he used to go to in Athens, such as 'Rozi Claire'.⁴¹ He writes about how as a child his father used to take him to the cinema,⁴² and all his books narrate his cinema-going with his friends and his dates. Additionally, he nicknames girls after famous stars, such as Kim Novak,⁴³ he categorises them into films according to the girl's film taste, like *Zeta-Laura*,⁴⁴ or even writes a screening time next to their names, like Molly 6-8,⁴⁵ because that was the only time that the girls' families allowed them to go to the cinema.

³⁶ Bartholomew, 2011.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ 'Sporos' means seed. The word is metaphorically used to signify the young age or the small built of someone.

³⁹ Nikos Nikolaïdis, interview with Thanasis Lalas, Viewed 12 August 2014, http://www.nikosnikolaïdis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=97&Itemid=7.

⁴⁰ Nikolaïdis, *Hit in the Eye*, 430.

⁴¹ Nikolaïdis, *Pigs*, 12.

⁴² Ibid., 210.

⁴³ Ibid., 207.

⁴⁴ Nikolaïdis, *Hit in the Eye*, 41.

The influence of both Greek and world literature on Nikolaidis is evident in his writing, through his use of literary quotations, such as by Nikos Kavvadias,⁴⁶ and his references to literary personas, including F. Scott Fitzgerald.⁴⁷ His literary influences are also evident in his films, particularly in *TWASS* and *MP* where he uses quotes and ideas from novels and poems, and incorporates these within character dialogue. Therefore, Nikolaidis's work is clearly intertextual. His pastiche work acquires multiple levels, since the filmmaker does not merely pastiche older films, but also older literary work, combining both American and Greek cultural elements and creating new texts. Through them, Nikolaidis's authorial signature is highlighted instead of being eliminated, since the selected pastiched works describe Nikolaidis's ideas and promote the 'coming nightmare'.

Apart from the aforementioned influences, Nikolaidis's novels make extensive reference to the rock 'n' roll culture in Greece. Greek culture is eclectic, appropriating elements from various other cultures. Nikolaidis's novels and films demonstrate this eclectic nature of Greek culture, combining music genres, cultures, and subcultures, and labeling them as rock 'n' roll. Nikolaidis's adolescence was a time with 'plenty of rock 'n' roll, a little sex and no drugs.'⁴⁸ His novels describe the rock 'n' roll experience of the 1950s, the dancing and the nights that Nikolaidis spent with his friends in various clubs in Athens that include 'Green Park', 'Top Hat' and 'Blue Fox'. The music played in these venues intrigued him and led him to feature it heavily within his whole body of work. Nikolaidis writes meticulously about the music he used to listen and dance to as a teenager, mentioning a plethora of legendary musicians of the time, such as Fats Domino,⁴⁹ The Platters,⁵⁰ Simon and Garfunkel⁵¹ among many. It was for these rock 'n' roll elements which were associated with revolutionary ideas, that Nikolaidis was accused of being against the Greek ideals and of following an American style rather than projecting Greece and its troubles, as many filmmakers of his time did.

This criticism against Nikolaidis is evident in critics' reception of *TWASS* at the TFF. All of the reviews of the film, both positive and negative,⁵² stress Nikolaidis's American influence. The majority of these reviews also doubt or criticise the existence of

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁷ Nikolaidis, *Pigs*, 149.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁰ Nikolaidis, *Hit in the Eye*, 64.

⁵¹ Nikos Nikolaidis, *The Angry Balkan*, (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1999), 19.

⁵² Such as Kitsa Bontzou, 'Mia Tenia Requiem gia tous Epanastates'/'A Film Requiem for the Revolutionaries', BPA; Yannis Bakoyiannopoulos, 'Meta tin Kinonikopiisi, Epochi Prosopikon Apologismou'/'After Socialisation, Era of Personal Reports', BPA; Antonis Moschovakis, 'Dio Genies sto Mikroskopio'/'Two Generations under the Microscope', BPA. Specifically Bontzou writes that the film shows a society of reclassification and of political instability through Greek family's taboos and under the shadow of the American influence (American colleges, language, music, cinema).

the group of people that Nikolaidis represents in the film: they argue that although the second wave of rock 'n' roll managed to bring about a change in politics in May '68, Nikolaidis's protagonists were 'an insignificant minority' that 'mythologised American cinema, musicals and rock 'n' roll.'⁵³ They further argue that Greek people cannot identify with the delinquent gang which is presented as being from a wealthy background.⁵⁴

However, for Nikolaidis this culture was a part of his adolescence and consequently a part of his personal Greece. The rock 'n' roll experience that Nikolaidis describes in his novels and in the *HNM* trilogy is based on autobiographic elements as well as on real life incidents that occurred at that time and that show that this culture was indeed present and popular in the 1950s.⁵⁵ Some PEK films of 1950s, such as for instance *I Theia ap'to Chicago/Aunt from Chicago* (Alekos Sakellarios, 1957), show the arrival of rock 'n' roll in Greece, the change to the music habits of the youth of the time, and the mixed reception that this music got by the youth and their parents.⁵⁶ Vasilis Maros's short film *I Athina Chorevei Rock 'n' Roll/Athens Dances Rock 'n' Roll* (1957) clearly shows that rock 'n' roll was embraced by all ages in Greece. This popular culture was faced with attempts of marginalisation and concealment by the Greek authorities, because rock 'n' roll culture was considered to be revolutionary and was linked with juvenile delinquency, as will be discussed next. Moreover, this popular culture was believed to threaten the Greek morals, since rock 'n' roll dancing was considered to conjure up a sexual atmosphere that would lead to 'moral dangers'.⁵⁷

⁵³ Bakoyiannopoulos, 'After Socialisation'.

⁵⁴ Moschovakis, 'Two Generations'.

⁵⁵ For instance, 'Yorgos Swing's' death in Igloo club in the 1950s, described in *TWASS*, which club played rock 'n' roll music, is a real-life incident. The episode 'Rock 'n' roll Invasion' of TV documentary series *The Haunts* mentions the incident, makes wide and explicit reference to *TWASS*, and to the connection of the film and of Nikolaidis to rock 'n' roll culture ('Rock 'n' roll Invasion', *The Haunts*, NERIT, 7 August 2014, Viewed 12 August 2014, <http://webtv.nerit.gr/katigories/politismos/07avg2014-i-isvoli-tou-rok-ent-rol/>).

⁵⁶ For more information see Eliza Anna-Delveroudi, *I Nei stis Komodies tou Ellinikou Kinimatografou 1948-1974/The Youth in Greek Comedies 1948-1974*, (Athens: General Secretariat of Youth, Centre for Greek Research, 2004).

⁵⁷ Kostas Katsapis, *Ichi ke Apoichi: Kinoniki Istoria tou Rock 'n' Roll Phenomenou stin Ellada, 1956-1967/Sounds and Reverberations: A Social History of the Rock 'n' Roll Phenomenon in Greece, 1956-1967*, (Athens: General Secretariat for Youth, 2007), http://www.iaen.gr/ihoi_kai_apoihoi_koinoniki_istoria_tou_rok_en_rol_fainomenou_s_tin_ellada_1956_1967-b-70*1.html, 103. Moreover, 'Rock 'n' roll Invasion' displays extracts from the Greek press of the time with headlines such as 'The American way of Living: Gun, Crime, Violence', 'New Type of the American Way of Living: The Teddy Boys of Athens Dance in... Titania [cinema]' ('Rock 'n' roll Worse than Opium', *The Haunts*).

The origins of the rock 'n' roll have been connected to African music of the Afro-American slaves, black music, and rhythm and blues.⁵⁸ While it is unclear when rock 'n' roll was born,⁵⁹ it started emerging in the USA in the late 1940s but was 'institutionalised as a separate segment of the mainstream'⁶⁰ in the mid 1950s. That was when the film *Blackboard Jungle* (Richard Brooks, 1955) came out, in which the song 'Rock around the Clock' by Bill Haley and the Comets featured.⁶¹ The song became number one single in the 1955 in the US and marked the beginning of a new music era.⁶² Rock 'n' roll, except for the new sound, brought fury to the US.⁶³ Since the early 1940s, the youth that was then introduced to the early rock 'n' roll music gathered in dance halls where they danced, and consumed alcohol.⁶⁴ The American history of the Cold War and the overall socio-political situation in the US had caused anxiety to the teenagers of the time and incidents of delinquency were common expression among this youth culture.⁶⁵

Hollywood films of the time [such as *The Wild One* (László Benedek, 1953), and *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955)], aimed to cautiously approach juvenile delinquency, but were instead faced with controversy, accused of rather promoting delinquency.⁶⁶ The film *BJ* though caused the greatest controversy since it featured rebellious teenage pupils that defy the school authorities and terrorise the American high school. During the screening of the film in the US people were dancing to the rock 'n' roll music in the cinema aisles, but violent incidents associated with the youth reaction to the film have also been reported.⁶⁷ This kind of audience reception travelled around the world together with the film, which started being banned from various screenings internationally and was denounced by teachers, legal organisations and film critics;⁶⁸ but it had achieved

⁵⁸ Richard Aquila, *The Old-Time Rock & Roll: The Chronicle of an Era, 1954-1963*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 3.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Keir Keightley, 'Reconsidering Rock', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 112.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'n' Roll Changed America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

⁶⁴ George O. Carney, *Fast Food, Stock Cars, and Rock 'n' Roll: Place and Space in American Pop Culture*, (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995), 23.

⁶⁵ Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 7.

⁶⁶ James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 179.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 184.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 185.

to make rock 'n' roll famous worldwide.⁶⁹ The film *Rock Around the Clock* (Fred S. Sears, 1956), in which Bill Haley and the Comets' song also featured, was followed by similar incidents. According to Paul Rock and Stanley Cohen, the London screening of *Rock Around the Clock* in 1956 was accompanied by 'what had now become regarded as the typical 'rock 'n' roll riot': fighting, slashing of seats, and other types of vandalism.'⁷⁰

That was the time that rock 'n' roll phenomenon also appeared in Greece.⁷¹ *BJ* was screened in Greece in February 1956 and this, together with a rock 'n' roll concert that the American Navy performed in Athens in late October of the same year, can be considered to have introduced rock 'n' roll in Greece.⁷² The impact of the film is also mentioned by Nikolaidis, who claims in an interview that the only access to new rock 'n' roll music was through films; he further states that he watched *BJ* when it was released in Athens after a friend urged him to watch it because of the music heard in the film.⁷³

The Greek press of the time reproduced articles about *BJ* from the American press, claiming that rock 'n' roll incites youth to engage in an open revolt against society, hence suggesting it is linked to juvenile delinquency.⁷⁴ Both in the Greek and in the foreign press, rock 'n' roll is frequently presented as a cultural symbol characteristic of the street gangs that resolved their differences in the streets.⁷⁵ Films that feature rock 'n' roll music have been accused of contributing to an epidemic of youth delinquency. Rock and Cohen write that this behaviour was linked to another type of juvenile delinquency that had already appeared in the UK and was referred to as the 'Teddy Boys'. Although I do not argue that Nikolaidis was a 'Teddy Boy', juvenile delinquency is explicitly described in Nikolaidis's novels, as well as in *TWASS*. What Nikolaidis describes as autobiographical elements connected to the rock 'n' roll and the 'Teddy Boys' phenomena in Greece predates the imported elements,⁷⁶ but also shows the concurrence of cultural events. The Greek youth

⁶⁹ For more information on youth cultures and the rock 'n' roll phenomenon in the US see Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), Michael Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1985).

⁷⁰ Paul Rock and Stanley Cohen, 'The Teddy Boy', in *The Age of Affluence: 1951-1964*, ed. Vernon Bogdanor & Robert Skidelsky, (London: Macmillan, 1970), 310.

⁷¹ Katsapis, *Sounds and Reverberations*, 52. The questioning of the rock 'n' roll aficionados' morality in Greece is also highlighted in 'Rock 'n' roll Invasion'. A retired police officer who was active in the 1950s and the press of the time featured in the documentary, stress the amoral nature of rock 'n' roll culture ('Rock 'n' roll Invasion').

⁷² Katsapis, *Sounds and Reverberations*, 52.

⁷³ Nikolaidis, interview with Triantafyllidis, *Billboard*.

⁷⁴ Katsapis, *Sounds and Reverberations*, 122.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁷⁶ Nikolaidis claims that 'Teddy Boys' appeared after the first rock 'n' roll phase, to which

delinquency was strengthened and exploded in the public consciousness with these foreign-imported phenomena. This combination of American and British youth phenomena appropriated into a Greek context showcase the eclecticism of Greek culture and Nikolaidis's pastiche.

The term 'Teddy Boys' was introduced in the UK but spread worldwide.⁷⁷ It first appeared in the UK press in 1954 and referred to gangs of London adolescent boys who were characterised by their style of dress (Edwardian suits) and who were causing violent incidents in the streets. This trend began appearing in 1953 when the Edwardians were mostly referred to as 'cosh boys' or 'spivs' until they were renamed the 'Teddy Boys'.⁷⁸ The coining of the term 'Teddy Boy' to signify the delinquent and amoral youth is greatly significant since the renaming

announces that a change has taken place in 'society's' attitude towards the phenomenon. [...] The Edwardian was renamed because his acts had acquired a dramatic quality which could not be conveniently dealt with in old terminology. [...] The 'Teddy Boy' was becoming defined as a 'social problem'. A social problem is a thing about which 'something ought to be done'.⁷⁹

The British 'Teddy Boys' were portrayed in the Greek press as 'a real plague'⁸⁰ and were frequently associated with rock 'n' roll due to the violent behaviour that they were presented to have in the non-Greek press of the time.⁸¹ The violent incidents with entertainment as their main goal was the only element that connected the original 'Teddy Boys' with their Greek version, since the latter did not adhere to the same style of dress as their UK counterparts.⁸² The 'Teddy Boy' term started being applied in Greece and was used in order to refer to the youth gone astray.⁸³ The 'Teddy Boy' phenomenon in Greece characterised a brand of deviant youth that ignored school, went to notorious places, had sexual relationships and, as described in the press at that time, had 'sexual parties'.⁸⁴ In the late 1950s, Greek society was highly concerned with the youth's behaviour and pressured the Greek government to implement legislation against these 'improper' behaviours that they claimed stemmed from rock 'n' roll.⁸⁵ Consequently, in 1959 a law was

he adhered to, so he cannot connect the two notions. Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Philippas Chrysopoulos, *Pop&Rock*, BPA.

⁷⁷ Rock & Cohen, 'Teddy Boys', 289.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 292-293.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 294-295.

⁸⁰ Katsiapis, *Sounds and Reverberations*, 132.

⁸¹ Ibid., 154.

⁸² Ibid., 133.

⁸³ Ibid., 129.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 155.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 166.

implemented.⁸⁶ According to the newspaper *Avgi* in 1958, the ‘Teddy Boy’ movement in Greece was nothing more than the commitment of offences with no financial benefits, such as throwing yogurts at people, and was only aimed at ‘the satisfaction of the habits emerging in the rock ‘n’ roll climate of the time.’⁸⁷ This behaviour is described in Nikolaidis’s novels, where he links rock ‘n’ roll culture to non-conformism, juvenile delinquency and political indifference, and is also referred to in *TWASS*, which details incidents such as stealing cars and throwing yogurt.

While elements of rock ‘n’ roll can be found within Nikolaidis’s whole body of cinematic work, they are especially apparent in the trilogy *HNM*. This trilogy is arguably his only piece of filmic work that takes place in the real world, and not in the fictional one evident in the rest of his films, and that refers directly to Nikolaidis’s own generation. Nikolaidis uses original rock ‘n’ roll music as well as pastiche music that imitates it, his mise-en-scène features record players and jukeboxes, and he has his characters talk about music of the 1950s. This influence is also prevalent in his advertisements where he makes a clear visual reference to rock ‘n’ roll style, recycling an iconography of American popular culture. Moreover the advertisements are accompanied by rock ‘n’ roll music. For instance the advertisements for Chiclets Adams chewing gum seen (Fig3.1.1), features jukeboxes on which the flavours of the chewing gum are displayed, displayed as young people dance to the Ritchie Valens 1958 rock ‘n’ roll song *La Bamba*, incorporating the commercial product into a prop that is much used in his films. This instance shows the strong influence of American culture on Nikolaidis’s work. He further aims to make his advertisement films more popular to audiences by integrating elements of the popular and, in doing so, stresses his work as inherently referential.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 145. The Legislative Law 4000 imposed a minimum three-month imprisonment for the convicted ‘Teddy Boys’ which could not be bailed out. Ibid., 146.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 167.

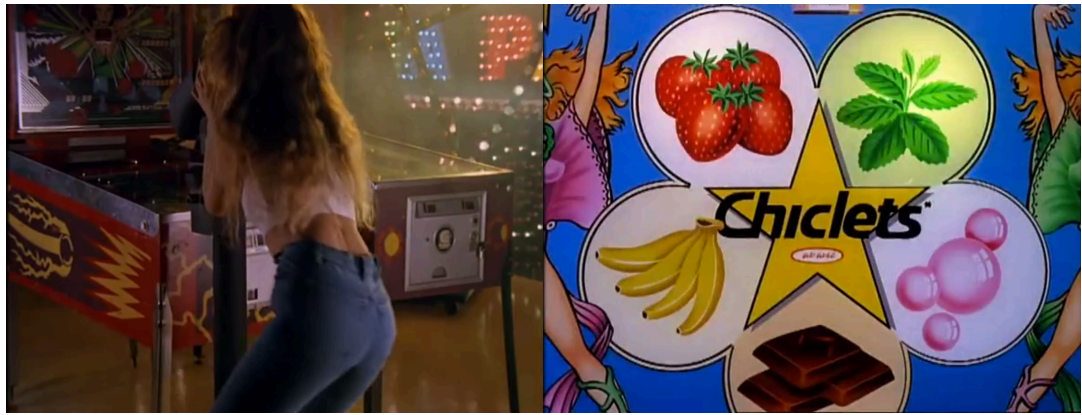


Fig3.2.1 Rock 'n' roll elements in Chiclets Adams advertisement

Along with rock 'n' roll the influence of specific films and styles is also prevalent in Nikolaidis's work. The filmmaker uses his cinematic influence in his advertisements in the same way he uses rock 'n' roll elements. Thus his advertisements are pastiche as well, following and complementing his filmic work. For example, in a different Chiclets Adams advertisement, the use of shadows and the use of neon lights suggest a film noir quality (Fig3.1.2). Nostalgia films, road movies, and less often, science fiction are pastiched in some of his Delta ice-creams advertisements. His advertisements are also inspired by iconic images from American films; for instance, Nikolaidis recreates a scene from *Nine ½ Weeks* (Adrian Lyne, 1986) in his Jotis Jelly Crystals advertisement (Fig3.1.3). This advertisement is also accompanied by the rock 'n' roll song *Sexy Ways* by Jerry Lee Lewis, referencing his own fascination with rock 'n' roll culture while connecting the dancing 'shakes' that the song mentions⁸⁸ to the shaking movements of the jelly in the advertisement, hence underlining the pastiche nature of his work.



Fig3.2.2 Film noir elements in Chiclets Adams advertisement

⁸⁸ 'Sexy Ways' lyrics say: 'I said a shake baby shake, till the meat rolls off your bones [...]'.



Fig3.2.3 Nine 1/2 Weeks (above) imitated in Jelly advertisement (below)

By pinpointing Nikolaidis's influences, it becomes evident that the filmmaker has been consistent in his ideology, influences and topics, and has effectively and creatively combined these elements in order to produce new pieces of work. At the same time, these pieces of work, by continually referencing common elements, they are strongly linked together, and justify the films' retrospective categorisation in sections. His references to rock 'n' roll culture, his cinematic and literary influences, and the political tones of his works become indicative of his authorial style. These topics, ideas, styles, and iconic images recur throughout Nikolaidis's work, and have been a main point of criticism against the filmmaker.⁸⁹

3.3 Nikolaidis's Film Style

During the 48th TFF, which presented a retrospective of Nikolaidis's work, a special event entitled 'In a Dark Passage: Film Noir in Greek Cinema' hosted screenings of fifteen Greek film noirs,⁹⁰ from 1958 to 2004, while an eponymous book was published by

⁸⁹ For instance the review in 'Athinorama' characterises his work as repetitive: 'Reviews', *Nikos Nikolaidis*, Viewed 14 August 2014, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39&Itemid=17.

⁹⁰ For the festival see 48th *International Thessaloniki Film Festival*, Viewed 14 August 2014, <http://tiff.filmfestival.gr/default.aspx?lang=en-US&page=638&SectionID=27&mode=1#tab1>. The choice of films shows a further connection between Nikolaidis and Greek film noir. Katsouridis (*Morning Patrol*'s cinematographer) directed two films of the event (*Egklima sta Paraskinia/Murder Backstage*, 1960 and *I Adistaktoi/The Ruthless*, 1965). Triantafyllidis's *Ta Skylia Glifoun tin Kardia mou/Dogs Licking my Heart* (1993) chose Panayotis Thanasoulis, *SS*'s protagonist, as the protagonist of his film, as a reference to Nikolaidis.

the Film Festival press.⁹¹ The festival's press release writes that the special event for the Greek film noir is 'directly linked to Nikolaidis's retrospective.'⁹² This is because the selected Greek films 'locate the commonalities between a genre that redefined the notion of time, life and death on the big screen, and of a pioneer Greek filmmaker who has set these notions in a completely distinct way from the established Greek cinematography.'⁹³

Nikolaidis's cinema is indeed largely influenced by film noir, recreating and appropriating film noir aesthetics across his films. Moreover, he indeed provided a distinct perspective of the notions of time, life and death in Greek cinema, throughout his body of work. Nikolaidis employed film noir in order to talk about these very topics, and to connect them with the bleak future he perceived for Greece. However, apart from possible similarities in aesthetics, the films of the aforementioned special event differ significantly from Nikolaidis's work. Although these films' aesthetics and narrative are influenced by the classic film noir, the majority of them, particularly the earlier ones, create localised narratives (something that Nikolaidis never did), in order to appeal to Greek audiences.

As James Naremore notes, it is easier to recognise film noir than to define it.⁹⁴ Though there is no single definition of noir, since not all film noirs share the same common set of characteristics, in terms of its history it has been generally accepted that film noir originated in the US, was mainly created in 1940s and 50s, and it was named retrospectively as 'black film' in France, when a great number of American crime thrillers was screened there after World War II. Film noir was highly influenced by German Expressionism, and some common visual and narrative features include low-key photography, dark and wet city streets, neon lights, femme fatales and masculine crisis.⁹⁵

Apart from the difficulty of defining the term film noir, scholars and critics have encountered a difficulty in deciding if film noir is a genre, a cycle, a mood, a period, a style, a movement or a phenomenon. Janey Place for instance considers film noir a film movement,⁹⁶ because it shares commonalities with previous film movements, like for example with the German Expressionism.⁹⁷ She adds that film movements 'occur in specific historical periods,' while genres 'exist through time,'⁹⁸ and that film noir has

⁹¹ Alexis Dermentzoglou, ed., *Se Skotinous Dromous: To Film Noir ston Elliniko Kinimatografo/In a Dark Passage: Film Noir in Greek Cinema*, (Thessaloniki: Erodios, 2007).

⁹² 48th Film Festival.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ James Naremore, *More than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008, 9.

⁹⁵ See for instance Naremore, Ibid., Dale E. Ewing, Jr, 'Film Noir: Style and Content', in *Film Noir Reader 2*, Alain Silver and James Ursini, eds, (New York: Limelight Editions, 1999), 73, William Park, What is Film Noir?, (Plymouth: Bucknell University Press, 2011), 1.

⁹⁶ Janey Place, 'Women in Film Noir', in *Women in Film Noir*, (London: BFI, 2000), 49.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 50.

homogeneous visual style, as film movements do.⁹⁹ Naremore considers film noir a category of its own, stating that film noir is an ‘unusually baggy concept,’¹⁰⁰ it is ‘one of the most amorphous categories in film history’¹⁰¹ and it has ‘no essential characteristics.’¹⁰² However he uses terms such as ‘classic film noir’, while also he compares noir to ‘any other genre or style,’¹⁰³ contradicting the differentiation he suggests.

William Park argues that film noir is ‘the only Hollywood genre that is also a style, a period style no less.’¹⁰⁴ Park notes that

the syntactic perspective enables us to see the genre more clearly, while the semantic gives us a better view of the style and its period. [...] When a writer refers to film noir, he may be referring to the genre or the style, for of course in the classic period the two accompany one another and cannot be easily separated.¹⁰⁵

Park further writes that ‘as a genre, film noir continues on as “neo-noir,” but as a period style it remains forever fixed in the 1940s and 1950s.’¹⁰⁶ Therefore, it becomes evident that, though scholars debate over labelling film noir, there seems to be a distinction between the original, classic film noir of the 40s and the 50s, and the ‘neo noir’ that followed. Being aware of the debate over the labelling, in this thesis I will be using the terms film noir genre and ‘classic film noir’ as inclusive terms in order to refer to the film noir of the 40s and the 50s and its atmosphere. Nikolaidis is specifically influenced by film noir of that period and was interested in these films and their style, a fact that is obvious in his novels, in his interviews, but also in the films he chooses to directly reference [for instance *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950) and *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944)]. Therefore, I argue that no matter how film noir is labelled, Nikolaidis was interested specifically in this time period of classic film noir and the ‘noirness’ of these particular films, and that he therefore pastiches this specific period. The fact that he also pastiches the rock ‘n’ roll appropriated phenomenon that he experienced in the 1950s confirms that he was specifically interested in this time period, which is connected to his teenage years.

Critics have claimed that film noir is apolitical and that it expresses a bleak view of the society, which is characterised by pessimism and perversion; that film noir is defined by a ‘hopeless’ and ‘relentlessly cynical’ approach.¹⁰⁷ However, film noir has also been considered covertly political. Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton, the first critics to

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Naremore, *More than Night*, 5.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰² Ibid., 5.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 219.

¹⁰⁴ Park, *What is Film Noir?*, 6

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁷ Paul Schrader, ‘Notes on Film Noir’, in *Film Noir Reader*, (New York: Limelight Editions, 1996), 169.

analyse the element of pessimism in film noir,¹⁰⁸ argue that this pessimism is deeply political and that film noir is a genre of social commentary. They relate pessimism to the aftershock of the US Depression and the 1930s gangster era, to the involvement of the US in World War II, and to the post-war social turmoil.¹⁰⁹ They further connect this 'gloomy expressionistic style' to the German refugee filmmakers (such as Fritz Lang) that had left fascist Germany to escape Hitler.¹¹⁰

Naremore notes that most of the filmmakers of the 1940s who were associated with film noir (as for instance John Huston and Orson Welles) were members of Hollywood's committed left wing community, while crime writers who provided Hollywood with their material (such as Graham Greene and Raymond Chandler), were either Marxists or social realists.¹¹¹ He further argues that actors who played in film noir (as for instance Humphrey Bogart) were icons of liberalism or leftist radicalism.¹¹² Naremore thus notes that film noir 'has formative roots in the left culture of the Roosevelt years – a culture that was repressed, marginalized, and virtually extinguished during the postwar decade, when noir took on increasingly cynical and even right-wing implications.'¹¹³ Censorship was quite prevalent in 1940s Hollywood and there were several boards that monitored the films for liberal or anarchic-libertarian elements.¹¹⁴ According to Naremore

during World War II, when black soldiers were fighting overseas, the government had encouraged [...] filmmakers to produce liberal pictures about racial problems, but after the war, with Roosevelt dead and the civil rights movement not yet fully underway, any attempt to discuss such issues on the screen was scrutinized for its potential as 'communist propaganda.' In response, left-wing Hollywood tended to show the effects of racism indirectly, chiefly through pictures about lynch-mob violence directed against whites.

Therefore, it becomes evident that film noir, although on the surface appeared apolitical and detached from social problems, it did in fact convey political messages indirectly, in order to disguise them from the monitoring film boards.

Though after the 1950s film noir was not prominent, in the late 1960s, early 1970s, 'neo-noir' emerged in the U.S., at a time when Hollywood was in a financial crisis and 'turned to the possibilities of a genre that appeared to have died out a decade earlier [...] but which was gaining attention in popular and academic critical writing about classical

¹⁰⁸ In *Panorama du Film Noir Américain*.

¹⁰⁹ Dale Ewing Jr, 'Film Noir: Style and Content', in *Film Noir Reader 2*, (New York: Limelight Editions, 1999), 75.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Naremore, *More than Night*, 104.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Hollywood.’¹¹⁵ While some filmmakers used the same notion of film noir and upgraded the detective stories, some other filmmakers who were mostly immigrants from Europe working in Hollywood, brought with them their influences from European movements and infused them to film noir, thus revitalising the American crime stories.¹¹⁶ While film noir filmmakers were unaware of creating film noir, neo-noir filmmakers consciously make films with film noir in mind, aware of the historicity of the genre.¹¹⁷

The film noir visual and narrative elements that are traced in all of Nikolaidis’s films, for instance night shots in heavy rain, retro cars, cigarettes, venetian blinds, neon lights, chiaroscuro lighting, murder, palpable feelings of claustrophobia, fatalism, point of view shots, and femme fatales, (consciously) refer to classic film noir of the 40s and the 50s. I further argue that due to film noir’s relatively low budget, the choice of this genre also accommodated Nikolaidis’s budget restrictions. Since Nikolaidis was interested in making films that referenced film noir, and he set off his career when neo-noir started emerging, it could be said that he created neo-noirs. However, while film noir is his main influence, it is not the only one that has shaped his work. Thus, with the exception of *Loser Takes All*, I claim that his films are not simply neo-noir films.

Elements from the horror genre, the Greek tragedy, the post-apocalyptic film and the western, among others, can also be detected throughout his oeuvre. The filmmaker uses elements from various genres in general, and films in particular, combines them together, filters them through his obsessions, ideas and creates new pieces of work. In this way, he both creates a dialogue with the genres/films he refers to, and he reflects his ideology, rendering his films introverted and personal. Therefore, Nikolaidis creates postmodern pastiche films.

The term postmodernism also does not have a lucid definition and has a fluctuating meaning; the term has been used in philosophical, socio-cultural, and aesthetic debates, complicating its definition even further. Defining postmodern film is equally hard, and it is difficult to summarise its characteristics inclusively. However, some common traits of postmodern filmic texts are generally accepted to be intertextuality, bricolage, multiplicity, pastiche, parody, and self-reflexivity, and the fact that postmodernism mixes genres and historical periods. Also, postmodernism refuses grand narratives and heroes, and is characterised by elements such as nostalgia, irony, hypereality, humanity in crisis, and dystopia.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Mark Bould, Kathrina Glitre and Greg Tuck, *Neo-Noir*, (London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2009), 4

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁸ For more information about postmodernism in film see M. Keith Booker, *Postmodern Hollywood: What’s New in Film and Why it Makes us Feel so Strange*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 2007), Catherine Constable,

Nikolaïdis's filmic work has postmodern characteristics. For example, the bleak future, the feelings of despair and the 'nightmare' that Nikolaïdis projects in his filmic work are directly linked to his attack of optimist modernist beliefs. Nikolaïdis also denies heroes and deals with antiheroes, marginalised groups, who are often projected as postmodern ciphers. He portrays postmodern societies that have been 'infected' by the fascism of authoritative regimes. These societies do not believe in progress, since fascism has prevailed, and they are presented as a distorted reality. These societies are also set in virtually alternative 'universes' of non-specific location. Temporal distortion is another distinctive element of Nikolaïdis's work that is strictly linked to postmodernism. By presenting a distorted context, Nikolaïdis subverts mainstream conventions. However, what renders Nikolaïdis's work memorable and recognisable is pastiche per se.

Pastiche is closely linked to postmodernism, as Jameson has argued in 1984.¹¹⁹ Jameson draws from the Marxist tradition and Ernest Mandel's economic model to link postmodernism to late capitalism. Jameson is concerned with the economic, social, and cultural change that postmodernism brings in contemporary societies, and the capitalism's power over these societies. He further claims that modern societies have entered a 'post-industrial' stage where capitalism has the hegemonic role, and he examines how cultural production changes in this new capitalist system. Jameson considers depthlessness, paranoia and pastiche as effects of postmodernism. However, though he accepts present society as free of reference to 'reality', he maintains a distinction between surface and depth in a dialectical materialism that uses the notion of totality and critical distance as important means to socio-cultural transformation.¹²⁰

Jameson also links pastiche to late capitalism, and notes that consumer society is attracted by heterogeneity and stylistic diversity.¹²¹ He defines pastiche as a 'blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humor'¹²² that is 'amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter.'¹²³ Specifically, he writes:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without

'Postmodernism and Film', in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, Steven Connor (ed), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Christina Degli-Esposti (ed), *Postmodernism in Cinema*, (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998),

¹¹⁹ Jameson, 'Late Capitalism', 78.

¹²⁰ Peter Brooker, Introduction to 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in *Modernism/Postmodernism*, (New York: Longman, 1992), 163.

¹²¹ As Jameson writes there are three expansions of capitalism since the 19th century: market, monopoly and multi-national or late capitalism. Jameson chronologically links pastiche to the latter expansion. Ibid.

¹²² Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in *Modernism/Postmodernism*, (New York: Longman, 1992), 167.

¹²³ Jameson, 'Late Capitalism', 65.

laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic.¹²⁴

Therefore, for Jameson parody constitutes a political act, but pastiche is devoid of any political undertones and is instead an apolitical parody. Under this logic, pastiche is not a form of critique nor engages in any meaningful purpose. According to Jameson, the postmodern subject is unable to create a continuity between past and present or to create anything original; instead, the postmodern subject is only able to imitate older pieces of work: 'the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture.'¹²⁵ Thus, postmodern pastiche creations lack authorial signature, are superficial with no further meaning and can only address the past.

Jameson further claims that in postmodernism the look back to the past is presented in nostalgic modes. Particularly in cinema, the look back to the past has been seen through 'nostalgia films' or 'la mode rétro'¹²⁶ as Jameson writes, where the 'lived reality' is presented. The author differentiates between films like *American Graffiti* (George Lucas, 1973), which was filmed in the 1970s but takes place in the 1950s, and films like *Body Heat* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1981), which is supposed to be set in present time but appears to be placed in 'an eternal 30s'.¹²⁷ According to Jameson, *BH* is characterised by a certain 'pastness', and 'pseudo-historical depth'.¹²⁸ Jameson notes that in *BH* the town where the film is set has the 'crucial strategic function'¹²⁹ of hiding references of the contemporary world, like for instance through the appliances, the cars and other products, that are associated with late capitalism and with the consumer society, aiming at placing the narrative in a nostalgic past beyond history.¹³⁰ Jameson adds that this address to the nostalgic past shows that we might have become 'incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience.'¹³¹

In order to further stress the role of 'nostalgia films' Jameson uses the example of *AG*, arguing that the film refers to the rock 'n' roll culture of the 1950s that attempts to 'appropriate [US's] missing past.'¹³² When Jameson discusses historicism, in terms of translating the past into contemporary vision, he claims that this is done as a 'random

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 66.

¹²⁷ Jameson, 'Consumer Society', 170.

¹²⁸ Jameson, 'Late Capitalism', 39.

¹²⁹ Jameson, 'Consumer Society', 170.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 171

¹³² Ibid., 66.

cannibalization of all the styles of the past,¹³³ often adding the prefix ‘neo’ in front of the original genre.¹³⁴ Therefore, according to the philosopher, the pastiche nostalgic films are limited to the recreation of style and image of the original lived history, thus with limited ties to reality, since ‘the history of aesthetic styles displaces ‘real’ history.’¹³⁵ Jameson further suggests that contemporary writers and artists cannot create new styles and traditions and it appears as if the ‘immense weight of seventy or eighty years of classical modernism [...] weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living,’¹³⁶ as Marx had called this historical nightmare.

Jameson asks for ‘genuine historicity’, ‘our social, historical and existential present and the past as “referent” or as ‘ultimate objects’,¹³⁷ that for him postmodernism cannot provide. In this way he refuses to accept that postmodernism helps us become more aware of the ‘ultimate objects’ of the past. As Linda Hutcheon writes in 1989 however, postmodernism

teaches and enacts the recognition of the fact that the social, historical, and existential ‘reality’ of the past is *discursive* reality when it is used as the referent of art, and so the only ‘genuine historicity’ becomes that which would openly acknowledge its own discursive, contingent identity. The past as referent is not bracketed or effaced, as Jameson would like to believe: it is incorporated and modified, given new and different life and meaning.¹³⁸

Therefore Jameson believes that postmodernism and pastiche are ahistorical, and void of any ability to critique the past and history. He uses ‘historicism’ as a term to note historical styles being aesthetised and being devoid of the political implications that these styles might have when combined together. Subsequently, for Jameson pastiche and postmodernism are politically dangerous, since they provide a ‘canivalisation of styles and history’ and, as explained in the case of *BH*, they conceal political elements, like the reference to consumerist society, because they are unable to comment on contemporary experiences. Hutcheon further critiques Jameson’s argument that postmodernism produces homogeneous identities, while she claims that ‘the increasing uniformisation of mass culture is one of the totalizing forces that postmodernism exists to challenge’, rather than to deny.¹³⁹ Hutcheon also criticises Jameson’s distinction between pastiche and parody, arguing that it is the ironic ambivalence of parody that has made parodic postmodernism

¹³³ Ibid., 65.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 66.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 67.

¹³⁶ Jameson, ‘Consumer Society’, 178.

¹³⁷ Jameson, *Late Capitalism*, 67.

¹³⁸ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1988), 24-25.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 6.

problematic to Jameson.¹⁴⁰ Hutcheon further describes a basic difference between parody and pastiche: ‘parody is transformational in its relationships to other texts; pastiche is imitative.’¹⁴¹

Jameson’s understanding of pastiche as a blank parody with no historicity, and with a lack of authorial voice has been criticized and dismissed by other scholars as well. Margaret A. Rose for instance writes in 1993 that pastiche is ‘a more neutral practice of compilation which is neither necessarily critical of its sources, nor necessarily comic,’¹⁴² while she stresses pastiche’s ability to combine different elements. However, she states that pastiche could work the way parody does, or suggests that these two concepts are not very different to each other. Rose argues that pastiche can be both comic and critical, while she also stresses that these concepts, together with other terms of referencing, have lost their meaning through time.¹⁴³

Nikolaidis’s work only somewhat adheres to Jameson’s formulation of pastiche. Nikolaidis uses elements from ‘nostalgia films’; for instance, *TWASS* also pastiches the rock ‘n’ roll phenomenon, similarly to *AG*, appropriating it to his personal experience. In contrast to Jameson’s claim that pastiche aims at conveying ‘pastness’ ‘through stylistic connotation,’¹⁴⁴ and denies historicity in pastiche, nostalgia in Nikolaidis’s work refers to nostalgia for the past and for old films. This nostalgia is also linked to the doomed future of Greek cinema, of cinema in general, of Greek society in particular and of societies in general. Nikolaidis refers nostalgically to the past, in order not solely to stress his preference for the 1950s culture, but mainly to criticize the present, aiming to awaken people to the forthcoming ‘nightmare’ and the bleak future.¹⁴⁵

Additionally, the superficiality and the depthlessness described by Jameson are absent in Nikolaidis’s cinematic oeuvre. On the contrary, the combination of genre elements and self-referential authorial motifs by Nikolaidis create depth and generate multiple levels in the director’s work. Subsequently, the depth of his films and his ability to combine previous works by both maintaining their originality and by adding his personal ideas to them can be claimed to be part of his authorial signature, negating the lack of authorship that is central to Jameson’s description of pastiche.

¹⁴⁰ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), xii.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁴² Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 72.

¹⁴³ For further critique on Jameson’s ‘blank parody’ see Dan Harries, *Film Parody* (London: British Film Institute, 2000); Ingeborg Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film and Literature* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁴ Jameson, ‘Late Capitalism’, 67.

¹⁴⁵ This fact is further highlighted by Nikolaidis aforementioned claim that he has written his story of a part of 1950s generations through his memories of the past and future.

Instead, Nikolaidis's work adheres to the notion of pastiche developed by Richard Dyer, who builds on Jameson's work on pastiche. Dyer in 2007 tries to 'rescue pastiche from postmodernism'¹⁴⁶ claiming that pastiche should not be understood only through postmodernism. Dyer subverts Jameson's view of pastiche being an aesthetic mannerism, and argues for an aesthetic imitation, for a concept with a strong history in cultural production, and specifically in film, music, literature and art, and examines how historicity can be represented through feelings. Dyer thus claims that pastiche is 'inescapably historical' and views it as a product of cultural and historical circumstances.¹⁴⁷ Dyer claims that the most significant aspect of pastiche, which connects historicity and feeling, is its 'ability to move us even while allowing us to be conscious of where the means of our being moved come from, its historicity.'¹⁴⁸

For Dyer, what is most important in conceptualising pastiche is its ability to combine distinct elements. Therefore, pastiche is a combination of imitations that do not have to have generic similarities. According to Dyer, 'pastiche is a kind of imitation that you are meant to know is an imitation' and in order 'for it to work, it needs to be got as a pastiche.'¹⁴⁹ Although there are many applications of the term pastiche in art and culture, Dyer prefers to use the term 'pasticcio'¹⁵⁰ to describe the 'combination of the elements taken from previous works, what now tends to be referred to as intertextuality,'¹⁵¹ thus stressing the 'combinatory' essence of pastiche. Pasticcio is, according to Dyer, the most appropriate way to express the mixing of the elements – which are different in terms of period, authorship, and genre – in terms of a mosaic, with each element maintaining its individual characteristics, rather than a melting pot.¹⁵²

I draw from Dyer's term to describe Nikolaidis's oeuvre in terms of a 'pasticcio' work. The filmmaker uses a combination of elements from various genres and refers to numerous films from different eras, countries and styles, whilst maintaining each element's characteristics as recognisable. Nikolaidis expected his audience and his followers to be in a position to realise that what they are watching pastiches other films or genres and to be able to identify them.¹⁵³ For Dyer, pastiche can be considered 'elitist', as 'for it to work, it needs to be "got" as a pastiche,' and thus there is a need for an audience with particular

¹⁴⁶ Dyer, *Pastiche*, 131.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 133.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 138.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 1 and 3.

¹⁵⁰ 'Pasticcio' is borrowed from a culinary terminology, from the Italian 'pasticcio': a mixed dish in the form of a pie, with meat, and/or vegetables and pastry. Ibid., 8.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁵² Ibid., 10.

¹⁵³ Nikolaidis, interview with Kokkinos, 48.

competences.¹⁵⁴ Also, the filmmakers that create pastiche films exclude a part of the audience that does not understand the dialogue that the filmmaker constitutes with the original films or genres. In this sense, Nikolaidis's films created an elitist pastiche work, since he desired to have an active, cineliterate audience, able to process what they see and recognise his influences; in this sense, he was able to choose his audience.

This kind of elitism, as Dyer highlights, does not necessarily overlap with what elitism means in our societies. He further adds that pastiche can be used equally in popular and mass culture and in middle and high brow culture. Thus, while *TWASS*, *SB* and *LTA* were popular with the audiences, they can be included in Nikolaidis's 'elitist' work, since it is specifically the narrative and the revolutionary ideology of the films that made them popular, when their form and the way Nikolaidis pastiches film genres, specific films, literature, and music, I argue, has only been fully comprehended by a small audience section. Hence there is a selection process of audiences taking place, which makes these films 'elitist'.

Rather than arguing that Nikolaidis merely imitates elements in order to declare his 'pasticcio' work, I argue that he uses them creatively to build his own style and authorial signature, and to create new meaning. In line with Dyer's arguments regarding pastiche, Nikolaidis's films look like the films/genres he is referring to, but the filmmaker 'imitates the *idea* of that which [he] imitates' (my emphasis),¹⁵⁵ conveying in this way the idea of the pastiched films and their genre. Dyer notes that pastiche is formally very close to what it pastiches, but it is not identical to the original form; rather, it becomes distinguishable from the original because it deforms it. Pastiche work selects a number of traits which makes them its bases, rather than reproducing every detail of the referent; it accentuates and exaggerates these traits and repeats them more frequently than the original does, and it concentrates the elements that it borrows.

Like Jameson, Dyer also comments on 'neo-noir' films, which he calls 'pastiche-noir', as well as on the films about which Jameson also wrote. According to Dyer, the pastiche-noir style 'reworks the visual style and/or mood'¹⁵⁶ of the classic noir, thus reconfirming the existence and the characteristics of the classic film noir genre. He further argues that, 'what it imitates is not straightforwardly noir but the memory of noir, a memory that can be inaccurate and selective.'¹⁵⁷ Dyer claims that pastiche 'confirm[s], delineate[s], and at times bring[s] the genre (back) into being; [it is] an integral and even

¹⁵⁴ Dyer, *Pastiche*, 3.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

sometimes originary aspect of a genre's history.'¹⁵⁸ Therefore, Dyer clearly talks about the appropriation of a style or a genre, which appropriation is deeply connected to historicity, because though the pastiche created might be inaccurate and selective, it confirms and rejuvenates the original genre, due to the fact that the filmmakers that produce this pastiche are aware of the genre and its elements; in contrast to the classical film noir filmmakers for instance, who were unaware that they were producing film noir.

Dyer's arguments regarding pastiche can be applied to Nikolaidis's filmic oeuvre, as the filmmaker uses film noir style, creatively and selectively imitating film noir elements. Through the imitation of the classic film noir, Nikolaidis expresses his disappointment that 'they don't make them like this anymore.'¹⁵⁹ Hence he expresses his admiration for the classic noir, and his love for this dead type of cinema, together with his overall appreciation for the 1950s. He thus expresses his 'necrophilic' tensions that take the form of a quest for dead cinema, dead music and dead women, as it will be explained in the film analysis further along the thesis.

Dyer gives two examples of 'pastiche noir': *BH* and *Tirez sur le Pianiste* (François Truffaut, 1960). *BH* explicitly refers to two classic noirs: *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944) and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Tay Garnett, 1946). The film recreates the film noir aesthetic elements through the use of pastiche but maintains three basic elements of difference to the classic noir: colour – which, however, simulates the black and white photography of the classic noirs; expression of the femmes fatales' concealed sexuality – their sexuality was present but was not spelled out; anachronistic jazz music – which is associated with classic noir but was not on the film scores at the time.¹⁶⁰ These differences distinguish *BH* from the classic noir. These elements are present in classic noir, but by stating it, 'marks [the pastiche noir's] distance from its referent, the same as but not the thing itself.'¹⁶¹

TSLP is a French New Wave film and is aesthetically different from *BH*. Nonetheless, it is noir in style because it imitates the idea of film noir. The fatalistic narrative in conjunction with the chiaroscuro lighting and various other elements of mise-en-scène confirm its connection to classic noir. However, it is different to *BH* in terms of editing and camerawork, instead adhering to the conventions of the French New Wave. In this sense, the film has different stylistic tone to neo-noirs, which difference links the film to other genres; in this way a pastiche of genres, like social realism, slapstick, is

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 118.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 130.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 123-124.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 124.

encountered.¹⁶² As Dyer notes, these ‘shifts in tone and generic reference constitute a pasticcio of pastiches, with the interruptions bringing one up short against the fact of imitation and reference.’¹⁶³ Thus, genres become ‘repositories of situations, styles and iconographies that can be used and combined, to set one another off, to highlight, pastiche-fashion, what is characteristic, interesting or suggestive about them.’¹⁶⁴

Both of the above film examples confirm that Nikolaidis’s work is paradigmatic of the pastiche work that Dyer describes. Nikolaidis uses colour, female sexuality and music in the same way as *BH*. At the same time, his work uses pastiche as *TSLP* does, since his films use apart from film noir, elements from various other genres and styles, such as horror films, Greek tragedy, comedy and many more, in similar ways to *TSLP* as will be elaborated on in the film analysis chapters. Thus instead of characterising Nikolaidis’s work as a neo-noir, or pastiche-noir, that would overlook elements and styles pastiched in his films that are not connected to film noir, I claim that Nikolaidis’s work can be characterised as a ‘pasticcio of pastiches’. This ‘pasticcio of pastiches’ allows the filmmaker to utilize generic elements that aid him in expressing his viewpoints, rendering genres ‘repositories of situations, styles and iconographies.’¹⁶⁵ The ‘pasticcio of pastiches’ thus allows incompatible elements, like for example film noir and westerns, film noir and ancient Greek tragedy, to be combined.

Due to the fact that Nikolaidis leaves the films’ locales unclear, and by pastiching genres without localising the narrative, Nikolaidis manages to perpetuate these styles and to contribute to the significance of their historicity. He furthermore brings these genres into different contexts and broadens the study of his films. Moreover, due to the extremely personal nature of Nikolaidis’s films, his cinematic oeuvre is inherently self-referential. Because he was interested in conveying the same messages throughout this work, the filmmaker recycles and recreates aesthetics and topics, with the result that the same motifs are used consistently across his films. Hence pastiche helps Nikolaidis’s films to be simultaneously opened up and impenetrable.

A main difference between the concept of pastiche as developed by Jameson and by Dyer, that negates the connection of Nikolaidis’s work to Jameson’s concept, is the critical and thus political ability of pastiche. One of Dyer’s main claims about the ‘pasticcio’ work, is that ‘pasticcio combines things that are typically held apart in such a way to retain their identities.’¹⁶⁶ Thus, with pastiche, the political connotations of the

¹⁶² Ibid., 126.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 127.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 21.

referent film are maintained in the new, pastiche work. Moreover, Dyer claims that pastiche is by itself political:

[t]he very fact that [pastiche] breaks the boundaries of medium and genre, and refuses decorum and harmony, implies that it challenges received wisdom about what is proper, about the way things are supposed to be done, about what goes with what.¹⁶⁷

Nikolaidis's films are highly political. From his first to his last film, Nikolaidis attacks authoritative regimes and fascism, not only through his films' narrative but also through pastiche, with the films and the genres he specifically chooses to pastiche. The films and the genres he pastiches (such as film noir, as argued earlier, horror films, westerns) offer a political comment in Nikolaidis's films. Nikolaidis further pastiches the revolutionary rock 'n' roll phenomenon, as well as specific Greek and international literature, which is mostly political act.

Specifically, *The Shape of the Coming Nightmare* trilogy, in *EBA* Nikolaidis pastiches the Orphic myth and elements from the horror genre in order to create a political story which comments on the Military Junta; in *MP* he pastiches various classical Hollywood films in general and classic film noirs in particular and post-apocalyptic films so as to stress out the 'nightmare' that fascism and authoritative regimes will bring to humanity; and he pastiches the horror genre and thriller films in *TZY*, in order to show the outcome of the imposed fascism and what will happen if contemporary citizens do not react.

In the *Those Who Loved a Corpse* diptych, Nikolaidis mostly uses his major 'repository of situations, style and iconography,' film noir. In *SS* he pastiches two specific film noirs, film noir style in general, the horror genre, comedy and Greek tragedy in order to produce a 'filmic cocktail' which comments on the decay of contemporary societies. *SIHMD* is Nikolaidis's least political work, and one of his more personal films, where he pastiches specific film noirs, and the atmosphere of comic books in order to comment on patriarchy and on the future of Greek cinema, which is, in his opinion, jeopardised by the role of the state and the GFC.

Hero No More is Nikolaidis's most overtly political trilogy. In *TWASS* Nikolaidis pastiches nostalgia films, film noir, specific films, literature and rock 'n' roll music and culture in order to express his nostalgia for the 1950s and express his disappointment in politics. In *SB* the filmmaker pastiches the western genre, film noir, specific films and rock 'n' roll in order to highlight his antifascist and antiauthoritarian beliefs and to mourn for the future generations that will not fight for resistance against authoritative regimes.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 21.

Finally in *LTA*, openly setting his film in Greece, and in Athens in particular, for the very first time, Nikolaidis creates a neo-noir and uses the political comments of classic film noir and the ‘antipathy towards the city’¹⁶⁸ in classic film noir, in order to show that his concerns for the increasing power of the authoritative regimes were valid and this can be seen in contemporary Athens.

Thus I argue that Nikolaidis’s use of pastiche is political and his use of pastiche dovetails with Dyer’s aforementioned claims. Nikolaidis’s films break the boundaries between the medium and the genre, and create a ‘revolutionary’ form that does not conform with conventional film forms. Both form and context refuse ‘decorum and harmony’¹⁶⁹ since they combine genres and elements from specific films that would initially appear incompatible. Nikolaidis’s uncompromising attitude to not create works that do not express him as a person and his protagonists’ nonconformity are in line with the uncompromising nature of his films’ form.

3.4 Literature on Nikolaidis and Female Representation in Greek Cinema

Through this examination of Nikolaidis’s work, it is evident that women have an important role throughout his cinematic oeuvre. This prominence can be linked to the role that women played during Nikolaidis’s adolescence, to the connection between women and rock ‘n’ roll in Greece, and to the role of women in American cinema, particularly in film noir. Through female representation, Nikolaidis further highlights his use of pastiche particularly through his treatment of classic noir’s femme fatale in order to comment on the bleak future of (the Greek) society.

Although some existing articles recognise Nikolaidis as a postmodern filmmaker, his work has not yet been analysed as pastiche.¹⁷⁰ Specifically, Skopeteas writes that *SS* ‘undoubtedly adheres to the oppositional postmodern mode rather than to the mainstream one.’¹⁷¹ Skopeteas borrows Susan Hayward’s definitions of oppositional and mainstream

¹⁶⁸ Deborah Thomas, ‘How Hollywood Deals with the Deviant Male’, in *The Movie Book of Film Noir*, (London: Studio Vista, 1992), 60-61.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Konsantinos Kyriakos mentions pastiche but he seems reluctant to apply it to *SS*. Konstantinos Kyriakos, ‘Anaparastasis tou Somatos: Themata Ypokritikis ke Fylou’/‘Representations of the Body: Issues of Acting and Gender’, in *Grafes Gia ton Kinimatografo: Diepistimonikes Proseggisis/Writings about Cinema: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, (Athens: Nefeli, 2005).

¹⁷¹ Yannis Skopeteas, ‘I Egkathidrisi tis Metamodernas Praktikis’/‘The Establishment of the Postmodern Technique’ in *Anichnevontas ton Sygchrono Elliniko*

postmodern practices. Hayward's definitions are though based on Jameson's analysis of postmodernism and pastiche, and though Nikolaidis is a postmodern filmmaker, they cannot be applied in his case, as explained earlier. Skopeteas considers *SS* a postmodern film, but adds that the fact that some filmmakers use elements of postmodernism does not make them postmodern filmmakers, denying that Nikolaidis is a postmodern filmmaker. Skopeteas therefore implies that there is a difference between a postmodern filmmaker and a filmmaker who uses postmodern practices, with which I do not agree, creating confusion between these two notions. Konstantinos Kyriakos, furthermore, agrees with Skopeteas, and characterises *SS* a Greek postmodern film.¹⁷²

Nikolaidis has challenged dominant Greek cinematic discourses with his uncompromising cinema and his controversial reception, however, literature on the filmmaker is limited. There are several magazine articles that feature interviews with the filmmaker.¹⁷³ In these interviews, the director talks about his views of Greek cinema, his collaborations, his relation with the state, and his experiences with funding bodies for his film productions. He also tends to recycle the same ideas and he never explains or analyses his own work. Following his death in 2007, many brief articles appeared outlining his carrier,¹⁷⁴ followed by a series of articles focused on a retrospective on Nikolaidis that took place in the Greek Film Archive in 2011.¹⁷⁵ Further articles appeared when *Directing Hell* premiered in 2011;¹⁷⁶ however, these simply mention his work but little other information is given.

Apart from the magazine articles and interviews on Nikolaidis's career, his name is mentioned in various Greek Film Studies articles, as noted in the previous chapter. Soldatos and Karalis include Nikolaidis's filmography in their books of the history of Greek cinema,¹⁷⁷ which are accompanied by a brief description of the filmmaker's stance

Kinimatografo/Tracing Contemporary Greek Cinema, (Athens: Kentro Optikoakoustikon Meleton, 2002), 54.

¹⁷² Kyriakos, 'Representations of the Body', 101.

¹⁷³ See for instance Nikos Nikolaidis, *Elle*, BPA; Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Lagia Yourgou, *Playboy*, Viewed 14 August 2014, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=98&Itemid=7.

¹⁷⁴ See for instance 'Nikos Nikolaidis is Dead', *News247*, 5 September 2007, Viewed 14 August 2014, <http://news247.gr/eidiseis/article103332.ece>.

¹⁷⁵ See for instance 'Aferoma ston Niko Nikolaidis'/'Nikos Nikolaidis Retrospective', *E-Tetradio*, 25 May 2011, Viewed 14 August 2014, <http://e-tetradio.gr/article/5159/>.

¹⁷⁶ See for instance Thanasis Patsavos and Liapi Christina, 'Nikos Nikolaidis: Skinothetontas tin Kolasi'/'Nikos Nikolaidis: Directing Hell', *Cinema*, 22 May 2013, Viewed 14 August 2014, <http://www.e-go.gr/cinemag/article.asp?catid=28049&subid=2&pubid=128785506>.

¹⁷⁷ Soldatos, *History*; Karalis, *History*.

on Greek cinema. Short synopses and analyses of Nikolaidis's films are also encountered in Aglaia Mitropoulou.¹⁷⁸ His influence by film noir is also merely mentioned in the book stemming from the Greek film noir event, without delving into greater detail.¹⁷⁹ Mimis Tsakoniatis's book¹⁸⁰ is the major work dedicated entirely to Nikolaidis. The book is a compilation of interviews, 'requiems' for his death, and Tsakoniatis's film analyses. However, it is not an academic piece of writing, thus I only refer to the interviews included

From the aforementioned literature, only Zoumboulakis's article identifies the importance of women in Nikolaidis's oeuvre. Moreover, Kyriakos's article is the only academic piece that identifies the significance of female representation in Nikolaidis's work.¹⁸¹ The article uses *SS* as one of its case studies. Kyriakos considers *SS* as an 'interesting endeavor to comment on the roles of the two genders through a Greek version of some postmodern principles.'¹⁸² Kyriakos however does not elaborate on his ideas and theories, nor provides any sustained analysis of Nikolaidis's film. Instead, he merely mentions theories that can be applied to *SS* and offers a suggested bibliography in extremely long footnotes. This bibliography is useful for further reading, and the way that it is presented renders the footnotes more important than the actual text.

This thesis could draw from literature on female representation on Greek cinema as a useful research tool. However, gender representation and specifically female representation in Greek cinema remains understudied and neglected. Evidence of this gap is that from the 77 articles on Greek cinema written from 2010 to 2013 in English¹⁸³ only three of them deal with female representation.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, from the 48 books and the

¹⁷⁸ Aglaia Mitropoulou, *Ellinikos Kinimatografos/Greek Cinema*, (Athens: Papazisis, 2006).

¹⁷⁹ Yannis Deliolanis, 'Typology of a Fantasy: Echoes of Film Noir and the End of Myth in Nikos Nikolaidis' Cinema', in *In a Dark Passage*, 35.

¹⁸⁰ Tsakoniatis, *Nikolaidis*.

¹⁸¹ Kyriakos, 'Representations of the Body', 37-132.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁸³ Olga Kourelou, 'English-Language Bibliography on Greek Cinema (2010-2013)', in *Filmicon: Journal for Greek Film Studies* 1 (2013), Viewed 16 June 2014, <http://filmiconjournal.com/journal/article/2013/1/13>.

¹⁸⁴ Maria Komninos, 'Representations of Women in Greek Cinema', in *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 37 (2011), 75-89; Maria Paradeisi, 'Maria, Irene and Olga 'la Recherche du Temps Perdu'', in *Visions of Struggle in Women's Filmmaking in the Mediterranean*, ed. Flavia Laviosa, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2010), 129-145; Theodora Patrona, 'Migration, Space and Ethnic Female Subjectivities: Pantelis Voulgaris' film Brides', in *Migration and Exile: Charting New Literary and Artistic Territories*, ed. Ada Savin, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

83 articles of Greek publications on cinema from 2010 to 2012¹⁸⁵ only one article¹⁸⁶ deals with gender in Greek cinema.

Since the examination of Greek cinema takes place across three periods (PEK, NEK, SEK) correspondingly, female representation is mostly framed within these categories. The few existing articles on female representation in Greek cinema simply locate the role of the women in particular films and are very descriptive. The films that these articles focus on share no commonalities with Nikolaidis's cinema. As Nikolaidis does not strictly abide to the three categories, it can be claimed that his cinema refuses straightforward categorization, then so does female representation analysis in his films.¹⁸⁷

Articles about female representation in PEK mostly focus on notions of female stardom, and specifically on actresses Alikì Vougiouklaki and Jenny Karezi. Maria Paradeisi¹⁸⁸ and Athena Kartalou¹⁸⁹ focus on comedies with the aforementioned stars and they note that although the films present female protagonists with aspirations, they abandon their dreams when they get married. Nikolaidis's female protagonists have nothing in common with such representations. Yet, Papadimitriou's article¹⁹⁰ which also focuses on films where the two aforementioned stars play, constitutes a significant research starting point for combining female representation with fascism and the state. In *The Shape of the Coming Nightmare*, the women in each of the films live in fictional environments, are presented as victims of the fascist state and can be understood as representatives of Greece as a country. Using four case studies, Papadimitriou argues that the women in the

¹⁸⁵ Dimitris Kalantidis, 'Ellinikes Ekdoseis gia ton Kinimatografo (2010-2012)'/'Greek Publications About Cinema (2010-2012)', in *Filmicon: Journal for Greek Film Studies* 1 (2013), Viewed 16 June 2014, <http://filmiconjournal.com/journal/article/2013/1/12>.

¹⁸⁶ Maria Paradeisi, 'Filo, Metanastefsi ke Kinimatografos'/'Gender, Immigration and Cinema', in *Immigration and Cultural Interchanges* (2013), Nisos.

¹⁸⁷ This is not characteristic of Nikolaidis; other Greek filmmakers have followed a similar pattern. For example, Leros writes that Stavros Tsiolis directed melodramas for Finos Film during PEK, abandoned cinema and re-emerged after fifteen years to create a series of art films during NEK. Leros further states that Tsiolis's cinema is divided into three distinct periods, and each period is characterised by specific narrative and stylistic elements and is associated with different eras of post-war Greek Cinema (Leros, 'Carnivalized Greekness', 169). This fact is a further indicative that the three categories of Greek cinema are problematic.

¹⁸⁸ Maria Paradeisi, 'I Gyneka stin Elliniki Comedi'/'The Woman in Greek Comedy', in *Ksanavleponas ton Palio Elliniko Kinimatografo/Rewatching the Old Greek Cinema*, (Athens: Kentro Optikoakoustikon Meleton, 2002), 113-128.

¹⁸⁹ Athena Kartalou, 'Gender, Professional, and Class Identities in Miss Director and Modern Cinderella', in *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 18 (May 2000), 105-118.

¹⁹⁰ Lydia Papadimitriou, 'Greek War Film as Melodrama: Women, Female Stars and the Nation as Victims, in *Action and Adventure Film*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 297-308.

Greek war films of the 1960s and 1970s¹⁹¹ are presented both as victims – since their husbands or fiancés are killed or are implied to have been killed in World War II – and as heroes – since they are presented to remain true to the national ideals.¹⁹² These women, having lost their partners, obey to the patriarchal discourse by being subservient to men, in order to contribute towards the conservation of the nationalist ideals, and, at the end, are saved when their partners return, concluding with a happy ending.

Papadimitriou claims during the Military Junta Greek War films multiplied in number but then disappeared almost completely right after the fall of the dictatorship. According to her, ‘by victimising the woman, and then saving her, patriarchal ideology asserts its superiority over women. By extension, it can also be argued that this expresses the dominant political ideology of the period of the film’s production.’¹⁹³ These films constituted propaganda for the ideas that the dictatorship desired to pass on to the citizens: the films were a means of showing that the Colonels were there to save Greece. As Papadimitriou states, the Colonels viewed themselves as ‘saviours of the nation; of a nation ailing and victimised, acting in the service of its leaders, but ultimately saved through their intervention – like the women in the films.’¹⁹⁴ The saving force that the dictators aimed to portray through the Greek War films of the 1960s and 70s was a kind of help that would only benefit the fascist state.

Unlike these melodramas, Nikolaidis refuses any benefit of any fascist state. Having started filming after the fall of the Junta and therefore free from their impositions, Nikolaidis presents the omnipresent but unseen state as negligent, indifferent and condescending towards its citizens. The state is presented as male and as women’s victimiser, and denies the role of men as saviours. When male characters who could be saviours appear, they are presented rather as anti-heroes. Women may accept help from men, (*MP*, *SS*, *The Zero Years*) but men are tools for the women’s goals. Even in *Euridice BA 2037*, with Orpheus being the epitome of the idea of men as saviours, Euridice refuses to be saved by him. Regardless of their problematic representation, women in this trilogy do not need to be rescued. They condemn the male existence, which is synonymous with the state and with patriarchy, take advantage of men and find ways of saving themselves. For this reason, I will not be using the word *heroine*, but I prefer to use the expression *female protagonists* because ‘the structural connotations of the term heroine make the

¹⁹¹ *I Daskala me ta Chrysia Mallia/The Teacher with the Golden Hair* (1969-1970), *Ipolochagos Natasha/Lieutenant Natasha* (1970-1), *Konserto gia Polivola/Concert for Weapons* (1966-7) and *Mia Gineka stin Antistasi/A Woman at Resistance* (1970-1). Vougiouklaki stars in the former two films and Karezi in the latter.

¹⁹² Papadimitriou, ‘Greek War Film’, 300.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 305.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 305.

woman named by a figure in need of rescue, while agency is synonymous with the hero function.¹⁹⁵

The idea of these women's victimhood is connected with the situation of victimhood in which the filmmaker perceives any fascist state's citizens, in general, and Greek citizens, in particular, to be. In *TSOTCN*, the women victimised by the state symbolise Greece, which also is victimised and imprisoned by the authorities. This resonates with the melodramas that Papadimitriou writes about. Nikolaidis replaces melodrama with violence, horror, black humour, and irony, ascribing timelessness, placelessness and film noir atmosphere. Misogyny in this trilogy is presented as a symptom of the unseen fascist state, and the women fight against fascism, each in their own way.

Achilleas Hadjikyriakou¹⁹⁶ explores how PEK films represented masculinity and gender relations in an era battling between tradition and modernity, that is specifically the time between the end of the Civil War in 1949 and the imposition of the Military Junta in 1967. Hadjikyriakou shows the transformation that the representations of masculinity went through during this period, and examines how class and 'loyalty' were represented in terms of gender identities in film. The author identifies that the concepts of 'honour' and 'shame' played a catalytic role in defining masculinity, while he also notes that issues of class, subordination and hegemony contributed to a crisis of masculinity. Hadjikyriakou's book, which is a very useful addition to Greek Film Studies, focuses on masculinities deeply grounded in a Greek historical context; and while it could contribute to my research since Nikolaidis's male protagonists are facing crisis of masculinity and identity, the director's perspective of crisis, I argue, is rather rooted on personal history, desires and obsessions.

As far as literature on female representation in NEK films is concerned, there is more research on auteur cinema rather than on individual films. For instance, Kiki Gounaridou¹⁹⁷ focuses on Voulgaris's realistic films and frames women as historical subjects. Gounaridou questions women's subjectivity in Voulgaris's films and concludes that Voulgaris attempts to inscribe female identity within a social, historical and cultural framework, in order to underline the indeterminacy of such an inscription.¹⁹⁸ Gounaridou's article contributes to existing debates regarding women in Greek cinema. Although the article could be used methodologically in order to examine how the author conducts her analysis on female representation in Voulgaris's films, I chose not to examine it because

¹⁹⁵ Laleen Jayamanne qtd. in Sue Thornham, *What If I Had been the Hero? Investigating Women's Cinema*, (London: BFI & Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 11.

¹⁹⁶ Achilleas Hadjikyriakou, *Masculinity and Gender in Greek Cinema, 1949-1967*, (New York & London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹⁹⁷ Kiki Gounaridou, 'Representations of Women in the Films of Pantelis Voulgaris: Akropole, The Stone Years, and The Engagement of Anna', in *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 18 (2000), 151-160.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 158.

the sociopolitical and historical context of Voulgaris's films differs from that of Nikolaidis's films, and the two filmmakers differ significantly, and there are other methodological models that can be more useful to this research. Yanna Athanasatou¹⁹⁹ writes about Frida Liappa and Tonia Marketaki and she also claims that *Revanche* (Nikos Vergitsis, 1983) is an important film for women in NEK in which a woman has a parallel relationship with two men. Athanasatou though offers generalised and unjustified statements. The uncontextualised table entitled 'Selected Filmography from 1981-1986 for the Topic 'Women on Both Sides of the Camera''²⁰⁰ in which *Sweet Bunch* is listed, found in the article could contribute to this research project, but fails to do so since no further information is given.

Athanasatou²⁰¹ notes that women in SEK started turning from objects to subjects of the gaze, and they became 'strong, different, quotidian, contradictory, but unconventional and real female personalities.'²⁰² However, the author again refrains from offering further analysis but rather proposes only descriptive and generalised comments, such as the above statement, without explaining or documenting how she reached this conclusion. Moreover, the only bibliographical reference provided is Laura Mulvey's 1973 article 'Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema.'²⁰³ There are some more articles about female representation in SEK, which are all descriptive and cannot contribute to this research project.²⁰⁴

The aforementioned articles, along with others, are instances of scholarly writing of female representation in Greek cinema but there remains a critical gap in this field of study. Also, the existing bibliography on female representation on Greek cinema cannot be used to analyse Nikolaidis's films, which, as was noted earlier in the thesis, differ so distinctly from other Greek film productions. Thus, I will be analysing female representation based on the filmmaker's influences and the genres and films that he pastiches. Literature on classic and neo-noir femmes fatales is the most significant tool for comprehending and analysing female representation in Nikolaidis's work since they are the main inspiration for Nikolaidis's female protagonists. Bibliography on abject feminine, lesbianism and misogyny will also be of paramount importance in the female representation analysis.

¹⁹⁹ Yanna Athanasatou, 'I Gynekes apo tis Dio Plevres tis Kameron'/'Women on Both Sides of the Camera', in *Opsis tou Neou Ellinikou Kinimatografou/Views of the New Greek Cinema*, (Athens: Kentro Optikoakoustikon Meleton, 2002), 159-170.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 169.

²⁰¹ Yanna Athanasatou, 'Icones Gynekon'/'Images of Women', in *Anichnevontas ton Sygchrono Elliniko Kinimatografo/Tracing the Contemporary Greek Cinema*, (Athens: Kentro Optikoakoustikon Meleton, 2002), 143-148.

²⁰² Ibid., 144.

²⁰³ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 837-848.

²⁰⁴ For instance, Paradeisi, 'Maria, Irene and Olga', 129-148.

3.5 Analysing Female Representation in Nikolaidis's Films

Women are of paramount importance in Nikolaidis's oeuvre. It is undeniable that women in his work have a leading role, have agency, and, mostly appear to be stronger and more powerful than men. However, their representations are often paradoxical and complex. While on the one hand, women appear powerful, independent, and able to subvert patriarchy, on the other hand, they often appear as props, rendering their representation as inconsistent and problematic.

A central reason for this ambivalent representation is the fact that Nikolaidis differentiates and juxtaposes two types of women throughout his work: *the powerful women* vs. *the unimportant women*. Those who do not conform to the powerful female characteristics are characterised within the second category. Therefore, the perpetuation of the good \neq evil, virginal \neq whore binary stereotype, which is common within the patriarchal discourse, renders his work ambiguous as far as female representation is concerned.

Throughout his work, Nikolaidis is in search of the 'ideal woman' who has the characteristics of a powerful woman.²⁰⁵ For Nikolaidis, this ideal woman assumes the name 'Vera', 'Molly' or 'Laura', where 'Laura' is inspired by Preminger's eponymous film. According to Nikolaidis, his obsession with 'Laura' started when he first saw Preminger's film when he was fifteen-years-old and got fascinated by it.²⁰⁶ The idea of 'Laura' haunted him ever since.²⁰⁷ His whole work has been built around this quest for the ideal woman. Nikolaidis borrows the definition that he often attributes to 'Laura' from Julie London's 1955 song 'Laura', which is based on the eponymous film's theme song:²⁰⁸ Laura is the woman 'on the train that is passing through. Those eyes, how familiar they seem. She gave your very first kiss to you. That was Laura but she's only a dream.'²⁰⁹ In *TWASS*, the ideal and unattainable woman acquires an essence that connects her with the filmmaker's ideal cinema and ideal music since Nikolaidis names 'Vera' 'an age that is lost forever.'²¹⁰ For Nikolaidis, this age is his adolescent years, when he became fascinated by cinema and rock 'n' roll culture.

Throughout his oeuvre, Nikolaidis plays with these three names in an attempt to recreate the absolute woman through his films. This fascination with the ideal woman and

²⁰⁵ Placing women on a pedestal is problematic by itself.

²⁰⁶ Nikolaidis, interview with Tsakoniatis, 43.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Nikolaidis, interview with Kavvadias, 104.

²⁰⁹ David Raksin, Johnny Mercer, written for *Laura* and was performed by various artists.

²¹⁰ As a character pretending to be 'Vera' says in *TWASS*. More information to follow in subchapter 6.1.

the perennial effort to construct the absolute femininity can be linked to *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), where Scottie recreates Madeleine to suit his obsessions. The connection between Nikolaidis and Hitchcock goes further than this commonality with *Vertigo*; they are further linked by notions of male authorship and misogyny. For this reason, Tania Modleski²¹¹ sets an important framework for the research of the aforementioned aspects, but also for the filmmaker's search for the ideal woman. Modleski approaches Hitchcock's films from a feminist point-of-view and exposes Hitchcock's ambivalence towards females. I argue that this ambivalence is also noted in Nikolaidis's work.

Specifically with regards to the quest for the ideal woman, when Modleski discusses Scottie's obsession with Madeleine, she writes that the men's fascination with the ideal woman and the eternal feminine is a fascination with their own double,²¹² and that the 'desire[s] to merge with a woman who in some sense doesn't exist'²¹³ is a desire for self-annihilation. This idea helps explain Nikolaidis's representation of the male characters in his filmic work. Masculine identity is in question and crisis: the male is often used and exploited by the females and is literally or metaphorically castrated (*TSOTCN*, *TWLAC*). Men occupy secondary roles within the narrative and are equated with the fascist state (*TSOTCN*), which is the omnipresent enemy in Nikolaidis's work. When men are attributed the role of the protagonist, they share it with women, and they appear more sentimental and less powerful than their female counterparts (*HNM*). Men in Nikolaidis's films appear as emotional and idealist, always in search for the ideal way of life – which is hidden in film noir and rock 'n' roll culture and is located away from the fascist state. They are also portrayed as being in pursuit of the ideal woman, a role that can be assigned to the filmmaker himself.

This prototype of the ideal woman originates in Nikolaidis's fascination with the female characters from the cinema of the 1940s and the 50s, and especially with film noir's femme fatales. The femme fatale is the symbol of beautiful, sexual but also powerful and lethal women who seduces men. The symbol of the femme fatale originates in various forms of ancient times,²¹⁴ but emerges as a central figure in French paintings and writings of the nineteenth century,²¹⁵ and it is most closely associated with film noir. As for noir itself, it has been easier to list specific characteristics of the femme fatale rather than

²¹¹ Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory*, (London: Routledge, 1988).

²¹² *Ibid.*, 92

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 94.

²¹⁴ For further information see Stevie Simkin, *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale: From Pandora's Box to Amanda Knox* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

²¹⁵ Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*, (New York: Routledge, 1991), 1.

concluding to a single definition, and the term *femme fatale* has been widely debated. Yvonne Tasker for instance notes that the *femme fatale*'s characteristics include her 'seductive sexuality', 'the power and strength (over men) that this sexuality generates', 'deceptions, disguises and confusion that surrounds her' that makes her an 'ambiguous figure for both the audience and the hero', and 'the sense of woman as "enigma"'.²¹⁶ Mary Ann Doane writes that the *femme fatale* 'harbours a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable or manageable,' while she stresses that the *femme fatale*'s most sticking characteristic is that she 'never really is what she seems.'²¹⁷ Julie Grossman argues that *femme fatale* are 'unfatal' and claims that the *femme fatale* is a product of cultural ideation, and her representation and interpretation relies on problematic ways of thinking about gender in societies.²¹⁸

The choice of the *femme fatale* as the prototype of the ideal woman is itself problematic, since these women have been considered by many as powerful, independent, manipulative 'spider-women',²¹⁹ but, mostly, they have been viewed with great suspicion. Several psychoanalytic approaches to the *femme fatale* connect her to male desire. Janey Place²²⁰ for example views the *femme fatale* as a male construct, since 'men need to control women's sexuality in order not to be destroyed by it.'²²¹ Doane claims that 'the *femme fatale* is not a subject of feminism but a symptom of male fears about feminism.'²²² Grossman²²³ moves away from psychoanalytic approaches and examines the *mise-en-scène*, the narrative and the social psychology of film noir, both classic and neo-noir, to prove that *femmes fatales* are victims 'firstly, of the social rules that dictate gender roles and secondly, of reading practices that overidentify with and overinvest in the idea of the *femme fatale*.'²²⁴ The study of the aforementioned research contributes to the reading of Nikolaidis's protagonists both as empowering and as problematic figures.

It needs to be pointed out that I do not wish to show Nikolaidis's female protagonists as instances of localisation of the *femme fatale* in Greek cinema, as scholars have done for various national cinemas, as for example Ann Davies,²²⁵ Mary Wood,²²⁶

²¹⁶ Yvonne Tasker, *Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 120.

²¹⁷ Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, 1.

²¹⁸ Julie Grossman, *Rethinking the Femme Fatale in Film Noir: Ready for Her Close-Up*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

²¹⁹ See for instance Place, 'Women in Film Noir'.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid., 49

²²² Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, 2.

²²³ Grossman, *Rethinking the Femme Fatale*.

²²⁴ Ibid., 2.

²²⁵ Ann Davies, 'Spanish Cinema in her article The Femme Fatale in Spanish Retro Noir: The Recuperation of a Repressed Voice', in *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 145-156.

John J. Marambio and Marcie Rinca²²⁷ or as Antonio Marcio da Silva.²²⁸ The aforementioned scholars trace the femme fatale in national cinemas and films that are connected to the Spanish Civil War (in Davis's case), to post-war Italian cinema (in Wood's case), to Mexican heritage and culture (in Marambio's and Rinca's case) and to cultural representations in Brazilian cinema (in da Silva's case). Because Nikolaidis's films diverge from national Greek cinema, I argue that Nikolaidis portrays a specific and idiosyncratic appropriation of the femme fatale, which corresponds to the specific cultural history that is linked with Nikolaidis's personal experiences and imaginings of Greece. He further presents versions of classic and neo-noir femmes fatales and perpetuates them in the history of his cinema through the use of pastiche. Therefore, to analyse Nikolaidis's version of femme fatale, I will be using literature on canonical noirs as Ann Kaplan's edited volume²²⁹ as well as Doane.²³⁰

Nikolaidis's female protagonists are directly linked to the film noir, and since they are created after the late 1960s, they can be considered to share more characteristics with the femme fatales of the neo-noirs. As Chris Straayer writes, the femme fatale of contemporary film 'operates in an independent agent, always signalling but no longer contained by film noir.'²³¹ Straayer further adds that 'now the femme fatale is a metonym that travels among a variety of genres, summoning film noirness for atmospheric or hermeneutic effect.'²³² Roberta Garrett examines the feminist side of neo-noir and writes that, although it has been claimed that in postmodern films in general and neo noir in particular portray a regressive male fantasy, and therefore female representation in neo-noirs is misogynistic, by coding the neo-noir female protagonist as fantasy

the neo-noir invites female audiences to revel in the sheer nastiness of the femme fatale. The noir heroine may indeed draw life from men's fears and fantasies about the perceived increase in women's social, sexual and economic power but, in the 1980s and 1990s, she has undoubtedly also functioned as an emblem of female desire and aspiration, a hyperbolic mish-mash of the post-feminist preoccupation with a certain kind of hard-nosed individualist,

²²⁶ Mary Wood, 'Chiaroscuro: The Half-Glimpsed Femme Fatale of Italian Film Noir', in *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 157-169.

²²⁷ John J Marambio, and Marcie Rinca, 'A Myth is Born: The Femme Fatale in the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema', in *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 170-183.

²²⁸ Antonio Marcio Da Silva, *The 'Femme' Fatale in Brazilian Cinema: Challenging Hollywood*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

²²⁹ Ann E. Kaplan (ed), *Women in Film Noir*, (London: BFI, 2000).

²³⁰ Doane, *Femmes Fatales*.

²³¹ Chris Straayer, 'Femme Fatale or Lesbian Femme: Bound in Sexual Différance', *Women in Film Noir*, (London: BFI, 2000), 154.

²³² Ibid.

careerist feminism and the old archetype of the dangerous seductress.²³³

Thus, while such a reading could be applied to neo-noirs where active, independent, and careerist women appear, Nikolaidis refuses his female protagonists the opportunity for post-feminist preoccupation, by placing his films in fictional worlds, by fetishizing them, and therefore limiting them to the realm of his fantasy, and highlighting the problematic representation of the femme fatale in general. Also, though the femme fatale for Nikolaidis was inextricably linked to classic noir, and I sustain that this is one of the reasons Nikolaidis was fascinated by noir, the appropriated femme fatale in Nikolaidis's work can be used as a 'metonym' that travels among genres, as Straayer argues, because the filmmaker specifically pastiches film noir and creates a dialogue with classic noir, but also with the other styles and genres he pastiches.

In addition to appropriating the characteristics of the femme fatale, Nikolaidis also borrows elements from the horror genre. The women in *TSOTCN* and in *TWLAC* are presented as schizophrenic and abject. Although these two characteristics might be associated with the patriarchal order and the way that patriarchy expects women to be because of its fear for women, these traits can also be considered a reaction to patriarchy and a resistance to it. Critical literature on abjection is crucial for understanding Nikolaidis's women. With the term abjection, Julia Kristeva defines 'that which does not respect borders, positions, rules and which disturbs identity, system, order.'²³⁴ Barbara Creed examines feminine abject bodies in horror films and her work provides a crucial framework for the reading Nikolaidis's women as abject. She argues that images of abjection 'are central to our culturally/socially constructed notions of the horrific. They signify a split between two orders: the maternal authority and the law of the father.'²³⁵

These images of abjection that render women as monstrous, hinder the connections between female representation and visual pleasure, and constitute an attack on the dominant patriarchal status quo. Similarly Nikolaidis's female protagonists' social discomfort and paranoia are read as responses to trauma caused by patriarchy. Furthermore, these women can be said to (partly) avoid objectification. This is achieved through abjection and social discomfort, literal or metaphorical male castration, distancing methods, such as addressing the camera directly, and by having an active gaze themselves, to the men's passive one.

²³³ Roberta Garrett, *Postmodern Chick Flicks: The Return of the Woman's Films*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 166.

²³⁴ Julia Kristeva qtd. in Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 8.

²³⁵ Ibid., 13.

At the same time, although these women present a challenge to patriarchy, they are represented as conventionally beautiful and fetishized, and this renders a reading of their representation as problematic. In *TSOTCN* and in *TWLAC*, I argue that because the women are presented in fictional worlds and because these films are seen as ‘autobiographical’, female representation can be considered to be Nikolaidis’s personal projections of a male fear and desire about female subjectivity and women as castrators. This argument is strengthened by both Modleski’s and Creed’s research, as well as by the reading of the *femme fatale* by various scholars, such as Harvey, Place, Doane and more. In these films, the women appear as ‘Others’, as threats to male hegemony and patriarchy. Although in these five films, however problematic they are, a feminist reading could be applied, when these ‘Other’ women are brought in the real world, in *HNM* trilogy, their ‘Otherness’ is stressed by misogynistic characteristics and the unimportant women make their appearance.

The latter type of women is used in the *HNM* trilogy almost as a prop: they are naked, passive, naive, unintelligent, usually blonde, and only serve as objects for the protagonists’ and the spectators’ sexual pleasure. Although the latter category of women is present only in these three films, these women are more frequently encountered in Nikolaidis’s novels. There, they are described with derogatory adjectives aimed against their appearance and ethics,²³⁶ and their function as sexual objects is highlighted with sexist acts and terms.²³⁷ In his films the strong female prototype prevails. Yet, the fact that ‘the unimportant women’ are frequently encountered in his novels – which are based on autobiographical elements and are linked to Nikolaidis’s personal thoughts and memories, and thus this is not a type of woman that merely appears in the *HNM* trilogy as a symptom of the real world – assigns misogynistic connotations to his oeuvre, even though Nikolaidis constantly denied it.²³⁸

Another important element that problematises the ideal ≠ prosaic women binary is the fact that, apart from the inconsistency of female representation, there is a further inconsistency within the categorisation. In *EBA*, *MP*, *TZY* and *SYIHD* the monstrous/evil/paranoid/schizophrenic women fall under the category of the ideal woman, and they play the role of ‘Vera’/‘Laura’, reaffirming Nikolaidis’s statement that he looks for his lovers in Hell because ‘Paradise girls are boring’²³⁹ – further asserting his misogyny, both for perpetuating patriarchal binaries and for infantilising them by calling them ‘girls’

²³⁶ Such as ‘frokalo’ (Nikolaidis, *Pigs*, 99), meaning garbage, metaphorically used for ugly women.

²³⁷ For instance, ‘Sporos’ frequently encounters a woman for sex; when she does something with which he does not agree, he shows that he is in charge by dictating her ‘obligations’, such as to mop his house, iron his shirts and have sex with him (Ibid., 4).

²³⁸ For instance Nikolaidis, interview with Yourkou.

²³⁹ Nikolaidis, interview with Tsakoniatis, 52.

instead of 'women'. Though in *SS*, where the women are associated with the femme fatale, Laura is not one of the protagonists, but she is the dead, absent, passive, innocent woman, killed by the monstrous protagonists, thus confusing the reading of the two types of women.

This misogynistic approach can be considered to be symptomatic of Nikolaidis's background and, more importantly, of Greece's sociopolitical situation. Nikolaidis's upbringing in the 1950s and during the emergence of rock 'n' roll culture can be understood as playing a fundamental role in the formation of the misogynistic ideas. The rock 'n' roll era was a period of emancipation for young women who until then could mostly see themselves in a domesticated future, as submissive wives and homemakers. According to Christopher P. Martin, although there is research that shows that rock 'n' roll in the U.S. could be characterised as being gendered, differentiating the male-performers to the female-consumers,²⁴⁰ at the same time rock 'n' roll culture offered young girls the opportunity to find a voice through the fan community, by turning male performers into idols.²⁴¹ During an era that '[f]or teenage girls sexual delinquency typically meant sexual activity outside the context of marriage,'²⁴² realising the power they had as a fan community, they started becoming sexually liberated. Teenage girls hence started viewing themselves as grown up women, and dressed and behaved accordingly.²⁴³

Rock 'n' roll offered a new vision of sexuality (female as well as male) that was distinctly undomesticated; and it offered an unprecedented vision of men, not as beaux or breadwinners but as sex objects for women.²⁴⁴

Thus, a decade before the radical feminist movement in the US, rock 'n' roll culture gave young women a chance to counteract the dominating patriarchal sexist order aimed at domesticating them.²⁴⁵

As mentioned previously, rock 'n' roll was globally associated with juvenile delinquency and the 'Teddy Boy' phenomenon. This association was prevalent in Greece as well, and the press constantly highlighted the perils of rock 'n' roll culture for the teenagers. As part of the propaganda against rock 'n' roll, the press provided reports of instances of juvenile delinquency as cautionary tales, in the cases of both boys and girls. The reports clearly show that the behaviour of teenage girl fans in Greece was very similar to the behaviour of their female counterparts in the U.S. described earlier. For instance, a

²⁴⁰ Christopher Martin, 'The Naturalized Gender Order of Rock and Roll', in *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 19 (April 1995), 54.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 58.

²⁴² Ibid., 57.

²⁴³ Katsapis, *Sounds and Reverberations*, 61.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 63.

report on the rock 'n' roll concert of an American Navy band states that many 'uninvited' girls, that belong to the 'Teddy Girls' movement, took part in the ball for the concert.²⁴⁶

In 1959 the newspaper *Avgi* published an extensive article for the 'Teddy Boy' phenomenon that included reports of several delinquent incidents. These incidents, however, did not constitute violations of any rule or law.²⁴⁷ One of these reports concerns the story of a mother who claims that she has 'lost' her child to rock 'n' roll, because her teenage daughter started dressing like a grown up woman, wearing high heels, indulging in beauty procedures, and stopped caring about school, while at the same time ignoring maternal advice and dismissing her mother for not comprehending rock 'n' roll and for not letting her have a boyfriend.²⁴⁸ The mother adds that every night her daughter went with her friends to listen to Elvis' records and to dance 'rock' in dark, notorious places that are 'Teddy Boys' dens.²⁴⁹ The mother also states that she found some photographs her daughter was hiding that are 'indecent even for men.'²⁵⁰

These descriptions, apart from revealing the behaviours of teenage rock 'n' roll fans in the 1950s also reveal elements of Greek youth culture at the time. This Greek youth culture is connected with Nikolaidis's work and the aforementioned arguments about the reception of rock 'n' roll in Greece.²⁵¹ The liberation that the teenage girls experienced at the time was further boosted by the fact that women's right to vote was finally established in 1952.²⁵² Although after World War II, Greek women found themselves fighting for their rights, the political turmoil hindered their fight and the feminist movement did not find expression until after the fall of the Military Junta, when there was an imperative need for change in all sectors of social life. Thus, it can be claimed that the rock 'n' roll appropriated culture gave Greek teenage girls the opportunity to resist dominant patriarchal structures and rigid social limitations and to feel empowered towards men.

This detailed teenage female rock 'n' roll fan culture description perfectly coincides with the description of women in Nikolaidis's novels that talk about the same time period. However, sexual liberation, even though it could be perceived as a step towards feminism, it is not synonymous with it. Therefore, in patriarchal societies such as Greece, where the prevalent family law until 1983 considered the man as the head of the

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 154.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 155.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 155.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 156.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ For more information about the youth and Greek film of the 1950s see Delveroudi, *Youth in Greek Comedies*.

²⁵² 2nd of July 1952. Law 2159. *Government Gazette*, Viewed 28 April 204, <http://www.et.gr/>. The right to vote had been first demanded by Kalliroi Parren Siganou (one of the first feminists in Greece who devoted her life to the fight for women's rights) in early 1910s.

family and the only responsible person for decision-making in the house,²⁵³ it was easy to take advantage of the teenager's sexual liberation in the 1950s and 60s. This manipulation of female sexual liberation is portrayed in Nikolaidis's novels, since it seems like the 'unimportant women' category, are used by the males. It is made obvious that sexual liberation renders these women empowering, and they choose to get engaged in several sexual acts, possibly without realising that their mere liberated participation to them does not change their role in the society, therefore resulting in their voluntary use as props.²⁵⁴

Synoptically, Nikolaidis presents two categories of women in his oeuvre: the 'powerful women' and the 'unimportant women', who appear to contradict each other and show that Nikolaidis's work is inconsistent and ambivalent in terms of female representation. The women of the first category have agency and arguably attack patriarchy, but a contradiction in this representation is still obvious and thus female representation can be said to be 'neither here nor there' in the director's work. The women in the second category are clearly used for male objectification, and misogyny is blatant. The first category of women is much more prevalent in Nikolaidis's work and can thus confuse viewers' readings of Nikolaidis's films, especially if *TSOTCN* trilogy and *TWLAC* diptych are watched separately, without the problematic *HNM* trilogy in mind.²⁵⁵

However, when watching *HNM*, which takes place in a realistic world rather than the fictional, the doubts over the 'here or there' of representations of 'powerful' or 'unimportant' women vanish, asserting that female representation in Nikolaidis is indeed misogynistic, and the empowered women of his work that threaten patriarchy are merely projections of Nikolaidis's fears and fantasies. Though I acknowledge misogyny and sexism in Nikolaidis's work, I will examine his films with the 'neither here nor there' argument in mind, because I argue that although this category is indeed misogynistic, it is represented extremely differently than the 'unimportant women' category, and thus shows Nikolaidis's controversy within his misogyny, which is a key argument of this thesis. Both misogyny and controversy are of paramount importance for the examination of his work, since women *are* his work.

²⁵³ Only in 1983 (Law 1329/83) was the notion of the patriarchal family substituted by equality in marriage ('*Ikogeniako Dikeo*'/'Family Law', General Secretariat for Gender Equality, [Viewed 28 April 2014, http://www.isotita.gr/index.php/docs/c103/](http://www.isotita.gr/index.php/docs/c103/)). However, it cannot be claimed that Greece is not a patriarchal society anymore.

²⁵⁴ For instance, the girl in footnote 239 is presented to have no reservations in sleeping with any man, a fact that makes her sexually liberated and liked among 'Sporos's' friends. However, when her sexual liberation brought her in an awkward position, she passively accepted her 'obligations', and voluntarily turned into 'Sporos's' prop.

²⁵⁵ In the way that I was also confused while watching this trilogy and the diptych, without having re-watched *HNM* for a very long time.

Chapter 4: *The Shape of the Coming Nightmare Trilogy*

Introduction

Although the three films have different casts and there is a big span of time between them, a sense of continuity prevails across all of the films. Nikolaidis considered this trilogy ‘films-gravestones’, and a last warning for humanity’s remaining time.¹ In *Euridice BA 2037* the female protagonist is imprisoned in a house waiting to be transferred elsewhere, in *Morning Patrol* she goes out into the world, wanders around in a destroyed city to experience the ominous outside world for herself, gets disillusioned and then returns to a comparatively safe shelter in *The Zero Years*.

EBA is a black and white film which has some stylistic differences to the rest of Nikolaidis’s feature films, since pastiche is not evident. It can be considered an experimental film, as far as both film practice and context are concerned. *EBA* makes use of modernist aesthetics, revealing that Nikolaidis had not yet fully established his style. At the same time, the film heralds both the filmmaker’s recurrent stylistic elements and his narratology. It combines stylistic and thematic elements from Nikolaidis’s experimental *Lacrimae Rerum* and modernist² *Unconditionally*, hence producing the inaugural film of a personal cinematic oeuvre, where socio-political concerns meet personal desires, fantasies and fears. *EBA* pastiches the Orphic myth and is an allegory for the recent (to the film) dictatorship.

MP can be considered the only film in which Nikolaidis aimed to present something more than merely his personal obsessions, and he deals with existential questions and issues of humanity. However, his personal quests are also included in the film as Nikolaidis examines topics that greatly interested him and which he perpetuated throughout his films, such as issues of companionship and spectatorship. The filmmaker’s antiauthoritarian beliefs are detected in *MP* since it is implied that the authorities are responsible for the situation depicted in the film.

In Nikolaidis’s last film, *TZY*, the nightmare that the filmmaker describes in all of his previous filmic work, the threat, and consequently, the enemy, is explicitly presented: the nightmare takes form and is articulated through the state’s presence – and absence. The

¹ Nikos Nikolaidis, ‘En Oligis Archisa na Varieme’/‘In Short I Started Getting Bored’, *Bibliothèque*, 5 September 2013, Viewed 20 July 2014, <http://bibliotheque.gr/archives/27268>.

² Not having seen the film, I rely on Maria Papadopoulou’s description of the film for a newspaper in 1969. According to her, *Unconditionally* seems to have a modernist style. Nikolaidis had stated that the film starts with the final scene from Antonioni’s *Blow Up* (1966), thus the connection to modernism is enforced. Maria Papadopoulou, ‘Anef Oron’/‘Unconditionally’, BPA.

filmmaker's antiauthoritarian beliefs culminate in his swan song, in his last effort to express the state's unproductive and ineffective strategies, epitomising his fears in a dark, morbid and raw film.³ Due to the film's strong attack on authoritative regimes, it could be claimed that misogyny in *TZY* is portrayed as a by-product of fascism, and that it is used as criticism of both.

³ *TZY* was not distributed in cinemas after its screening in the 46th TFF (2005). During the festival, Nikolaidis stated that this would be his last film because he was tired of making films due to his struggle to get funding and to the constant controversies with the GFC (Nikolaidis, interview by Economou). Bartholomew, however, some years after his death, stated that she believed that he would be making a comeback, since he had many scripts waiting to be materialised [Marie-Louise Bartholomew, interview by Nicolas Triantafyllidis, *Athens Voice* no. 348 (2011), 28].

4.1 *Euridice BA 2037*

Film Synopsis

Euridice (Vera Tschechowa) is imprisoned in a house. She has been given the reference number BA 2037 and waits for the state to transfer her to another place, as her service in the particular house she currently resides in has been terminated. She has no recollections, has lost track of time and cannot tell for how long she has been waiting to be transferred. Everything that comes from the outside world is ominous. A woman with bandages on her wrists (Niki Triantafyllidi) visits her, and they talk about their pasts, although Euridice is unable to recall hers. Euridice receives a call from an old lover of hers, Orpheus (John Moore) whom she does not remember either. When he visits her, he offers to help accelerate her transfer process since he works for the state. However, she has already gotten used to her situation and has come to terms with her isolation. After they have violent sexual intercourse, Euridice castrates him, she goes on living in her isolation and the film ends where it started in a circular narrative pattern.

4.1.1 Underworld and Dictatorship

The original Orphic myth tells the story of Orpheus and Euridice, a couple who were separated by death on their wedding day, when Euridice was bitten by a snake and sent to Hades in the underworld. Orpheus, devastated by the loss of Euridice, continuously played mournful music that eventually convinced Persephone and Hades to allow Orpheus to descend into the underworld and take Euridice back with him, under the condition that Orpheus would not look back at Euridice as she followed him out of the Underworld or else she would stay in Hell forever. Orpheus, overwhelmed by his wife's return to life, disobeyed Hades's command, looked back at Euridice, and she instantly died a second death.¹

In terms of cinematic representation, the majority of filmic works that have adapted the Orphic myth² present it from Orpheus's perspective, with Orpheus as the films' protagonist. Conversely, Nikolaidis works against this dominant mode of representation by instead narrating the Orphic myth through Euridice's perspective. In Nikolaidis's version

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. 'Orpheus', Viewed 20 September 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/433177/Orpheus>.

² As for instance in Jean Cocteau's Orphic Trilogy, consisting of *The Blood of a Poet* (1930), *Orpheus* (1950), and *Testament of Orpheus* (1959), in Marcel Camus's *Black Orpheus* (1959) or in *Orfeu* (Carlos Diegues, 1999).

of the myth, Euridice does not expect Orpheus to drag her out of Hell; instead, she refuses to die a second time by killing him and celebrating her freedom. According to Nikolaidis, 'in Euridice BA 2037, the history is written to mock the history and the eye records in order to enucleate the eye.'³ With this quote, Nikolaidis confirms that he is not centrally interested in history and myths. Instead, he is interested in appropriating history and myths for his own aims, and rendering history and myths as 'repositories' of ideas for his pastiche work. For Nikolaidis history and myths become a personal matter. The film's extremely complicated and fragmented narration obscures the clear unfolding of the story. The dreamlike sequences confuse notions of time, and mix past, present, future, memories and fantasies together so that everything is questionable. A plethora of symbols further convolute the film's plot. Even the protagonist's nature is questioned. The name Euridice is never heard diegetically and it is merely assumed by the film's title. The name therefore becomes a reference and a symbol, just as the number that accompanies it.⁴ Likewise, the place and the country where Euridice lives in are not mentioned in the narrative. Although these elements are given in the title itself, the narrative refutes all given facts.

According to Greek mythology, before reaching the underworld, the souls of the dead are first immersed in Lethe, the river of forgetfulness and oblivion,⁵ from which they emerged with their memories erased. In Nikolaidis's film, Euridice is assumed to have followed the mythological dead souls' rite of passage since she is presented as having no memories: she is unable to recall her lover who calls her and claims that they had an affair while he was with a woman named Vera,⁶ and that the three of them were together the day Vera died. Euridice remembers Vera but not him, and the complicated narrative implies that she might be Vera's alter ego in the underworld,⁷ since Orpheus still remembers her.

In addition to not providing Euridice's personal information, the film's narrative does not mention the dictatorship either. The lack of dialogue – being restricted in scenes with the woman with the cut wrists, with Orpheus and to the phone conversations with the state – does not provide any further information about the regime. Instead, dictatorship and the underworld are suggested by the film's mise-en-scène (mainly through the chaotic environment that suggests Hell) and sound elements (especially the orders that the state representatives give Euridice over the phone, and the marches that are heard throughout the

³ Nikos Nikolaidis, 'Euridice BA 2037', in *Cinemythologia/Cinemythology*, 270, BPA

⁴ Nikolaidis was frequently asked if BA stands for the acronym of North East in Greek, but he claims that it is simply his old car plates and has no further connotations (Nikolaidis, interview with Soldatos).

⁵ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. 'Lethe', Viewed 17 June 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/337388/Lethe>.

⁶ The quest for the ideal woman is traced as early as Nikolaidis's first film. In this case, as also in the next films, Vera is dead and lost.

⁷ The final scene (to be analysed later on in this Chapter), further sustains this argument.

film). Since the environment where Euridice resides alludes both to the underworld and to dictatorship, the house becomes an allegory for Hell to imply that fascism is worse than Hell: Euridice feels constantly threatened by it, refuses to receive a letter from outside, and people attack her from the skyline and window. The spectators are not aware of the off screen space because the windows are covered with newspapers in an effort to seclude the protagonist (Fig4.1.1). The audience only gets a glimpse of the outside when Euridice opens a window and sees people from a distance, which image is followed by the sound of gunshots and of a siren that work as reminders of the on-going dictatorship. However, this ‘other’ territory outside the house is not contradictory to the house interior, which is also ‘othered’ both by Euridice herself, but also by dictatorship.



Fig4.1.1. Windows covered with newspapers

The overpopulated, baroque frames that are encountered across the whole of Nikolaidis’s cinematic oeuvre, as well as his great attention to props, are found in *EBA*; however, they originated in his earlier film, *Lacrimae Rerum*. In *LR*, Nikolaidis presents decaying and worn out objects, the crying objects as the title suggests,⁸ focusing on them and their shadows either by zooming in and out, or by showing them in extreme close-ups from various angles in order to play with expressionistic light (Fig4.1.2). These dark images, as well as his obsession with props, and specifically dolls and mannequins, closely resemble *EBA*’s cinematography. Props play a similarly predominant role in *Unconditionally*, as the Nikolaidis’s camera focuses on props such as cameras, lights and photographic backgrounds in a photographic studio.⁹

⁸ *Lacrimae rerum* means ‘the tears of things’ in Latin. The title comes from verse 456 of the first book of Virgil’s *Aeneid* ‘sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt’ (are the tears of the things and our mortality cuts to the heart). *Lacrimae Rerum* though visually interprets Lambros Porfyas’s eponymous poem’s reflection on the character’s loss due to his lover’s death, which loss is emphasised through the grief of personified objects of the house.

⁹ Having not seen *Unconditionally*, I use the description in Papadopoulou’s review (Papadopoulou,

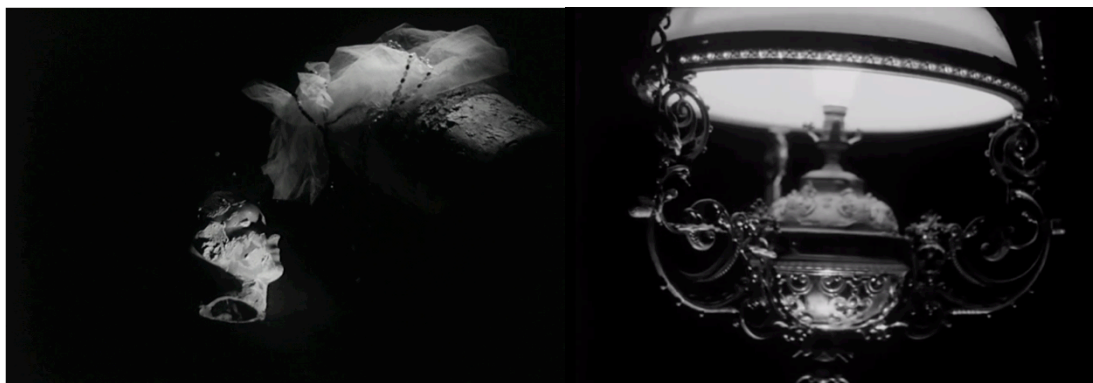


Fig4.1.2 The 'crying objects'

The medium and long shots used in *EBA* present Euridice's environment in terms of a sense of chaos. Euridice's house is full of untidily placed furniture, clothes and garbage due to her constant preparation for moving. The distress caused by the chaotic prop allocation in the frames is highlighted by the stylised lighting Nikolaidis uses, which resembles *LR*'s lighting. In addition, the plastic that covers furniture and props, is scattered around the house (Fig4.1.3), and is also linked to the clothes of the woman with cut wrists (Fig4.1.4). Plastic signifies here consumable nature, temporality and death, since these images can be connected to the plastic with which dead bodies are covered in a dream/fantasy scene, among which Euridice is seen walking (Fig4.1.5).¹⁰ Along these lines, Nikolaidis exploits the mise-en-scène to connote the underworld in which Euridice resides. Therefore, the chaotic environment of the house challenges domestic stereotypes by presenting an anarchically arranged house. The environment works as a prison that confines the protagonist, and as a continuation of the ominous and chaotic outside environment. Simultaneously this anarchy counteracts the notion of dictatorship.

¹⁰ 'Unconditionally', *Ethnos*, BPA).

¹⁰ Additional connections between plastic and death can be made with *The Wretches Are Still Singing*, where one of the male protagonists covers women's corpses as well as holes in the garden where corpses are buried with plastic.



Fig4.1.3 Plastic covering some furniture



Fig4.1.4 The woman with the cut wrists wearing a plastic coat



Fig4.1.5 Dead bodies covered in plastic

The protagonist's habits further signify that she lives under dictatorship and fascism since her living conditions connote the experience of living in war times, during which people save food, and the black market flourishes. The film builds on the experiences of famine and poverty and the difficulties of survival under these conditions by presenting Euridice saving food by keeping bread leftovers in a box. Moreover, when a smartly dressed state representative visits her to investigate why she refuses to accept their letters,

he tries to sell her some fish, which is presented in a close-up in well protected packaging, as if it was something priceless. He adds that he also accepts jewellery if she has no money. Euridice has neither money nor jewellery, which is confirmed later on in the film when her jewellery box is revealed to contain seashells rather than jewellery. These seashells are Euridice's valuables, since they appear to be remnants of her previous life, connected to the sound of the sea and the seagulls that Euridice often recalls or anticipates in various instances throughout the film. As in the majority of Nikolaidis's films, the sea and the sounds connected to it (waves, seagulls) are linked to notions of freedom, escapism and emancipation from the fascist state.

4.1.2 Film with a Double Nature

From what has been analysed so far it is evident that *mise-en-scène*, editing and sound play key roles in the film for drawing out particular themes and for making evident Nikolaidis's authorial stamp. The limited dialogue allows for the formal aspects of the film to more explicitly contribute to the development and understanding of the protagonist and the film's story. These same aspects also work to draw out themes of dictatorship and fascism. Nikolaidis uses certain editing techniques extensively. He uses abrupt cuts for flashbacks and flashforwards, leaving it unclear whether a certain scene is a flashback or a flashforward, and this disrupts the linearity of the film's narrative. Moreover, through the use of parallel montage, Euridice is presented throughout the film as being obsessed with the idea that someone in the house is watching her. As in Nikolaidis's body of films as a whole, surveillance is connected to fascism and the fascist state's obsession with watching over its citizens. This theme of surveillance is also implied through the use of props; for instance, in parallel montage with shots of Euridice a lit cigarette falls from the astray, a pot of coffee is boiling in the kitchen under no supervision, dolls watch Euridice, contributing to the idea that the house is a living organism that haunts and surveils Euridice. The feeling of surveillance is enhanced by Nikolaidis's propensity for using subjective point-of-view shots (Fig4.1.6), as well as by the close-ups on the aforementioned props, which attribute 'liveliness' to them, and with the shot of Euridice sneaking around holding a knife in order to defend herself from the observer whenever entering a room.

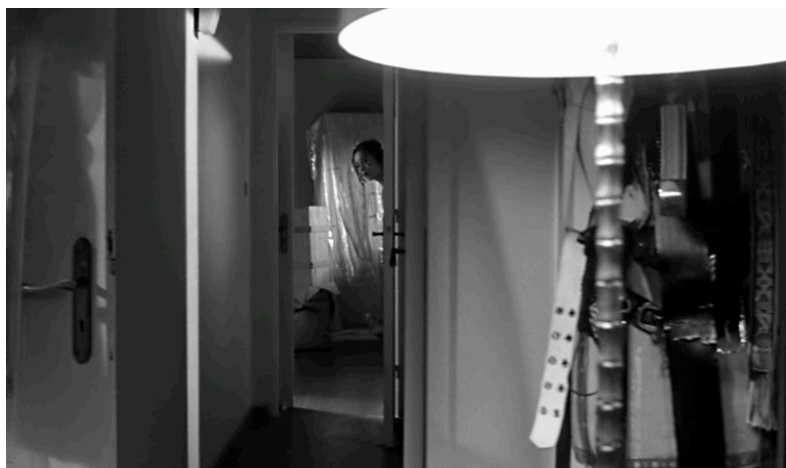


Fig4.1.6 Subjective point-of-view shot

The editing in the film's final scene, however, is the most pivotal one, since it characterises Euridice as a paranoid woman by revealing her multiple presence in the house. In this scene, Nikolaidis and the cinematographer¹¹ place the camera on a wheelchair to film Euridice talking on the phone in a medium shot. The camera (on the wheelchair), then pans around the living room where the woman with the cut wrists is seen from behind. The song 'Till'¹² starts playing non-diegetically, and the camera moves down a corridor, recording the walls and the open room doors on each side of the corridor. These open doors reveal Euridice's presence in every room: she is shown making coffee in the kitchen, coming out of a room with the knife, defending herself with a spear, taking a shower. Finally, at the end of the corridor, the camera pans to the first instance of Euridice, framed in a long shot, who hangs up the phone and looks at the camera directly. As the camera approaches her, her image becomes frozen in a freeze frame¹³ and the 'End' credit appears accompanied by shotguns (Fig4.1.7). Although this scene is presented as if it is a single shot, Nikolaidis has actually edited different shots together and has camouflaged the cuts.¹⁴ Thus, Nikolaidis manages to portray both his own look through the camera and the look of paranoid Euridice towards herself and towards the camera. Euridice is haunted by her own self and will keep being stalked by herself, as the film has a circular narrative which is perpetuated.

¹¹ Panousopoulos.

¹² Performed by Vera Lynn.

¹³ According to Panousopoulos (*Directing Hell*) and to Chouliaras (interview with *SevenArt*), Nikolaidis here uses a freeze frame to save the shot because Panousopoulos lost the command of the wheelchair. Nikolaidis liked the outcome and used freeze frames to end all his following films.

¹⁴ The cuts are invisible and one could think that the rooms are connected and Tschechowa runs from one room to the other. Apart from the fact that she wears different clothes in every room, the film is shot in Nikolaidis's house, so the rooms cannot be connected.



Fig4.1.7 Final freeze frame

Euridice can also be considered to be the same person as the woman with the cut wrists. Among the flashbacks and flashforwards, Euridice is shown imitating suicide. She draws fake blood lines on her wrist in the bathroom, while in a parallel montage of a flashforward, possibly recreating the memory of her actual suicide that brought her to the underworld, she is seen lying on the floor of the living room pretending to be dying (Fig4.1.8). In this parallel montage, the sound of the water running from the tap is interchanged with a silence that gives way to the sound of the sea and seagulls and of Euridice humming ‘Till’ when about to ‘die’. Euridice’s feathered scarf, apart from drawing parallels with some glamorous femmes fatales of the classic film noir, is further associated with birds and the sound of the seagulls, in turn merging the non-diegetic sound and the image, as well as stressing Euridice’s quest for freedom. Therefore, since Euridice is seen imitating to cut her wrists, the woman with the cut wrists can be considered as another version of Euridice, building further on Euridice’s multiple presence in the house.



Fig4.1.8 Euridice drawing fake blood on her wrists (left) and pretending to be dying (right)

In addition to editing, sound also plays a central role in the film by specifically building on the themes of dictatorship and fascism. The role of the sound elements is maintained throughout the film and they assign to it pace, rhythm and continuity. Nikolaidis uses both diegetic and non-diegetic sounds in order to create two films at the same time. As the filmmaker himself notes, in *EBA* there is a recording of the image instead of an illustration of the sound.¹⁵ Within the film's story, another story is narrated through the sounds. In the film sounds that are connected to military dictatorship and war are heard: military marches, sirens, gunshots, voices through megaphones, running horses and generally sounds that are perceived as ominous in the film. The parallel political story is read individually, personally and idiosyncratically by each spectator. The non-linear narration allows the viewers to develop their own ideas about what is happening.

EBA on a first level presents the Orphic myth from Euridice's perspective, and a second level depicts the same story from a political perspective. The film's sounds create a political film that comments on the recent to the film dictatorship, and to any fascist state in general, which oppressed the citizens, contributing to their memory loss.¹⁶ The political importance of the sounds is detected as early as the opening credits, in which the credits are interchanged with images of the house, while several non-diegetic sounds are heard. After the silent first credit 'ATOSSA FILM'¹⁷ appears on-screen, the spectators are presented with a corridor. This image is accompanied by the ominous increasing sound of a helicopter and a commanding unclear voice heard through a megaphone. An abrupt cut shows the next credits, which are dressed with the increasing sound of horses running. The latter sound gives way to the sound of a typewriter and a deep male voice heard through a telephone calling for 'BA 2037' over a zoom into a flickering detuned television. The film cuts to a black screen on which credits are shown, accompanied by Chopin's 'Andante Spianato and Grande Polonaise'. The telephone starts ringing while the classical music continues to play. The ringing is heard both during the black background credits and over a picture of *Laurel and Hardy*. In the meantime, a train whistle is also heard. While the music is still playing, the sound of seagulls and of waves is heard over the credits, to be interrupted by a siren and the cut to the opening establishing shot of Euridice sleeping in her bed and people throwing garbage at her from an open window (Fig4.1.9).

¹⁵ Nikolaidis, 'Euridice BA 2037'.

¹⁶ As also happens in *Morning Patrol*.

¹⁷ Vadim Glowna's production company.



Fig4.1.9 *EBA's* opening shot

The combination of these sounds with the characterisation of Euridice's house as a hostile environment, where chaos prevails and its dark formalistic lightened rooms, suggests an atmosphere of terror and fear, and a regime of dictatorship under which Euridice lives, accepting orders and depending on the authorities. All these sounds though are also found throughout the film. The telephone ringing stands for the calls she gets from Orpheus, as well as from the state. The sound of the seagulls and the sea is associated with Euridice's freedom. These two sounds are heard twice in the film: first when Euridice imitates suicide, as discussed above, and then when she kills Orpheus, liberating herself from the myth. The siren is heard at the end of the film, after Euridice kills Orpheus. And this is also when the spectators are brought back to the very beginning of the film, to the image of Euridice sleeping.

Therefore, all of the sounds used during the opening credits do not only narrate the parallel political story, but also summarise Nikolaidis's film. Nikolaidis exploits film language at its utmost, making strong use of editing, attributing active roles and meanings to all his frames, as he also does with sound and music. Nikolaidis created a film that expresses a double nature, and sets up the second film that is selectively read. The audience learns about the political undertone of the film, as well as eventually maps Euridice and comprehends her character, not through dialogue, but through the multiple levels of the film. Nikolaidis's aforementioned quote about the history that mocks history is reinforced, since film language addresses the political context of the film, and thus Nikolaidis's personal concerns, subverting the Orphic myth and representing a subjective version of the dictatorship. The idea of the 'neurotic' female protagonists is presented in Nikolaidis's film as well, and is strictly linked to film language and explicates a kind of 'neurotic' editing and mise-en-scène.

4.1.3 Female Representation

Nikolaidis presents a 'neurotic' woman as a by-product of fascism and through her portrays his antifascist ideology. Nikolaidis also presents Euridice's side of the story by focusing on her viewpoint. The form of female representation that Nikolaidis uses in *EBA* is also found in the other two films of the trilogy, as well as in the following diptych. This pattern of female representation is a woman-castrator who resists the system from within. However, here, as in the other four films, this figure of the neurotic woman is presented as conventionally beautiful, fetishized and eroticized. She can therefore be considered in terms of Nikolaidis's own fantasy and reflection of men's fears of women as castrators, as the female body's fetishization is strictly linked to the male fear of sexual difference and of castration.¹⁸ Furthermore, the use of the figure of the woman who ostensibly appears to be beautiful and pure and yet is revealed as inherently evil and corrupt is widespread in patriarchal discourses aiming to highlight woman's evil nature.¹⁹ Yet, although Euridice appears as a neurotic, paranoid and abject woman, perpetuating the misogynistic patriarchal discourse, this representation can also be read as a response to the trauma caused by this very patriarchy, and by dictatorship. Therefore the contradictory female representation is traced as early as Nikolaidis's first feature film. Though it is quite possible that female representation in *Unconditionally* has a similar treatment, if both the description of the film and the only picture available (Fig4.1.10) is taken into consideration.



Fig4.1.10 'N. Nikolaidis's *Unconditionally*: Surrendering to a Dehumanised World' (source: 'Uncertain Future', 27)

¹⁸ See for example E. Ann Kaplan, 'Is the Gaze Male?', in *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, (New York & London: Methuen, 1983), 23-35.

¹⁹ See for example Creed, *Monstrous Feminine*, 42.

Although the influence of film noir in *EBA* is restricted to the use of expressionistic lighting, Euridice resembles to some extent the classic film noir figure of the femme fatale. Elements that connect Euridice to this figure include: her outfit, her overuse of cigarettes, her conventional beauty and the fact that she is 'fatale' since she manipulates Orpheus and kills him. As with all of Nikolaidis's female protagonists, she is conventionally attractive and is shown naked in various scenes throughout the film. Although these elements trigger scopophilia and engage the women in a 'to-be-looked-at-ness'²⁰ situation, the women's representation in non-conventional situations in combination with their abjection can be said to partly hinder visual pleasure, thus confusing female representation in Nikolaidis's films.

As a highly political film, *EBA* criticises dictatorship, and Euridice arguably represents the victimised Greek citizens (and any citizen of the world experiencing dictatorship). However, the fact that Euridice chooses to kill Orpheus and that she has started feeling comfortable in her isolation questions her status as a victim. She was initially victimised but she seems to have gradually become a victimiser. The fact that Nikolaidis chooses a woman to stand in for the citizens, and the fact that she is presented as schizophrenic does not necessarily connote misogyny. It can be read as an allegory for Greece specifically, since 'Greece' is a female name in Greek. Furthermore, Euridice becomes a symbol for fascist conditions where people are neglected and kept imprisoned, since for Nikolaidis fascism can only be connected to the male gender and to patriarchy, as it will be analysed further on. At the same time, Euridice finds a voice as the film progresses, and as the spectators are presented with her gaze. She further revolts against the regime, breaking free from its dominant norms, by refusing the help of male heroes and saviours, and by attacking the state from within, getting revenge and castrating Orpheus over and over again due to the circular narration which accommodates the film to continuously run in a loop.

From the very beginning of the film, Euridice is presented as a complex character. She is a passionate woman who experiments with her sexuality, and her sexual drives are evident throughout the film as she involves herself in various role-plays. For instance, in one scene she is lying in bed covered under a white sheet. The camera is under the sheet as well, and building on the sense of surveillance, a shadow of an unseen observer's hand, who is thought to be over the bed, is visible on the sheet (Fig4.1.11). The shadow starts stroking her covered figure, and in a parallel editing the film cuts to a shot that shows the shadow of a person appearing on the windows which are covered with newspaper, similar

²⁰ Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasures', 841.

to (Fig4.1.1) above, where Euridice is seen next to the covered with newspapers window. But it is shortly proven that the hand is hers, and that she plays the existence of someone else in the room. Moreover, the scene of Euridice's and Orpheus's sexual intercourse is presented in a dreamlike sequence through fragmented shots, making it resemble a fantasy. Their sexual intercourse, which alludes to both rape and passionate lovemaking, and which makes the two indistinguishable, takes place in Euridice's house. However, when she grasps the knife and is about to kill Orpheus, they are presented in the house and in a parallel editing at the same time in water while raining (Fig4.1.12), signalling Euridice's forthcoming liberation and her return to the sea.



Fig4.1.11 Shadow over Euridice



Fig4.1.12 Euridice castrates Orpheus

Orpheus's castration is foretold earlier in the film. In line with Euridice's characterisation as hypersexual, she is shown playing and experimenting with dolls. The dolls come alive in Euridice's hands, becoming active performers in the situations that Euridice places them in. The instance that anticipates Orpheus's killing shows Euridice simulating sexual intercourse between a male and a female doll, with the male doll

distinguished from the other by having a penis. The dolls have a voice system with which they articulate ‘Do you want to play with me?’ and, more frequently, ‘Lets hide quickly’. This second expression underlines the dictatorship’s oppressive role and references the government’s imposed curfew during the on-going political situations. While the two dolls have sex (Fig4.1.13), the protagonist is fantasising about herself having sex by imagining herself in the role of the dolls. When she finishes playing this sex game, she aggressively throws the female doll on the floor. She then grabs the male doll and puts the penis in her mouth, tenderly at first but then she abruptly turns violent, bites it off, and keeps it into her mouth. This violent attack on the male doll reveals her mixed feelings regarding her relationship with Orpheus and foretells her ultimate revenge on him and his brutal murder. A later shot in the film shows that not only did she castrate the male doll, but she also burned it with cigarettes, leaving her last cigarette butt on it, as if it were a voodoo doll, while the other dolls continue to look at the ‘corpse’.



Fig4.1.13 Euridice simulates sex between dolls

Male castration during sex can be associated with the idea of the ‘vagina dentata’, the toothed vagina,²¹ which is a central trope in the horror film genre. This representation of female genitalia as a trap is found in various myths from around the globe.²² For instance Wolfgang Lederer writes that

[t]he breaking of the vaginal teeth by the hero, accomplished in the dark and hidden depths of the vagina, is the exact equivalent of the heroic journey into the underworld and the taming of the toothy hell-hound Cerberus by Herakles. Darkness, depth, death and woman – they belong together.²³

²¹ Creed, *Monstrous Feminine*, 105.

²² For more information see Creed, *Ibid.*, 105-106.

²³ Wolfgang Lederer qtd. in Creed, *Ibid.*, 106.

Similarly, in Nikolaidis's film, although neither the actual castration nor penetration is explicitly presented, Euridice possesses a 'vagina dentata' with which she castrates Orpheus and confirms patriarchy's fears. Even as Orpheus descended to the underworld to rescue Euridice, he failed to tame her and thus the film confirms Lederer's claim that darkness, depth, death and woman belong together.

The castrating female figure is frequently presented as a threat against the male figure and patriarchy. This fear of castration by the 'vagina dentata', according to Creed, can refer to symbolic castration (loss of mother's body) or literal castration.²⁴ Interpretations of 'vagina dentata' shows the latter as an expression of the sadistic mother that might desire to feed on her infants while she feeds them, or as an expression of the dyadic mother who threatens to engulf her infant.²⁵ In both cases, it refers to the fear of being swallowed up by mother. Hence, in *EBA* Nikolaidis projects a version of 'vagina dentata' that devours men and represents his fears for castration, as well as to allude to the notion of 'mother' and all the Freudian connections of mother and son.

However, male castration is viewed as an attack against patriarchy, and also Euridice's freedom to experiment with her body may be considered to add a feminist undertone that projects ownership of her body. In the scene after Euridice's metaphorical suicide, a shot of Euridice is framed with her back to the camera, sitting on a table on which she places one leg. The film cuts to a close-up of Euridice's face that shows her deriving pleasure from something, and then cuts to a shot of a doll that Euridice holds between her legs, pressing its eyes. It becomes evident that Euridice inserting the doll in her vagina, despite this action not being explicitly shown. Blood is also visible running down her thigh (Fig4.1.14). The film then cuts and a parallel montage presents the aforementioned shot of Euridice lying on the floor as if dying. While she inserts and stabs the doll inside her, the lying down figure of Euridice imitates spasms, as if she is being stabbed to death. The image of Euridice bleeding creates connotations of menstrual blood and reinforces Euridice's abjection. Moreover, this masturbatory and sadomasochistic act negates patriarchy's presentation of women as fetishized objects and challenges patriarchy by both appearing as abject and by celebrating the independence of her body.

²⁴ Ibid.,107.

²⁵ Ibid.,109.



Fig4.1.14 Euridice's blood

The latter feminist reading of body ownership could be applied in this scene, and the role that Euridice attributes to the dolls so far signify a form of resistance, rebellion and revenge towards the state through castration and, consequently, towards men. However, the overuse of dolls contradicts this reading and leads to the characterisation of this scene as another male fantasy. Dolls are a popular image associated with childhood and traditionally girls' playtime activities. According to Freud, infants do not recognise boundaries between live and lifelessness objects, and subsequently treat dolls as real people. He argues that this inability to distinguish between animate and inanimate objects explains the infantile fear or the uncanny infantile wish for a doll to come to life.²⁶ For this reason child's culture in general and dolls in particular, have been widely used in horror films as an innocent façade of violence and crime.²⁷ Euridice is shown in the film playing with dolls and expressing herself through doll play, as if she were a child. Moreover, dolls frequently appear to have a voyeuristic gaze that makes it appear as if they are coming to life. The existence of dolls all over the house, from selves to kitchen drawers, infantilise Euridice, and could be considered to highlight the fascist state's patronising attitude towards the citizens it diminishes to a child level.

Further horrific images in the film contribute to the consideration of Euridice as abject. For instance, after Euridice refuses to collect the letter, trying to hinder the contact with the outside world, she is presented vomiting in the bathroom. However, this act of throwing up is presented backwards and in slow motion, as if Euridice is sucking in the vomit from the toilet while she is naked and holds a plastic that is connected to death, as

²⁶ Sigmund Freud qtd. in Dominic W. Lennard. 'All Fun and Games...: Children's Culture in the Horror Film, from *Deep Red* (1975) to *Child's Play* (1988)', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, Vol.26, no.1 (2012), 134.

²⁷ Ibid.

pre-mentioned (Fig4.1.15). Euridice's abjection is also stressed with the image of her running happily with Orpheus's intestines, as if they were a trophy of her emancipation (Fig4.1.16), disempowering the gaze and arguably challenging her objectification. These images of the abject body also suggest a reflection of Euridice and her untidy house, since she contradicts the centres of 'clean and proper self'²⁸ that patriarchy imposes on women. These images of fetishized and conventionally beautiful women being involved in horrific deeds is central in Nikolaidis's iconography and contribute towards the ambivalence of female representation across his cinematic oeuvre.



Fig4.1.15 Euridice sucking the vomit in



Fig4.1.16 Euridice running with Orpheus intestines

According to Julia Kristeva, 'abject is a force which both disrupts social order and (in doing so) operates as a necessary psychological 'safe-guard, abjection...settles the subject within a socially justified illusion – [it] is a security blanket.'²⁹ Euridice's abjection can also be a sort of 'security blanket' to help her get through the state's oppression.

²⁸ Kristeva qtd. in Creed, *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁹ Kristeva qtd. in Imogen Tyler, 'Against Abjection', *Feminist Theory*, no. 10 (April 2009), 79.

Euridice's bodily fluids and actions render her horrific and monstrous. The horrific attacks the patriarchal discourse, represents the 'other' and signifies taboo, transgression and immorality.³⁰ Euridice becomes a monster that 'devours' the enemy in order to take revenge and survive. Even as she seems to be complying with the state's norms, by patiently waiting to be transferred to another house, her representation is a comment on fascism and signifies a revolt from within the system.

4.1.4 Concluding Remarks

Nikolaidis's first feature film pinpoints narrative and aesthetic elements that the filmmaker uses in his subsequent films. The abundant use of editing techniques and film sound result in a complex and dense film. The density of the film renders every single scene essential in understanding the narrative, as well as constructs the double nature of the film. As early as his first feature film, Nikolaidis makes it clear that he addresses a cineliterate audience who is in a position to read a film as a whole and who will be able to recognise his influences and understand the messages he conveys. The formal aspects also accommodate the understanding of the protagonist. Female representation in the film is contradictory: elements of abjection, of anti-patriarchy but also of misogyny are traced here.

³⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 17.

4.2 *Morning Patrol*

Film Synopsis

A woman who has no memory wanders around a deserted and abandoned city, hiding in various places. She heads west, in the direction of where she believes the sea is and where she will be safe. The only thing that she knows is that she has to escape the city and that she needs to keep walking in order to avoid the morning patrol that guards the city and kills wanderers. The woman gets attacked in a cinema and then hides in a house where she encounters a morning patrol guard who has been following her. He points a gun at her but does not kill her in order to check if she knows something that he does not, and they both realise that they have each lost their memories. The guard is weak due to an illness and the woman blackmails him by taking his pills and refusing to return them unless he helps her escape. They start their journey together towards the sea, during which they build an intimate relationship. In the meantime, the female protagonist starts feeling the same pains as the guard and they realise that they will soon die. The film ends with both characters reaching the river through which they can get to the sea, but the man is too weak and dies in the woman's arms. The spectator never learns whether the female character makes it to the sea.

4.2.1 Pastiche and Dystopia

Morning Patrol participated in the 16th Avoriaz International Science Fiction Film Festival in 1988, where it competed against *RoboCop* (1987). The festival characterised *MP* as the European 'answer' to Paul Verhoeven's film.¹ Both films deal with the topics of dystopia, militarism, memory loss, cultural, and social decline; however, *RoboCop* deals with men-machines, cyborgs and can be characterised as a 'new bad future science fiction film.'² The two films bare no stylistic resemblance: Nikolaidis's film has been considered by various critics as a science fiction and futuristic film that describes broken communications, damaged relationships between humans, as well as the general catastrophic future that people will face in future decades.³ Specifically, critics have argued

¹ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Lefteris Tarlantezos, 'Bang! You're Dead', *Cinesyllogi/Cinecollection*, 35, BPA.

² Fred Glass, 'The 'New Bad Future': *Robocop* and 1980's Sci-Fi Films', *Science as Culture*, no. 5 (1989), 8.

³ In this film the majority of the critics from all political parties agree that *MP* is an original film in Greek filmography, characterising it as 'beautiful', and consider it allegorical and futuristic. For instance, Danikas from *Rizospastis*, the newspaper of a left political party, writes that the filmmaker has thrown a 'nuclear bomb that kills consciousness' and that *MP* is Nikolaidis's most ambitious project because it

that Nikolaidis dealt with ‘the difficult fields of futuristic allegorical science fiction’⁴ and Tsakoniatis has even claimed that with this film, Nikolaidis predicted the Chernobyl disaster.⁵ This claim stems from the fact that he had already started filming earlier than April 1986⁶ and scenes in his film could be said to resemble the destruction caused by the Chernobyl disaster. Nikolaidis denied that *MP* is exclusively futuristic: although he addresses the ramifications of contemporary people’s passivity, his film mostly refers to these people’s cultural blankness. For Nikolaidis these people who lead passive lives without resisting have turned into living-dead, into zombies.⁷

Although elements of the science fiction film are evident in *MP*, the film cannot be strictly categorised under this genre as its visual style also connects it to film noir. In fact, *MP* is a pasticcio of pastiches that combines stylistic elements from various genres and specific films. As Susan Sontag writes,

Science fiction films are not about science. They are about disaster, [...]. In science fiction films, disaster is rarely viewed intensively; it is always extensive. It is a matter of quantity and ingenuity. [...] The science fiction film [...] is concerned with the aesthetics of destruction, with the peculiar beauties to be found in wreaking havoc, making a mess.⁸

MP is a science fiction film because it deals with disaster and with the aesthetics of destruction that Sontag describes. The film’s aesthetics also bring in ‘beauties [...] in wreaking havoc’ through the film’s style and formal aspects. *MP*’s mise-en-scène exposes a vacant city where everything is left untouched: lights in empty houses are left on, house doors are left open, tables are set for family meals, televisions are left turned on and cinemas are screening films in vacant rooms. In the streets, there are abandoned cars and general debris, and the city is full of empty buildings. Signs of desertion are evident, connoting a catastrophe in the Benjaminian sense, where there is a subversion of both the ‘ontological and epistemological experience of the world.’⁹ In addition to this catastrophe,

encloses the filmmakers concerns. Chrysovitsanos from *Ethnos*, a newspaper of a socialist influence, writes that *MP* is ‘extremely beautiful’ and it highlights Nikolaidis’s impressive skills. In the same vein, Bakoyiannopoulos notes in conservative *Kathimerini* that *MP* is one of the finest samples of Greek cinema. ‘Morning Patrol Reviews’, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, Viewed 17 July 2014, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=32&Itemid=15.

⁴ Kostas Parlas in *Proti*. Ibid.

⁵ Tsakoniatis, *Nikolaidis*, 108.

⁶ The last opening credit reads that *MP* was filmed in Athens from October 1985 until February 1986.

⁷ Nikolaidis, interview with Triantafyllidis, *Billboard*.

⁸ Susan Sontag, ‘The Imagination of Disaster’, in *Commentary*, (October 1965), 44.

⁹ Anirban Kapil Baishya, ‘Trauma, Post-Apocalyptic Science Fiction and the Post Human’, in *Wide*

the patrol's representation, as suggested by the mise-en-scène, is interlinked with authoritarianism and militarism: checkpoints, gas masks, wires and barricades (Fig4.2.1). These elements allude to a state of war, occupation and curfew, and suggest that the foe is the fascist state, which is proven to be Nikolaidis's perennial enemy in his films, as well as the cause and perpetrator of this disaster.



Fig4.2.1 Imagery of war

With his films, Nikolaidis aims to convey an atmosphere similar to Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982).¹⁰ Since Nikolaidis's budget could not provide him with the same high production values as *BR*, the film crew filmed in open spaces at nighttime, using water as a reflector of the existing light (such as the moon light) to create a dramatic atmosphere (Fig4.2.2). Visually, the film resembles *BR*. Although outdoor locations in *BR* differ from those of *MP*, the dark images with the neon lights attribute similar futuristic notes to the atmosphere and suggest links to film noir (Fig4.2.3). The light blue colour of *MP*'s photography as seen in (Fig4.2.1) above also creates similar images to *BR*. The similarities between the two films mainly surround style and aesthetics; although both films deal with the topics of memory and nostalgia, they treat these topics differently.

Screen, Vol. 3, no. 1 (June 2011), Viewed 10 July 2014, <http://widescreenjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/9/9>.

¹⁰ Katsouridis, the film's cinematographer, writes that he had long talks with Nikolaidis concerning the aesthetics and photography of the film. Together they watched many films in order for Nikolaidis to give Katsouridis an example of the kind of photography he wanted for his film, as the filmmaker had already conceptualised it. Nikolaidis finally decided that *BR* is the best example of what he had imagined for *MP*. Dinos Katsouridis, *Anazitontas ton K./Searching for K.*, (Athens: Gavriilidis, 2013), 240.



Fig4.2.2 Water used as reflector



Fig4.2.3 The lighting in *MP* (above) and in *BR* (below)

Nikolaidis's choice to create *MP* along *BR*'s lines was not only based on a desire to imitate this film's style but it also had to do with genre connection between the two films. *BR* has been characterised as a multi-genre film: a cross between film noir and science fiction, a tech-noir or neo-noir.¹¹ As I claimed in Chapter 3, Nikolaidis uses film noir elements in the majority of his films. For instance, the 'expressionistic' lighting and the venetian blinds used in *MP* (Fig4.2.4), where the limited natural light comes from outside, in conjunction with the artificial light from the lamp and the fireplace, create unusual shadows. These lighting techniques help to associate the film's images with scenes from film noirs, as well from the rest of Nikolaidis's filmography. Additionally, the chiaroscuro, which is also widely used, the dark shots filmed mostly at night, the moist atmosphere from the supposed rain, and the two protagonists' voice-over are all elements associated with film noir and link the film genre to *MP*. These elements are combined with the low camera angles to add a claustrophobic feeling to the film, even in open-air scenes, and to underline the notion of the threat.

¹¹ In *BR* website the film is characterised as a 'haunting, early prophetic mixture of science fiction and film noir'. *Blade Runner*, Viewed 15 July 2014, <http://bladerunnerthemovie.warnerbros.com/>.



Fig4.2.4 Lighting in *MP*

In *MP*, the protagonists' lack of memory, in combination with the plethora of films that Nikolaidis pastiches, ascribe a nostalgic note to the film. Nikolaidis is nostalgic for classical cinema, and specifically for film noir. The fact that Nikolaidis uses nostalgic references to the past in order to criticise the current state and passive citizenship by exposing a catastrophic future clearly differentiates Nikolaidis's work from Jameson's notion of pastiche, who denies the critical ability of pastiche. In his film, Nikolaidis warns his audience of the consequences of their passivity. He further warns it of the future of cinema.¹² In order to achieve this warning, Nikolaidis believed that the use of post-apocalyptic film elements suited his needs.

After WWII, there emerged many post-apocalyptic films, both in Europe and in Hollywood. Later on, in the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s, there was a tendency in cinematic discourses to imagine the future and portraying it as filled with advanced technology, while conveying nostalgia for the past. Examples of this tendency can be found in *RoboCop* and *BR*. With *MP*, Nikolaidis presents an ominous, disastrous and dystopian future and conveys nostalgia, but he does not engage with topics concerning technological advancement. He uses the images of a collapsing urban and industrial society to convey his messages for the self-destructive course of humanity.

Although the scenes in *MP* reference contemporary life rather than the future, it is difficult to recognise the locations where the film is shot. *MP* is filmed in Omonia, one of the busiest areas in Athens city centre, which Nikolaidis has turned into a post-apocalyptic environment. In doing so, he renders the area unrecognisable, with no landmarks, and prevents any city or country specific allusions. Nikolaidis claims that this is how he in fact

¹² See Nikolaidis, interview with Triantafyllidis, *Billboard*.

perceives these places through the 'threat' of 'the shape of the coming nightmare', as the trilogy title suggests, but not many people can see that.¹³ Therefore, Nikolaidis takes actual places, strips them of their historicity and identity, appropriates them to this threat and distorts them into 'non-places'. According to Marc Augé, spaces that 'cannot be defined as relational, or historical or concerned with identity' can be characterised as 'non-places'.¹⁴ Apart from disguising places to render them unrecognisable, such as known arcades in Athens (Fig4.2.5), the filmmaker also films in settings that are by definition, according to Augé, 'non-places', such as empty and abandoned train stations and shopping centres, (Fig4.2.6).



Fig4.2.5 An Athenian arcade as a 'non-place'



Fig4.2.6 Examples of 'non-places'

In conjunction with his use of unrecognisable 'non-places' and a lack of spatial mapping in the film, Nikolaidis does not provide temporal mapping in the film either. The protagonists (and the spectators) have no clear perception of space and time. For the

¹³ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Maria Katsounaki, YouTube Video, Viewed 3 May 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyH5jnrPJr4>.

¹⁴ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. (New York: Verso, 1995), 77-78.

protagonists, time is counted in terms of the amount of time they have left until they die. In the beginning of the film, the female protagonist steals a watch from a person who she thinks is dead, checks if it works and wears it herself. Yet she never uses it, and only towards the end of the film, when the guard asks her what time it is, does she realise that the watch is not working. In a voice-over, the guard then says that he senses that time is running fast again, since he has no watch, but even if he had, ‘watches are not made to count this kind of time.’ No watch can tell them when they will die. Thus the protagonists exist in a timeless and placeless location, with no real memories, and the only thing they know for sure is that they will die. They do not have a past or a future. The memories of film noir becomes the protagonists’ ‘home’ and shelter, since the narrative denies them a childhood/personal memory where they can return and feel safe.

4.2.2 ‘Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again...’: Memory, Nostalgia and Threat

As soon as the opening credits of the film finish, an eerie music introduces the opening sequence of the film. This opening shot immediately conjures up images of disaster, showing an abandoned car in the middle of a road surrounded by fallen electricity pillars (Fig.4.2.7). The female protagonist’s voice-over begins:

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I passed by the iron gate with its rusted spokes and walked along the drive in front of me. [...] I suddenly came upon the house and I stood because it was Manderley, our Manderley, silent and secretive as always, with its grey stones shining in the moonlight of my dream. [...] These images can never be dissolved because they are memories that cannot hurt. I’m aware of all these while I’m dreaming, for like most people, I know that I’m dreaming. We can never go back again, that much is certain. The past is still too close. We share everything, but we never talk about Manderley because this place is no longer ours. There is no Manderley anymore. I have to keep talking or I’ll die. I have to keep walking or I’ll bump into the morning patrol. [...] Something happened to me as I was walking back home after so many years and I’m no longer the same. This is all I remember. The stupidest question one can ask on this earth is ‘where the hell has everybody gone?’



Fig4.2.7 MP's opening shot

The woman's voice-over, in conjunction with the scenery, suggests a disaster has occurred and implies her lack of recollection of this event. At the same time, the protagonist retains her memories of Manderley. Since these are her only recollections, she believes that she comes from there. She also adds that she does not recall her past life. Wandering around in this destroyed city without a sense of belonging, she feels already dead and claims that

what does it matter where you lay once you were dead? In a dirty sump or in a marble tower on top of a high hill. What does it matter. You are dead and you are not bothered by things like that. Oil and water is the same as wind and air to you. You just sleep the big sleep, not caring about this nastiness.

Through her voiced thoughts, it is made clear that she does not actually have any personal recollections at all. Manderley is not her lived experience. Manderley is the estate in Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca*, and in Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940). In fact, the aforementioned voice-over is the voice-over of the opening scene in the latter film: these are the Manderley memories of the new Mrs de Winter. Similarly, her quote about the dead is from Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, on which Howard Hawks's 1946 eponymous film is based. *MP*'s credits reveal that the script was written by Nikolaidis and includes excerpts by Daphne du Maurier, Philip K. Dick, Chandler and Herman Raucher. The exact pastiche works are not credited, and the collaged screenplay makes the origin of the extracts unclear: in addition to *Rebecca* and *The Big Sleep*, Nikolaidis pastiches Raucher's *Summer of '42*, which was adapted into the eponymous film in 1971, and Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* of which *BR* is an adaptation. All four novels have been adapted into films. Consequently, the protagonist's memories are filmic memories: films that she has seen, which have been inscribed in her memory, and which turn out to be more resistant and more powerful than her own personal memories. It is the cultural

memory that survives and cannot be deleted by any force. These memories remain vague as she says that she perceives them like dreams.

The protagonist's recollections are cinema-going memories from before the disaster. Her memory can thus be considered what Jackie Stacey calls 'narrative memory'.¹⁵ According to Stacey 'narrative memories' concern stories of cinema-going which are temporally stored in memory.¹⁶ As part of these memories, the 'spectators construct themselves as heroines of their remembered narratives, which in turn deal with their own cinema heroines of that time. Memories of [...] stars are thus represented through the narrative structures which connect the self to the ideal.'¹⁷ I therefore argue that the female protagonist in *MP* identifies herself with the stars and actors of the films she watched before the disaster, since these memories have been temporally stored in her mind. However, due to the disaster her long-term memory, which includes the actual memories of her life, has been erased, leaving only the 'narrative memories'. With these films, Nikolaidis transfers the messages of the original films but simultaneously conveys further personal messages, and reproduces his obsessions.

The way Nikolaidis pastiches *Rebecca* is a characteristic example of how Nikolaidis uses pastiche. The filmmaker takes elements from the original works and appropriates them within his own films, thus creating a dialogue between historical periods, genres and cinemas. The voice-overs in *Rebecca* and *MP* are both narrated by an unnamed woman. Manderley is a place of horror for the new Mrs de Winter as the mansion was built for Rebecca, the former Mrs de Winter, who committed suicide, and the memories of whom haunt the mansion. When Rebecca was alive, Manderley was run according to her will and she was forming the space with her anti-patriarchal rules, acting independently, cheating on her husband, and undermining the social and sexual values of the time. As Modleski writes, 'Rebecca is the Ariadne in this film's labyrinth, but since she does not relinquish the thread to any Theseus, her space, Manderley, remains unconquered by man.'¹⁸ When she died, the house lost its balance and haunted the new Mrs de Winter. Thus Manderley becomes for her a version of Hell, just as Euridice's house was for Euridice that forced her to come out to the world in *MP*. In *Rebecca* the new Mrs de Winter had to lead a life constructed by the society, being restricted to her role as a wife. She also had to live among the memories of Rebecca. Mrs de Winter is confined in Manderley due to her marriage, in

¹⁵ In contrast to the 'iconic memories', which are a 'frozen moment' of 'pure image'. Jackie Stacey, 'Hollywood Memories', in *Screen* 35, no. 4 (1994), 318.

¹⁶ Ibid., 139.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Modleski, *Women Who Knew Too Much*, 53.

contrast to *MP* where the protagonist is found in her current situation due to an omnipresent and unseen fascist state. Her Manderley memories are liberating instead of restrictive as in the case of the new Mrs de Winter.

Because of the film's militarist elements and Nikolaidis's antiauthoritarian ideology, it is claimed that the disaster and the lack of memory are owed to the authorities who aim to have the absolute control over people and who use this control to exploit them by segregating them into hunters and preys in order to reach their goals.¹⁹ The protagonist's lack of recollections and of a clear past has turned her into a 'hardboiled' woman who initially seems emotionless. However, when she sees a film playing on the television set in an abandoned house, she looks content and peaceful, showing emotion for the first time, as if she recognises what she sees. The 'narrative memory' is her only connection to the past.

The rest of the pastiche films are used for specific purposes as well. For example, *The Big Sleep* is pastiche in order to show the forthcoming threat and death, which is originally conveyed in Chandler's novel. Hawks's film is a classical Hollywood film,²⁰ it is apolitical and does not focus on the corrupted and fallen world (the main focus of Chandler's novel), but its central point is the romantic relationship between detective Philip Marlow (Humphrey Bogart) and Vivian Rutledge (Lauren Bacall). By pastiche both the novel and the film, Nikolaidis brings the political comments on the fallen world of the novel and the romantic element of the film into *MP*, as both these elements are pivotal in Nikolaidis's film. Also, the protagonist is presented watching *The Man with the Golden Arm* (Otto Preminger, 1955). This film presents a sort of resistance to the predominant status quo and shows a 'marginalised' part of the society since it deals with drugs and imprisonment. The specific sequence presented in the film is when Frankie (Frank Sinatra) meets Molly (Kim Novak) in the bar she works. Therefore, indirectly encompassing in the film 'underground' spaces like bars, which are characteristic of film noir, further builds on the noir atmosphere – even though Preminger's film is not a film noir – and brings in the film noir milieu that *MP* lacks.²¹

¹⁹ Through a further examination of *BR* and *MP*, in the former film 'prosthetic memory', according to the company that produces the replicants, is added because if we give them a past, they create a 'cushion' for their emotions, which helps the control them better (*BR*). Therefore, in *BR* memory is added in order to usurp control, while in *MP* for the same reason memory is extracted.

²⁰ Some scholars have characterised it as a film noir (as for instance Park) but some others consider it a crime film (Naremore).

²¹ I argue that the choice of the specific extract has also to do with Nikolaidis's fascination both with Novak and with 'Molly' ('Vera'/'Laura'), since Novak is called Molly in the film, as heard in the extract. 'Molly' reminds the spectators of the quest for the ideal woman who is now long gone in this post-apocalyptic world.

In another abandoned house that the protagonist hides in, she watches *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941) on the television set. As she watches the film, she picks up the phone and dials a number. At the same time, the on-screen figure of Humphrey Bogart picks up the phone. The protagonist waits, staring at the screen, and then hangs up (Fig4.2.8). Since the protagonist of *MP* has no memories, she has no one to call. Yet, she seems to remember Bogart from his films, and in this scene she appears to intend to call him, but is then scared to say anything. The same instance occurs later on when the male protagonist makes a call from another house, and Robert Mitchum from *Farewell, My Lovely* (Dick Richards, 1975) appears to be picking the phone up on television. The simulation of the call to the film underlines the hyperreality in Nikolaidis's *MP*, as the spectators are presented with a pastiche of reality (within the film) and representation.



Fig4.2.8 The 'dialogue' between *MP*'s protagonist and Bogart

Apart from opening a dialogue with older films and passing his personal messages through them, Nikolaidis also uses the original films creatively in order to comment on film spectatorship itself, in turn offering metacinematic comments. *MP* becomes a film about film. Spectatorship in the film is connected with the raised questions about humanity, such as what will be the future of the human kind and what the future of cinema will be. The way that the pastiched films are used in *MP* differs from the way Nikolaidis deals with pastiche in the rest of his films, since this is his only film that features extracts from other films instead of recreating scenes from them, as will be examined next. These differences lie in the importance that Nikolaidis attributes to the pastiched films and to the question about the future of spectatorship. Some of the extracts used in *MP* and the way they are presented in the film, provide self-reflexive comments. The cinephile spectators become aware that the female protagonist watches films and through this realisation, they become aware of the process of watching *MP*.

For instance, as the protagonist watches *TMWTGA*, the actors' close-ups on the television screen are presented in a medium shot so that the television set remains visible, framing them (Fig4.2.9). This particular instance demonstrates that this extract, as well as with all the others films that the protagonists watch on television, cinema is presented as distanced: it is presented through television frames or through empty cinemas where *MP*'s spectators do not see the screen. In *MP* cinema cannot be recreated as in the rest of Nikolaidis's films. Cinema is not a lived experience, it is presented solely as memory, and the future of the cinema is dubious.

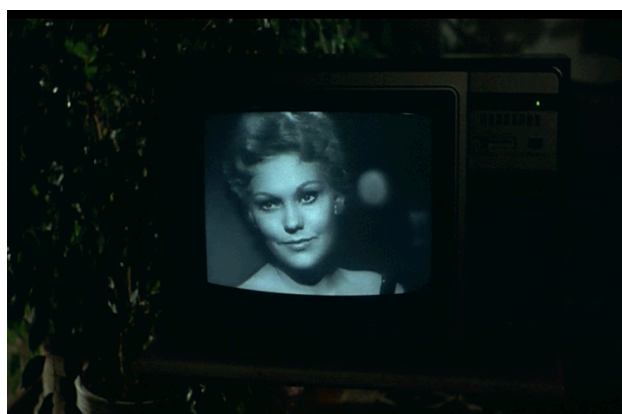


Fig4.2.9 Kim Novak on a television

During her wandering in the city, the protagonist finds temporary shelter in an abandoned cinema that plays *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946). Although the screen is not shown, *Gilda* is identified by the songs of the film. The protagonist is seen once again smiling and having a facial expression (Fig4.2.10). When Gilda sings to a club attendant 'Put the Blame on Mame', *MP*'s protagonist starts humming along, and her familiarity with the song reinforces the idea that she has filmic memories. In this scene, (which is not seen in *MP*) Gilda is heard singing while Johnny, her lover, is sleeping in a room at the club. He wakes up to the song, gets out of bed and from his dark room observes Gilda singing in a lit club room. This look draws a parallelism to cinema spectatorship, and to *MP*'s protagonist's looking from the dark cinema room at the screen, just like Johnny looks at Gilda. Moreover, the protagonist being alone in an empty cinema comments on the dissolution of film spectatorship.



Fig4.2.10 The protagonist watches *Gilda*

As the protagonist watches *Gilda*, she suddenly gets attacked by some people lurking in the room, and passes out. The spectators do not witness what happens next. The film then cuts to the cinema's projection room, where the film can still be heard playing as the film reel unfolds, falling on the floor and piling up. The camera focuses on this pile, and the protagonist emerges from the celluloid with her upper part of her body naked, while the rest of it is covered by the celluloid (Fig4.2.11). This is the only scene that the spectators see the protagonist's partly naked body. Unlike the rest of Nikolaidis's protagonists who have their bodies constantly exposed, the protagonist's entire naked body is never revealed in *MP*. In this scene, she is seen naked because she is presented as if she was just (re)born. The self-reflexive nature of Nikolaidis's cinema is highlighted in this scene, since the spectators witness the creator's product – the protagonist and, in extension, the film itself – emerging from primal matter, from the film reel and from film noir (*Gilda*). The protagonist literally mixes with a classic film noir and she literally emerges from it, stressing her connection with the classic femmes fatales.



Fig4.2.11 The protagonist emerges from the film noir

These films also constitute Nikolaidis's childhood memories since he was an avid cinema-goer from a young age. This fact renders *MP* a personal film, since the protagonist's narrative memories can be said to be Nikolaidis's narrative memories as well. Nikolaidis's personal investment in the film is explicitly evidenced when the protagonist enters an abandoned house and the room she finds herself in is full of posters of actors such as Bogart and Dean, as well as photographs of the ordinary people that used to own the house. She looks at the covered walls and the camera carefully browses through them, in the way that the protagonist does. Images of Nikolaidis himself can be seen among these photographs and posters, once again noting a thin line between his personal life and his cinematic oeuvre.

In all the above instances of the relation between *MP* and the other films, there is always fear lurking, as well as a hint of the forthcoming death of cinema. This death is related to the kind of films produced, how the films are distributed and who is watching them. For instance, the fact that the protagonist wants to speak with Bogart constitutes a dialogue with the dead: Bogart was already dead in 1987, and the protagonist is almost dead herself and she does not speak because of fear for this death. The same fear lurks when she gets attacked in the cinema, since the cinema becomes a trap. Additionally, when she watches *TMWTGA*, a toy car follows her and watches her, as the spectators are presented with the automated car running in the house under no supervision. This fact adds

to the general sense of surveillance under which the unseen state has the citizens in order to kill them. The fear of surveillance and of threat is also seen when the protagonist sleeps and she suddenly wakes up to the television turning on by someone she cannot see to a Fred Astaire film. This fear for the protagonists' future is the fear for the future of the cinema.

Throughout his work, Nikolaidis articulates a longing for a certain kind of Hollywood, for the film noirs of the 1940s and 50s, and this longing is especially apparent in his use of pastiche in *MP*. In doing so, Nikolaidis once again refutes claims that nostalgia in pastiche does not merely show a stylized image of the past with no actual connection to history and devoid of critical stance.²² In *MP*, Nikolaidis criticises the past and present that will lead to no future, both with regards to society and cinema, and creates multiple levels to the film, denying Jameson's claim for pastiche as depthless.²³

Furthermore, I argue that this fear can be linked to Nikolaidis's concerns about Greek cinema specifically, and for the fact that Greek filmmakers were discouraged from producing films because the GFC controlled film productions and did not supply filmmakers with adequate funding. In a 1987 interview, Nikolaidis states that 'the system' had persuaded the filmmakers that they are hopeless, and thus the filmmakers were afraid to go against the state.²⁴ The union of film distributors in Greece stressed the bleak future of cinema, as well as accused the GFC for insufficient film distribution and promotion strategies since, according to the union, it was the only institution responsible for cinema production in Greece.²⁵ The decline in ticket sales for Greek films in the 1980s also mainly had to do with the increasing VHS market. By the end of 1985 Greek film production had virtually disappeared due to VHS circulation, as fewer than 20 'artistic Greek films' were

²² See Jameson, 'Late Capitalism', 65.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ This fact was also brought to Nikolaidis's attention during the anti-festival in Thessaloniki that took place the same year that *MP* came out, of which Nikolaidis was a member. The fact that the filmmakers complied with the state's commands and, therefore, perpetuated a biased pattern of Greek film production, instead of trying to redefine the issues of Greek cinema and of fighting for a better future, generated concerns to Nikolaidis about the future of Greek cinema, which concerns are articulated through the threat and hopelessness that prevails in *MP*. (Nikolaidis, interview with Triantafyllidis. *Billboard*).

²⁵ They provide ticket sale information according to which in 1972 18,000,000 tickets had been sold when in 1986 only 7,500,000 were sold, noting that the distribution of foreign films in Greece is dramatically rising: 77% of the films screened in Greek cinemas in 1985/86 were from the US and only 8% from Greece [Yannis Soldatos, *History of Greek Cinema*, Vol 6, (Athens: Egokeros, 1992), 140-142].

now produced per year.²⁶ Ticket sales for Greek films continued to decline until the end of the 1980s when private television channels appeared, taking more people out of the cinemas²⁷ and confirming the fear for the declining course of the spectacle Nikolaidis expressed through *MP*.

4.2.3 Female Representation

MP resembles the rest of Nikolaidis's cinematic oeuvre in terms of female representation, but differs in one significant part: this is his only film in which there is a noted lack of sexist elements and the female protagonist appears as an empowered figure without being fetishized. Furthermore, she is not abject and she does not fight the system as Nikolaidis's female protagonists generally do. The fact that the morning patrol squad has also been used, since they themselves suffer from memory loss and are also dying, women and men appear as equal.

The protagonist is the main narrative presence. She is featured alone for 45 minutes in the film and the male protagonist only enters into the narrative in the middle of the film. She is independent, walks alone in a destroyed environment and kills people to defend herself. Due to the influence of film noir on Nikolaidis's work, the protagonist is linked to the femme fatale of classic noir and she is presented as their appropriation within a post-apocalyptic world. She is indeed 'fatal' as she uses a shotgun to blackmail the guard and to kill people. This shotgun, in conjunction with the overall iconography of violence in the film, code her phallic, following the prototype of the film noirs' phallic femmes fatales.²⁸

As in film noirs, the female protagonist is represented as a woman who goes against the patriarchal prototype. She does not depend on men and represents a danger towards them, stealing from them, manipulating them and killing them.²⁹ Although, the female and male protagonists begin to depend on each other as they travel towards the sea,³⁰ the female protagonist had this plan even before she met the guard. She would try to reach the sea whether she had met him or not. As she tells the guard, in case he is killed during their journey, she will be taken out of the city by the person who will kill him. The guard becomes a tool for her navigation and anyone could have been in his place. He only

²⁶ Karalis, *History*, 198.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁸ See Chris Straayer, 'Femme Fatale or Lesbian Femme: bound in Sexual Differance', in *Women in Film Noir*, 155; and Place, 'Women in Film Noir', 54. More on the phallic femme fatales on the next chapter.

²⁹ Kaplan, Introduction to 1978 Edition, in *Women in Film Noir*, 16.

³⁰ The sea is associated once again here with freedom.

becomes her Orpheus gradually, as she did not expect to meet him and to be helped by anyone.

The female protagonist is not sexualised by either the guard or the spectator. She is dressed in rugs, not leaving any part of her revealed. Her hands are the only parts that are not covered, but one of them is covered in a makeshift bandage to protect some wounds. These scars are her history and her experience and are inscribed on her body, however she has no memories of what caused them and instead of reminding her of the past, through their deterioration throughout the film, they remind her of her forthcoming death. The scars gradually make her more vulnerable. In the very beginning of the film, the protagonist takes care of her wounded hand herself. At this point her wounds do not prevent her from continuing her course, or from killing people. The spectators are aware that she is wounded, but the scars seem like a sign of bravery and boldness. However, after she meets the guard they develop a pattern of co-dependency. The guard needs her because she keeps his pills, and she starts trusting him and lets him guide them without pointing the shotgun to him anymore. The key moment in the film when the female protagonist seems to have become more vulnerable and in need of the guard is when the guard asks her if he can see her wound, and she lets him treat it.

Although the protagonist is in pain and goes through such appalling circumstances she has no facial expression. This only changes in the final scene, when she cries for the death of the guard and kisses him for the first and last time, as well as when she is watching films. Doane writes that

the face, more than any other bodily part, is for the other. It is the most articulate sector of the body, but it is mute without the other's reading. In the cinema, this is evidenced in the pause, the meaningful moment of the close-up, for the spectator, the scale of the close-up corresponding less than other shots to the dictates of perspectival realism.³¹

The protagonist's close-ups though are not offered up for a reading. This is because of her almost Brechtian distancing. There is no expression on her face even when she has a gun in her face, when she first meets the guard and he takes precautions (Fig4.2.12). It seems as if she has forgotten how to be human. Nikolaidis uses eerie but also romantic, melancholic and nostalgic music which ascribes to the film the emotions that the protagonists initially miss, and creates a sentimental atmosphere, and helps the protagonists build emotions gradually.³²

³¹ Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, 47.

³² The music is composed by Yorgos Hatzinasios, who had also composed the music for *SB*.



Fig4.2.12 The protagonist has no facial expression

The love story between the two protagonists unfolds progressively and innocently, as they never express their feelings to each other. Their relationship begins to build as soon as they start their journey towards the sea. They become closer emotionally as they learn to cooperate and trust each other and, thus become collective heroes instead of the ego-driven ones that they were so far. Their progressive connection is not only presented through their coordinated and collaborative effort to escape the city but also becomes evident when the female protagonist hands the two bottles of pills that she had confiscated from the guard back to him and he hands one back to her, as she is already showing the same symptoms.

Their relationship is presented in a pure way because they do not remember the feelings they used to have before the disaster. Consequently, it is as if they fall in love for the first time. These feelings indeed generate memories from the pre-disaster era, since the guard, recognising the intimacy between him and the protagonist, asks her if they have met before and her name before he dies, as he first did when he met her. The resistant filmic memory is also a resource that can provide them with recollections of how to feel and express themselves.

4.2.4 Concluding Remarks

In *MP*, ‘narrative memory’ has replaced personal memory, highlighting the importance of cinema in the film. Nikolaidis’s ‘pasticcio of pastiches’ exemplifies how the filmmaker’s nostalgia for ‘dead’ cinema can be used to critique the present, which may result in a disastrous future. The future of cinema, spectatorship and humanity is in danger. The female protagonist lives through classical cinema, but she feels death approaching. *MP* is also a personal film which tries to examine the origins of Nikolaidis’s obsessions. Although the film does not seem to explicitly allude to politics, the state is responsible for the disaster since it needs to control the citizens. This fact is confirmed throughout the trilogy.

4.3 *The Zero Years*

Film Synopsis

A woman (Vicky Harris) who works as a prostitute in service to the state joins three other women in a public brothel. The four of them are mistreated by the state system since they have been forcibly sterilised, are asked to perform sadomasochistic sexual acts with clients of the brothel and host a show for them. The newcomer was used for experiments before being sterilised, and had given birth to a monstrous baby, which the state kept for further experiments. The appalling conditions in which they live, in conjunction with the medicine they are forced to take, cause them to hallucinate and become fixated by personal obsessions: Maro (Archontisa Mavrakaki) constantly thinks that she is pregnant, Christina (Eftichia Yakoumi) thinks she sees children coming out of the sewer outside the house to attack her, and the third, unnamed, woman (Tzeni Kisteli) is suicidal. Although the newcomer does not initially identify with the issues that the other women face, she gradually begins to share the women's preoccupations. When a client goes missing, the police start investigating his disappearance. After the women find out that Maro is hiding him and keeping him alive as a captive in order for him to father her child, they cover for her, by lying to the state representatives. When a document arrives terminating the newcomer's service, she leaves the brothel in order to find old friends and start a new life. However, she soon returns, disappointed at not having found anyone. She re-joins the rest of the women and they keep living in the brothel, withdrawing from the outside world, which is proven to be more threatening and hostile than the atrocious brothel environment.

4.3.1 Style, Aesthetics and Decay

Similarly to *Morning Patrol*, *TZY* can be read as a futuristic film, not strictly in terms of style or generic conventions, but in terms of how the film represents a future nightmare rather than a current situation. The film predicts what will occur if societies do not revolt against the repressive state and pursue radical changes that will eventually alter the state's tactics. Nikolaidis aimed to project what he viewed as the citizen's current sedated status in an effort to awaken them.¹ The circumstances that the film's female protagonists are living in become an allegory for the filmmaker's perception of what the situation in Greece – or any society oppressed by fascism – was in 2005. The title of the film signifies the zero point from which people start realising that change is pivotal:

¹ Nikolaidis, interview with Economou.

The zero years start counting from when you can handle the date and its significance. What the contemporary unsuspected person comprehends and experiences as present is only a projection of the past. The present constantly surpasses the person and in this way, the clues they have for it do not help in the delineation and the concluding for some future. I'm talking about today, about now.²

Nikolaidis thus attempts to crystalize the image of the threat, as he perceives it. In line with the rest of the trilogy, he produces a film-warning for contemporary audiences, in order to help them comprehend the actual socio-political situation the societies are in and to be stimulated by this.

Apart from the narrative, this threat is also conveyed through the formal aspects of the film. Due to a lack of funding and the consequent transition from celluloid to digital media, *TZY* differs aesthetically from the rest of Nikolaidis's films. The influence of film noir is no longer visible, mostly due to the use of bright artificial light, and only a vague association with the femme fatale reminds the viewer of the film noir genre. There is also an element of 'awkwardness' in performance, which can be connected to theatre acting, and which mostly has to do with the role and the condition of the specific prostitutes. Performance does not appear as natural, but the process of acting is made evident in the film. This awkwardness in performance, in conjunction with the bright photography, do not immediately reference Nikolaidis's prior filmic work in terms of aesthetics, but signifies his different approach to filmmaking with digital technology.

The film does not entirely convey the dark atmosphere to the same extent that Nikolaidis's other films do. Instead, Nikolaidis attempts to imitate this bleak atmosphere through alternative means. For instance, although digital editing did not lessen the brightness of the photography to a great extent, it helped him enhance and build on the eerie atmosphere with the use of superimposition, which is used repeatedly throughout the film. Superimposition helps Nikolaidis hide imperfections associated with bad quality video while also adding a dreamlike sense by presenting the women as ethereal beings, and also suggests readings of some scenes. For example, superimposition is used during the opening credits where the unnamed woman is seen performing a show where she has to masturbate for people behind wires, while her whole body is covered up by a wide fabric. As she performs, images of her and of her voyeur clients are superimposed,

²Nikos Nikolaidis, 'The Zero Years', *5 Books, 6 Films and...Nikos Nikolaidis*, Viewed 18 July 2014, <http://www.nikolaidis.eexi.gr/zeroyears/simeiomata.htm>.

suggesting the ‘in-yer-face’, provocative, raw and aggressive narrative that is about to follow³ (Fig4.3.1).



Fig4.3.1 Superimposition of an image of the unnamed woman and of the people behind the wires

MP's dystopia is here set indoors. The house that the women work and live in is old, filthy and dilapidated. The walls are rotten, the windows are sealed with boards (a similar image to the windows concealed with newspapers in *EBA*), the clothes that the women wear are worn out and torn (recalling *MP*'s protagonist's rugs), and overall the house emanates a sense of decay which is stressed by the bright artificial light used for shooting. Props that recur throughout Nikolaidis's films, such as canned food, masks, newspapers, eggs, are also found in *TZY*. These props fill the frames, and allows Nikolaidis's authorial signature to be displayed in an otherwise aesthetically different film to the rest of his oeuvre.

In particular, the use of dolls here recalls Nikolaidis's other films. However, in contrast to the rest of his films the dolls in *TZY* are explicitly linked to children, and the lack of them. For instance, Christina believes that she is attacked by children whose aura she senses throughout the house. In one of these attacks, the children disarrange the room and set one of the many automatic dolls found in the room in motion, as if possessed, adding horror elements to the film. Additionally, when Maro buys clothes and diapers for the child she is obsessed with that she is ‘expecting’ she also buys a discounted doll in order to practice how to put diapers on it. This specific doll differs from the rest of the dolls in the house: it is stuffed and is missing a leg – hence the reduced price (Fig4.3.2).

³ I argue that *TZY* due to its explicit narrative, to elements of theatricality in the performance and the set which is limited to a house, could be claimed to resemble the notion of ‘in-yer-face’ theatre, which, according to Aleks Sierz, ‘takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message,’ shocks and provokes them. (Fig4.3.1) can be said to suggest this ‘in-yer-face’ narrative to follow. Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 4.

For the spectator, this doll conjures up an image of an infant that could have been born to such an abused mother, but also an image of the deformed child to which the newcomer gave birth before being sterilised.



Fig4.3.2 The automatic doll (left) and the stuffed doll (right)

The film denies the viewer a holistic perspective of the film's locales by not using the conventional establishing shot. In *TZY*, the spectators are only given fragmented and partial views of the house. The denial of any longer shot of the house is in order to create the claustrophobic atmosphere that is characteristic of Nikolaidis's films. This sense of claustrophobia is connected with the threat and the nightmare that the filmmaker sees coming. Therefore, as in *Euridice BA 2037*, mise-en-scène here also suggests a kind of Hell as well as highlights and comments on the role of fascism.

4.3.2 'You'll Forget God down here...': Hell and Fascism

TZY is a political film that is at once Greek-specific and yet simultaneously open to universal readings. As with the whole of Nikolaidis's cinematic work, *TZY* does not display 'Greek reality', but expresses Nikolaidis's personal obsessions, beliefs and viewpoints. Since public brothels do not exist in Greece they are invented by Nikolaidis and used as an allegory to imply that the state has extreme control over these women and, consequently, over its citizens. The state has turned the society into a brothel, undertaking the role of the procurer itself. Furthermore, the fascist state has forced women to work as prostitutes, since prostitution is a form of civil service that the protagonists have to undergo, and the state has sterilised them without their consent, and controlled their clientele and living conditions. Influenced by the passivity of the contemporary people, Nikolaidis places *TZY* protagonists in a victimised position, rendering them bearers of his message for change.

Women's victimhood in the film is linked to the filmmaker's perception of contemporary Greek citizens as victims. The film's protagonists are also found in the same victimised condition as Euridice. Thus, in their turn, it can be claimed that they symbolise Greece (or any fascist society), which is victimised by the authorities. The state's deprivation of the women's natural ability to give birth is the ultimate expression of fascism, and denotes the eventual decadence of society. In a society of decadence, a society characterised by moral and cultural decline, Nikolaidis believes that there are no roles for women and for people in general any more, since the state has great power over them, and it is imperative for these roles to be redistributed.⁴

The imprisonment of these four women in the particular Hell-like house also creates associations with Jean-Paul Sartre's 1944 play *No Exit*. In *No Exit*, three people die and when they end up in Hell, they find themselves in a room from which they are unable to exit. Through a discussion of the reasons why they are there, they conclude that 'Hell is other people' since they cannot escape each other.⁵ *TZY* and *No Exit* are further linked by their respective responses to fascism, since *No Exit* was written while Paris was under German occupation, and constitutes a comment against the Nazis. The women in Nikolaidis's film are also randomly found in a house, cannot escape each other and have to learn to live with the other women's obsessions. Hence 'Hell is other people'. At the same time, this captivity differs from Sartre's existential captivity as it explicitly refers to the power of fascism to physically hold citizens captive.

Fascism is further addressed in the film through the issue of surveillance, a theme found in the majority of Nikolaidis's films, and its links to the power of the authorities. In *TZY*, the state has installed cameras in the brothel in order to keep the women under full control. However, the cameras do not work anymore; the rodents have bitten the cables off and have not been repaired since. This indicates that for the state these women are not worthy of surveillance. Yet the effect of surveillance remains even though the apparatuses cease functioning, as it will be discussed next. To reinforce the fact that the state perceives them as insignificant, two of the protagonists have no names. The doubt for their significance and their nature is also expressed through the use of superimposition every time they enter a room (Fig4.3.3). They appear gradually, acquiring a ghost-like nature that doubts their nature, complicating the act of looking.

⁴ Nikolaidis, interview with Economou.

⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit*, (New York: Vintage International Edition, 1989), 45.



Fig4.3.3 Superimpositions portray women as ghosts

This kind of surveillance that the fascist state imposes on the women is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's metaphor of the 'Panopticon'. The Panopticon is a circular institutional building and at its centre there is an inspection area. The idea of the Panopticon was suggested by philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century, who came up with this construction in order for it to accommodate institutions like schools, hospitals and prisons, and ameliorate the effectiveness of the observation of the institutionalised inmates.⁶ This construction would allow the observer, who would be in a tower in the middle of the building, to observe all inmates in the rooms, but without them being able to see the guard. For Foucault, this fact is the major effect of the Panopticon: 'to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.'⁷ Thus, the inmates will think that they are constantly being observed and they will refrain from misbehaving or reacting. Foucault used the idea of the Panopticon as a metaphor to connect this notion of constant surveillance with the obsession of modern societies to discipline, patronise and closely observe its citizens. As he writes,

the [Panopticon] inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. To achieve this, it is at once too much and too little that the prisoner should be constantly observed by an inspector: too little, for what matters is that he knows himself to be observed; too much, because he has no need in fact of being so.⁸

Similarly with the inmates in Bentham's prisons, the protagonists in *TZY* are thought to be under the state's constant surveillance. Although the women are aware of the fact that

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 200.

⁷ Ibid., 201.

⁸ Ibid.

the cameras throughout the house are not working, the ‘automatic functioning of power’⁹ is still in force as they are used to being watched. They are indeed ‘caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers’¹⁰ since they have become obsessed with the idea that the state is still watching them. Christina is always by the window using binoculars to track the children and the state representatives who are supposed to be spying on them (Fig4.3.4). However, the spectators never see the view through the binoculars, or through the broken cameras, restricting the view of the house to the camera angles that the filmmaker chooses. The effectiveness of the applied idea of the ‘Panopticon’ is stressed in the unnamed woman’s speech to Christina with regards to her watching out for state representatives:

The more attention you pay to them, the more they enter into your life, and into ours. And in the end you spend all your life dealing with them. They’ve brought you to the point where you are watching them, not them watching you. This is their trap. I don’t think they care about us. [...] They’ve brought us where they wanted to. They plucked our wombs out and implanted fear. And they are not concerned with us anymore. A loss of time you see. [...] Empty cocoons filled with filthy air. That’s what we are. Dirty water, beating, fucking, injections... Nausea.



Fig4.3.4 Christina looking for state representatives

4.3.3 Female Representation

Female representation in *TZY* is complicated and controversial. On the one hand Nikolaidis places women in a victimised position in order to criticise fascism, attack patriarchy and ridicule the state through the women’s abject bodies and their acts towards men, such as captivating them. On the other hand, questions rise, such as why do they need to go through this victimisation in order for Nikolaidis to accomplish these aims, and why are they fetishized? The brutal sadomasochistic images projected in the film arguably avert

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

visual pleasure by connecting sadomasochism to Greek's socio-political situation (as perceived by Nikolaidis).

The unnamed woman's speech describes precisely what these women go through. The phrase 'they plucked our wombs out and implanted fear' could be considered the motto as well as the moral of the film. The fact that the protagonists can never be impregnated intensifies their desire to become mothers since they deserve to have the option; and as stated by Christina in the film: 'in our minds, we are playing something that we will never become. I wanted a child, even a disabled one.' This strong desire haunts them and they have subsequently turned what they are unable to have into an enemy. Their belief that their obsessions occur in reality is stronger than a mere hallucination and the filmmaker deliberately blurs the line between reality and illusion. For instance, Christina is not only able to describe the children she sees, but also experiences attacks by them, which are also made visible to the spectators. The children are also presented to the audience coming out of the sewer. However, they are portrayed in black and white, distinguishing them from the rest of the coloured imagery, and their presence is accompanied by an eerie dreamlike electronic music.¹¹

The unnamed woman's speech also touches upon other themes that are dealt with in the film. The 'empty cocoons' refer to the women's dysfunctional ovaries due to their sterilisation. This sterilisation is not only literal but also metaphorical, alluding to the sterilisation that the fascist state performs on people through its authoritarian power. While the right for women to have control over their own bodies has been a key aim of the feminist movement,¹² wombs have been considered threatening for the patriarchal society for being abject.¹³ For this reason, Margaret Miles claims that in Christian art, Hell has been often compared to the womb: "'a lurid and rotting uterus' where sinners were perpetually tortured for their crimes."¹⁴ Through this understanding of how patriarchy associates Hell with the uterus, the wrecked house in which the women live, which is reminiscent of Hell, becomes a metaphor for their dysfunctional wombs.

As Sue Best writes, some male writers¹⁵ perceive the house as a woman: 'a warm, cosy, sheltering, uterine home.'¹⁶ She adds that Gaston Bachelard describes the 'maternal features of the house', connecting it to the 'the realm of perfect maternal care,' protecting

¹¹ Produced by a theremin instrument.

¹² For instance see Camilla Griggers, *Becoming – Woman*, (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 79.

¹³ For instance see Creed, *Monstrous Women*, 43.

¹⁴ Margaret Miles qtd. in Creed, *Ibid*.

¹⁵ Most notably Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*, as Best writes. Sue Best, 'Sexualizing Space', in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, (London: Routledge, 1995), 182.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

‘the dweller’ but also nourishing him.¹⁷ The feminisation of domestic space is frequently linked to the characterisation of women as docile and dominated.¹⁸ This is the state’s intention in *TZY* by placing the women in the brothel in order to control them. The extent to which the state dominates the women by intervening on their bodies can characterise these women’s bodies as what Foucault calls ‘docile bodies’, which bodies ‘may be subjected, used, transformed and improved,’¹⁹ providing an increasing control over the body and the citizens. The house that the women live in is not reminiscent of the maternal nurturing space that Best claims that many male authors write about, but is still a ‘uterine home’;²⁰ the specific women’s dysfunctional ‘uterine home’. The women internalise this defective prison as a home. The house is ‘Othered’ by patriarchy, which also ‘Others’ these women by appropriating their bodies. By not being able to understand the functions of the female body, male figures of authority and power within a patriarchy feel threatened by it, and consider pregnancy and labour quintessentially grotesque functions. Since ‘[i]t is woman’s fertilizable body which aligns her with nature and threatens the integrity of the patriarchal symbolic order,’²¹ sterilisation serves the state’s endeavour to perpetuate patriarchal norms and silence the women.

In addition, women have been considered abject and monstrous by nature.²² The womb has been considered quintessentially abject ‘for it contains a new life form which will pass from inside to outside bringing with it traces of its contamination-blood, afterbirth, faeces.’²³ The women are forced to adhere to patriarchal norms and rules, which aim to render the women less threatening and less monstrous. The fact that the women are imprisoned in the house and neglected furthers the impression that the state aims to hide the disgrace. However, controlling these women by suspending their wombs’ function further increases their abjection.

Considering the fact that ‘images of blood, vomit, pus, shit, etc., are central to our culturally/socially constructed notions of the horrific,’²⁴ the women in *TZY* have become even more abject than they would be if they were able to give birth. Specifically, instances of abjection can be seen in the following examples: the newcomer, before being sterilised, was used by the state as a surrogate mother for an experiment in which she gave birth to a child-monster, a child more threatening than her. Maro squirts blood on the women that

¹⁷ Ibid., 183.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.

²⁰ Best, ‘Sexualizing Space’, 182.

²¹ Creed, *Monstrous Women*, 50.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 49.

²⁴ Ibid., 13.

help her 'give birth' (Fig4.3.5). Christina wets herself and her urine splashes the other women. The unnamed woman simulates a sexual fantasy by rubbing a razor blade in a glass, and is then found covered in blood when she tries to commit suicide and the blood running down her thigh creates connotations with menstrual blood, thus adding to the idea of abjection. Moreover, all women vomit constantly and their nausea caused by their state-ordered injections (Fig4.3.6). This imagery of the women producing and being covered in bodily fluids renders them abject and they in turn become threats to the patriarchal society, which does not achieve to 'normalise' them and render them less threatening to its ideals. Their unclean bodies, with uncleanliness as a basic characteristic of the abject body, are reflected in their unclean house. In both cases, the uncleanliness is accommodated by the state.

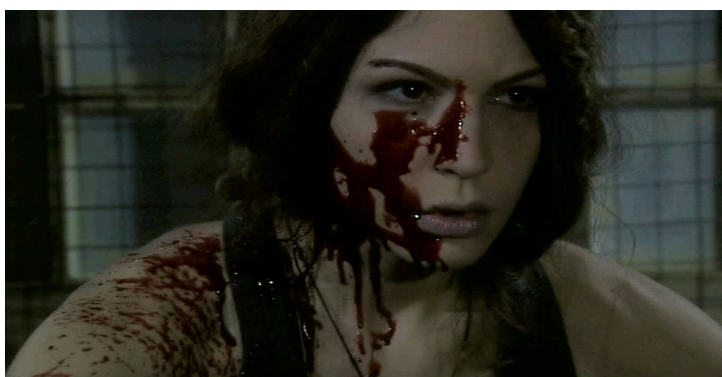


Fig4.3.5 The newcomer covered in blood



Fig4.3.6 The women vomiting

Another example that demonstrates the women's abjection in *TZY* is their act of smearing egg on their chests as a form of punishment. The women have set rules concerning their behaviour towards each other and the house that mainly have to do with mutual respect. In case one of the women breaks the house rules, one of the others takes

the one responsible for the incident to the kitchen, breaks a raw egg, and smears it over the offending woman's chest. Although this is a form of punishment, in both of the cases where this happens in the film, the women who gets smeared as well as the woman who smears the egg enjoy the process. With this very act, Nikolaidis pastiches J. Lee Thompson's *Cape Fear* (1962), where Max (Robert Mitchum) smears an egg over Peggy's chest (Polly Bergen), as a warning for her acts (Fig4.3.7). The recreation of this scene from *CF*, but transformed to incorporate two women rather than a man and a woman, problematises a heterosexual reading position, going once again against the patriarchal roles and the predominance of heterosexuality, since instances of lesbianism are traced in the contact between the women.



Fig4.3.7 Smearing the egg in *TZY* (above) and in *CF* (below)

In *TZY*, the broken egg becomes a symbol of the women's broken and dysfunctional ovaries, and works as a reminder of their sterilisation. The filmmaker further uses the egg to symbolise fear and violence by referencing its use in *CF*. However, in contrast to *CF*, where the man is imposed on the woman, in *TZY* the women are equal, with equal authority, and thus the breaking of the egg becomes an excuse for them to get closer

together. The egg can also be said to be a symbol from Bataille.²⁵ As Roland Barthes writes, there is a connection between the eye and the egg concerning the liquids of the former and the tears of the latter, and, since eye and egg are associated with the genitals, they are also connected with urine.²⁶ Along these lines, the egg in *TZY* can be connected to all the afore-mentioned elements and can add to the abjection of the women, since perversion and violence are widespread in the film.

The role of gaze in *TZY* is also of great significance. Building on the idea of the egg-eye connection, the breaking of the egg signifies an act of violence against the eye, the eye of the spectator. The connoted violence is not only visible in the scene with the smearing of the egg, but it is portrayed in the scenes when the women practice sadomasochism on their clients. By having sadomasochistic sexual intercourse with their clients, the women abide by their clients' wishes, and consequently, to the state's commands. As Shaviro writes,

the masochism of the cinematic body is rather a passion of disequilibrium and disappropriation. It is dangerous to, and cannot remain the property of, a fixed self. The agitated body multiplies its affects and excitations to the point of sensory overload pushing itself to the limits: it desires its own extremity, its own transmutation.²⁷

The extreme acts that the male clients ask of the women is paramount to the narrative. Their need to be beaten up and their desire not to remain 'property of a fixed self'²⁸ is the essence of the masochistic scenes. This is because, in this way, it is stated that the sexual desires of the clients, not only imply the perversion and decay of people and the state, but also demonstrate the numbness of contemporary people who in order to feel something must resort to such extreme actions. Consequently, the source of the sadomasochistic desires of the male customers is their passivity towards the state's commands and their indisposition to doubt the authorities. By their passivity, they have been transformed into docile humans that need this extremity in order to feel alive. The public nature of the brothel implies that this is rather a common phenomenon, and it does not only allude to a specific part of citizens who might have a fetish, but declares that all citizens are found in the same situation.

Sadomasochism in *TZY* appears to have little connection with visual pleasure, but connotes the filmmaker's antifascist beliefs. In one scene where the unnamed woman has

²⁵ George Bataille in *The Story of the Eye* (1928) provides a comparison between the eye and the egg.

²⁶ Thus, 'the world becomes blurred; properties are no longer separate; spilling, sobbing, urinating, ejaculating form a wavy meaning'. Roland Barthes, *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1979), 245.

²⁷ Stephen Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 60.

²⁸ Ibid.

sadomasochistic sexual intercourse with a client, she beats him hard and he passes out, at which point he is captured by Maro. The scene opens abruptly and the spectators immediately witness the unnamed woman beating up a client, who is in a suit, is wearing a black leather mask and is chained up in the chair. As she beats him, his blood sprays on a mirror behind him (Fig4.3.8), stressing a connection between this film and the horror genre. At this point, the eerie music that accompanies the appearance of the children, as discussed earlier, starts again while she continues her monologue: ‘I’m going to put you in my infected fluids, and all that will be left will be your black crust and the ashes of your bones. [...] Empty cocoons is all you create, and you dress them in little white coats and little black coats. You won’t make it out of here alive! Come on, suck on this now [referring to her breast] and you will become a cocoon made of ash again.’



Fig4.3.8 The client (left) and his blood on a mirror (right)

This scene provides information about the relationships between the women and the men and with the state, as well as about the role of sadomasochism in the film. The scene takes place in a dark room, which is separated from the rest of the house with wires, from which gas masks are hanging. Gaylyn Studlar claims that ‘the examination of the masochistic aesthetic and film explores the wider theoretical implications of masochism to cinematic pleasure’, and she examines these implications with reference to the female defined as ‘lack’ and the male gaze defined by control.²⁹ Studlar comments on the masochist film aesthetics of Von Sternberg’s films, writing that there is ‘sublime visual beauty and sensuality’ and ‘dreamlike chiaroscuro’ that frame the masochist narrative.³⁰ In contrast to this description, the aesthetics of *TZY* are mostly associated with disaster, decay and militarism. Sadomasochism is not linked with visual pleasure in the film, but it declares the extremity of the state. The mise-en-scène of wires, masks and gags alludes to

²⁹ Gaylyn Studlar, ‘Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of Cinema’, in *Film Theory and Criticism*, edited by Leo Braudy, Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 779.

³⁰ Ibid., 778.

sadomasochistic pornography; however, the narrative as a whole and the unnamed woman's speech in particular undermine these associations with pornography and highlight their connections to the political and authoritative undertone of the film. There is no sensuality, no pleasure – which can also be connected to the almost theatrical, awkward performances – and no penetration is visible either. It can be thus claimed that the film perverts the norms of visual pleasure.

Studlar claims that the majority of the women in sadomasochist films are presented in the position of Mulvey's 'to-be-looked-at-ness' and they become objects of the male gaze.³¹ In the case of *TZY*, the representation of the women is more complicated. Although the unnamed woman wears a fetishized costume, her abjection and her monologue take the focus away from this imagery, and it can be claimed that they deny sexual pleasure. The dark imagery in the specific scenes along with the use of violence against the male client does not build a *mise-en-scène* of voyeuristic sadomasochism but instead creates a *mise-en-scène* connoting horror films. The sexual intercourse is not portrayed as a pleasure inducing action, but as a threat towards the male client who is pacified and unable to defend himself. In contrast to Nikolaidis's common camera angles that fetishize the female body, in this specific film the female body is not fetishized during the intercourse. The female characters are seldom presented as fragmented due to the lack of long shots and during the sexual intercourse their bodies are hardly visible. The performance that they give for their voyeur clients confirms this claim, since they wear a wide cloth that hides every part of their body and conceals the act of masturbation. However, they are fetishised, since in the rest of the film their outfit exposes their body parts.

In response to the Freudian 'lack', Studler writes that 'women in masochism are no longer defined as lack nor as phallic because they assume symbolic functions by possessing the breast and the womb while men are deprived of any symbolic function.'³² The women in *TZY* do not have the kind of symbolic nature that Studler writes about since they have dysfunctional wombs, and the unnamed woman stresses this fact in her speech: the empty cocoons refer to their empty wombs. However, the mother-child connection that Studlar claims to be prominent in sadomasochism is evident in the previous scene where the unnamed woman asks the client to suckle on her breasts so that he will become again a 'cocoon made of ashes', an infant with no future. Thus a connection is drawn between the sadomasochist clients and the women who project their fears and obsessions on them.

³¹ Ibid., 779.

³² Ibid., 780.

The unnamed woman's power over the client during sexual intercourse and his subsequent loss of consciousness that leads to his metaphorical castration (since Maro captures him, takes advantage of him and dresses him in her clothes, as will be discussed later) can be claimed to refer to the 'vagina dentata'.³³ Similar to Euridice who castrates Orpheus, these women 'castrate' the client. The unnamed woman's monologue places the client – and any man – in the position of an infant and represents a cannibalistic 'mother' that 'threatens symbolically to engulf the infant, thus posing a threat of psychic obliteration.'³⁴ Therefore, the woman is rendered monstrous for threatening the male during sexual intercourse, in turn stressing the connection with the horror genre.

Studlar further writes that while the male in Hollywood narrative cinema objectifies the women with his gaze, in the masochist aesthetic the female possess 'a controlling gaze that turns the male into an object of 'to-be-looked-at-ness'.³⁵ In *TZY*, the women have a controlling gaze, or rather a gaze that seeks revenge instead of aiming to objectify men. Being accustomed to the idea of the 'Panopticon', the women have learned to be, or to think that they are, constantly watched. Their contact with the clients, as well as with the state representatives, is their only chance to return the gaze and show them their aggressiveness by beating them hard. The male gaze in these scenes is concealed: the mask partially covers the clients' eyes and does not allow them to have a gaze or any element of control. The mask also blurs individual male clients into a homogenous mass (Fig4.3.9). They have no individual identity, no name, no face. Men are all the same for the women. The power that the women have over them expresses their thirst for revenge for the situation that the state has put them in. However, the reverse of the active-male/passive-female dyad which is portrayed here, and the women's agency, is mitigated by the power of the state apparatus, as these women are asked by the state to act in this way. Thus it can be claimed that the state has agency through these women, with the women as extensions of the state rather than as agents in their own right.

³³ Creed, *Monstrous Women*, 105.

³⁴ Ibid., 109.

³⁵ Studlar, 'Masochism', 782.



Fig4.3.9 Two different clients appearing as similar

Based on all the previously examined elements, female representation in *TZY* emerges as complicated and controversial. While Nikolaidis seems to be aiming to avert scopophilia, other elements contradict this aim and annul the women's aims to resist the system. The fact that the women are represented as possessing a 'vagina dentata' further complicates their representation since it can be perceived both as an attack towards patriarchy but also as another male fantasy. An element that confuses their reading is the role of the men in the film since they are equated with the fascist state and although they indulge in their authority, they are attacked and criticised by Nikolaidis, since they appear homogeneous and one of the clients appears in a female costume.

The clients are not the only male characters in the film. Two state representatives also visit the brothel in order to interrogate the women regarding the client's disappearance. Both representatives are older men who wear dark clothing and sunglasses, hiding their gaze (Fig4.3.10). Their black leather jackets also create a connection with the black leather masks that the clients wear. Whereas in the two previous films of the trilogy the state was either unseen or its representatives appeared in a more formal outfit or in a dress code, such as suits (in *EBA*) or long coats (as will be seen in *SB*), the two men here are presented in an outfit that would rather suit these women's clients. Therefore, the earlier claim that in this film the state has become the citizen's pimp is confirmed since the leather jackets and the sunglasses better resemble pimps than state representatives. Even one female state

representative (Michele Valley) that visits the brothel to collect the money that the clients pay the women is dressed up similarly to a man: she is in black suit, khaki shirt and black tie, an outfit strongly connected to militarism (Fig4.3.11). Moreover, all the state representatives, male and female, always connect their visit to the brothel with ‘special treatment’ from the women.



Fig4.3.10 The male state representatives appear as pimps



Fig4.3.11 The female state representative dressed in military colours

This female character is presented as part of state patriarchy. She is portrayed as a cliché lesbian icon, as a ‘butch lesbian’ with male characteristics, and that implies a connection between homosexuality and ‘perversion’, and fascism and the state. However,

this kind of homosexuality as related to the state differs from the traces of lesbianism among the women. The women's relationship is not merely based on companionship, support and sharing: since they are confined in a house, unable to escape, they have come up with a way to escape mentally by thinking that they are transferred to the sea. They all lie on the bed they share, touching hands, closing their eyes and sharing in a collective fantasy (Fig4.3.12). The superimpositions enhance the idea of the mental journey by adding a dreamy atmosphere.



Fig4.3.12 The four women in their mental journey

The journey to the sea, just like in *EBA* and in *MP*, is vital for the survival of the women, as they need to believe in the sea in order to keep going. In all of these films, this metaphorical or literal journey works like a response to trauma: the sea is associated with freedom, as a refuge that helps them feel relieved. Apart from its tranquillity, the sea's association with a shelter can be linked to Hélène Cixous' association of the sea and the mother's womb.³⁶ Consequently this association is linked to a natural environment, where they feel more relaxed, and will be able to come to terms with the maternal issues they face. Their return into the nature, which is connected with the feminine, is a quest for finding the natural in the unnatural environment they inhabit. The seaside where they are mentally taken to is their ultimate resort, the only refuge where they can live away from the fascist state.

Female bonding is extremely important in this film because 'female bonding is a precondition for lesbianism.'³⁷ Lesbianism constitutes an act against the heterosexual patriarchal society. Instances of lesbianism in *TZY*, like when Maro and the unnamed woman kiss when the latter smears the egg on Maro's breasts, can be thought not to

³⁶ 'Aller a la mer' means both 'going to the sea' and 'going to the mother' and Cixous combines the two notions. Helene Cixous, 'Aller a la Mer', in *Twenty Century Theatre*, ed. Richard Drain. (London: Routledge, 1995), 135.

³⁷ Chris Straayer, *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies: Sexual Re-orientations in Film and Video*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 17.

accommodate visual pleasure for the male or lesbian spectator. However, they can be perceived as statements regarding the women's preference for female companionship over any contact with men and the state. Through their actions, they reveal that they do not need men in their lives, since men cannot offer them a child and they are synonymous with the fascist state. Moreover, they do not feel sexual pleasure: Maro, for example, is unable to have or even fake an orgasm for their show. These women consider sex as their job and men as the tools for it. The circumstances in which they live have deprived them of the desire for sexual intercourse and they fill this gap with female bonding.

Maro's only aim for imprisoning the client is to use him in order for him to father her child. This fact is confirmed in the final scene of the film at the 'family' dinner table, where the four women sit with the prisoner dressed in women's clothes and a mask (Fig4.3.13). Christina shows her breasts to the captive and Maro says 'until he gets me pregnant he is mine. Afterwards you can do whatever you want with him.' Additionally, the way Maro treats him is reminiscent of the treatment of a child, since he is weak and unable to move, react or act independently. Maro feeds him, uses baby talk with him and dresses him as she wants; she has turned him into a child since she is unable to have a real one. As with the previously described unnamed woman's treatment of her client, Maro's captive man is pacified.



Fig4.3.13 Maro infantilising her captive

The fact that Maro has dressed her captive in her clothes has further connotations. Taking into consideration that these women see men as one with the state, dressing a man in women's clothes is a way of diminishing both man and state. The cross-dressing of the client has to do with the kind of revenge the women take by imprisoning and exploiting him. The man is diminished because he is forced to wear the outfit of a prostitute whom he

previously ignored. Moreover, he has no power in this brothel as he is fully controlled by the women and his life depends on them. Thus, his diminishment becomes the proof that the women attempt to have certain powers of resistance. Once again, though, this power is regulated by the state, and it can be said that this power is just an illusion.

4.3.4 Concluding Remarks

With *TZY* a circle that opened with *EBA* closes. The fact that these two films are the first and the last of Nikolaidis's films, with a thirty-year gap between them, is not coincidental. *TZY* portrays Nikolaidis's antiauthoritarian beliefs, and explores the connection of women and the state. The circumstances that the women of the film live in are allegorical for the situation the filmmaker perceived societies oppressed by fascism to be. The film's mise-en-scène is connected to horror films and perpetuates the dark atmosphere with which Nikolaidis was obsessed. The claustrophobic frames underline the fascist oppression. The women are controlled by the state, but they manage to cope with this fact and find ways to ignore it themselves. Nikolaidis's perception of the 'coming nightmare' renders these women postmodern ciphers. The abject women problematise the reading of female representation in his films since misogynistic elements and an attack on patriarchy is detected. This fact confirms the inconsistent representation of women in his oeuvre.

Chapter 5: *Those Who Loved A Corpse* Diptych

Introduction

The ‘necrophilic’ diptych accentuates Nikolaidis’s pastiche work. *Singapore Sling*, subtitled *A Man Who Fell in Love with a Corpse*, and *See You in Hell, My Darling*, subtitled *A Necroromance*, further highlight how Nikolaidis uses pastiche in order to both comment on the ‘death’ of the cinema that he craves and on ‘perverted’ contemporary society. Nikolaidis’s use of pastiche in these films differs from the way it is used in *MP*. In *SS* and *SYIHMD*, the filmmaker explicitly pastiches film noir. *SS* pastiches Otto Preminger’s *Laura* (1944) and Billy Wilder’s *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), and *SYIHMD* pastiches Henri-George Clouzot’s *Les Diaboliques* (1955) and Robert Aldrich’s *Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964). In doing so, Nikolaidis transfers the noir atmosphere as well as the specific atmosphere of the pastiche films; at the same time, he appropriates the original filmic texts to address his own personal concerns, hence adding layers of meaning. The dialogue between *SS*, *SYIHMD* and the pastiche films underlines the importance of cineliteracy in order to closely follow Nikolaidis’s films. The element of necrophilia in the two films is seen in the two films’ subtitles, but is also explicitly evidenced in the film narratives. However, necrophilia does not exclusively concern the actual necrophilic quest for the love of a dead person, but is instead linked with a necrophilic longing for the dead film noir.

The four women in the two films are similarly portrayed: they are all conventionally beautiful, fetishized, eroticised, abject and empowered. In this instance women are not appropriated by the state, but instead they attack patriarchy and aim to subvert it. Moreover, since death is a key element in both films, their relationships are found between Eros (Love) and Thanatos (Death). According to Freud, the relationship between Eros and Thanatos is an oppositionary binary, which permeates all relationships, but becomes more apparent in sadomasochistic relationships,¹ like the ones described in the diptych; though, the two notions are inseparable. For Freud, the sadomasochistic relationship moves between Eros and Thanatos, and the death drive in the form of sadism is a basic component of Eros.² Freud also claims that facing the fact of the impossibility of full and painless gratification of all desires becomes a traumatic experience. This is the ‘narcissistic scar’ that leads those

¹ Havi Carel, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Studies: Life and Death in Freud and Heidegger*, (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi B.V., 2006), 41.

² Jordi Maiso, ‘Remembrance of Nature within the Subject: Critical Theory, Psychoanalysis and the Limits of Subjection’, in *Beyond Deconstruction: From Hermeneutics to Reconstruction*, ed. Alberto Martinengo, (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 202.

who are 'scarred' to become involved in situations and relationships that allow them to become frustrated, be harmed and suffer.³ Therefore, I claim that the women in *SS* and *SYIHMD* are found in perverse sadomasochistic relationships between Eros and Thanatos, have a narcissistic scar which leads them into these relationships, and also have a trauma caused by patriarchy.

³ Ibid., 203.

5.1 *Singapore Sling: The Man Who Loved a Corpse*

Film Synopsis

One rainy night, Mother (Michele Valley) and Daughter¹ (Meredith Herold) bury their chauffeur, whom they have just killed, in the garden of their mansion. A wounded detective (Panayiotis Thanasoulis) arrives at the house in search for a woman named Laura. After the death of the father in the family, Mother has taken his place: she engages in all his activities, from killing servants to having sexual intercourse with their daughter. The women capture, take sexual advantage and torture the detective (whom Daughter calls ‘Singapore Sling’ when she finds a recipe of the cocktail in his pocket) in order to find out what he knows about Laura, who was their maid and who they killed. Daughter pretends to be Laura in order to entice the detective and at first he appears to be successfully deceived; however, it turns out that he is playing along with the women’s act of deception because this is the only way for him to survive. When he finally agrees to talk about Laura’s case, the women start feeding him and he voluntarily starts getting involved in their sexual games. The man develops a relationship with Daughter and she urges him to kill Mother so that she can be liberated from Mother’s authoritative figure. After they kill her, Daughter takes over Mother’s authority and assigns the detective the role of Mother in their sexual games, but he kills her by raping her with a knife in order to take revenge for Laura’s murder. Daughter shoots him before she dies, and the film ends with him crawling into the garden to bury himself alive thinking that he will be in Laura’s company.

5.1.1 Style, genre, pastiche

Although it had limited release in Greece, *SS* enjoyed wide reception outside Greece.² ‘Degenerate’, ‘damned’, ‘morbid’, ‘heretic’, ‘provocative’, ‘daring’, ‘disgusting’, ‘sick or slick?’ are just some of the characteristics assigned to the film by both Greek and international reviewers in websites associated with European art cinema and cult films.³ Yet, the majority of these reviewers added that the film is a masterpiece.⁴ The film is radical, raw and aims to shock. Karalis describes *SS* as ‘the strangest and most

¹ Both the mother and the daughter have no names. I will therefore be referring to these characters with these capitalized nouns.

² As noted in Chapter 2.

³ See for instance *Eccentric Cinema*, Viewed 14 August 2013, http://www.eccentric-cinema.com/cult_movies2007/singapore_sling.htm; ‘Reviews’, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, Viewed 14 August 2013 http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36&Itemid=16.

⁴ See for example the aforementioned reviews.

controversial film of the year, and probably of the whole of the 90s,⁵ and it can be claimed that it is an unprecedented film in Greek cinematography as far as the combination of film style and topics is concerned.⁶ Nikolaidis touches upon taboo issues, such as incest and perversion, and he articulates his concerns and fears for society and cinema through pastiche.

Although *SS* is identified as a postmodern film,⁷ it has not been examined as pastiche. Additionally, only *Laura*'s influence in the film has been identified while *Sunset Boulevard*'s has been widely neglected. Whereas *Laura* is explicitly pastiched in the film's narrative, dialogue and mise-en-scène and its influence in *SS* is easily detectable, *Sunset Boulevard*'s influence is mainly stylistic. This influence concerns the baroque frames and the recreation of Norma Desmond's iconography, *Sunset Boulevard*'s decaying femme fatale. *SS* is intentionally black and white in order to both imitate the film noir genre in general and the black and white imagery of the two pastiched films in particular. While its main influence is film noir, the film pastiches other genres as well, such as horror, Greek tragedy and comedy,⁸ and it is therefore a pasticcio of pastiches. The pasticcio of pastiches is also suggested by the film title, since the film is a 'cocktail' of genres.

Laura's narrative⁹ is appropriated in Nikolaidis's film. In Preminger's film, detective McPherson (Dana Andrews) investigates Laura's murder (Gene Tierney). During the investigation, McPherson becomes dazzled by her portrait in her house and gradually falls in love with the image of Laura. However, when Laura returns home after the weekend, she is surprised to find out that everyone thought she had been murdered, and this leads to the realisation that the murderer mistook another woman for Laura. Laura and the detective enter into a relationship, and at the end of the film it is revealed that Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb), Laura's mentor at work, is the killer, when he attempts to kill her again but is instead killed by the detective.

The subtitle of Nikolaidis's film (*The Man Who Loved a Corpse*) directly pastiches *Laura*. When Lydecker discovers that the detective is falling in love with Laura he advises him that, 'you'd better watch out McPherson or you'll end up in the psychiatric ward. I don't think that they've ever had a patient who fell in love with a corpse.' Nikolaidis hence

⁵ Karalis, *History*, 228.

⁶ At least before the emergence of the 'Weird Greek Cinema', feature taboo topics that mainly have to do with the problematic Greek family. However, *SS*'s raw imagery is not encountered in any of these films.

⁷ See for example Skopeteas, 'Establishment of Postmodern', 51. The Greek film reviews neither characterise *SS* as a postmodern film nor as pastiche.

⁸ Nikolaidis had in mind that he was making a comedy with elements from Greek tragedy. Nikos Nikolaidis, Viewed 14 August 2013, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/mainenglish/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54&Itemid=15.

⁹ And thus Vera Caspary's eponymous novel (1942), on which the film is based.

makes the pastiche explicit in its subtitle and engages the cinephile viewers early in the film. The recreation of *Laura* becomes evident as early as *SS*'s credits. The credits start with the sound of rain while 'Marni Film'¹⁰ features on a black background. Following the fade out of the first credit, a shot of a staircase at night with heavy rain and the title of the film is presented. The same song that accompanies *Laura*'s opening credits starts; however, the version in *SS* is grimmer and more melancholic than *Laura*'s. The opening credits in *SS* further imitate those in *Laura* in terms of the organisation of the screen space (Fig5.1.1). The main difference between the two is that in *Laura*, the background is a single stable image of Laura's portrait, while *SS* features moving images of the garden where Laura is buried. Nikolaidis does not merely imitate *Laura*'s opening credits but adds recurrent motifs of his films (the rain, the garden, shadows), thus even as *SS* resembles the original filmic text it differs significantly from it. Moreover, the opening credits in *SS* provide the viewer with images of the location where the film starts and finishes: the garden.¹¹



Fig5.1.1 The opening credits in *Laura* (left) and in *SS* (right)

The imitation of *Laura* is repeated throughout the film. *SS* pastiches specific scenes from *Laura*. At the same time, they are not merely recreated, but instead layers of perspective have been added to them along with further narrative elements in order to serve Nikolaidis's purpose. In this way, Nikolaidis engages in an actual dialogue with the pastiche film while also adding his own authorial signature. *Laura*'s recreated scenes occur as an outcome of Daughter pretending to be Laura in order to earn the detective's trust. Daughter uses *Laura*'s dialogue, and she is also presented in similar iconic shots to *Laura*. For instance, the most iconic image in Preminger's film is Laura's portrait. The portrait is placed in a dominant position in Laura's flat and enthralls men and triggers their

¹⁰ 'Marni Film' is Bartholomew's and Nikolaidis's production company.

¹¹ The film finishes with the detective burying himself alive, ending in a freeze frame, as discussed in *Euridice BA 2037*.

attention by expressing Laura's beauty. In *SS*, when the detective begins to return to consciousness he finds himself in a room where Daughter's portrait hangs on the wall. In the portrait she has the same body posture as Laura in the painting in Preminger's film. Nevertheless, is not placed in a dominating spot like Laura's painting is, but is located behind curtains. These curtains emphasise Daughter's obscure multileveled character, which will be analysed next. When the detective comes to consciousness and sees Daughter for the first time, the shot recreates the scene in *Laura* when Laura returns home after the weekend and finds the detective sleeping in her armchair (Fig5.1.2). Additionally, when Daughter enters the room, she plays *Laura's* theme song on the record player, creating both visual and aural connections with the source film



Fig5.1.2 Recreation of the first encounter of the detective and Laura (left) in *SS* (right)

Therefore it is as if, apart from Nikolaidis, Daughter herself recreates *Laura*: Daughter plays the role of 'Laura' in order to trick the detective. Thus pastiche becomes a topic in the film that the relationship between the detective and Daughter depends on. Moreover, although the recreated aforementioned scene virtually consists of the same props as *Laura's* scene, Nikolaidis uses costumes, cloths and props to add layers of perspective in the frame by not limiting the perception to a flat level. The baroque frames become a recurrent image across Nikolaidis's work. The camera angles in combination with the prop allocation on frame, give almost a three-dimensional quality to the image.

Nikolaidis's messages are noticeable for example in another recreated scene from *Laura* in *SS*. In Preminger's film, Laura is arrested as a suspect for the murder. At the police station, the detective shines the interrogation lamp's light on Laura's face as she states that she is not involved in the murder. In *SS*, when Mother finds out that Daughter is pretending to be Laura in order to befriend the detective, she 'interrogates' her using an interrogation lamp similarly to the scene in *Laura* (Fig5.1.3). Daughter repeats Preminger's

Laura's exact words out loud, and then whispers extra lines to Mother so that the detective does not hear her. This fact is another example of pastiche as it is made evident that 'the pastiche does not itself change: [...] the words are what they are, but the perception of their significance and affect changes.'¹² Moreover, in this scene the background is given layers by the use of cloth, shadows and indoor plants. The differentiation from the original text shows that Nikolaidis is moving away from Laura's love story and its fatalistic nature to instead comment on the fatalistic nature of society in general, as will be further elaborated later in this chapter. These layers are also attributed to *Sunset Boulevard*'s baroque iconography: Norma Desmond's extravagantly decorated mansion is mixed with *Laura*'s iconography, producing *SS* as a symptom of baroque iconography (Fig5.1.4).



Fig5.1.3 Recreation of *Laura*'s investigation scene (left) in *SS* (right)



Fig5.1.4 Recreation of Norma Desmond's house iconography (left) in *SS* (right)

The baroque frames, in conjunction with the claustrophobic feeling in the house,¹³ produce a chaotic sense, which is connected with the previous trilogy. This sense together with the necrophilia in the film, create associations with Hell. *Laura* can be considered a

¹² Dyer, *Pastiche*. 55.

¹³ Which is the same house where *EBA* and part of *MP* were filmed – Nikolaidis's house.

‘seeker-hero film noir.’¹⁴ As Michael Walker writes, in this kind of film noir the hero’s investigation is a quest ‘into a dangerous and threatening world, the noir world.’¹⁵ This world has two aspects: ‘it is an underworld of crime, vice and murder’ or it lies behind the ‘respectable world’, the world of bourgeois order and propriety [...] a world of duplicity and dissimulation.’¹⁶ The investigator does not know whom to trust as characters are untrustworthy, inauspicious and violent and his quest might even take mythical undertones.¹⁷ *SS* falls under the ‘seeker-hero film noir’ as the detective looks for Laura. His quest takes place in a dangerous and threatening world; however, this is not a world of gangs, mafia and nightclubs, as in classic noir. It is simultaneously both an underworld of crime and murder and a world of ‘bourgeois order and propriety’¹⁸ enclosed in a house. The detective is trapped in the two women’s mansion where there is no exit; he is caught in their ‘webs’. The house once again assumes the form of Hell, of the underworld to which the detective descends in order to find Laura. In a sense, he assumes Orpheus’s role, looking for dead Euridice. Nikolaidis’s recurrent motif of the claustrophobic environment is found in this film as well; however, here isolation is self-inflicted.

As with film noir, *SS* uses voice-over, with voice-over as the only means through which the detective’s voice is heard. The women have full control over the captive therefore his voice cannot be possibly heard in the diegesis, since he has no power in their house. The detective’s first voice-over declares that he will not survive in this house. He speaks about himself in the past tense, and this suggests to the spectator that he is already dead when he is describing the story. This element connects the film to *Sunset Boulevard* since this film starts with the drowned writer that Norma Desmond ‘captivated’ narrating his story. At the same time, the voice-over in *SS* is differentiated from *Laura*’s voice-over, which does not correspond to the detective but to the killer.

In contrast to classic noir, *SS* refuses conventional storytelling. Throughout the film, both women address the camera directly and narrate their story to the viewers. This direct camera address breaks the ‘fourth wall’, fragmenting the narrative. The story does not unfold in the film’s present, but it is a past event which is narrated by the women and re-enacted in the film, instead of being recalled. Additionally, in certain cases the film makes the process of filmmaking evident. For instance, in one scene Mother addresses the camera directly, narrating what happened the previous night, and Mother/Valley mistakes her act

¹⁴ Michael Walker, ‘Film Noir: Introduction’, in *The Movie Book of Film Noir*, ed. Ian Cameron, (London: Studio Vista, 1992), 10.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

and the scene is reshot. Nikolaidis incorporates two outtakes in the film followed by the third successful take.

In line with its narration of past events, the film uses flashbacks. These flashbacks are not conventional and are visualised in a distinct way: the past is re-enacted, just as *Laura*'s scenes are, breaking the linearity of the narrative and adding to the absurdity of the film. For instance, when Daughter describes Laura's murder, Mother is seen dragging Daughter-as-Laura in the kitchen and slaughtering her, while Daughter (as herself) sits in the kitchen table witnessing Laura's murder. Since the spectators are not presented with the actual Laura in the film, the flashback replaces Laura with the image of Daughter, who plays the role of Laura. In addition, in a different type of flashback, which still involves re-enactment, is used when Daughter directly addresses the camera as she recalls and narrates how she was abused by her father. As she narrates, she is shown having sexual intercourse with a mummy that signifies her dead father, adding to the general necrophilia of the film (Fig5.1.5).



Fig5.1.5 A 'flashback' that Daughter re-enacts

SS incorporates nostalgic undertones for film noir and its era. The combination of film noir elements and elements from other genres signify nostalgia for the aesthetics and the style of film noir, admiration for the specific genre and simultaneously an expression of disappointment for the fact that such films are not made anymore and if they do they appear as hybrid. The fact that Daughter speaks in English, Mother speaks in English and French, and the detective's voice-over is in Greek, suggest links with classic noir and with French cinema and its connection to film noir,¹⁹ as well as European cinema in general. This dialogue with the 'dead' kind of cinema is directly linked with the film's thematic

¹⁹ See for instance Ginette Vincendaeu, 'Noir is Also a French word', in *The Movie Book of Film Noir*, ed. Ian Cameron, (London: Studio Vista, 1992), 49-58.

undertones of necrophilia. Nikolaidis is in search of the 'lost' cinema in the same way that the detective is in a quest to find the dead Laura: they both know that what they seek is already dead. Therefore, it can be said that *SS* is highly stylised and includes images of sadomasochism, fetishism, perversion as a consequence of Nikolaidis's fetish with the medium.

5.1.2 'Fatal Femme'

Film noir is also pastiched through Mother and Daughter's representation. These women imitate the femme fatales of classic film noirs in extreme ways. Since *SS* was filmed in 1990, the two women are best compared to the femme fatale of the 1990s films. 1990s femme fatale are categorised under the 'phenomenon of 'noirness' and 'retro-noir', or neo noir, which repeats nostalgically the cultural mode of the film noir era.²⁰ Nikolaidis articulates the repressed sexuality of the classic femme fatale by portraying two contemporary femmes fatales, or two 'fatal femme' as Julianne Pidduck characterises the 1990s 'incarnation' of femme fatale of the classic noirs.²¹ In this way, Nikolaidis perpetuates the image of the femme fatale, placing them into a different context than the conventional American paradigm while also taking his work outside Greek borders.

The two women's representation in *SS* borrows elements from the two pastiched film noirs. Preminger's Laura though is not a femme fatale; she is 'the Eternal Woman [who] remains beyond reach of the mire.'²² It is the attraction men feel for her via her portrait that renders her 'fatal': she becomes 'a silent and still (painted) image during her long weekend absence, which gives the other characters limitless space to recreate her in their own terms.'²³ Mother and Daughter in *SS* contradict Laura's representation. They are represented as 'fatal femme'. For this reason, Laura in *SS* is re-enacted by Daughter, who is more empowered than the innocent and weak Laura, and subsequently aligns better with the conventions of film noir.

Mother and Daughter are highly stylised in the film. They are presented wearing vintage baroque costumes and heavy and expensive jewellery, exposing their wealth and adding to the overall baroque style of the film (Fig5.1.6). Mother's iconography is very similar to Norma Desmond's: they both appear in conspicuous costumes and smoke with a

²⁰ E. Ann Kaplan, 'Introduction to New Edition', in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 2000), 1.

²¹ Julianne Pidduck, 'The 1990s Hollywood Fatal Femme; (Dis)Figuring Feminism, Family, Irony, Violence', in *CineAction*, n. 38 (March 1992), 65.

²² Angela Martin, 'Gilda Didn't Do Any of Those Things You've Been Losing Sleep Over!': The Central Women of 40s Noirs', in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 2000), 211.

²³ *Ibid.*, 213.

cigarette holder (Fig5.1.7). They also appear as crazy and possessive, with an ambiguous sexuality. They both imprison the man who enters into their house, albeit in different ways, and they each take advantage of him. Norma Desmond forces her male captive to become her lover and write a screenplay for her, while Mother takes sexual advantage of the imprisoned detective. Their similarities in terms of iconography are also reflected in the ostentatious nature of their houses. According to Place, *Sunset Boulevard*'s visual style and, to an extent, *SS*'s demonstrates the dangerous sexual power of the women over their victims and emphasise the 'perverse, decaying side of film noir sexuality.'²⁴ This perverse and decaying style of film noir sexuality is explicitly displayed in *SS*.



Fig5.1.6 Mother dressed extravagantly



Fig5.1.7 Norma Desmond (left) and Mother (right) part of similar iconography

Mother and Daughter's main difference from the classic figure of the femme fatale is that the latter's lust

²⁴ Place, 'Women in Film Noir', 54.

was overwhelmingly for money rather than sexual pleasure. [...] The classic femme fatale was known for her trigger-happy killings, not for her orgasms. Her sexuality *per se* was passive, limited to its allure [emphasis on the original text]. Although narratively she manoeuvred the male protagonist with her sexuality, the specifically sexual desire and pleasure it served belonged to the male.²⁵

Moreover, because classic femme fatale did not openly express her sexuality, she was sexualized 'through high coded glamour, and an armoury of visual iconography arranged to signal sex and define her as a sexual pleasure.'²⁶ Mother and Daughter turn the classic femme fatale's oppressed sexuality into perversion to signify the decay of modern societies. Unlike the classic femme fatale, the fatal femmes in *SS* do not lust for money, since they are already affluent, as foregrounded in the film's *mise-en-scène*, but they constantly seek sexual pleasure and orgasms. The women appear as hypersexual and the viewers are presented with scenes of masturbation, of sexual intercourse between the two women and with the women and the detective. However, penetration is never visible and sex scenes are presented in an artistic way for art cinema spectators.

The women's bodies are fetishized both by the conspicuous, vintage lace lingerie that they constantly wear that reveals their body parts but also by the camera angles and the lighting that Nikolaidis uses. The film's *mise-en-scène* and sexual iconography present images connected to sadomasochism and sexual fantasy. The lace, the leathers, the cloth fetish and the humid erotic atmosphere of the film noir suggest a voyeuristic reading. Nikolaidis raises the taboo and the moral barriers by freely expressing the perversion of these two women, with the further aim of expressing the perversion of aristocracy. The fact that Mother speaks French is also an indication of the decaying aristocracy which, in combination with the baroque frames, takes the form of an attack on aristocracy, since French language and education has been associated with upper classes in Greece.

Although the women are eroticized, I argue that visual pleasure is partly averted. For instance, the incestuous sex scenes between Mother and Daughter provoke repulsion and vulgarity for the viewer rather than pleasure. Also, towards the end of the film, when the captive pretends to collaborate with the two women while playing along with their insanity in order to ultimately kill them, he agrees to take part in their erotic plays. The erotic scene between the three characters is presented in a parallel montage to a scene of the detective digging a grave in the garden; thus, visual pleasure is diverged, but the necrophilic sense of the film is enhanced. Although there are scenes that look like soft-core pornography, as for

²⁵ Straayer, 'Femme Fatal or Lesbian Femme', 152-153

²⁶ Kate Stables, 'The Postmodern Always Rings Twice: Constructing the Femme Fatale in 90s Cinema', in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 2000), 172.

example in a scene when for instance Daughter rubs a kiwi all over her body until it melts in her intimate part, it can be claimed to be laughter-inducing for the audience, and to discourage a serious reading of the scene. Scenes like this are comments on the aristocratic society.

The attack on aristocracy is further displayed by the women's fetish. As part of their effort to make him talk and suffer, the women force the starving detective to watch them as they eat a luxurious dinner. They sit at a table filled with an abundance of food. The camera is placed at the level of the table, among the food and the glasses (some of which are decorated with jewellery, as a further expression of the women's extravagance). The women are presented eating greedily, choking and vomiting on the food, and then continuing to eat. While they satisfy their food fetish, they connect every choke with small deaths, and small orgasms, thus rendering the family table a place of atrocity and disgust for the spectators and for the captive. Specifically, when Mother chokes on food, she grasps her breast with one hand and sticks the detective's face in a cake, while food is dripping from her mouth (Fig5.1.8). This image is one of fetish, overconsumption and extravagance, and links the women's food fetish with sexual pleasure and domination over the male. Such a representation constitutes an attack on the dominant status quo, since the patriarchal discourse refuses female fetish.



Fig5.1.8 Mother chokes on food and gets gratification

Consumerism and consumption is linked to postmodernism, and Jameson connects it to late capitalism.²⁷ Although the act of purchasing is not visible in the film, food overconsumption is of significance, since in the majority of Nikolaidis's films food is a rare asset.²⁸ The spectators do not witness the women purchasing assets, but they witness them greedily consuming food and being conspicuously dressed. Furthermore, Mother and

²⁷ Jameson, 'Late Capitalism', 78.

²⁸ As already seen in the previous trilogy, and as it will be seen in the last trilogy.

Daughter appear as schizophrenic: they are paranoid and they are serial killers as they systematically kill their servants, imprison the detective in order to sexually exploit him, and engage in incestuous sexual intercourse. Their exaggerated performativity, of which the re-enactment of scenes and their direct address to the camera can be said to be an extension, introduce elements from ancient Greek tragedy, which in a contemporary film seem awkward, and stress the women's schizophrenia.²⁹ Moreover, the two women are presented as abject, adding horror elements to the film that destruct visual pleasure: they vomit and urinate on the passive captive while they take sexual advantage of his weak body (Fig5.1.9). They also slaughter 'Laura' and extract her internal organs, placing them on the kitchen table and decorating them with pearl jewellery. These images of abjection provoke disgust and obscenity, and, arguably, laughter, highlighting Nikolaidis's work hybridity.



Fig5.1.9 Images of abjection

Further comic elements can be traced in the film, and these contribute to the consideration of these women as socially awkward and displaced, adding to their general abjection and absurdity. For instance, in the opening scene, the two women dig a hole in the garden, wearing lingerie, raincoats, rain hats, and goggles (Fig5.1.10). While digging, Daughter offers water to Mother. Mother does not see the gesture, and throws mud with the shovel on Daughter's face as she keeps digging. The daughter freezes and stays covered in mud, showing in this way that this film is a masqueraded black comedy in a rather awkward, perverse and paranoid environment.

²⁹ Personality disorder has been identified as a characteristic of the femme fatale. Scott Snyder, 'Personality Disorder and the Film Noir Femme Fatale', in *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 8(3) (2001), Viewed 17 August 2014, <http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcipc/vol8is3/snyder.html>, 155-168.



Fig5.1.10 The women in the garden

5.1.3 ‘My mammy has a little thing between her legs...’: Phallic Women and the Subversion of Patriarchy

In *SS*, the two women’s representation constitutes a further attack on patriarchy. Matriarchy seems to have replaced patriarchy in this film. Mother and Daughter appear as empowered figures. They reverse the passive-female \neq active-male binary dyad and present their active and perverse sexuality; in this case, their agency is not mitigated by anyone else. The captive’s survival depends entirely on them. They determine his food and water consumption, they use him as a tool for their perverse sexual pleasures, and they infantilize him, as Mother tries to teach him how to speak, since he appears unable to articulate. The extremity of the sexual advantage is seen through a rape scene: Mother electrocutes the detective, with the pretext of torturing him for not cooperating, and then takes advantage of his trembling body (Fig5.1.11). His pain and passive behaviour arouses them even as they punish him. Therefore, the women appear to have a relationship that moves between Eros and Thanatos where the death drive encourages sadomasochism. The relationship they build with the detective is also a response to the ‘narcissistic scar’ since they appear to seek out harmful situations.



Fig5.1.11 Sexually exploiting the detective

The representation of the family in classic film noir is a ‘vehicle for expression of frustration,’ in contrast to other groups of American films that portray the institution of the family as a sacred refuge where equilibrium prevails.³⁰ In these other types of American films, representations of the family tend to maintain the hierarchical relationships of the members of the family – father/male=head of family, mother/woman=subservient to father/male – and this hierarchy is extended to the society. The repressed role of the woman in the society was determined by her repressed role in the patriarchal family and ‘as Engels suggested, within the family ‘she is the proletarian, he is the bourgeois’.’³¹ In classic film noir ‘family relations as broken, perverted, peripheral or impossible founds itself upon the absence of the family.’³²

In *SS*, family relations are fragmented, ‘broken, perverted, peripheral.’³³ The women’s fetishization and their expressions of perversion distort the traditional idea of the family. According to Sylvia Harvey ‘film noir offers us again and again examples of abnormal or monstrous behaviour, which defy the patterns established for human social interaction.’³⁴ Her argument is relevant to *SS*, where the viewers are presented with a disturbed family relationship. The traditional hierarchy of the family is subverted. The father is dead, and the mother has assumed his role, imposing a matriarchal order in the house. She occupies an active role in the house and possesses and achieves everything that patriarchy deprived her of.

Incestuous lesbianism also undermines the patriarchal family. The bonding between mother-daughter has been considered by many as the origins of lesbianism. For instance Mandy Merck describes a ‘daughter’s identification with her phallic mother which survives postoeidally,’ a fact that calls a ‘masculine identification with a female imago.’³⁵ Additionally, Merl Storr states that

for a woman, the sexual object which resembles herself, will also resemble her mother... [Hence] the female sexual object who is the image of both myself and my mother confounds the Freudian structure of ‘female homosexuality’ [...] and reveals lesbian desire as simultaneously a narcissistic relation [based on the sexualised difference between the image of oneself as ideal or model] and an anaclitic object choice [the image of one’s mother as model]; as in fact a desire which renders the

³⁰ Sylvia Harvey, ‘Woman’s Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir’, in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, (London: BFI, 2000), 36.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 37-38.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 35.

³⁵ Mandy Merck qtd. in Straayer, ‘Deviant Eyes’, 135.

distinction between these terms- and hence the very definition of either-meaningless.³⁶

In *SS*, Nikolaidis traces this mother-daughter identification and projects the aforementioned narcissistic relationship through the women's relationship in the film. However, what is important in *SS* is not lesbianism, but perversion; perversion in a form of fetishism, the permanent lust for sexual pleasure and the quest for instant gratification, taking the form of overconsumption. The relationship of Mother and Daughter does not conform to a lesbian reading but is used as a critique of modern societies. The women in *SS* behave extravagantly and their house is their projection. They are not just victims of consumerism; they are consumerist fetishists. They get whatever they want when they want it, thus they seek sexual pleasure and instant gratification from each other when they want sexual intercourse. It can thus be claimed that the 'narcissistic scar' that they developed under patriarchy is now addressed and covered by sadomasochism and by their instant gratification.

Mother was possibly repressed by the patriarchal family norms. Inspired by the perverse nature of her husband, she over-expresses her repressed sexuality as soon as he dies. She is an over-sexualised narcissist and sees herself in her daughter, which is a reason behind her wanting to have sexual intercourse with her. Thus, Mother '[does] not relate to the child as Other, but as an extension of [her] ego.'³⁷ Moreover, Mother, being responsible for Daughter's upbringing, has turned Daughter into an abject feminine, showing her how to maltreat men and enact forms of perversion on them. Their paranoia, schizophrenia, abjection and fetishism are responses to the trauma caused by patriarchy. Therefore, these women subvert patriarchy through their behaviour: they take sexual advantage of the man in the way they were taken advantage of by the father; they pacify the captive, diminish him to a child, just as patriarchy does to women in the previous trilogy; they produce body fluids which patriarchy frowns upon; they refuse the imposition of patriarchy in the recreated scenes from *Laura*, as for instance in the interrogation scene where patriarchy is imposed with the use of the lamp but in *SS* Mother takes the role of the detective.

The two women seem alike and act together. However, Mother assumes a parental role towards Daughter that represses her and perpetuates her childishness. In her monologues to the spectators, Daughter often complains that Mother does not let her smoke, yet allows her to have sex with her own mother, to rape the captive and to kill

³⁶ Claire Whatling, *Screen Dreams: Fantasising Lesbians in Film*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 43.

³⁷ Kaplan, *Women and Film*, 203.

servants. This prohibition represses Daughter, who gets angry with Mother, and she subsequently decides to get rid of her so that she can be liberated. According to Kaplan:

on the unconscious level, we get angry with the mother on two counts: first, because she would not give us the independence we need or the wherewithal to discover our identities; second because she failed to protect us adequately against an alien patriarchal culture by which we were psychologically, culturally and (sometimes) physically harmed.³⁸

Daughter gets frustrated with Mother for these reasons, because she feels oppressed, has been harmed by patriarchy and has become like Mother; thus she needs to find her identity and kill Mother in order to emancipate herself. However, her anger towards Mother also lies in her own self-concern, which cannot cope with repression and guidance. This is also an attribute that her Mother has passed on to her, as she neither accepts any norm or rule, breaking the patriarchal standards. When Daughter kills Mother, she takes her place, wears her jewellery and smokes freely.

These women do not depend on men although Daughter creates a relationship with the captive. What Daughter actually desires is not the detective but constant sexual pleasure. The fact that he appeared in her house, that she managed to trick him into her intrigues and get Mother out of the way, was coincidental.³⁹ She uses him to gain independence from Mother and to constantly derive sexual pleasure.⁴⁰ The detective helps the two women satisfy their sexual desires; however, they do not need men to satisfy them. In their perverse relationship, they substitute each other for a male companion. This can be reinforced with the consideration of the *femmes fatales*' narcissism and the fact that 'they only loved themselves,' a fact that rendered their 'romantic coupling problematic' in classic film noirs.⁴¹ Mother and Daughter only care about themselves and about how they will have as many orgasms as possible. They have become serial killers for their own gratification. They belong to the aristocracy, they have no emotions, they kill people of the lower class and they take advantage of people because they have the power to do so. They do not even care for each other since Daughter kills Mother. Their narcissism keeps them together as long as they can perpetuate and satisfy each other's perversions and fetishes. Since Daughter has found a substitute for Mother in the detective, who allows her smoke and does not oppress her, she kills Mother and plans to run away with him.

The sexual iconography and the iconography of violence in the film also suggest subversive representation. As Place writes about the *femme fatale* in general and Norma

³⁸ Ibid., 173.

³⁹ As in *MP*.

⁴⁰ This fact is associated with Maro's plans in *TZY* where she keeps a captive in order for him to impregnate her, but does not care about the particular man; any man could take this place.

⁴¹ Straayer. *Femme Fatale*, 153.

Desmond in particular, the sexual iconography of the women depicted with jewellery, excessive make-up and cigarettes represent a danger towards men.⁴² The Hell-like environment of their big mansion that traps the detective contributes to this danger. Place writes that '[c]igarettes with their wispy trails of smoke can become cues of dark and immoral sensuality, and the iconography of violence (primarily guns) is a specific symbol (as perhaps is the cigarette) of her 'unnatural' phallic power.'⁴³ In *SS*, both Mother and Daughter smoke and use guns, and they can therefore be coded as phallic. However, the phallic nature of these women is not only coded by their cigarettes and guns. As part of their incestuous behaviour, Mother and Daughter recreate a role-play that the father used to perform with their servants. In this role-play Daughter pretends to be Laura who has to perform fellatio to the father, performed by Mother, in order to get hired. When Daughter-as-Laura gets closer to Mother-as-father, Mother lifts her skirt up and reveals a phallus (Fig5.1.12). Mother has fully substituted the father: she has become the head of the family; she has become the fetish; she is the bourgeois Engels claimed man to be; she has turned down the passive-mother role and has become phallic. But she still acts along patriarchal lines. Consequently, both the phallic Mother and Daughter who take part in this form a threat towards men, and, thus, towards patriarchal society, as well as signifying male castration and substitution of male power.



Fig5.1.12 The phallic mother

The detective is presented as metaphorically castrated: he is weak, passive and dependent on his emotions. He tolerates the torture for Laura's sake. At the end of the film, he manages to avenge her murder, but he is also killed. All the challenges he goes through

⁴² Place, 'Women in Film Noir', 54.

⁴³ Ibid.

make him even weaker and more passive, ultimately silencing him. Now, *he* is 'lack' and he has contributed to the inversion of the active-male \neq passive-female dyad. He is also presented as literally castrated: when Daughter takes Mother's place in the house, thus dethroning matriarchy and imposing her power, she keeps performing with the detective the aforementioned master-servant role-play. When the detective could be playing the role of the father, as he has a penis, he performs the role of Mother-performing-the-father, and is presented in Mother's excessive clothes, jewellery and make-up; thus he is feminized, carnivalized and masqueraded (Fig5.1.13). He is not a male with the patriarchal connotations anymore; the two women have turned him into an object.⁴⁴ When Daughter-as-Laura is about to perform fellatio on the detective-as-Mother-as-father, instead of a penis, he reveals a knife with which he is about to rape Daughter (Fig5.1.14). This iconic image is a confirmation of his castrated nature, since the knife is a substitute for his genitals. He might kill both women, but he dies castrated, in a feminised nature and as a remnant of matriarchy. In the final scene, the detective takes off the make-up and Mother's clothes and puts his coat on in an effort to re-assume his role as a man. Nonetheless, he has been destroyed by Mother and Daughter, and he can only bury himself alive in the garden, in order to be closer to Laura.



Fig5.1.13 The detective dressed as Mother

⁴⁴ As Maro did in *TZY*, where she dressed the captive in her clothes.



Fig5.1.14 The knife as a substitute for penis

The excessive power that the women have over their captive is reminiscent of the respective power Norma Desmond has over the writer. According to Place, Norma Desmond is

the most highly stylised ‘spider woman’ in all of film noir as she weaves a web to trap and finally destroy her young victim, but even as she finally dominates him, she is presented as caught by the same false value system.⁴⁵

A similar claim could be made with regard to Mother and Daughter in *SS* as they are indeed presented as stylised ‘spider women’, who trap the man in their ‘web’ but are trapped themselves and killed at the end. However, their deaths simultaneously bring about the destruction of the captive. Nevertheless, they managed to subvert patriarchal values and divert phallocentrism. They have proved that they do not have penis envy and they are not defined by lack – as women are often perceived in cinema⁴⁶ – since they can cope with a phallus. They are by no means subordinate to men; instead, the man is subordinate to them.

5.1.4 Concluding remarks

Necrophilia is linked to Nikolaidis’s quest and lust for the lost film noir cinema, for which he is nostalgic. Nikolaidis revives and recreates film noir during an era in which Greek cinema produced very few films due to the adverse GFC policies, most of which failed to even capture the attention of the audience.⁴⁷ Nikolaidis highlights his fetish with the medium and also makes it clear that cineliteracy is vital in order for the audience to comprehend and appreciate his films. The ‘fatal femmes’ extreme representation is not merely an attack on aristocracy; it attacks the petit-bourgeois family in 1990s Greece,

⁴⁵ Place, ‘Women in Film Noir’, 53.

⁴⁶ Studler, ‘Masochism’, 210.

⁴⁷ In 1990 only 16 Greek films were produced. Karalis, *History*, 227.

which at that time was going through a crisis in ‘family values, masculinity, religious authority and [...] the legitimacy of the state.’⁴⁸ Although the women subvert patriarchy, the film appears as a sexual fantasy and consequently the film represents Nikolaidis’s fear of women as castrators. The women’s excessive fetishization, eroticization, as well as their representation as paranoid, schizophrenic and abject, might be a response to trauma, but is also a stylised and fetishized Nikolaidian dream that has misogynistic undertones.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 215

5.2 *See You in Hell, My Darling: A Necroromance*

Film Synopsis

Vera (Valeria Christodoulidou) visits Elsa's mansion (Vicky Harris) after a long period of time during which the women did not see each other. The film's non-linear narrative reveals that the women used to be in love with each other as well as the same man (Paschalis Tsarouchas). Although Elsa married the man, Vera had sexual intercourse with him on his and Elsa's wedding day after the three of them robbed a van and took three suitcases filled with money to split. The two women are now trying to destroy each other in order to get a bigger share of money. In particular, Elsa dissolves drugs in Vera's whiskey and keeps poisoning her. Elsa reveals to Vera that she has killed her husband whose corpse is still floating in the swimming pool in the garden of her mansion. The women try to dispose of the body by throwing it in water and burying it in Elsa's father's grave in the garden, but the husband returns from the dead as a zombie. Elsa kills him again and after she kills Vera, she realises that she cannot live without her, shoots herself, and all three of them float, reunited in death, in the swimming pool.

5.2.1 Style, Genre, Pastiche

See You in Hell, My Darling follows the example of *Singapore Sling* in terms of style and use of pastiche. In this film, Nikolaidis once again pastiches two older films. However, he diverges from their topics and appropriates their imagery and the elements that interest him for his own interests and obsessions, thus telling his own story. Yet a main difference between the two films it pastiches and *SYIHMD* is the colour. The filmmaker once again through pastiche comments on the 'death' of the cinema he longed for – the film noir of the 1940s and 50s. The subtitle *A Necroromance* highlights the necrophilic nature of the film, which, like *SS*, is not solely detected in the fatalistic narrative that takes place in Hell, the quest for love, and the fine line between Eros and Thanatos. It mainly concerns the quest for the 'dead' kind of cinema that the filmmaker yearned for.

SYIHMD pastiches Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* and Aldrich's *Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte*. Whereas *SS* explicitly pastiches *Laura*, in *SYIHMD* Nikolaidis's use of pastiche follows the way in which *Sunset Boulevard* is pastiched in *SS*. *SYIHMD* does not recreate the original films' dialogue, but Nikolaidis makes the original films sources from which he derives elements to be creatively used in his new film. The pastiched films have basic differences: *LD* is a French film noir released in 1955, and *HHSC* is a Hollywood thriller

that is also frequently characterised as an American gothic film that was released in 1964.¹ Nevertheless, they share some narrative and aesthetic elements, which Nikolaidis detected, examined and combined in order to produce a third film, asserting the 'repository' value of the genres and films.

In *LD*, Cristina (Vera Clouzot) is the owner of a boarding school, and the wife of the school's sadistic headmaster (Paul Meurisse). Nicole (Simone Signoret) is a teacher and the headmaster's mistress, and Cristina is aware of their affair. The women plan to murder the headmaster because they cannot tolerate his cruel behaviour. They trick him into going to Nicole's house, dissolve poison in his whiskey, and drown him in the bathtub. They then take his body to the school and throw it in the filthy water of the school's swimming pool, making it appear as an accident. When the swimming pool is drained, the corpse is nowhere to be found. The women get upset when they see signs that he is still alive, especially Cristina who has a severe heart condition. She finally collapses when she sees him emerging from her bathtub appearing like a zombie. Nicole gets in Cristina's room and helps the headmaster get ready to leave together and split Cristina's wealth, and it is revealed that Cristina was tricked all along, but an inspector arrests them in time.

In *HHSC*, Charlotte (Bettie Davis) is an ageing woman who is certified as demented after being accused of murdering her lover, who was married and was planning to run away with Charlotte thirty-seven years previously. When Charlotte refuses to leave her plantation in order for it to become part of a new highway, she asks her cousin Miriam (Olivia de Havilland) to help her. After she arrives, Miriam urges Charlotte to move out. Charlotte starts experiencing supernatural phenomena. Her doctor (Joseph Cotten) diagnoses a deteriorating condition, and Miriam takes care of her. However, Miriam is poisoning Charlotte and conspiring with the doctor to inherit her wealth. One night Charlotte is tricked into a hallucination, and Miriam makes her believe that she shot the doctor while hallucinating. The women dispose of the corpse in a swamp, but when they get home the doctor appears as a zombie, and Charlotte collapses. When she gets round, she overhears the couple discussing their plans underneath her window, throws an urn at them and kills them both. The next morning, as Charlotte leaves the plantation, an investigator hands her a letter from the wife of her lover, confessing that it was she who had killed her husband.

The basic similarity between the two films and also Nikolaidis's films is that women lead the films while male characters are more peripheral. Also, both pastiche films concern a story where an evil woman tricks a vulnerable one with the help of a man in

¹ Stephen Farber, 'New American Gothic', *Film Quarterly*, 20.1 (1966), 23.

order to seize the second woman's wealth. In both films, the trick that is used in order to manipulate the fragile woman is to make her believe that she has murdered the man involved in the hoax, either intentionally (*LD*) or by accident (*HHSC*), and she then experiences the man's supposed return from the dead in the form of a zombie. Nikolaidis has borrowed these common elements as well as selective imagery from the two films and has pastiched them into a new filmic text which differs significantly from the original films.

In *SYIHMD* neither of the two women collaborates with the man in order to get the other women out of the way. On the contrary, Elsa also kills the man – more than once. The man's return from the dead is not a hoax since all three characters reside in Hell, in an unrealistic environment. As with Nikolaidis's other films, Hell becomes once again a significant erotic place, and a place to return to. Hell is not only suggested by the film's title and the subtitle, but is also evident in the film's setting: Nikolaidis's house and garden, which his followers are in a position to recognise by now, and to directly associate with Hell.² Furthermore, there is no fragile woman in Nikolaidis's film. Vera becomes physically weak because she has been drinking the poison that Elsa gives her, but otherwise she is equal to Elsa.

SYIHMD has a complicated, non-linear narrative. The film's frequent use of flashbacks and flashforwards confuse past, present and future, thus negating the importance of historicity in this film as well. Non-linearity also prevents the spectator from fully comprehending what happens in the film. Nikolaidis gives his film the suspense and the thriller atmosphere of the two pastiched films, and therefore engages the cinephile audience that recognises the borrowed elements. With this film, Nikolaidis once again shows that cineliteracy is a vital tool for helping spectators follow his film, thus confirming that he chooses his audience by producing an elitist work.

SYIHMD is not a black and white film; however, its imagery is reminiscent film noir and its expressionistic style, with harsh shadows and high contrast lighting. In this sense, the film resembles *Body Heat*. As Dyer writes, although *BH*'s mise-en-scène and narrative elements are so similar to classic film noir that it could be mistaken for one, its pastiche noir nature is revealed by its use of colour.³ *SYIHMD* can also be claimed to follow Dyer's description of *BH* with regards to its use of photography. As Dyer claims, 'film noir is so associated [...] with the use of black and white photography, that the idea of noir in colour seems a contradiction in terms.'⁴ Therefore, *BH*, and also *SYIHMD*, find alternative ways to simulate film noir photography. Dyer argues that the technological advancements in the

² Since it is the house where *EBA*, *TWASS*, and *SS* were filmed.

³ Also by sexual explicitness and music, as will be elaborated later on next. Dyer, *Pastiche*, 124.

⁴ Ibid., 123.

1980s that are used in *BH* helped the film photography to achieve the production of imagery similar to classic film noir.⁵ This is accomplished by the use of strong contrasts and the controlled use of colour, specifically of coloured light like red.⁶ Additionally, the use of pitch-black night shots in combination with the use of black and white props and costumes further imitate the film noir photography.

SYIHMD was filmed eighteen years after *BH*; consequently the technology used by Nikolaidis was equally advanced to the technology used in the latter film. Nikolaidis's film only consists of night shots, and this provides a dark background for the majority of the scenes. The film uses chiaroscuro lighting, night scenes, venetian blinds and shadows, and there is a shine to the look of the film. The film has a celluloid glow and a celluloid look that connect the *SYIHMD* further to film noir by making the film 'feel' like film noir, which is Dyer's major arguments for pastiche films. Furthermore, the costumes are either light or dark coloured in order to create contrast and imitate black and white photography. Nevertheless, this is not merely the reason for their selection. Except for the common signification of black as evil and white as good, which is applied in this film since Elsa appears as evil and wears black and Vera white, in order to further pastiche *LD*. In *LD*, Cristina is a pious woman and is presented as innocent: she wears light-coloured costumes, has black hair with thick braids connoting to a child, and has innocent wide-open eyes. On the other hand, Simone wears dark costumes, has short blond hair, and when the spectators first see her she is wearing sunglasses, concealing her evil nature (Fig5.2.1). In *SYIHMD* Vera is mostly dressed in white and light colours when Elsa wears mostly dark colours (Fig5.2.2). Thus, the wife and the mistress in *SYIHMD* wear the reverse colours to the respective pair in *LD*.



Fig5.2.1 Cristina as an innocent figure (left) and Simone as a threatening one (right)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.



Fig5.2.2 Vera dressed in white (left) and Elsa in black (right)

Nikolaidis borrows specific imagery from the original works and appropriates in his film. For instance, in *HHSC*, when Charlotte's lover is murdered, his blood sprays on a nearby statuette. In *SYIHMD* the image of a statue sprayed with blood is repeated throughout the film (Fig5.2.3). The image first appears in the beginning of the film in a flashforward, while in a parallel montage the shadow of a woman killing someone is projected. At the end of the film, the image appears linearly when Elsa shoots herself. Nikolaidis transforms the original image in an exaggerated way, as he also did with the imagery in *SS*. The statue in Nikolaidis's film is not a classical statue like the one in *HHSC*; it is larger and abstract. The vivid red is contrasted to the white statue, which presented against a dark background. This contrast not only connotes classic film noir but also imitates *HHSC*'s black and white photography.



Fig5.2.3 The sprayed with blood statuette in *HHSC* (left) and the respective imagery in *SYIHMD* (right)

Additionally, the treasured music box that Charlotte's father had given her and which is full of her childhood memories acquires a different role in *SYIHMD*: Vera uses it in order to spit out the poisoned whiskey that Elsa gives her (Fig5.2.4). Hence, the prop which makes Charlotte nostalgic for her past, is stripped of its historicity in Nikolaidis's

film and becomes a prop devoid of past and memories. The most significant element that is shared by all three films is the representation of the man as a zombie. The men in the films are either drowned or their corpses are disposed of in water. When all three men come back from the dead, they are wet, dripping with water, and they appear at night time (Fig5.2.5). In *SYIHMD*, Nikolaidis presents the man in night shots, against a dark background and dressed in dark colours, in order to imitate black and white photography. Therefore he does not differ greatly in appearance from the two men in a zombie form in the earlier films. Through these instances it becomes clear that Nikolaidis uses black and white props and costumes, as well as vivid colours, and mostly red, and a gloss in the film to create contrast to the black and white and imitate film noir photography.

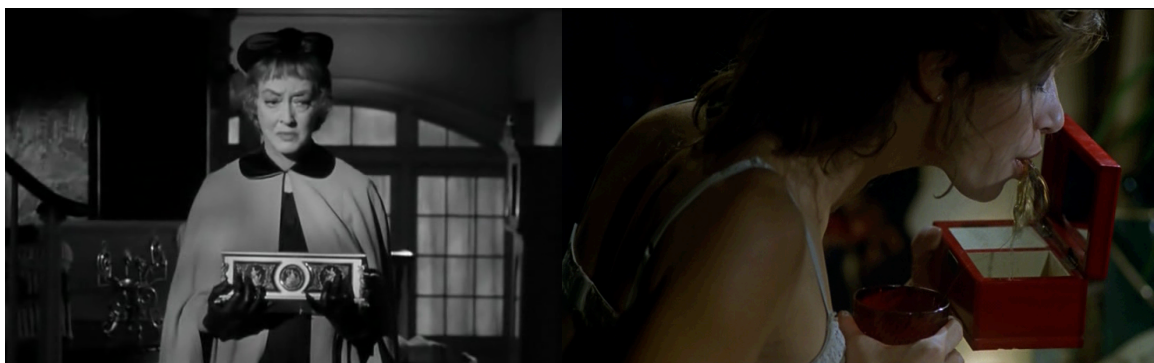


Fig5.2.4 Charlotte carrying the music box (right) and Vera spiting the whiskey in the music box (right)

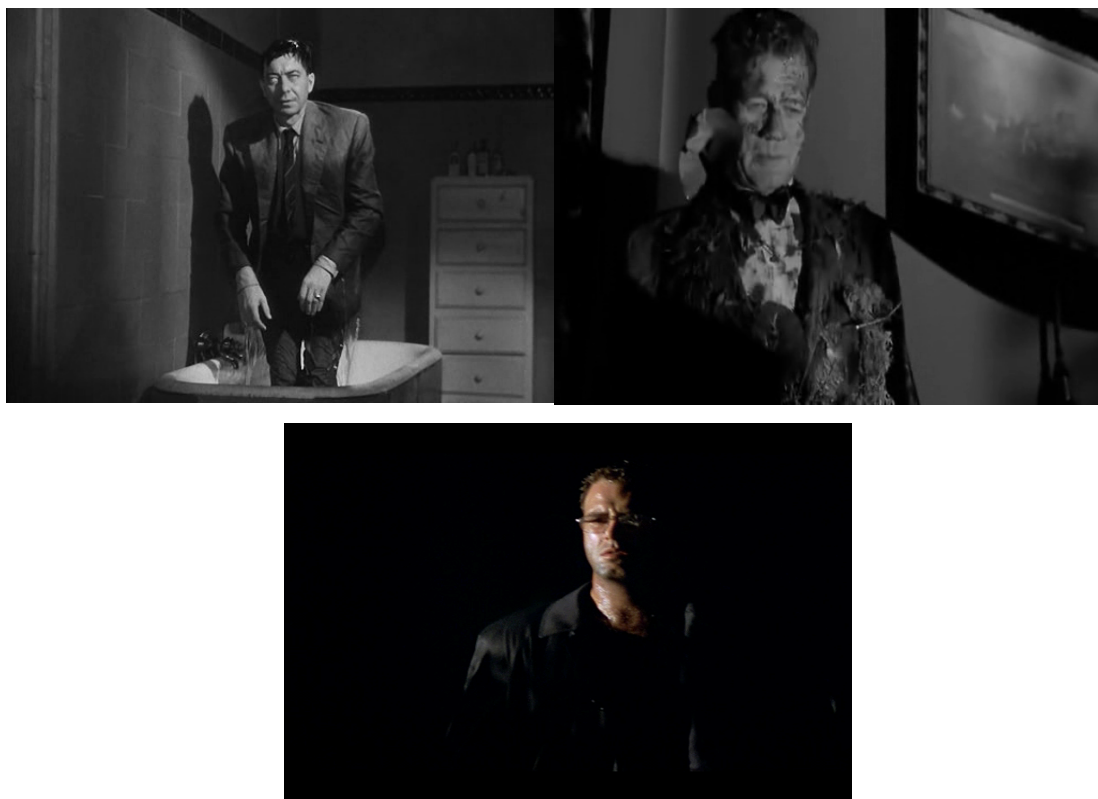


Fig5.2.5 Above: The headmaster in *LD* (left) and the doctor in *HHSC* (right) as 'zombies'. Below: The man as a zombie in *SYIHMD*

Nikolaïdis uses close-ups in order to narrow the space and maintain a visual focus on the women, ascribing a feeling of claustrophobia, and enhancing the connection of the house with Hell. The layers of perspective used in *SS* are not used here; the film loses its depth of field by blurring the predominantly black background, adding to the claustrophobic feeling. Rain, which is also characteristic of film noir, is once again present in this film. However, while rain in classic noir is experienced in cities and streets, in Nikolaïdis's film it is experienced out in nature, in the garden. The wind chimes heard in the rainy and windy night, in conjunction with the drumbeats of the music score during the scenes of suspense, link this film to classic film noir as well as the thriller film.

SYIHMD's mise-en-scène is evidence that Nikolaïdis not only imitates previous works from other directors, but he also imitates his own previous work to produce a self-referential work. For instance, the first shot of Vera in the film shows her getting out of her car, while the sound of the rain is heard, and going up some wet stairs towards Elsa's house. In these shots the viewers are only presented with fragmented shots of her (fetishized) legs. The wet stairs that Vera goes up reference the wet stairs in the opening credits in *SS* (Fig5.2.6). Moreover, the image of Vera's legs getting out of the car shares similarities with Nikolaïdis's advertisement of the liqueur cream *Amanda* in the late 1980s/early 1990s⁷ (Fig5.2.7). The rain-covered car in *SYIHMD* also recalls the wet car in *SS*. These instances highlight Nikolaïdis's obsessions with specific imagery and the interconnected nature of his work. His influence by film noir and other genres have helped him develop his own style and establish his authorial voice.



Fig5.2.6 The stairs in *SS* (left) and in *SYIHMD* (right)

⁷ Nikolaïdis had full control over the advertisements he was making and was facing them as short films. Although in the specific advertisement the model acting was chosen by the company of the liqueur and not by him, he had full control over the settings and the concept and thus his style is very evident in the advertisement (Bartholomew, 2011).



Fig5.2.7 The woman in the advertisement (left) and Vera in *SYIHMD* (right)

During flashbacks or flash-forwards in the film, the colour and the quality of the film change. The flashback of the robbery is presented to the spectators in a series of colour-saturated images of videotape quality (Fig5.2.8). These saturated images as well as the rapid pace editing during the action shots create an imagery that resembles the aesthetics of a comic. In fact, when *SYIHMD* came out in 1999, it was accompanied by a hand-drawn comic by Yorgos Tasioulas, which narrates the story of Nikolaidis's film (Fig5.2.9). By pastiching this form of art, Nikolaidis experiments with genres and mediums and adds to the hybridity of his films, as well as confirms that his work is a pasticcio of pastiches.



Fig5.2.8 Flashback of the robbery presented in saturated colour



Fig5.2.9 *SYIHMD* in a comic (BPA)

The role of pastiche and the link between *SYIHMD* and the classic noir are also detected in the film's soundtrack. When Vera arrives at Elsa's home, she plays Etta James's song 'I Found Love' on the record player. This song turns out to be Elsa's cry for Vera's or her husband's attention, since she admits to play it any time she needs either one of them. The song acquires a similar nostalgic role to the music played from in Charlotte's music box in *HHSC*. Therefore, this song conjures up nostalgia for the long gone relationship between the two women. At the same time it displays Nikolaidis's nostalgia for film noir. According to Dyer, another element that differentiates *BH* to classic noir, apart from colour, is music. Dyer writes that *BH* uses jazz music, which is now associated with film noir, however, it was not heard in classic noirs of the 1940s and the 50s.⁸ Similarly, the theme song 'I Found Love' heard in *SYIHMD* is a Rhythm and Blues song released in 1975. This music genre started making its appearance in the world in the 1940s, but was not used in film noir scores. Thus, the film's music is anachronistic, in contrast to *SS*'s theme song, which is *Laura*'s theme song.

5.2.2 'Fatal femme'

The relationship of Elsa and Vera is complicated by the abstract, non-linear narrative. Their background story is revealed through flashbacks and the women's conversations with each other and the dead man, who does not remember anything but the two women and his relation to them. The two women appear to share many of the characteristics of the

⁸ Dyer, *Pastiche*, 124.

women in all of the films analysed so far. The use of the name 'Vera' further connects the film to Nikolaidis's quest for love and for the ideal woman. By pastiching film noir, Nikolaidis pastiches the classic noirs femme fatales here as well. Since the film was filmed in 1999 and follows the example of *SS*, Vera and Elsa can be considered as 'fatal femme'.⁹ The two protagonists, especially Elsa, exhibit schizophrenic behaviours, they address the camera directly, they are over-sexualised, and once again female bonding is presented as pivotal. However, in *SYIHMD* the women are more fetishized than in any other of the films examined so far: the female body is eroticised more than it is in the previous films, and the relationship between the two women and the man could be claimed to be part of a male fantasy. At the same time, the women are dead, since they reside in Hell, and they are abject and socially awkward. This fact further problematises female representation in Nikolaidis's work since it is once again made clear that the 'ideal women' that he is after is dead.

SYIHMD is based on two films where there is a marked distinction between weak, gullible woman and evil, devious woman; however, while Elsa is indeed presented as the cunning woman, Vera is only weak because of the poison. The power that Elsa gets by poisoning Vera turns her into a 'fatal femme', who has full control over her victims. She is aware of her attractiveness and of her power that makes her look like film noir's spider women. Her (metaphorical) webs are in fact visible in the film, and Vera appears to have been trapped in them (Fig5.2.10). Here, it is not the mistress who wants to get the wife out of the way, but the wife who desires to kill both the mistress and the husband. One reason for this plan would be Elsa's desire to keep the money for herself, a quality which abides to the typical behaviour of the classic femme fatale who is after money.¹⁰ However, Elsa does not claim the money for herself; she uses it to entice Vera to come to her house and, since she knew that she was coming, leaves the house door open for her. Elsa wants to see Vera, kill her, and unite with her in death. Therefore, the relationship between Elsa, Vera, and Elsa's husband borders on sadomasochistic since it involves harm and suffering and lingers between Eros and Thanatos, where Thanatos represents a peaceful and blissful place where Elsa can be with Vera.

⁹ Pidduck, '1990s Hollywood Fatal Femme', 65.

¹⁰ Stayceer, 'Femme Fatal', 152-153.



Fig5.2.10 Vera tied up in Elsa's 'webs'

The women are naked throughout the film; Nikolaidis sculpts their bodies with the help of camera angles that are level with the women, and with the help of dim and warm lighting that adds the celluloid glow to the film (Fig5.2.11). The film frame is not filled with props, losing thus the aforementioned layers of perspective, and emphasis is instead on the fetishized and fragmented images of the women on screen. The use of water helps the sculpting of their bodies, since it emphasises their body figures, as occurs with the fetishized high heels that the women wear in every instance (Fig5.2.12). Although these women are eroticized and fetishized, it seems that the filmmaker aims to attack the patriarchal status quo.



Fig5.2.11 Vera's 'sculpted' body

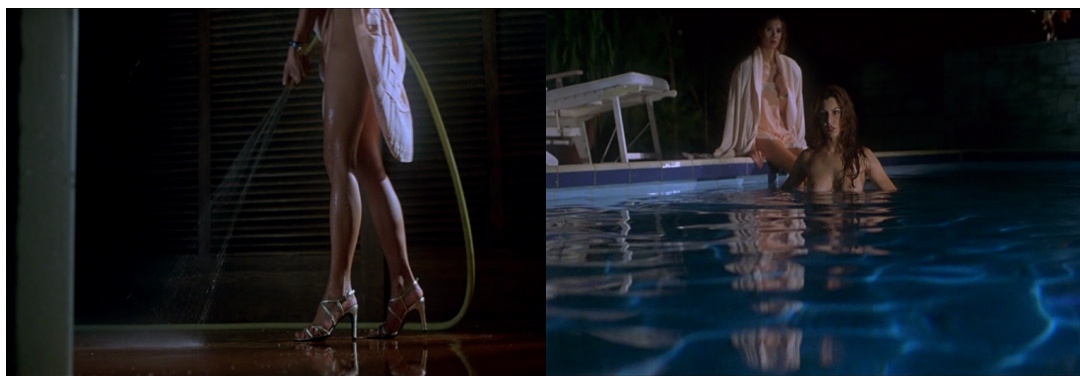


Fig5.2.12 Vera's wet legs (left), Elsa and Vera in the swimming pool (right)

Their eroticization and fetishization is reinforced through the sense of surveillance that dominates the film. From the beginning of the film, someone is watching the women in the house from behind the blinds. These subjective point-of-view shots constitute the voyeur's fantasies, and, arguably, Nikolaidis's fantasies. After a conversation between Elsa and Vera at the beginning of the film, the two women move to a room where Elsa sets up a video camera for recording. She then tells Vera that she witnessed her having sexual intercourse with her husband and asks her to show her how they had sex. The camera cuts to a shot of the voyeur. Yet rather than presenting the spectators with a subjective point-of-view from outside the house, where the voyeur is, a shot observes the voyeur from inside the house, although he is not visible. The spectators are then presented with an imitation of the sexual intercourse Vera had with Elsa's husband. The sexual intercourse is accompanied with anger and rage and that make it resemble a fight. The two women are almost naked, and Elsa takes the part of the man, simulating what she would be doing if she had a penis to penetrate Vera. While the women simulate sex, the film cuts between shots of the two women to shots of the black and white footage of Vera having sex with Elsa's husband. The cuts are accompanied by a sharp sound that signals the flashbacks and flash-forwards in the film. Therefore, the women are re-enacting a specific past instance of sexual intercourse and not having sex themselves. Re-enactment becomes once again a form of dealing with the past and with history, and simultaneously commenting on this past event.

The eroticism evoked by the women's bodies is partly mitigated by their abjection. The women, especially Vera, are shown vomiting and urinating as they adopt erotic postures (Fig5.2.13). Moreover, the women in *SYIHMD* are clumsy and exhibit socially awkward behaviour, characterising the film as a form of black comedy. For instance, when the women go to throw the body of the dead husband in the sea, they constantly stumble and fall on the sand and in the water. They do not seem to be as cautious as Cristina and Simone are when they dispose of the body in the school swimming pool (*LD*), nor as

Charlotte and Miriam when throwing the body in the swamp (*HHSC*). Elsa and Vera also make fun of each other's efforts to be eroticized; for example when Vera falls in the sea, Elsa helps her get back on the boat and she laughs when she realises that Vera is not wearing underwear, while Elsa responds that she never wears any. This exaggerated behaviour of the women is part of the hybrid nature of Nikolaidis's films. Apart from film noir, Nikolaidis is influenced by other genres as well, such as comedy, but these genres are pastiched more indirectly than film noir. The excess of feminine abjection also plays a role to this behaviour, which makes the women appear almost monstrous. The excess forms part of Nikolaidis's aim to shock, and it is thus connected to the previous trilogy and to *SS*.



Fig5.2.13 Images of abjection

5.2.3 Phallic Women and the Subversion of Patriarchy

The relationship between the two women in *SYIHMD* is inspired by the ambiguous relationship of the two women in *Les Diabliques*. Whereas Cristina in *Les Diabliques* is presented as a fragile woman, Simone is presented as having a rather masculine attitude. According to Hayward, Simone is masculinised in relation to the wife, since she 'smokes her cigarette in a 'masculine' manner', she teaches science, which can be claimed to be more connected to male subjects than female, and, 'iconically speaking, [...] she represents here the traditional femme fatale of the film noir, with her clothing marking her as the

safely contained phallic woman.’¹¹ The relationship between the two women in *Les Diaboliques* can be read as a lesbian relationship. For instance, in (Fig5.2.1) above, the women are presented looking out of the window the morning after they have thrown the body in the swimming pool. The bed behind them is unmade and the viewer knows that they have spent a night together in the same room. While the narrative does not make the sexual nature of their relationship explicit, the film is an adaptation of a novel¹² in which the two women protagonists do in fact have a lesbian relationship. Taking this fact into consideration, it can be argued that Simone represents the ‘butch lesbian’ while Cristina represents the ‘fragile, hyper-feminine femme.’¹³ This implicit lesbian relationship between the two women in *LD* has been translated as an explicit lesbian relationship in *SYIHMD*. Thus, the sexual explicitness which, according to Dyer, is another element that differentiates *BH*, and by extension, neo-noir, from the classic film noirs that it pastiches¹⁴ is also articulated through *SYIHMD*. Sexual explicitness in Nikolaidis’s film unveils the nature of the relationship of the two women of the French film noir.

Unlike *LD*, in Nikolaidis’s film both women are lesbian femmes and neither adopts the role of the butch lesbian. They are at once feminized and fetishized. At the same time, they are both ‘fatal femme’ and ‘lesbian femmes’. The examination of lesbianism as an extension of narcissism is presented in this film as well. Before the robbery and the wedding, the two women had grown up together, had begun looking alike and exhibiting similar behaviours. They could see themselves in one another; as Vera says at the end of the film, ‘sometimes we looked at ourselves in the mirror and got confused and then we changed our voices to figure out who was who.’ This identification between the two women is also expressed through the language of the film. When the women meet at the beginning of the film, Vera is presented through a mirror, as if her image is Elsa’s reflection (Fig5.2.14). The two women also look alike: they both have shapely bodies and long same-coloured hair. Moreover, they are either portrayed with costumes of contrastive colours, thus complementing each other, or else are presented in the same outfit.

¹¹ Susan Hayward, *Les Diaboliques*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005), 50.

¹² *She Who Was No More* (1952), written by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac.

¹³ Judith Mayne, ‘Inversion and Lesbian Plots in Henri-Georges Clouzot’s *Les Diaboliques*’, in *Framed: Lesbians, Feminists, and Media Culture*, (Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 44.

¹⁴ Dyer, *Pastiche*, 124.



Fig5.2.14 Elsa and Vera's reflection in the mirror

A conversation between Vera and Elsa at the very beginning of the film reveals that the two women used to be together in a happy relationship. However, Elsa got married and Vera started a sexual relationship with Elsa's husband. Vera asks Elsa to have a look at themselves and describe what she sees. Elsa and Vera complete each other's words and utter the last words together: 'After a long time, some lonely women, a bit scared, over thirty, and hidden in rented hotel rooms.' It is the first time in the films that have been analysed so far in this thesis where the women talk about their ages and their social conditions. The women 'hidden in rented hotel rooms' can be associated with the women in film noir, who are placed away from a family house signifying the absence of 'normal' family relations.¹⁵ Therefore, the two women appear to go against the patriarchal family, for being both 'fatal' and lesbians. The film makes it clear that the two women do not in fact care about the man but they have instead used him as a tool for a game they played between themselves.

In a similar way as in *SS*, the women in this film are coded phallic, and they appear to subvert patriarchy. The women smoke incessantly, and Elsa uses cigarettes to trap the zombie husband who looks for cigarettes. The association of the film with film noir is further expressed by the act of smoking, which plays a vital role in the diptych. Smoking was a sign of glamour in classic film noir,¹⁶ thus *SYIHMD* underlines this fact and perpetuates the classic film noir glamour in contemporary film. Moreover, the women's phallic nature is supported by their use of guns.¹⁷ This fact is reinforced towards the end of the film: Elsa wears fetishized white lingerie as a wedding dress, and after asking the zombie-husband if he would marry her again if she would give him a lot of cigarettes, she throws him down on the floor and simulates what she would be doing if she had a penis to

¹⁵ Harvey, 'Woman's Place', 38.

¹⁶ Dyer, *Pastiche*, 122.

¹⁷ See Place, 'Women in Film Noir', 54.

penetrate the man, without the man reacting (Fig5.2.15). In this occasion, Elsa can be considered phallic, as she holds a gun. Soon after, Elsa shoots the man with her phallic gun – while recreating Charlotte’s experience when she was hallucinating that she had shot her dead lover (Fig5.2.16) – and sends him back to the swimming pool.



Fig5.2.15 Vera assuming the male role

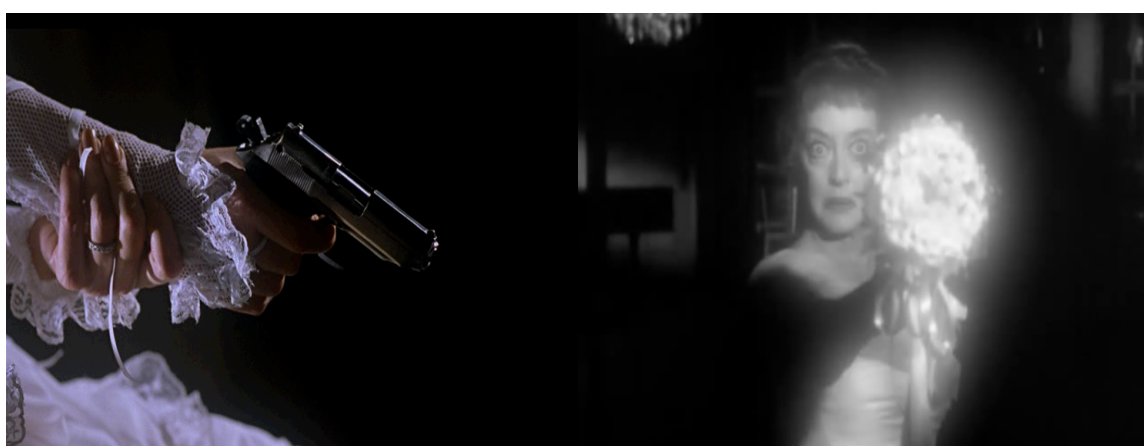


Fig5.2.16 Elsa shooting the man (left) and Charlotte shooting her lover (right)

Furthermore, in the aforementioned simulated sexual intercourse between Vera and Elsa, the voyeur turns out to be the dead husband through flashbacks. The man is watching the women from a distance, and is not moving closer to them or speaking. He is presented as weak and passive, and he has no name and no memory. At the end of the film, he begs Elsa not to throw him in the pool again, and he only asks for cigarettes. The representation of the man in the film suggests his passivity: he has no agency; he is lurking around the house and the garden in the dark; his movements are slow; he is a zombie. This fact certifies Nikolaidis’s films as hybrid since the filmmaker explicitly uses elements from the horror genre, or the thriller, in order to create a new film.

Consequently, in *SYIHMD*, Nikolaidis once again undermines the male character of his film, denying him the characteristics of the hero. Additionally, continuing with what he started in *SS*, Nikolaidis further attacks patriarchal society through male representation. Elsa's father is barely mentioned in the film; he belongs to the past since he is dead as well. When the two women try to get rid of the husband's body, they want to bury the corpse next to Elsa's father's grave, because this is where he belongs to. Patriarchy is dead. The two women do not need the father nor the man. On the contrary, they make fun of the dead father when they ask him to move over in order to add an extra person to his grave – if the father does not mind – laughing incessantly as they do.

Though indirectly, men are once again feminised in this film. The statue on the father's grave, which seems like a wooden handcrafted caricature, appears to have breasts on which two golden earrings have been placed (Fig5.2.17). The feminisation of male characters in this film does not share similarities with the respective male feminisation in *TZY* or in *SS*, though *SYIHMD* ridicules men to the same extent. In this film, the feminised and carnivalised person is not the husband, as he is already presented as pacified from the beginning of the film. The unseen, dead father and his obsolete authority are feminised instead. The grave in the garden¹⁸ draws associations with *SS* and *TWASS*, since the detective and Laura in the first film and Vera in the second are buried in the same garden.



Fig5.2.17 The statue on the father's grave

One of the most important statements that Nikolaidis makes in this film is linked to the man and to his state of being a zombie. His state of passivity can represent the passivity and zombification of the late 1990s society and the filmmaker's suggestion that the contemporary audience passively accepts everything it sees on screen. Therefore the

¹⁸ A concept borrowed from *HHSC* where father's grave is located in the garden.

zombie is an attack on the non-cineliterate and non-cinephile audience, but it is also a more explicit attack on the Greek audiences who passively watch Greek films filtered through the state (GFC). According to Nikolaidis, the state only aims to zombify the viewers.¹⁹ When asked about the Greek cinematic situation in Greece in the late 1990s, Nikolaidis replied: ‘The televisual body is now camouflaged and projected on 35mm film, on silver screens, organised by cloned people for cloned spectacle viewers, entrapped in digital screening rooms-cells...’²⁰ The passivity of the man in *SYIHMD* is reinforced by the imagery. The man is refused an active look, since his glasses are broken (Fig5.2.18). He has a distorted vision, which he passively accepts. Once again Nikolaidis reverses the active-male \neq passive-female dyad by refusing to allow the man to have an active look; this is now exclusively women’s task.



Fig5.2.18 The man in broken glasses

In contrast to the zombified man in the film, the women appear to have an active gaze. As in *SS*, the women narrate their story directly towards the camera and the spectators. In doing so, they further alienate themselves from the audience. The once again awkward acting adds on their paranoia. This look towards the camera and the spectators is a female look. The filmmaker gives the women the chance to return the gaze. Specifically, when Elsa sets up the video camera to record the simulated sexual intercourse between Elsa-as-husband and Vera, the spectators are presented with her perspective and what she sees through the camera lens (Fig5.2.19). Although what follows is also watched by the man behind the blinds, it is simultaneously recorded on Elsa’s camera, as was the actual erotic scene of her husband having sex with Vera. The subjective point-of-view in the erotic scene between Elsa’s husband and Vera is Elsa’s point-of-view, as she witnesses

¹⁹ Nikolaidis, interview with Takoniatis, 34.

²⁰ Nikos Nikolaidis, interview with Dora Amarantidou, BPA.

them. The most significant part of this scene, apart from the fact that the man is not visible, is that Vera returns the gaze by looking at Elsa, at Nikolaidis's camera and at the spectators directly, showing that she knows she is being watched and engaging the spectators in the game she plays with Elsa (Fig5.2.20).



Fig5.2.19 Elsa's point-of-view from her camera



Fig5.2.20 Vera returns the gaze

When Vera is having sex with the man, she wears the mask she wore during the robbery, thus concealing her gaze from him. Vera decides when to look and whom to look at, a fact that shows that the relationship between the two women is stronger than that of the women and the man. This claim is reconfirmed by their statement that they have always slept with each other's lovers, making this situation seem like a game where men are their pawns. The active female look is also presented in the scene where Elsa wears glasses and reads out a letter that Vera had written to the man. According to Doane,

the woman with glasses signifies simultaneously intellectuality and undesirability; but the moment she removes her glasses [...] she is transformed into spectacle, the very picture of desire. [...] Glasses worn

by women in the cinema do not generally signify a deficiency in seeing but an active looking, or even simply the fact of seeing as opposed to being seen.²¹

In *SYIHMD* although Elsa's active look is reinforced by her glasses, her framing and body posture negates undesirability. As seen in (Fig5.2.21), Elsa is simultaneously fetishized and presented as a bearer of an active look, self-aware of her own objectified position. Elsa is placed in the centre of the frame and the low camera angle emphasises her attractive legs in high heels. Behind her the background is dark and blurry, only allowing some shadows to be distinguished and retaining a focus on Elsa. The fact that she is concurrently smoking also stresses her phallic nature, but at the same time confounds female representation in Nikolaidis's work, since she has an eroticized body posture.



Fig5.2.21 Elsa in glasses

5.2.4 Concluding Remarks

SYIHMD pastiches two films that share common elements and creates a 'necrophilic' film which expresses the filmmaker's longing for film noir. At the same time, the influence of other genres is detected, highlighting the hybrid nature of Nikolaidis's work. The explicitly pastiched elements from the original films show that *SYIHMD* addresses cinephile audiences and condemns the 'zombified' viewers through male representation in the film. Nikolaidis's nostalgia for film noir is also presented through the imagery, which imitates black and white photography. Elsa and Vera are 'fatal femmes', take advantage of the man, have an active, and subvert patriarchy. However, the women are also highly eroticised, thus their empowerment is challenged and the film becomes Nikolaidis's fantasy, along the lines of *SS*.

²¹ Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, 27.

Chapter 6: *Here No More Trilogy*

Introduction

The Wretches Are Still Singing, *Sweet Bunch* and *Loser Takes All* all feature gangs and have narratives set in tangible worlds, rather than the fictional worlds featured in the previously analysed films. The clear spatiotemporal indications in *TWASS* and *LTA*, differentiate this trilogy from the narratives of the films from the previous sections. The specificity of time and place that is assigned to this trilogy is due to Nikolaidis's autobiographical elements, but is also due to the actors' personal experiences, which they incorporate in the films. The protagonists in the three films share characteristics in terms of their backgrounds and their influences. They reference the rock 'n' roll culture and youth delinquency of the 1950s. Popular culture elements define the films and contribute towards the use of pastiche.

TWASS is about a delinquent gang of the 1950s that meets together in the late 1970s and attempts to recreate their actions from the 1950s. Nikolaidis is nostalgic for the 1950s and he projects his anxiety for the future, which seems bleak and destroyed without resistance. Nikolaidis pastiches various genres and films, and highlights that pastiche is not necessarily devoid of historicity. Similarly, in *SB* the viewers are presented with another antiauthoritarian gang whose members are embracing rock 'n' roll culture and American cinema. *SB* pastiches specific films and genres, creating new work and commenting on Nikolaidis's concerns and ideology.

LTA differs from the other two films in its depiction of contemporary socio-political concerns that do not facilitate the formation of a gang. The decision to locate this film in the real world justifies the reflection of contemporary social issues. This justification is based on the fact that Greece, and especially Athens of 2002 was not the same place as when Nikolaidis last made *SB* in the tangible world in 1983. In the time between the two films, many social phenomena emerged in Greece, the most significant being the waves of immigrants that the country received.¹ By deciding to chronologically locate the film, Nikolaidis presents, for the first time in his filmography, issues of the contemporary

¹ In the beginning of the 1990s, Greece from an emigration country turned into an immigration one. In 1991 there were 167.000 legal immigrants in Greece. During the following years, Greece received a plethora of immigrants, many of which were illegal. The 2001 census showed that 797.091 legal immigrants lived in Greece but when in 2001 the government suggested legalizing and assigning Greek nationality to the illegal immigrants, around 372.000 people submitted applications. Anna Triantafyllou, *Elliniki Metanasteutiki Politiki: Provlimata kai Katefthinseis/Greek Immigration Policy: Problems and Directions*, (Athens: Elliniko Idrima Evropaikis kai Eksoterikis Politikis, 2005), Viewed 23 January 2014, <http://www.eliamep.gr/old/eliamep/files/TRIAND.pdf>.

metropolis by either commenting on them or by merely incorporating them in the mise-en-scène. In this way he creates a pastiche noir. The 'death' of cinema and of rock 'n' roll culture is taken for granted in this film; the film noir genre is pastiche instead of any specific films. Female representation in all three films of the trilogy is very problematic, since the women follow the ambiguous representation of the previous chapters, but in this trilogy, the 'unimportant' women appear, confirming that Nikolaidis's work is misogynistic.

6.1 *The Wretches Are Still Singing*

Film Synopsis

In 1978, four friends who are around 40 years old meet up in Alkis's house (Alkis Panayotidis) after not having seen each other for many years. A fifth friend is invited but he is in prison. Alkis is an unsuccessful musician, divorced with two children that he does not see, and he is obsessed with the idea of a woman called Vera. He is a serial killer of women, and has just raped and killed a woman and brought her body home. When ex-convict Konstantinos (Konstantinos Tzoumas) arrives, who has no family and no obligations, they put the dead woman in an open hole in the garden, where an unnamed woman who has assumed Vera's role (Olia Lazaridou) is also placed. Rita (Rita Bensousan), a drunk and the only female member of the gang, arrives after escaping from the psychiatric hospital where she has been hospitalised for the last year after attacking and biting a man. Last to arrive is Christos (Christos Valavanidis), a comedian and a family man who seems unable to stand his family. When everyone is gathered, they attempt to revive the old days of the gang, as they talk nostalgically about the music, the films and their lives in the 1950s. They are all disappointed in politics. After spending time together and realising that they are themselves becoming more conventional and are unable to live as they used to in the 1950s, Konstantinos kills a woman and then commits suicide, Rita returns to the psychiatric clinic, feeling that it is safer being in it than being outside of it, Christos returns to his family, and Alkis shoots himself just before the fifth 'wretch' Dimitris (Dimitris Politimos) arrives at the house after being released from prison.

6.1.1 Pastiche, Style and Popular culture

TWASS is characteristic of Nikolaidis's pastiche work. The film contains elements of the 'nostalgia film', which describe *American Grafitti* according to Jameson. Nikolaidis, as well as the protagonists of *TWASS*, are nostalgic for the 1950s, for rock 'n' roll and popular culture, for the cinema of the time, and particularly for film noir. However, the film does not convey a stylised 'pastness' devoid of historicity, as Jameson¹ writes with regards to *AG*, but acquires critical perspective and comments on the Greek society between the 1950s and the 70s. The basic aspect of the film that does not allow the past to be treated as in *AG*, is the fact that Nikolaidis's film is not set in the 1950s, as *AG* is set in 1962, aiming to pastiche the atmosphere of the time. Instead, Nikolaidis brings the 1950s into the 70s

¹Jameson, 'Late Capitalism', 67.

through the use of pastiche. He sets up the past and present as being in dialogue with one another, in order to comment on the future. He talks about the specific part of the 1950s generation in the film's present (the 1970s), thus distancing the protagonists from the 50s, and allowing their experiences between the 50s and the 70s, which are addressed in the film, to be used as comments on their past, present and future. This fact is a key element for assessing the role and success of pastiche in this film since this film has a clear setting and location, unlike the sense of placelessness characterising his fictional narratives. Therefore there is a different use of pastiche to *AG*, a fact that shows the restrictiveness of Jameson's notion of pastiche and confirms why I use Dyer's instead.

TWASS is once again a pasticcio of pastiches. Nikolaidis pastiches specific genres – film noir, nostalgia films, documentary and musicals – but also specific films. He further pastiches literature, as he did in *MP*. The narrative is once again non-linear, and there is a frequent use of elliptical montage. The vivid warm colours of the film attribute a celluloid glow to the film and this, in combination with the use of bright, dark and red coloured props and costumes, creates an atmosphere similar to *SYIHMD*. In order to bring the 1950s into the 1970s more effectively and give a nostalgic tone to the film, Nikolaidis uses music of the 50s.

Music plays a central role in the film. During the opening credits, the unnamed woman who has assumed the role of Vera is presented digging her own grave in the garden, while a song by The Platters is heard. The detailed list of the film's soundtrack in the opening credits (Fig6.1.1) emphasise the importance of the songs heard in the film and more broadly underline the significance popular music for Nikolaidis.² After the opening credits, an antique jukebox appears, further emphasising a link to rock 'n' roll culture. This iconic image, in conjunction with the aforementioned song list, render the film into a filmic juke box. Taking into consideration Nikolaidis's claims that the only access to new rock 'n' roll songs was through film,³ Nikolaidis further pastiches the 1950s films about rock 'n' roll culture and adds elements of nostalgia to the film.

² The advertisements of the film in the press of the time also stress the significance of music in the film and list the twenty-five songs heard in the film (BPA).

³ Nikolaidis, interview with Triantafyllidis, *Billboard*.

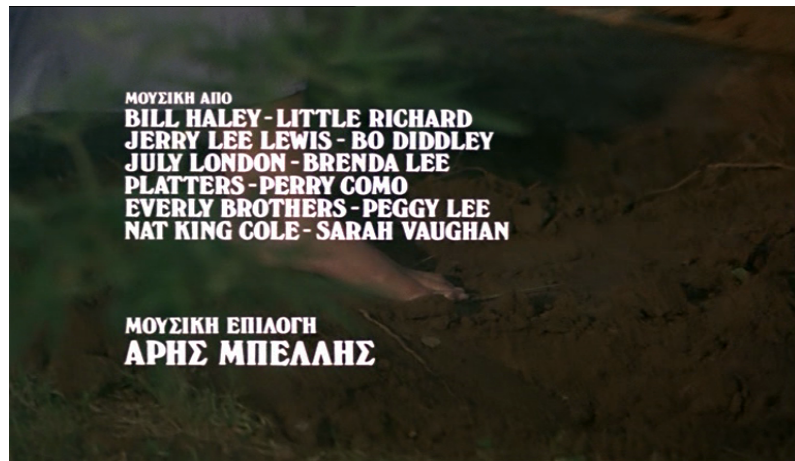


Fig6.1.1 The film's soundtrack

The role of music in the film is also alluded to in the characters' dialogue. Alkis and Konstantinos often repeat that 'things started going bad when that cretin Perry Como sang 'Glendora'.' They hence nostalgically remember listening to the song at 'Top Hat', the club they state that they went dancing in in 1956-1957, but also where Nikolaidis himself used to go. According to the filmmaker, this music died with 'Glendora' in 1956, a song that presented a 'seemly sound performance of rhythm which foretold its industrialisation at the end of the 1950s.'⁴ According to Katsapis, the dissolution of rock 'n' roll indeed started in 1956, since music industries started creating cover songs of successful African-American music, turning them into rock 'n' roll songs in order to make a profit.⁵ Nikolaidis thus has selected the music of an era that finished with 'Glendora' for the film score, in an effort to both recreate the atmosphere of the time and stress his necrophilic tendencies towards the 'dead' music and 'dead' cinema.

Apart from the popular rock 'n' roll songs of the time, theme songs from two 1950s films are also heard in the film: 'Ruby'⁶ from King Vidor's *Ruby Gentry* (1952) and 'Johnny Guitar'⁷ from Nicolas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954). These songs assume an 'interactive' role with the narrative, instead of merely dressing it with background music. 'Ruby' is heard when Konstantinos first arrives to the house, rings the bell and Alkis opens the door. The following dialogue, in combination with the mise-en-scène, highlights Nikolaidis's pastiche work. It also reveals a system of communication between the 'wretches' that is based on American cinema, as well as underlines the significance of partnership, which is a main topic in this film in particular and in all of Nikolaidis's films

⁴ Nikolaidis, interview with Kokkinos, 228.

⁵ Katsapis, *Sounds and Reverberations*, 44.

⁶ By Victor Young and His Orchestra.

⁷ By Peggy Lee.

in general. Konstantinos stands at the threshold of the door and holds a flashlight, which blinds Alkis and does not allow him to see who is there.

Konstantinos: Hey wretch.

Alkis: Who is this?

Konstantinos: You look just about the same, you know that?

Alkis: If you'd switched off the light so I could see you, I'd tell you if you've changed. Go on, give me the setting.

Konstantinos: You go first.

Alkis: *Ruby Gentry*.

Konstantinos: Jennifer Jones (withdrawing the light from Alkis and casting it on to his own face)

This dialogue pastiches *RG*, not only because the film title and the protagonist are mentioned, but also because the scene is a recreation of a scene from *RG*: when Boake (Charlton Heston) arrives at Ruby's (Jennifer Jones) house, she welcomes him by casting light to his face, hindering him from seeing her, and telling him 'Hey stranger. You look just about the same to me' (Fig6.1.2). Therefore, elements of pastiche are traced in the music, dialogue and the mise-en-scène of *TWASS*. As in the previously analysed films, the scene is not merely recreated, but Nikolaidis incorporates his own personal style. The point-of-view changes from *RG* to Nikolaidis's film in order for him to add layers of perspective that had already started becoming part of his characteristic style since *EBA*.



Fig6.1.2 Alkis in *TWASS* (left) and Boake in *RG* (right)

Nikolaidis pastiches *JG* differently in *TWASS*. The eponymous song is heard in the last scene of Ray's film, when Vienna (Joan Crawford) reunites with Johnny (Sterling Hayden) after a duel, and they start a better life. In *TWASS*, 'Johnny Guitar' is heard in the last scene as well, when Dimitris arrives at the house but everyone is 'gone'. They have all left for a better place, as Vienna and Johnny do in *JG*; either by returning to their re-evaluated everyday conventional lives or by committing suicide, which was considered by Nikolaidis a catharsis and an expression of non-conformism. According to Nikolaidis, when people

commit suicide, they deprive the system of a vital and productive unit, which has negative implications to the system since it loses voters: ‘Committing suicide is not a compromise; you leave for better places. It is important that *you* decide when you leave, and not them to make you decide.’⁸ Hence, in this case Nikolaidis does not recreate a scene, but uses the connoted sense of freedom conjured up in the original film and pastiches it in his film by appropriating it to allude to his own concerns and messages.

Although the narrative of *TWASS* is more realistic than the films analysed in this thesis so far, Nikolaidis’s influences are the same. Therefore, the film’s mise-en-scène does not diverge much from the mise-en-scènes of the films of the two previous sections.⁹ The influence of film noir style is once again recognised in the night shots, in the use of rain, in the shadows of the film, in the lighting, in Alkis’s antique car, and in the voice-over that narrates the story while Alkis is dead, creating connections with *Sunset Boulevard* and *SS*. Other genres are also detected. After the opening credits, the viewers are presented with Alkis’s ritualistic suicide: he takes off his clothes, shooting himself and crawling to his drums to play for the last time, while in a parallel montage the spectators are given a series of flashbacks and flash-forwards. After that, and in a parallel montage to Alkis playing drums, the viewers are presented with sequences of three people talking about Alkis. The audience is presented to an unknown woman who does not appear again in the film, the unnamed woman who has taken Vera’s role, and Dimitris who talks about Alkis’s latest behaviour, all addressing the camera directly (Fig6.1.3). However, this direct camera address is not reminiscent of similar techniques used in *TWLAC* diptych, but is instead used in order to make the film appear as a documentary. I argue that this genre is imitated in an effort to show that Alkis and the rest of the ‘wretches’ are not simply figments of Nikolaidis’s imagination, but their characters can find expression in a tangible world.



Fig6.1.3 'Vera' (left) and Dimitris (right) addressing the camera directly

⁸ Nikolaidis, interview with Frangkoulis.

⁹ The narrative takes place in the house where *EBA*, *SS* and *SYIHMD* were shot.

This film is also influenced by Hollywood musicals. Although there are no scenes in which the protagonists sing and dance simultaneously, there are scenes where they dance or perform acts directly linked to the song that is playing at that moment in the film. For instance, Alkis and Konstantinos perform an act to the song ‘Glendora’. The song ‘Glendora’ is about a man who fell in love with a mannequin in a store window, and he is heartbroken when the mannequin is dismembered during the store renovation. While this song is heard, Alkis and Konstantinos are playing around and pose with the woman Alkis killed, who is now naked and wrapped in plastic, in order for the blood to be drained.¹⁰ The dead woman assumes the role of the mannequin and the prop of the ‘wretches’ act (Fig6.1.4), and makes the act appear as a scene from a musical. The musical genre is further pastiched in Konstantinos’s and Christos’s dancing routine to the non-diegetic song ‘Just Friends’.¹¹ The song stresses the significance of friendship, which is a vital notion in this film. This dancing routine also consists of comic elements because they dance in a comical way (exaggerating moves), and due to the actors’ contrastive appearance: Konstantinos is tall and thin and Christos is short and overweight (Fig6.1.5). Therefore, the hybrid nature of Nikolaidis’s filmmaking is confirmed here as well. It is also evident that hybridity is traced in his early filmic work.



Fig6.1.4 Konstantinos and Alkis posing with the dead woman

¹⁰ Connecting her image to *EBA* and the plastic connoting death.

¹¹ By Ray Coniff Singers.



Fig6.1.5 Christos and Konstantinos in their dancing routine

Nikolaidis's and the protagonists' nostalgia for this 'lost' cinema also becomes apparent in a scene when the four characters go to an open-air cinema in the daytime and take seats as if they were waiting for the film to start (Fig6.1.6). The act of sitting in the open-air cinema off-season resembles a ritual for the protagonists' farewell to the 1950s films and a 'funeral' for the cinema they – and Nikolaidis – appreciated. In this scene the 'wretches' do not mourn exclusively over film noir and the course of the cinema, but they also grieve for the idea of cinema in the 1950s by talking about films and actors from the 1950s. This scene can be connected to the respective scene in *MP*, where the protagonist watches *Gilda* alone in an empty cinema that is used as a trap, symbolising the threat of the future of cinema.



Fig6.1.6 The 'wretches' in the open-air cinema

The image of the four characters sitting alone in the cinema, with no other people nearby, emphasises their alienation from modern (at the time) society. Their estrangement after the dissolution of the rock 'n' roll culture is stressed. Also, their estrangement from

the culture of the cinema-going in the 1950s when they were active in the screenings, in the way that Alkis describes his meeting with Vera in the beginning of the film, is highlighted. Alkis describes how he met Vera in the cinema 'Maxim' in 1956, when police were arresting cinema-goers for dancing to the rock 'n' roll music heard in the film. This incident appears to be a real-life incident that Nikolaidis experienced, since he also writes about it in *A Hit in the Eye of Montezouma*¹² and mentions it in an interview.¹³ According to Nikolaidis, what interested people back in the 1950s was companionship, thus it was important that they could dance with people that they did not know as if they were friends.¹⁴ After the socio-political turmoil that Greek citizens experienced after the 1950s, the part of the generation that Nikolaidis talks about opted to stay away from the masses, since the sense of companionship was lost. Therefore, Nikolaidis presents the 'wretches' in the 1970s in a condition of anomie, where individualism prevails and companionship and community are lost.

This expression of the longing for companionship is also presented through film dialogue. Unlike the previously analysed films, *TWASS* is very much a film based on dialogue. The protagonists use a communication code where, in addition to cinema, they also reference literature, music and certain trends from the 1950s, and therefore the dialogue pastiches the aforementioned cultural forms. The protagonists complete each other's sentences, showing that they grew up in each other's company and under the same influences. Thus Nikolaidis makes it evident that he expresses a cultural nostalgia and not a historical one, since he only looks back at the culture of the 1950s. The dialogue, the characters' choice of words and their choice of expressions are memorable, but the witty dialogue is lost when translated, a fact that might limit the film to a Greek speaking audience.

Many of the sentences that the protagonists use are extracts from 1950s Greek poetry. Extracts from the poetry of Dallas, Kariotakis and Kavadias are pastiched in the film, in

¹² The novel's protagonist (and Nikolaidis himself) was participating in a demonstration when the police started attacking people with tear gas. While running, he encountered a police squad attacking a girl, saved her and they run to hide together. Many people were hiding in cinema 'Maxim', where a film was on that the soundtrack of which included 'See You Later Alligator' and 'Long Tall Sally', as he writes. He further writes that people started dancing in the cinema while the ushers were trying to keep the audience calm. (Nikolaidis, *Hit in the Eye*, 49-53).

¹³ Nikolaidis, interview with Chrysopoulos. This can be partly confirmed since Katsapis writes that both *Blackboard Jungle* and *Rock Around the Clock* were screened at 'Maxim' in 1956 (Katsapis, *Sounds and Reverberations*, 53 and 73), and at the screenings of both films worldwide, similar incidents have been reported, as also stated in Chapter 3.

¹⁴ Nikolaidis, interview with Chrysopoulos.

the same way that literary excerpts are pastiched in *MP*. In *Pigs in the Air*, Nikolaidis writes about the determinant role of the ‘three Ks’ in his life: Kavvadias, Kavafis and Kariotakis.¹⁵ Extracts from these three poets can be found throughout his work and especially in *TWASS*. It can be argued that these three poets were selected because they all wrote about marginalised characters, love and death, topics that concerned Nikolaidis. The poets’ lives were also characterised by factors such as their own marginalisation¹⁶ and their suicidal tendencies¹⁷ that are also detected in Nikolaidis’s films. Thus, by referencing these poets and pastiching their works in the film’s dialogue rather than merely citing them, Nikolaidis reconfirms the pastiche nature of his work. He also shows that apart from cineliterate, the audiences of his films need to have a general knowledge of Greek literature in the 1950s. In this sense, Nikolaidis asks for a generally literate audience. However, this film was very popular to the audiences who quite possibly did not recognise the pastiched films and literary excerpts, but instead focused on the rebellious atmosphere of the film. Subsequently, Nikolaidis brought high art to the mainstream audience in *TWASS*. Nikolaidis shows that he is irreverent of the high culture and does not hesitate to combine high and popular culture in order to produce a pastiche work. The fact that Nikolaidis does not respect Greek high culture by placing it next to American popular culture is a basic reason for why his work was being attacked by the Greek film critics of the late 1970s.

6.1.2 Society and Politics

The poetry pastiched in *TWASS* has political undertones, and thus political and antiauthoritarian ideas are traced in the protagonists’ dialogue in the film. The films analysed so far in this thesis are highly political, but tend to refer to the system and the unseen state without naming or mapping it, instead appearing to comment on any form of fascist state. Along with the clear film location, *TWASS* is attributed actual political dimensions, and the ‘wretches’ refer to real political incidents. Also, the protagonists’ roles consist of an amalgamation of the actors’ personal stories and of Nikolaidis’s own experiences, a fact that shows Nikolaidis’s collaboration with the film cast. All actors have kept their real names in the film narrative. They do not assume a character but they play versions of themselves.¹⁸ Personal information about Nikolaidis that can be traced in his

¹⁵ Nikolaidis, *Pigs*, 360.

¹⁶ Kavafis was marginalised for being a homosexual.

¹⁷ Kariotakis committed suicide by shooting himself, after unsuccessfully trying to drown himself.

¹⁸ For instance, Panayotidis was a drummer in real life, playing drums in a band called M.G.C., which Politimos joined to play piano just after Panayotidis left the band. Moreover, Tzoumas in his autobiographical book *Os Ek Thavmatos/Like a Miracle* (2008) describes the 1950s in a similar way to Nikolaidis.

books and interviews can also be found in the film.¹⁹ It could be also claimed that Alkis represents a part of Nikolaidis's self: he is an artist and lives in his wife's house, (Bartholomew's house in real life); he also has two children about whom he hallucinates at some point in the film;²⁰ and both Alkis and Nikolaidis are obsessed with the idea of Vera and everything she represents. It can therefore be claimed that this film is Nikolaidis's most autobiographical film, in the sense that it includes real-life incidents that are also referenced in his novels and his interviews.

In *TWASS*, the words 'politics', 'system' and 'identity' are articulated for the first time in Nikolaidis's filmic work. All four 'wretches' are openly against the system, they do not support any political party, and it is their 'right to resist', as Christos says. They talk about their efforts to get involved in political actions, the political disillusionment and their ultimate decision to refrain from politics. Rita says that their generation went through 'rape with murder', thus connecting their situation to Alkis's habit. Rita further attacks the 'white system': the psychiatric hospital where she is an inmate. In a monologue, she states that her attack on the man is a cover story. It was made up by her parents in order to have her admitted into the hospital so they could keep her close to them, instead of letting her go to Germany, where she had been living before she returned to Greece in order to have an abortion. Her story underlines the highly repressive role of the Greek family and exposes Rita as a victim of the patriarchal family that prefers to have their daughter hospitalised than to let her leave them.

The conventional way that people were expected to live in the 1970s is characteristically described by Konstantinos: 'a happy career, social recognition, bank deposits, a blond lover and all that jazz.' Konstantinos disparages these ideals and considers himself a free spirit. He is openly against the system and is an ex-convict who has been sent to prison multiple times, but he never talks about his experience. His act of shooting the woman towards the end of the film is his last cry for staying uncompromised. Alkis, although he is secretive about his past, is an antiauthoritarian himself, and this is reinforced by the fact that James Joll's book *The Anarchist* (1964) is on his bookshelf. Despite being an antiauthoritarian, he lives in the mansion his wife left him after the divorce, going against what he preaches, and this is a fact that may have factored into his decision to commit suicide. Thus with this film, as well as the next one, Nikolaidis displays a desire for a rebellious and non-conforming life, away from the fascist state.

¹⁹ For instance, Christos says that he was born in a clinic in Kyvelis Street. This same line is repeated in Nikolaidis's interviews when asked where he grew up (see for instance Nikolaidis, interview with Soldatos), as well as in *PITA*, and is connected to *The Children of Kyvelis Street*, a Nikolaidis's unpublished novels.

²⁰ The children presented are Nikolaidis's kids.

The film's broad idea about of the 1950s generation's disappointment with how politics and society have restricted them to act freely and independently and have dictated their life choices can be summarised in Christos's monologue:

I was forced into the University without being asked. I was enlisted as a soldier without being asked either. And finally, without knowing how, I found myself married. Let it be. There was a time, no need to hide it, I got involved in politics and riots and had troubles with the cops. I got my share of beating. Protests about Cyprus, Ioulia, ²¹ demonstrations... And just when I thought that something started to happen, once again without asking me, they shitted on my ideals.

Christos succinctly describes what Nikolaidis often calls a 'lost generation', a generation which experienced a plethora of transitional socio-political circumstances, which was repressed by family and society, and which attempted to be politicised, but felt betrayed by politics and politicians.

This disillusionment with politics and with society has turned the film's characters into conventional beings. Subsequently, they desire to return to the culture of the 1950s, where they were united together. In order to attempt to relive this culture and return back to their lives in the 1950s, they begin to perform the delinquent rebellious behaviour they used to do and that was associated with 1950s rock 'n' roll culture: they throw yogurt at each other, similarly to how they used to throw yogurt at the police, they steal cars and they have a rock 'n' roll 'erotic party'.²² However, they soon realise that things have changed: their friendship is not real anymore and they begin to doubt if it ever really was, since Rita admits that she knew that they were using her in order to get introduced to girls as well as to have sexual intercourse with her. Therefore the 'ideal' culture that was created in the 1950s is deconstructed and the protagonists realise that it was nothing more than a myth.

6.1.3 Female Representation

Female representation in *TWASS* differs significantly to the previously analysed films, and the 'unimportant' women appear for the first time in Nikolaidis's filmic work. During the 'erotic party' that the characters organise, unintelligent, unnamed, naked, and mainly blond women, with no agency or voice, appear as sexual props for the men in the gang.²³ Moreover, the 'video-clip' scene of 'Glendora' further challenges female representation in the film, since Alkis and Konstantinos transform a dead woman into a

²¹ Ioulia, or Royal Coup, refers to the riots and the crisis emerged with the transition from a socialist government to kingship on the 15th of July 1965.

²² According to what was described in Chapter 3.

²³ Connecting *TWASS* with Nikolaidis's novels.

mannequin for their own entertainment. The idea of the femme fatale is still present, not only in the classic femme fatale, who are mentioned in the film, but also in the idea of Vera, of Rita of the 1950s and generally of the women of the 1950s. What is presented in Nikolaidis's work once again is the system's victimisation of women: the women in *TWASS* are presented as already destroyed, 'raped and murdered', as Rita says. Therefore, the misogynistic elements of the film are clear.

A controversial entity in the film is the idea of Vera. Although the actual Vera is not present, she haunts Alkis, the house and the film's narrative.²⁴ Alkis has become obsessed with her image and the idea of her, and he looks for her in various different women. Alkis's fixation with Vera and with the 1950s is apparent in his attack on the woman he kills and brings home. When he forces the woman into his car, and presumably every woman that Alkis has killed, he announces that she is about to meet Fats Domino, and he treats her as if she was Vera: he asks her if she remembers the riots at 'Maxim' and the songs heard in the film. This 'ritual' that Alkis follows with his victims confirms that he has been living in the past, refusing to move into the present and adopt a more conventional lifestyle. This adherence to the past is reinforced by the fact that he wears a college jacket, which is characteristic of rock 'n' roll popular culture. His fascination with the 1950s is also the reason why his wife divorced him and took his children away. His disappointment with Greece's socio-political situation over the last decades, the dissolution of film noir and of rock 'n' roll have turned Alkis into a melancholic person who refuses to cope with his contemporaneity. His melancholia is enhanced by his grief for his two deceased friends Yorgos 'Swing' and Kostas, whose deaths are addressed in the narrative and who were connected to his life in the 1950s.

All the things that Alkis, and Nikolaidis himself, used to believe in and live for in the 1950s are incorporated within the idea of Vera. This prevailing ideology of Vera is articulated by the unnamed woman in Vera's role who addresses Alkis in a flashback:

Maybe Brenda Lee, Billy Halley and Fats Domino live and attract you to places that others cannot see. But this Vera of yours... You must accept that Vera is the name of an age that is gone forever. And when we too are gone, my times may be named after you.

This statement can be used for the ideas of 'Vera', 'Laura', and 'Molly' that recur throughout Nikolaidis's oeuvre. Indeed 'Vera' in this film becomes a symbol of 1950s culture with which the 'wretches' and Nikolaidis are obsessed: the music, the cinema and the femme fatale, both in film and in real-life. The quest for the lost 'Vera' is the quest for

²⁴ It can be claimed that the idea of Vera as Euridice's alter ego in *EBA*, who is enclosed in the very house where *TWASS* narrative takes place, has remained in the mansion to perpetuate her presence.

the lost 'Laura', for the lost film noir and the rock 'n' roll phenomenon that Nikolaidis mourns for, attempts to recreate and express his appreciation through a pastiche of 'nostalgia films' and film noir. The 'combinatory' essence of pastiche that Dyer argues about helps Nikolaidis to combine his 'lost loves' together. The quest for the lost 'Vera' lingers between Eros and Thanatos, as does Nikolaidis's cinema, and which is expressed through the necrophilia and a fetish for the medium.

The woman who has assumed Vera's role has been living with Alkis for the last two years. Her effort to look like Vera is evident in one particular scene. In a flashback scene, she rides her bicycle in the garden of the house on a rainy day and then enters the kitchen where Alkis is cooking. The blurred edges of the image in the specific scene ascribe a dreamlike atmosphere to the scene, convey the eerie, ghost-like presence of this woman, and also connect this scene to 'nostalgia films'. This blurred image signifies the flashback, since the scene is presented as if it is part of a linear narrative: after this scene, Alkis exits the kitchen, and is found in the dining room serving food to Konstantinos the night that the 'wretches' meet up. When 'Vera' enters into the kitchen, Alkis remains indifferent and keeps cooking, ignoring her. She gives him flowers and tells him not to turn around until she says so. She puts on a grey raincoat (Fig6.1.7) and asks him to look at her. When he sees her, he turns his gaze away from her in a disinterested manner, while 'Vera' comments: 'It seems that I got it wrong once again.'



Fig6.1.7 'Vera' with the grey raincoat

In the conversation between the unnamed woman and Alkis that follows it is revealed that this woman has been living under Vera's shadow: she bought a grey raincoat because Vera was wearing one when Alkis met her, she dyed her hair in order to look like her, and she lets him call her Vera. She has become a living-doll in Alkis's hands, who

wishes to make her look like the woman he is obsessed with. This kind of Pygmalion²⁵ obsession for the ideal woman, and the ‘sculpting’ of a woman to render her identical to the object of fixation can be associated with *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958). When Scottie (James Steward) in *Vertigo* encounters a woman that looks like Madeleine (Kim Novak), his lost love with whom he is fixated, he attempts to recreate the woman in order for her to look like Madeleine: he has the woman’s hair dyed, buys her the exact same clothes that Madeleine wore and takes her to the places that he and Madeleine went.

Vertigo and *TWASS* share many characteristics in terms of the male protagonists’ fascination with a non-existent woman, their fascination with death, and the projection of these elements into the films’ mise-en-scène. Modleski writes that in *Vertigo*,

the source of the man’s fascination with the woman is her own fascination with death, with the gaping abyss, which she hallucinates as her own open grave and which is imaged continually in the film in many arch-shaped forms of church, museums, cemeteries, mission.²⁶

According to Modleski, the mise-en-scène of the scene when Madeleine sits in front of her ancestor’s painting, where is presented having her hair as the woman’s in the painting, and holding the same bouquet of flowers, idealises the woman, but also connects Madeleine to death.²⁷ In a similar vein, in *TWASS* (as well as in every Nikolaidis’s film) the protagonists are closely associated with death. I claim that the flowers that ‘Vera’ gives Alkis have associations with death in the same way that the aforementioned scene in *Vertigo* does. In contrast to the light-blue dress in which ‘Vera’ is buried or to the white one she wears when Christos sees her after she is already dead, the brown dress that ‘Vera’ is wearing in the scene in the kitchen is reminiscent of the colour of the soil where she ends up being buried in (Fig5.1.8). The flowers she holds enhance these associations with death, just as Madeleine’s flowers connote a funeral.

²⁵ Pygmalion in Greek mythology sculpted the statue of the ideal woman and fall in love with his own creation. Venus heard his prayers and brought Galatea to life. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. ‘Pygmalion’, Viewed 20 August 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/484560/Pygmalion>.

²⁶ Modleski, *Women Who Knew Too Much*, 91.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

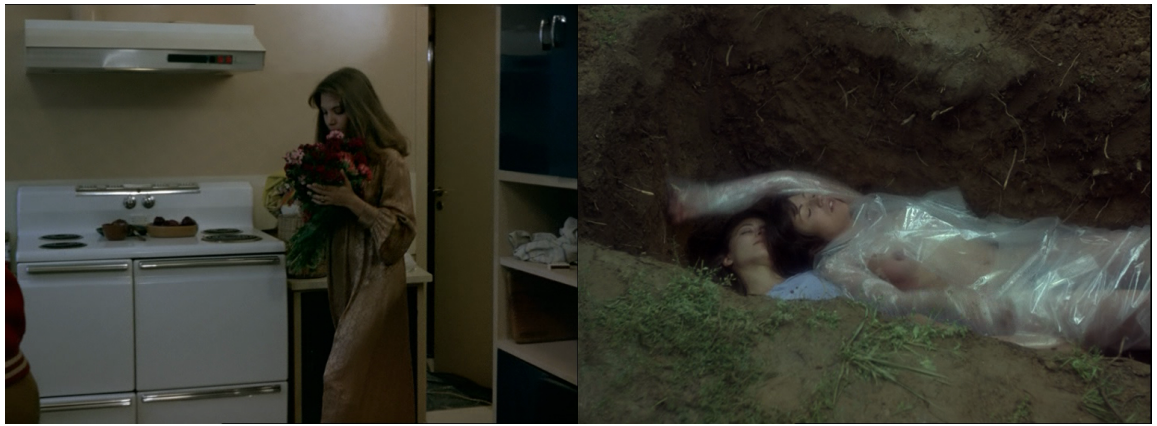


Fig6.1.8 ‘Vera’ with flowers and a brown dress (left) and ‘Veras’ in an open grave (right)

In *Vertigo*, Madeleine dreams of her open grave, whereas in *TWASS* ‘Vera’ digs her own grave. This grave is never covered with soil but is temporally covered with a plastic cover so as to keep the water out. The open grave shows this premonition with death, the forthcoming death of the two ‘wretches’, as well as the metaphorical death of the 1950s generation that haunts the protagonists. When in the beginning of the film Dimitris addresses the camera directly, he states that Alkis lately preferred to be alone, away from everyone. Whenever Dimitris would bring women to cheer Alkis up, Alkis would say: ‘in my generation in order to love a woman she had to have some death qualities. Those bimbos that you keep bringing here, what qualities do they have?’ This statement is connected with the death of the ideal woman, the quest for film noir and for rock ‘n’ roll culture, and with the death of the ‘wretches’ and the ‘raped and murdered’ generation.

These ‘bimbos’ that Dimitris mentions are the ‘unimportant’ women. They are representative of a new generation, since they are in their twenties, and they are the outcomes of the historical and socio-political situation. The system has turned these new generations into ‘bimbos’, into passive people who do not doubt or resist anything. These women can then be read as victims of the state and their representation is characterised by misogynistic elements. Moreover, in the case of the dead woman covered in plastic, there may be a further reason for Alkis’s attack on her. The woman is presented in tennis clothes and holds a tennis racket. Tennis is mostly associated with wealthy people in Greece and tennis courts are found in the most affluent areas of Athens. Mistaking Alkis for a thief, she assures him that she has money to give him in order to let her go. The fact that she comes from an affluent background is not coincidental since Nikolaidis also often attacks the aristocracy.

Scottie in *Vertigo* and Alkis in *TWASS* share many characteristics. According to Modleski, Scottie's 'desire to merge with a woman who in some sense doesn't exist',²⁸ is a desire for self-annihilation. Similarly, Alkis desires a woman whom he does not know really exists, and his desire to merge with her leads him closer to self-destruction. Similarly to Scottie, Alkis looks for Vera everywhere and sees her in the face of the women he murders. When both Scottie and Alkis find the woman who looks similar to their 'lost loves', they 'rema[ke] them [...] into the fully fetishised and idealised, 'constructed' object of male desire and male 'design'.'²⁹ Unlike Scottie, who has encountered the woman he was looking for but loses her in the end, Alkis has not found Vera. His efforts to trace her are fruitless, and his disappointment at the unnamed woman's 'wrong' attempts to look like Vera, wreak havoc with his mental state.

In *Vertigo*, Scottie encounters this 'wrong' quality in the 'new' Madeleine who, after all the changes that Scottie forces her to undergo, comes out as 'a debased version of her former self',³⁰ as Modleski claims. She adds that 'the melancholiac's disappointment in the love object results, says Freud, in hatred coming to the fore: 'the hate comes into operation on [the] substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering'.³¹ Scottie does not go to the extremes in forcing 'Madeleine' to confess that she was the same woman all along; alternatively, Alkis's melancholic disposition is not consoled by the unnamed woman's mediocre imitations, and thus he resorts to extreme behaviour, such as raping and killing Vera's substitutes, to derive sadistic satisfaction.

The idealisation of 1950s women is prominent in *TWASS*, as in Nikolaidis's other films. Vera is the idea of a femme fatale who haunts Alkis and drives his actions. Her absence works similarly to the way Laura's painting operates in Preminger's film: magnetising men and making them fall in love with her even though they have never met her. Vera is thus at the same time 'the Eternal Woman [who] remains beyond reach of the mire.'³² She has the 'death quality' that connects her to her absence, to the women Alkis kills in her name, to the dead femme fatale, to the 'dead' film noir and rock 'n' roll culture and to the open graves in the gardens.

In *TWASS*, Rita is connected to femme fatale in terms of who she was in the 1950s. Her past is described as similar to that of Nikolaidis's other female protagonists: she felt empowered and independent and thought she had an equal place in a male-dominated gang.

²⁸ Ibid., 94.

²⁹ Ibid., 96.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 97.

³² Martin, 'Gilda Didn't Do Those Things', 211.

However, her present-day self admits that she knew she was used, which places her in the category of the sexually liberated rock ‘n’ roll girls mentioned in Chapter 3. Consequently, both her current and past representation is highly problematic. Her effect on Christos is also similar to the effect that Vera has on Alkis: Christos confesses that he was thinking of Rita all these years and he asked his wife to dye her hair blond in order to resemble Rita. His obsession with a woman can also be said to be why Christos is the only one to see ‘Vera’ after Alkis has killed her and dropped her in the open grave.

When Rita first arrives at the house, she wears a cape and a mask, resembling a superheroine (Fig6.1.9). Her appearance and the story of how she bit a man presents her as a femme fatale and a ‘spider woman’. However, when it is revealed that she refuses to take off her mask because she is afraid that the ‘wretches’ will make fun of her ageing looks, as well as when the story of her biting the man is revealed to be false, she is presented as another victim of society and of the system, as deconstructed by conventionality and politics. The femme fatale in this film has died with the memory of the 1950s’ women, with this generation’s ideals, with this generation’s films and music. The survivors of this disaster are the ‘bimbos’ in the film. These women are inhabitants of a devalued present with little sense of the future. Therefore, it becomes clear that women in real worlds in Nikolaidis’s films appear in an extremely misogynistic way.



Fig6.1.9 Rita initially appears as a superheroine

6.1.4 Concluding Remarks

My analysis of *TWASS* reveals that Jameson’s notion of pastiche as devoid of history, authorial signature and depth is restrictive and cannot be applied to all pastiche films. Nikolaidis pastiches the 1950s into the 1970s through film noir, popular American genres, specific films, rock ‘n’ roll culture, and Greek and foreign literature. The gap in the

protagonists' lives from the 1950s to the 70s, allows the turn to actual sociopolitical incidents. This gap also and allows the 'wretches' to justify their non-conformity to the system, and Nikolaidis to comment on the political situation in Greece and on the marginalized place that he believed this part of the 1950s generation to occupy. The film shamelessly mixes popular art with high art, conveys nostalgia for the past and anxiety for the future and projects the protagonists in a state of anomie. The motto 'Vera is the name of an age that is gone forever' summarises Nikolaidis's quest for the ideal woman, the ideal cinema and the ideal music, and exemplifies his fascination with death and his necrophilic tendencies. The lack of femme fatale, or their limitation to the past, bring the 'bimbos' in the narrative, who are the outcome of a non resisting generation. However, the fact that these unimportant women are also encountered in Nikolaidis's novels mitigates the last claim and underline the fact that Nikolaidis, by including them in his films, makes his misogyny evident.

6.2 *Sweet Bunch*

Film Synopsis

Sofia (Despoina Tomazani), Marina (Dora Masklavanou) and Argyris (Takis Moschos) are antiauthoritarians, lead immoral lives, steal, plot frauds and live in a commune. Sofia satisfies the necrophilic sexual pleasures of a man for a living, and with the money she earns she funds an antiauthoritarian organisation. Andreas (Takis Spyridakis) joins the other three characters in the commune after being released from prison where he was imprisoned for political reasons. Sofia's antiauthoritarian acts have provoked the authorities to place the house under surveillance and to send the 'blond guy' (Alkis Panayotidis) to watch them. The gang mocks and defies the 'blond guy' and get on with their lives, while he is still watching them. Argyris, who is an actor, tricks Andreas into playing in a pornographic film on his behalf. After the shooting of the film, an actress, Rosa (Lenia Polycrati), joins the house. Rosa suggests a plan for robbing the safe in a factory and asks for half of the money. The gang robs the safe but lies to her that it was empty, and Rosa leaves. Because the authorities are still surveying the house, Sofia asks the organisation that she helps for a safe place to hide, but the place that is suggested has already been attacked by the authorities. When Rosa is found at the gang's home heavily injured after being attacked by the 'blond guy', Sofia kills the 'blond guy'. In the morning, the gang hangs him from the balcony to signal war to the authorities, and they further steal guns and prepare for an attack. The authorities open fire against them, killing Sofia and Marina, and injuring Argyris. Andreas places a shotgun in Argyris's hand pointing into his own mouth while he does the same to him and they simultaneously kill each other.

6.2.1 Pastiche and Popular Culture

What I have so far established as Nikolaidis's distinctive style is once again evident in this film: frames full of props, baroque aesthetics, and a pastiche of different genres and specific films. The film consists of many of the narrative and iconic elements that I have detected across Nikolaidis's body of work, which exemplify his style as an auteur. The filmmaker's antiauthoritarian ideas and antifascist ideology constitute *SB*'s thematic focus. The impact of the rock 'n' roll music is evident in this film as well as the protagonists' way of life based on a rock 'n' roll culture which in turn defines them.

At the same time, *SB* bears a significant difference from the films analysed so far. For the first time in Nikolaidis's work, the audience is presented with a linear narration,

which consists of five days in the lives of the bunch members. The significance of time in this film lies in the fact that these are the protagonists' five last days, rendering the passage of time into a countdown to their death. Although the duration of the five days is evident, the year and the place of the narrative are not mentioned.

Pastiche becomes apparent in the film's title, since it pastiches Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969). The connection to Peckinpah's film is not restricted to the name, but points of commonality can be pinpointed in terms of style and narrative since *SB* imitates the western genre. Nikolaidis characterises *SB* as a 'chamber western', a hybrid deriving from *kammerspiel*, the 'chamber drama'¹ trend in German filmmaking, which was strongly influenced by German expressionism.² This characterisation is not only based on the film's final fight scene, but can be found in various other elements that connect the film to the genre. Hybridity is therefore also evident in this film.

TWB is about a group of ageing outlaws in the American West in 1931 who are unable to keep up with the latest technology in guns. After a failed bank robbery that results in many fatalities, the gang moves to Mexico to take up their last job, stealing a weapons shipment from a U.S. Army train. This last mission proves to be unsuccessful as well, and leads to a brutal and lethal final confrontation. Although initially *TWB* and *SB* do not appear similar, a plethora of connections can be detected. In both films, the main characters are outlaws and antiheroes instead of conventional heroes. They are non-productive members of their societies, they lead uncompromising lives, and they are the authorities' foes. According to Peckinpah, 'the western is a universal frame within which it is possible to comment on today.'³ Thus, through the western, Peckinpah reflects on 'the renegade self in the national heritage that has been repressed and displaced by the bureaucracy and technology of today.'⁴ In *SB*, Nikolaidis is not referring to the same issues that concerned Peckinpah; however, he uses the notion of the 'chamber western' to express his own concerns about fascist ideology, fascism's increasing authoritative power and the impact on contemporary societies.

SB portrays an actual fight between the authorities and the protagonists. Themes of antiauthoritarianism in Nikolaidis's film are shared with Peckinpah's *TWB* since the use of violence in the latter film 'is deeply involved with profound humanist and antiauthoritarian

¹ Nikolaidis, interview with Tsakoniatis, 45.

² Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2003), 95.

³ Sam Peckinpah qtd. in Stephen Prince, 'Introduction: Sam Peckinpah, Savage Poet of American Cinema', in *Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch*, ed. Stephen Prince, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 25.

⁴ Ibid.

concerns that sometimes verge on radicalism.’⁵ Feelings of entrapment, enclosure and claustrophobia, triggered by the sense of finality and surveillance in both films, can be considered as further points of commonality between the two films. Apart from the narrative and ideological commonalities of the films, ‘non-places’ and other iconic images are also shared: train stations, generic bars, the armed robberies and the gunfire.⁶

Furthermore, the shadows, the lighting, the neon lights and the idea of the femme fatale once again reveal the influence of film noir. Popular culture is also present in the film: film posters and posters of film stars dominate the mise-en-scène, covering the walls of the house. The film also makes both explicit and implicit references to rock ‘n’ roll culture and to its dissolution. Rock ‘n’ roll becomes apparent in the film’s mise-en-scène and soundtrack: a pinball machine opens the film’s credits,⁷ the protagonists abide to a rock ‘n’ roll life, and they listen to rock ‘n’ roll music. The film score consists of music from the 1950s. In addition, Nikolaidis asked Hatzinasios to compose music for the film that imitated film scores of the 1940s and the 50s,⁸ in order to accompany *SB* with pastiche music of that era. The film conjures up nostalgia, that not only addresses the culture of the 1950s, but is also a nostalgia for what is about to be lost in the film: the rebellious lives of the anti-fascist outlaws, and the resistance towards fascism, thus mourning for the future.

The film’s opening sequence introduces Nikolaidis’s distinctive style of using overpopulated frames, but also demonstrates the influence of popular culture. The iconography in this film only refers to Hollywood cinema, a fact that creates further connections between *SB* and American pop culture. In this sequence, Nikolaidis introduces Sofia gradually, building suspense around her figure, since she appears in fragmented images, as if she was a (Hollywood) star. However, Tomazani is not a star, as prior to *SB* she had only acted in supportive roles. Nikolaidis’s decision to cast the specific actors in the film was aimed at their ability to bring their personal real life experiences to the film’s narrative,⁹ in turn creating a more authentic atmosphere. Sofia and the rest of the gang are

⁵ Christopher Sharrett, ‘Peckinpah the Radical: The Politics of *The Wild Bunch*’, in *Sam Peckinpah’s The Wild Bunch*, ed. Stephen Prince, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 79.

⁶ Further common narrative elements can be found. For instance, in Peckinpah’s film, the bunch betrays one of their members, and the enemies catch and torture him, and the bunch seeks for his revenge. Similarly, in Nikolaidis’s film, the bunch betrays Rosa’s trust, and the bunch’s enemy then tortures her, provoking the gang to seek to avenge her attack and to proceed to the fight with the authorities.

⁷ Connecting this image with the jukebox after the opening credits in *TWASS*

⁸ Nikolaidis, interview with Chrysopoulos.

⁹ For instance, Moschos was living in communes and had robbed a convenience store in Germany (Takis Moschos, *MIC Music Portal*, Viewed 20 August 2014, <http://www.mic.gr/cinema.asp?id=37182>).

antiheroes in contrast to the projected heroes in the film posters in the house; thus the posters construct a dialogue between *SB* and the featured films. For instance, Argyris is first shown in the film sleeping with a *Spiderman* poster visible above his bed (Fig6.2.1). Spiderman as a superhero is juxtaposed with Argyris, the outlaw antihero.



Fig6.2.1 Spiderman over Argyris

Moreover, Argyris is fixated with James Dean, often identifying himself with the star and frequently conversing with Dean's poster. Argyris associates his life with Dean's. The star is linked with adolescent disillusionment, rebellion and non-compromise, specifically because of the film *Rebel without a Cause*. The ideology associated with Dean's persona is also encountered in rock 'n' roll culture, of which Argyris is an aficionado.¹⁰ Argyris is presented from the beginning of the film as a troubled man with no faith in the future. As he states, 'no rock persona can survive after their thirties'¹¹ and he recites the lyrics of the song 'James Dean':¹² 'you were too fast to live, too young to die.' Therefore, Nikolaidis further pastiches popular culture elements in the film's dialogue. By linking Argyris's life to Dean's, Nikolaidis foretells his protagonist's death, and connects the death of the 'rock personas' with the dissolution of rock 'n' roll in general.

Further elements of popular culture and Nikolaidis's recurrent motifs are evident in the film's opening sequence. After the credits, during which the familiar (present in all his films) sound of the rain accompanies the nostalgic score of the film, an intertitle appears that states that it is the beginning of the first day of the narrative. The film cuts to a close-up shot of Marilyn Monroe's poster that hangs on a heavy curtain and is framed with

¹⁰ When the filmmaker was fitting the role to Moschos, he realised that the actor was obsessed with Dean himself. He knew all about his life, he was imitating his dressing style and was aware of all his homosexual love affairs, Moschos being a homosexual himself (Nikolaidis, *Kinimatografika Tetrada*, 80).

¹¹ Dean died at twenty-four and Argyris's is almost thirty.

¹² By the Eagles.

flashing lights. As the camera pans below the poster, the viewers are presented with Marina sleeping in white sheets and in white pyjamas on a bed amongst many dolls, who are also dressed in white (Fig6.2.2). The camera pans left while moving backwards into a longer shot, scanning the room, which is painted in dark red and decorated with lace tablecloths, and revealing an abundance of dolls causing a sense of chaos (Fig6.2.3). The dolls appear almost life-like, sitting in chairs and appearing to watch over the sleeping Marina. Hence, the viewers are immediately presented with elements that Nikolaidis recycles throughout all his films: heavy fabrics, lights, dolls, and black, white and red bright colours.



Fig6.2.2 Marina among dolls



Fig6.2.3 The full of dolls room

The film cuts to show Sofia entering the room where Marina is sleeping. The camera pans left to reveal the rest of the room, showing indoor plants, more film posters, mirrors, lights, dolls and wind charms. These items are presented in baroque frames and create iconic associations with all of Nikolaidis's work (Fig6.2.4). The establishing sequence up until this point is accompanied by non-diegetic music: the opening part of Strauss' Sunrise which is entitled 'Also Sprach Zarathustra'. The use of this specific song pastiches two of Nikolaidis's influences and passions: American cinema, since the song is heard in the opening credits of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), and rock 'n' roll, as

the song was being used as an opening theme to Elvis Presley's Las Vegas concerts in the 1970s.¹³ Therefore, it is evident that Nikolaidis establishes his authorial signature from the very beginning of the film.



Fig6.2.4 Iconic images of Nikolaidis's films

In *SB*, the group's conviction that rock 'n' roll is dead, in combination with the role of pastiche in the film, is highlighted in a scene in which Sofia is shown satisfying her client's necrophilic fetish. The client takes on the role of a dead man in an open casket, and Sofia 'grieves' over his death, while she simultaneously stimulates the 'dead' man. The place where this occurs resembles a chapel, with lit church candles, crosses, orthodox icons and funeral wreaths of flowers. The scene pastiches a scene from *Belle de Jour* (Luis Buñuel, 1967), where prostitute 'Belle de Jour' (Catherine Deneuve) is asked by her client to pretend that she is dead in a coffin while he laments her 'death' and masturbates next to her open casket (Fig6.2.5).¹⁴



Fig6.2.5 Sofia 'grieves' for the 'dead' client (left) and 'Belle de Jour' acts dead for her client (right)

¹³ Douglas Brown, 'Images of Elvis Presley in American Culture 1977-1997: The Mystery Terrain', in *Reference Reviews*, 12, 1 (1998), Viewed 3 December 2013, <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?issn=0950-4125&volume=12&issue=1&articleid=1494667&show=html>, 31-32.

¹⁴ Further information about this scene will follow in subchapter 6.2.3.

Necrophilia in this scene in *SB* is closely linked to the idea of the ‘dead’ rock ‘n’ roll, since while Sofia ‘grieves’ for the ‘deceased’ man, the rock ‘n’ roll song ‘Let’s Have a Party’¹⁵ is heard playing from a record player. The record player is placed among candles and icons, in order to both ridicule the church and to sanctify rock ‘n’ roll (Fig6.2.6). By involving rock ‘n’ roll music in the funeral, Nikolaidis signifies the death of this music genre for himself as well as for the gang in *SB*. This death is also detected in the scene when Sofia and Marina go to the client together. Marina plays the same song on the record, implying the possibility that the music choice is the client’s. Thus along with his ‘funeral’, the necrophilic rock ‘n’ roll fan grieves for the lost era of rock ‘n’ roll. The two women put the lid back on the coffin and start nailing it down, and the diegetic music stops abruptly before the song finishes, so that only the client’s scream for help and the women’s giggles can be heard. Nikolaidis thus displays necrophilia for the long gone 1950s culture, ‘grieves’ for it, and even throws a funeral for it.



Fig6.2.6 A record player placed among church elements

6.2.2 Surveillance and Antifascism

The frames overpopulated with dolls show that the dolls live with the protagonists and that they have an active role in the film. The dolls also illustrate that from the very beginning of the film surveillance plays a paramount role, since the dolls watch over Sofia and Marina in the film’s opening sequence. Furthermore, the ‘blond guy’ is constantly surveying the house, keeping watch over the gang members’ movements. Similarly to *TZY*, the house’s surveillance by the authorities has an impact on the protagonists’ lives, as the idea of being constantly watched begins to take toll on them. Since they have become

¹⁵ By Wanda Jackson.

subject to close surveillance, they feel a need to watch over the ‘blond guy’ to check if he is watching them. They set up a camera by the window and they, the observed, become simultaneously the observers. The images of them watching the state representatives are connected with images from *TZY* where Christina spies on the state representatives with her binoculars (Fig6.2.7). The gang in *SB* is therefore found in the same position as the women in *TZY*: ‘[the authorities] have brought you to the point where you are watching them, not them watching you,’ and they are ‘caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.’¹⁶ The fact that the gang thinks that they are being constantly observed would suggest that they would refrain from misbehaving or reacting. However, the gang refuses to sacrifice their revolutionary ideals by compromising.



Fig6.2.7 Marina with the camera (left) and Christina with binoculars (right), spying state representatives

Unlike *TZY*, where the audience is presented only with the director’s point-of-view, in *SB*, the audience also sees the gang’s subjective point-of-view shots. For instance, when Sofia looks out of the window the frame that the audience is presented with is surrounded by the moving curtains that Sofia holds (Fig6.2.8). Also, the shots from outside the house quite often employ a travelling shot with a subjective point-of-view. For instance, a travelling shot begins when Argyris opens the door of the house to exit with Andreas, with the camera presenting the protagonists from the side. In the meantime, the audience is also presented with a shot of Argyris and Andreas in the television monitor in the house through which they watch the ‘blond guy’, and which is now watched by Sofia and Marina. The film cuts back to the profile shot of the two men, as the camera turns to reach the ‘blond guy’ where the protagonists are heading to (Fig6.2.9). This combination and exchange of subjective point-of-view shots, which end up and merge with the ‘blond guy’s’ perspective, heightens the overall sense of surveillance, observation and obsession that the protagonists are being watched, as well as confirms the mixing of the reciprocal gazes. A

¹⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, 201.

similar effect to the travelling shot also appears in the house in a form of a pan,¹⁷ in order for the filmmaker to show that the house is under constant surveillance and that the idea of surveillance has been implanted in the protagonists' minds, as would happen with the inmates in Bentham's Panopticon.



Fig6.2.8 A subjective point-of-view shot



Fig6.2.9 The combination of points-of-view

Dolls and mannequins are presented as being alive. The subjective point-of-view shots used in the film, in addition to surveillance and fascism, are further connected with the idea of the house as a living organism. The neon lights, the plants, the film posters, which are often thought to be watching over the protagonists, as well as the flipper table and the dolls, build on the idea that the house is the fifth protagonist of the film. Some of the dolls are automatic and they animate by themselves and haunt the place, enhancing the atmosphere of surveillance. Moreover, in the film's final fight scene, the dolls and the mannequins are on the protagonists' side and are involved in the fight. They are used as bait for the authorities to start shooting, and they are themselves shot, making it seem as if the state is after dolls and mannequins as well (Fig6.2.10). Also, the flipper table is used

¹⁷ For instance when introducing the space in the opening sequence, or when showing the mess that the 'blond guy' created in the house when he went in to look for clues while the gang was away.

before the fight as a barrier for the staircase in order to restrict the authorities' access to the first and main floor of the house (Fig6.2.11). This use of props as a barrier to the authorities connotes the resistance of the house as a whole to the invasion of the fascists. The flipper table further signifies the death of the protagonists and the end of the film: still in the staircase, the flipper table opens and its metallic balls drop down the stairs, stopping at the foot of a state representative who just entered the house. In this way, the filmmaker highlights the gang members' interdependency, but also their link to the house as a whole. The invasion of the authorities initially seems to contradict Argyris's last words: 'Don't let the motherfuckers in. We don't deserve to live like this, my friend.' However, the protagonists 'leave' freely and escape the fascists.



Fig6.2.10 Mannequins getting involved in the fight



Fig6.2.11 The flipper table blocks staircase

The omnipresent sense of surveillance in the film is strictly linked to fascism and the control it aims to put the citizens under. According to Nikolaidis, *SB* 'is a study on the new face of world fascism.'¹⁸ This 'new face of world fascism' is presented as aiming to control every aspect of the societies. Unlike the previously analysed films, the unseen state is now

¹⁸ Nikos Nikolaidis, Viewed 5 December 2013, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=29&Itemid=14.

visible and is openly confronted. This state is not necessarily linked to the Greek state; due to the film's generalised place and time, it is linked to the overall ideology of fascism. The homogeneous appearance of the authorities in the film connects their representation to fascist aesthetics: they follow orders, they work like machines, their costumes are similar, mostly comprising of long coats, and they carry power and authority. They are closely linked to militarism since towards the end of the film, state representatives are shown arriving at the house in squads and are dressed in military costumes, connecting the film to the military coup presented in *MP* (Fig6.2.12). State representatives are also presented as silent, never conversing with the protagonists, and while they whisper to one another, their words are not heard. Since they are not heard, they refuse to hear the citizens' demands in their turn, and attack them when they are disrupting the status quo that fascism aims at maintaining.



Fig6.2.12 Representatives of the fascist state in *SB* (left) and in *MP* (right)

The 'blond guy' is an example of the representation of the authorities. In contrast to *TWASS*, in this film Panayotidis is presented to have a diametrically opposite role. Instead, Panayotidis's role in *SB* is associated with his role in *TZY* where, twenty-two years later, he plays a state representative once again (Fig6.2.13). However, in *TZY* he resembled a pimp, but here the 'blond guy' is dressed in a dark long coat, is characterised within the homogenous appearance of the rest of the state representatives and evokes hostility and mystery. The gang's audacious attitude towards this man makes him appear as if he is part of their gang: they exchange cigarettes, a lighter and a cigarette case. They approach him, despite knowing that nothing good can come out of it, and in this sense they appear to be flirting with death. The 'blond guy' can in fact signify death that awaits them.



Fig6.2.13 Panayotidis as a state representative in *SB* (left) and in *TZY* (right)

Nikolaidis's fierce antifascist ideas are also explicitly located in the actions and story of the characters, especially with regards to Andreas and Sofia. Sound elements work together with the mise-en-scène to highlight these ideas. Andreas has spent the last five months in prison for political reasons, although the film does not name these reasons or elaborate on the issue. Nonetheless, it is apparent that his antifascist and antiauthoritarian ideas have contributed to the reasons behind his incarceration. When Andreas is released from prison and Marina and Argyris are waiting for him outside the jail, he is shown running happily towards them, taking his clothes off and casting away his recent history, emancipating himself in a similar way that Alkis did before he committed suicide in *TWASS*. At the same time, the sound of seagulls, accompanied by the nostalgic theme tune of the film, aurally connect Andreas's representation with freedom, which can only be sought away from the fascist state.

Sofia appears to be a member of a revolutionary organization, but the audience is given no further relevant information. The viewers are only presented with a secret money transaction in a train coach and witness Sofia's phone call to other members of the revolution, as she asks for a safe place to hide. The authorities' pursuit of the outlaws and revolutionaries who hide in the place suggested to Sofia by the organisation is presented in an almost comic and satirical way which comments on the fascist power: middle-aged state representatives dressed in suits run to catch the young casually dressed illegals, accompanied by Verdi's Overtures. The music creates a counterpoint with the narrative in this scene by presenting the pursuit in an almost choreographed way, a fact that both highlights the comic elements of the scene but also intensifies the fascist state's 'classical repertoire' of chasing, arresting and assaulting what they are against.

In *SB*, fascism once again acquires a male face, since there are only male state representatives in the film. However, the protagonists do not resist the system from within as they are unable to stand living under the commands of the authorities. On the contrary, they proceed to engage in an actual fight with fascism, not caring about their lives but

believing that they will be finally emancipated from their overall state of oppression if they leave freely by committing suicide or dying in the fight scene. In this way, the protagonists do not compromise with the fascist regime. For this reason, *SB* could be considered a premature romanticised version of *TZY*: romanticised in the sense that the filmmaker believed at this point that citizens can react to the fascist regimes, while in *TZY*, after realising that there is no intention of change, he offers his ultimate attempt to awaken the audience.

Nikolaidis considered *SB* as an optimistic film.¹⁹ The protagonists choose their own deaths and decide to 'leave' freely. They choose to stay in the house, and to fight and die together, in the companionship of each other, when they have the chance to run away. They know that they will not survive the fight with the squads, but they choose to either die fighting or commit suicide, because, like Alkis in *TWASS*, they believe that with their suicide they will leave for a better place. They choose to enjoy the fight as much as they can: they make sarcastic jokes, they listen to rock 'n' roll, and they spend time together. Moreover, Argyris's line that 'this fucking sun never ends' as he lies on the floor and the rays of the setting sun hit his eyes, connote Nikolaidis's optimism. It is implied that the four of them will walk towards the sunset together, reunited after death, further linking the film to westerns, where the hero heads towards the setting sun.

6.2.3 Female Representation

In *SB* empowered, independent, 'fatal' women, who stem from the classic femme fatale, as well as 'unimportant' women who are used only for sexual intercourse and serve as background appear in the film. The appearance of the 'unimportant' women occurs because, although this film does not include Nikolaidis's autobiographical elements, it concerns a more realistic world than the fictional ones of the previous chapters. Therefore the 'unimportant' type of woman that appears complicates female representation and confirms that Nikolaidis is a misogynist.

The 'unimportant' women appear in a few scenes in *SB*, as they do in *TWASS*. In the latter film they are presented as naked, unnamed and unintelligent; however, in *SB* they have a representative who now has a name, manages to get into the gang's house and attempts to become part of the gang: Rosa. Rosa is presented as a naïve blond woman, who constantly chews gum. She, as is the case with the rest of the unimportant women in Nikolaidis's films, is only used for sex, and she is constantly fetishized. She uses her sexuality to distract the attention of the factory's ageing owner, for whom she performs a

¹⁹ Nikolaidis, interview with Frangoulis.

dance in a fetishized outfit (Fig6.2.14). Although she devised this plan, her trust is betrayed by the gang when she realises that they lied about the empty safe and that they have used her.



Fig6.2.14 Rosa dancing

The ornamental use of women can also be seen early in the film, when Andreas returns home. Because Andreas has refrained from sexual intercourse over the last five months, Sofia and Marina are asked by the two men to decide who is going to sleep with him. However, what confuses the sexist reading of this request is that, later on in the film, Sofia asks the guys to decide who is going to sleep with her, using them in her turn. This indicates that she has the same rights and needs as they do, and that the act of sleeping with each other constitutes a ritual, a contribution to the gang and an ideology that strengthens their companionship, and confirms the commune life they lead.

Until she is fully revealed at the end of the opening sequence, Sofia is only presented as a fragmented image. The audience first sees her hand, then her headless body, then her arms, followed by a shot of her fetishized leg while she puts on leggings, and finally the back of her head. Her fragmentation continues in the next shot. Sofia puts on underwear, lights up a cigarette and starts packing her purse, including a penknife. The image of her chest is then projected through a mirror, while she puts on a top, still fragmented, since the only part of her that is seen in the mirror is her torso, allowing her breasts to show through the transparent top. In the same shot, the lifelike quality of the dolls is reinforced as two are placed under the mirror, facing Sofia, and become an audience to Sofia's actions (Fig6.2.15). Sofia then sits in front of a mirror and picks up a black veil that is placed on a male mannequin's head. Her face is presented for the first time as a reflection in the mirror as she puts on the veil.



Fig6.2.15 Sofia's torso in the mirror

Sofia is a woman who encompasses the essence of Nikolaidis's female protagonists. The mise-en-scène and her acts present her as similar to the women in *TSOTCN* and *TWLAC*: a fetishized femme fatale who is dressed in a provocative way but who also carries a knife, rendering her phallic and 'fatal'. The unwrapping of the story shows that this is not Sofia's ordinary outfit but is her job 'uniform', providing a reason for her fetishization and connect her further to the 'fatal femme' of the previous films.

Recalling the film's pastiche scene from *BDJ*, Sofia is dressed in a transparent veil. Sofia's fetishized costume pastiches 'Belle de Jour's' long black veil that allows her naked body to show (Fig6.2.16). According to Doane, in some cases

the veil is characterized by its opacity, its ability to fully block the gaze. When it is activated in the service of the representation of the seductive power of femininity, on the other hand, it simultaneously conceals and reveals, provoking the gaze. [...] In the cinema, the magnification of the erotic becomes simultaneous with the activation of objects, veils, nets, steamers, etc., which intercept the space between the camera and the woman, forming a *second screen* [emphasis of the original text]. Such a screen is no longer the ground of the image but its filter.²⁰

In Sofia's case, the veil and her net-like top are connected to her profession and to her client's desires, since she has to entice her client and allow herself to be objectified. However, in this specific case, Sofia's client is pretending to be dead, and does not in fact see Sofia during the act. To some extent, this renders her choice of dress redundant and ridicules the client's desires. Still, Sofia's body is highly fetishized. Sofia is pretending to be a widow and her veil covers her face in order to conceal her (fake) tears. However, as the whole act is rather comical, Sofia further conceals her laughter both with her veil and with her fake crying sobs. As the audience observes Sofia during this unorthodox deed,

²⁰ Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, 49.

they are invited to laugh at the situation, and this disallows the creation of the second screen that Doane writes about. Therefore, Sofia's fetishized representation is ambivalent, as she provokes her objectification on the one hand and on the other hand the veil and the net top only highlight her actions as comic. Also, the importance Nikolaidis attributes to aesthetics and design is underlined.



Fig6.2.16 'Belle de Jour' in a transparent veil

Although the costumes of the two women and their clients' necrophilic desires in *SB* and *BDJ* are similar, Sofia does not assume the role of the dead woman in her customer's fantasy, as 'Belle de Jour' does. Instead, Sofia has an active role. The reversal of the roles of the two films' protagonists signifies Sofia's dominant position over the necrophilic and her power to manipulate him. Although both Sofia and 'Belle de Jour' are prostitutes, 'Belle de Jour' has a fetish and an entrapped perverse sexuality, as she chooses to work as a prostitute in the morning in order to satisfy her fantasies and needs. On the other hand, Sofia acts as a medium to satisfy other people's perversions, and she uses her sexuality in order to make money to fund the revolutionary organization. It could be argued that the money that pays for the antifascist revolution is 'dirty', gained through prostitution, and thus could contradict with the whole idea of resistance that comprises the gang's dominant ideology. However, it can also be read as a comment on manipulative female sexuality and the ridiculing of the male, as well as an attack on the state through sacrilege, since the iconography of the Greek Orthodox religion is prevalent in the necrophilic scene and the church is strictly linked to the state in Greece.

Additionally, the idea of Sofia being active and the man inactive aligns with female representation analysed in the two previous films, since the man is again presented as inanimate in front of the woman. In the opening sequence, Sofia keeps her veil on a male mannequin's head (Fig6.2.17). In doing so, Sofia further ridicules men by masquerading them, and this aligns with *TZY*, where Maro has dressed the captive in female clothes, and

with *SS*, where the detective is dressed in Mother's clothes. This mannequin in *SB* is also decapitated, since the body is missing, a fact that shows Sofia's 'fatal' nature and can act as a further connection to the power that the women in the previous two films had over men.



Fig6.2.17 The male mannequin's head covered in a veil

After losing Stathis, a man with whom Sofia had a relationship and who was killed in an invasion of the authorities in a commune, she rejects men, a fact that is highlighted in her lesbian preferences. When she is approached by a woman at a disco where the gang goes one night, she withdraws with her to the restroom, despite having ignored her initially. In the restroom, the diegetic dance music changes to non-diegetic romantic music when the two women come closer to one another. Their approach towards each other and the way they touch each other is represented in a sensitive and emotional way, which seems an act of love instead of mere sexual pleasure. No sexual intercourse is presented, as Marina interrupts them. This fact confirms Sofia's choice of women, and a decision to neglect men, who are again in this film associated with the state. However, this act also seems contradictory when taking into consideration that Sofia has sexual intercourse with men.

Sofia and Marina are portrayed very differently. Although Sofia's character is easily understood, Marina remains more mysterious throughout the film. Although the establishing shot makes her appear as an innocent woman, or rather, girl, because of the dolls and her white costume, later in the film she is proven to be as independent as Sofia. She exhibits the same types of behaviour as the men in the gang: she robs a supermarket and a gun shop and she is capable of firing guns. Whereas Sofia is dressed in a sexualised outfit, Marina only wears wide long dresses that do not allow any part of her body to show. Her emotionless and expressionless face, in conjunction with her fringe that often hides her eyes and her wide clothes that hide her body, contribute to her representation as an enigmatic woman. Even when she joins Sofia with Sofia's necrophilic client, Marina wears a conservative old-fashioned black and white costume that covers her body (Fig6.2.18).



Fig6.2.18 Marina and Sofia dressed differently

Argyris is secretly in love with Marina, and when he finally expresses his love for her, she replies that she does not care for love but only for sexual pleasure. In this reply, she expresses a value that is conventional for females in patriarchal societies. Argyris is more sentimental than Marina and he depends on her. Thus when he hears her response, he lectures her on the anatomy of the body according to the monologue from *Summer and Smoke* (1948) by Tennessee Williams,²¹ in an effort to comment on Marina's life choices and to highlight her need for love and patronise her. Her 'unnatural' stance to life, as Argyris terms it, is further reinforced by her actions and the mystery surrounding her character. Unanswered questions build on the mystery surrounding her such as questions regarding her relationship with a dying man she is paid to keep company. Moreover, Marina is presented as taking advantage of her female nature and the fundamental functions of the female body and benefitting from it. When she is about to rob the supermarket, with the help of Argyris she attaches a pouch around her waist, where she puts an inflatable bag in order to look pregnant, and replaces the bag with the stolen products (Fig6.2.19).

²¹ 'This upper story's the brain, which is hungry for something called truth and doesn't get much but keeps on feeling hungry. This middle's the belly which is hungry for food. This part down here is the sex which is hungry for love because it is sometimes lonesome. I've fed all three, as much of all three as I could or as much as I wanted. You've fed none' [Tennessee Williams, *Summer and Smoke*, in *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams*, Vol. 2, (New York: New Directions, 1971), 221].



Fig6.2.19 Marina steals goods from a supermarket

Although she is not fetishized, Marina still shares some characteristics with the classic femme fatale. She traps men, like Argyris, in her web, and she uses the possibility of motherhood in order to steal, showing her contempt towards the possibility of a family life, thus resembling the childless classic femme fatale. Marina is also presented using a gun and threatening the male owner of the gun store, having a hammer in her crotch in order to nail the man down in the necrophilic scene with Sofia (Fig6.2.20). These two scenes confirm her unnatural phallic power which becomes explicit in similar ways as in the case of Mother in *SS* and of Elsa in *SYIHMD*. Thus in this film it becomes evident once again that Nikolaidis represents women inconsistently, and ultimately misogynistically.



Fig6.2.20 Marina's 'unnatural phallic power'

6.2.4 Concluding Remarks

According to Nikolaidis, *TWASS* addresses concerns with regards to the 1950s generation, *SB* of the 1980s generation, and *Loser Takes All* of the 1990s.²² Nikolaidis's political concerns permeate the trilogy and although I agree about *TWASS* and *LTA*, *SB* could be considered a timeless and nationless statement against the ideology of fascism, since it is not clearly located. *SB* shows that Nikolaidis had indeed rendered genres 'repositories'²³ of elements which he could borrow from, since he appears to pastiche a western film, which at first glance has no resemblance to Nikolaidis's work. Nikolaidis's fear of the 'death' of the spectacle is presented here once again and is associated with the dissolution of rock 'n' roll culture, which is portrayed through the film's mise-en-scène, soundtrack and dialogue. Female representation appears problematic. Sofia and Marina remotely resemble the femme fatale, and they are connected to westerns through the combinatory essence of pastiche. The 'unimportant' women start gaining agency, best exemplified in Rosa's attempts to get a role in the gang. The misogynistic elements that are detected in the two previous chapters now become more apparent and more abundant, and culminate in *LTA*.

²² Nikos Nikolaidis, in *Nikos Nikolaidis*, Viewed 23 January 2014, http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/mainenglish/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=56&Itemid=17.

²³ Dyer, *Patsiche*, 127.

6.3 *Loser Takes All*

Film Synopsis

Following a break-up, a man in his forties (Yannis Aggelakas)¹, who is sick, takes prescription pills and is disillusioned with the future, goes to ‘Decadence’ bar, which is owned by his ex-lover Elsa (Ifigenia Asteriadi), to ask if he can live in her house for a while. When he gets to her house, after being attacked by the police on the street for no reason, he meets Kid² (Simon Bloom/Nikolaidis), Elsa’s nineteen-year-old lover. Elsa calls home to ask for help with a drunken customer, Odette (Tzeni Kitseli). Man picks her up and drives her to her house, where they have sex, he steals a ring and her car and leaves. The next morning a private detective, who is Man’s friend, asks him to watch Madalie (Louise Attah), a stripper in the ‘Eldorado’ nightclub, the owner of which has involved her in drug trafficking. Man meets Madalie and her friend and joins Madalie in a drug sale after she asks him to. He then meets with Kid the owner of ‘Eldorado’, who hires them for a drug-dealing job. Suspecting that it is a trap, Man recruits Elsa, Odette and Madalie in order to investigate the case. When they realise that Madalie’s friend is collaborating with the police, and that the transaction has been set up so that a television station can exclusively broadcast it, they take action: swapping cocaine with icing sugar, arriving at the designated transaction site earlier than they were meant to, keeping the money and escaping the police after the police track them down and begin to open fire. When the ‘gang’ drives away, they realise that Kid has been shot. Man gives Madalie and Odette their share of money, urging them to leave this city, and later does the same with Elsa after the two of them drive Kid to the hospital, where he is pronounced dead. Man stays back to wait for the police, but he is too sick, throws away his last pills and dies.

6.3.1 ‘Here No More’: Style and ‘Death’

In this film, Nikolaidis shifts from a focus on his concerns for the 1950s generation to focus on his concern for the 1990s generation. Nikolaidis’s constant and consistent fear and pessimism concerning the ‘coming nightmare’ recurs again in this film. Through *LTA*, he shows the materialisation of his fears within the context of a real world. The rebellious and revolutionary 1950s generation has been replaced by the subdued and already

¹ Aggelakas is an acclaimed Greek songwriter, composer, singer, poet and leader of the most celebrated Greek rock band, ‘Trypes’. He left ‘Trypes’ in 2001 in order to develop a more experimental form of music.

² Both the man and the ‘kid’ have no names. I will therefore be referring to these characters with capitalized nouns.

destroyed 1990s generation. This shift in subject of focus is accompanied by a change in the way that Nikolaidis deals with the notions of companionship, with time and space, as well as with female representation. Additionally, in this film Nikolaidis takes the ‘death’ of rock ‘n’ roll culture and of cinema as a given fact. Therefore, the film is devoid of elements of popular culture, and the protagonists appear to have lost interest in life. Regardless of this shift in focus, the film still pastiches film noir and features many elements that are recurrent across Nikolaidis’s body of work. While there are several commonalities with Nikolaidis’s previously analysed films in terms of style, themes and settings, these are treated differently in this film as opposed to the rest of Nikolaidis’s films.

The dynamics between the gang members are also different to the previous two films of the trilogy; this is attributed to changes taking place in post-1980s Greek society. In *LTA*, five people seek companionship, which was taken for granted in the two previous films: as Nikolaidis says, ‘in this film the individuals do not form a group; they are destroyed. Only in the course of the film do they realize the need to feel each other’s pain again, to touch each other again.’³ Feelings of isolation and solitude propel these characters to stick together for as long as they can, because in this way they feel that they belong for a while, albeit they know they might not survive.

Man embodies the characteristics of the protagonists from Nikolaidis’s earlier films: an antiauthoritarian attitude, an embracing of rock ‘n’ roll culture, the dissolution of which however he has accepted.⁴ This fact constituted his main difference from the protagonists of the other two films of the trilogy. The choice of his canary’s name, Belafonte, named after American singer, songwriter and actor Harry Belafonte, reveals the vestiges of the appropriated rock ‘n’ roll culture of Nikolaidis’s youth, which played a central role in the two previous films; yet, this reference is the only implicit mention to rock ‘n’ roll in the film. Sid Vicious’ single album ‘My Way’⁵ that Man hands to Kid telling him that it is

³ Nikolaidis Nikos, interview with Yannis Karabistos, *Camerastylo*, Viewed 23 January 2014,

http://camerastylogreekmagazine.wordpress.com/2008/07/04/nikolaidis_agelakas_interview/.

⁴ Nikolaidis wrote the script with Aggelakas in mind and aimed to cast him exclusively. When Nikolaidis first met Aggelakas he identified in him traits that the protagonist in *PITA* has. Aggelakas can indeed be aligned with characters from Nikolaidis’s work (Nikolaidis, interview with Sotiropoulos). He is himself an antiauthoritarian artist who addresses his political concerns through his music. As he states, ‘at last, a Greek filmmaker was speaking about us... About himself, who looked like us’ (*Directing Hell*).

⁵ Sid Vicious’ swan song and his last expression of resistance to the status quo through punk rock in 1978. Vicious’ connection to the rock ‘n’ roll culture of the previous films of the trilogy highlights the eclectic element of Greek culture as argued in Chapter 3.2.

memorabilia his time⁶ shows that the time when rebellion was still an option is now merely a recollection.

The film's soundtrack is neither rock 'n' roll nor pastiche 1950s-60s music, as with the previous films of the trilogy, but instead comprises a new kind of experimental sound.⁷ Likewise, cinema does not have the importance it enjoyed in Nikolaidis's previous films and its 'death' is now acknowledged: as soon as Man is found in the streets following his break-up in the beginning of the film, he gets in a cinema and goes straight to the bathroom to freshen-up. There, a film is heard playing. But he is not interested in it; he does not go in the theatre, like the protagonists in *MP* and *TWASS* do. Man's indifference to the film is connected with the filmmaker's concern for the future of the cinema. For this reason, the film does not pastiche any particular films, but is limited in pastiching film noir.

In order to show that his fears were not arbitrary since they are now applied in real life, Nikolaidis clearly maps the film onto Athens of the 2000s, leaving the placeless and timeless places aside. The filmmaker's treatment of the film milieu changes, whilst maintaining though his authorial style. *LTA* can be considered to be a pastiche noir, in terms of its narrative and style. The film consists of mainly night-shots that feature shadows, chiaroscuro lighting, neon lights, as well as Nikolaidis's recurrent elements, like blinds and plants. The film also features sites associated with the traditional film noir: bars, nightclubs, and the detective's office (Fig6.3.1). Therefore, while Nikolaidis used to pastiche film noir without pastiching its milieu, here he does portray these 'underground' places. The atmosphere of the film pastiches film noir as well, and is reminiscent of his previous films.



Fig6.3.1 The bar (left) and the detective's office (right) recall the classic film noir milieu

⁶ And, in doing so, referring to the time of the two previous films.

⁷ Composed by Angelakas.

The dissolution of cinema and of rock ‘n’ roll is further accompanied by the sense of finality in the film. Man and Kid’s obsession with the Apocalypse of John, to which they keep referring, and which concerns the catastrophic future for humanity, as well as their existential nihilism, foreshadow their respective deaths. Furthermore, *LTA* starts with a night shot in heavy rain in a rural area outside Athens, where a transaction takes place. The particular rural place in *LTA* refers to the setting of *MP*. The bridge under which the transaction takes place also features in the latter film, encouraging connections between the two films (Fig6.3.2). By assuming this connection, the voice-over in *MP* arguably foretells the ending of *LTA*, since it narrates that the protagonist feels already dead and that she does not recognise the place she is in anymore. The sense of finality in the film in conjunction with the motto ‘*what matters is... here no more*’ that the protagonists utter, and this trilogy is named after, can be said to be traced in this intertextuality. The reference to *MP* reminds Nikolaidis’s audience of his concerns for the future of cinema, which are confirmed in this film.



Fig6.3.2 The bridge in *LTA* (left) and in *MP* (right)

The sense of finality and the forthcoming unsuccessful outcome of ‘Eldorado’⁸ are also foretold when Man first visits the club. The first image of the club that the audience is presented with is the reflection of the club’s neon-light sign on the dark wet asphalt in the parking lot. This reflection is destroyed by Man’s car-wheel when he arrives at the club, leaving a blood-like vision and alluding to the lethal ramifications of their aspiring plans (Fig6.3.3). Thus, the dream of ‘Eldorado’ fades away.

⁸ The gang’s mission, which is named after the strip-club.

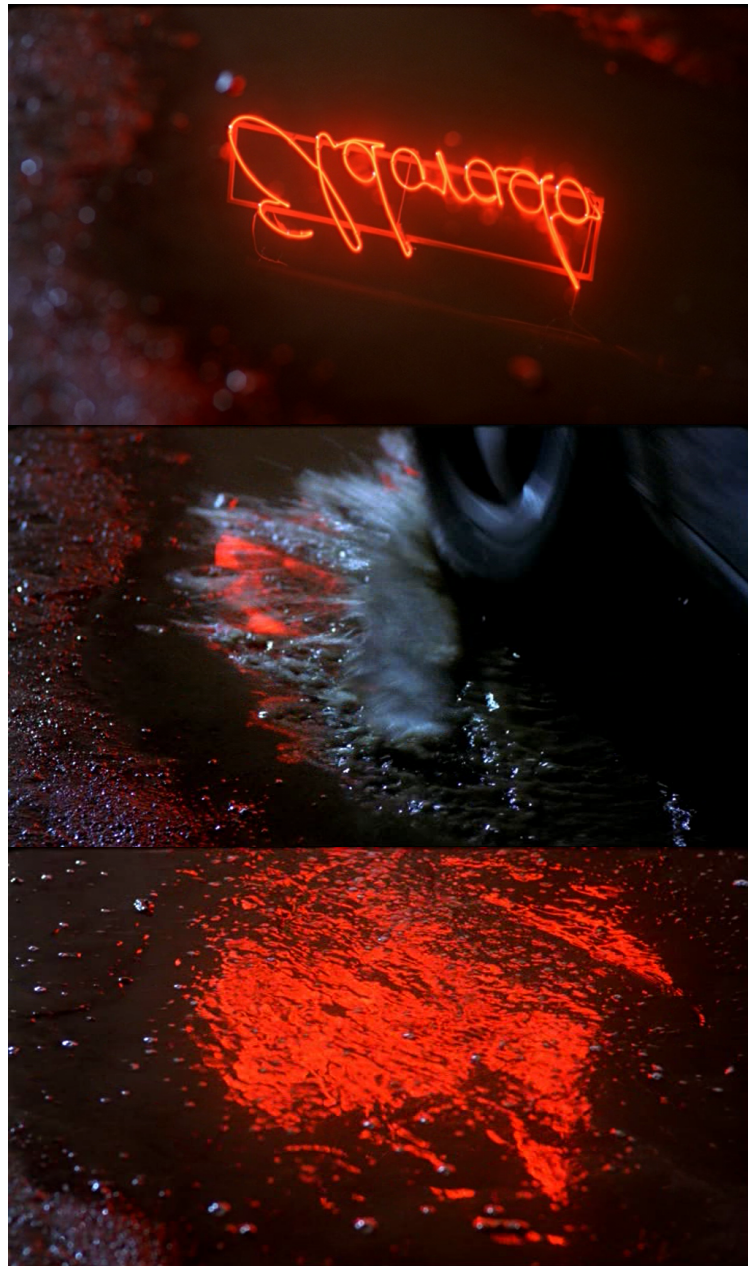


Fig6.3.3 The 'Eldorado' vision vanishing

6.3.2 The Spatiotemporal Significance of the Film

The fact that the film takes place in Athens in the 2000s is understood by the narrative and the mise-en-scène. Man's reluctance to accept euro currency when selling Odette's stolen ring in a pawn shop and his request for 'Greek money' suggest that the film takes place between January 2001 and February 2002, when there was a dual circulation of drachmas and euro.⁹ Furthermore, the mise-en-scène suggests the film is set during the carnival season of February/March. In particular, Elsa's bar is decorated with paper streamers, and the woman sitting next to the protagonist at the bar in the beginning of the

⁹ *Economic and Financial Affairs: The Euro*, Viewed 23 January 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/euro/countries/greece_en.htm.

film is dressed up for the carnival. Also when Man spends a night sleeping in the stolen car, he wakes up from a dream¹⁰ by the seaside, when a kite drops on his windscreen (Fig6.3.4). The kite signifies Clean Monday, the last day of the carnival season in Greece, when people fly kites – exclusively on that day.



Fig6.3.4 The kite on the windscreen

Another element that can be used to identify the film's setting and declares the shift of concern is a rave party that Man and Kid attend in a deserted warehouse. Rave (sub)culture is strictly linked to the 1990s generation and to its self-destructive tendencies, since the techno music in conjunction with MDMA drugs has been proven to have psychological implications for the ravers.¹¹ In the earlier films youth culture was never concerned with drugs, whereas in *LTA* they are central to the formation of the gang and the Eldorado mission. The use of drugs, the dark atmosphere, the void in the lives of the young people depicted in the film, are linked to the sense of finality and are presented as a consequence of the lack of companionship, understanding and trust.

When filmed outside of their homes, the protagonists in most of Nikolaidis's films are found in 'non-places'. For instance, *SB* features train stations, abandoned train coaches, generic bars and restaurants, and non-descript neighbourhoods. Similarly, Nikolaidis filmed *MP* in Athens but the shooting locations are unrecognisable, devoid of any traces of identity and history. In contrast to these undefined places, the places where the protagonists are seen in *LTA* are explicitly named and are recognisable. The filmmaker dedicates *LTA* 'to the kids that come down from the hills at night and walk in the dark alleys of our city,'¹² making it explicit that the film is set in Athens.

¹⁰ Kid flying a kite by the seaside.

¹¹ Steve Mizrach, 'Iterative Discourse and the formation of New Subcultures', in *Anthropology of Consciousness*, 8, 4 (1997), 139.

¹² Nikos Nikolaidis, *Nikos Nikolaidis*, Viewed 2 February 2014. http://www.nikosnikolaidis.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=44&Itemid=18.

The strip-club 'Eldorado' is a made-up place and it has been given this name as an implicit comment. The club employs immigrant women and it can be considered these women's 'Eldorado': the place where they ended up to in the hope for a better future. Despite being a fictional place, this club carries cultural connotations. The historicity and the importance of the environment can be clearly seen in Elsa's bar, 'Decadence', and its surrounding area. 'Decadence' does not only denote a decadent contemporary society, but it is also a well-known rock club in Athens city centre (Fig6.3.5). Specifically, 'Decadence Club' is situated in Exarchia, an area known as a place of congregation for young antiauthoritarians, anarchists and anti-capitalists. Until 2008 an unwritten law by the citizens of Athens regarded Exarchia as a 'forbidden' place for police and nationalist groups. Exarchia is associated with antifascist ideals. On November 1973, students gathered at the Polytechnic School, which is situated there, and went on strike, openly revolting against the dictatorial regime. This act triggered anti-junta revolts and ultimately led to the fall of the dictatorship in July 1974. Nikolaidis abandons the vague non-places in order to depict a politically and historically important context that expresses his ideals as well as the views of the younger generation to which he is referring in the film. The decision to portray Athens makes the film's iconography less abstract, and the referentiality of the mise-en-scène that renders the city recognisable possibly brought more funding to the film.¹³



Fig6.3.5 The 'Decadence' bar

The Exarchia area is visually mapped out in the film as Man walks towards Elsa's home. The camera operates in an observational mode, recording the space in a passive capacity and allowing the audience to think and reach their own conclusions about the situation of the city. Without naming the area, the camera records images that are

¹³ The film was also promoted more than the rest of Nikolaidis's other films. It was promoted by journalist Effie Papazachariou in the media, memorabilia was designed and a premiere party was organised.

characteristic of the district: distinctive steps, narrow pedestrian streets, and graffiti-covered buildings. In particular, graffiti plays a central role in establishing the identity of Exarchia since graffiti is associated with youth culture, and it constitutes a form of resistance to the legal, political and religious authorities.¹⁴ Graffiti in Exarchia seems, indeed, to be associated with resistance, since it is frequently used to express attacks on the authorities and conveys the creators' political messages, which are also shared with a part of a whole generation.¹⁵

Depicting graffiti and Exarchia by night, as a dark and almost abandoned area, Nikolaidis contradicts the procedures for rejuvenating Athens city centre for the Olympic Games, and specifically contradicts the Chromopolis project. In this project, local and international graffiti artists were called to 're-colour the grayness and drabness of the country's industrial past in cities that were to hold Olympic or parallel events.'¹⁶ This fact might signify that the procedures to change the way the city looks are just a mask for the 'decadent' Greek society, attributing meaning to the otherwise unnecessary depiction of the carnival season.

While walking in Exarchia following Madalie, Man is seen using a telephone booth in a long shot (Fig6.3.6). A graffiti image featuring a young man's face is visible on the wall behind the booth. As Man hangs up, the film abruptly cuts to a longer shot of the previous one, and allows the whole wall, and thus all of the graffiti, to become visible on the screen for a couple of seconds. The graffiti image now can be seen as featuring two young people's faces and reading 'Rest in Peace' (Fig6.3.7). Here, Nikolaidis's mise-en-scène conveys the filmmaker's focus on a younger generation's antiauthoritarian beliefs: this graffiti image is dedicated to two young people, eighteen-year-old Dimitris Papadimitriou, and twenty-one-year-old Evangelos Gkortsas, who were killed when the motorbike they were riding on July 2001 was crashed by a police vehicle, when the policeman driving it did not stop at the red traffic light.¹⁷ The rage against police brutality was even more enhanced when the police officer was set free soon after the incident.

¹⁴ Jeff Ferrell, 'Urban Graffiti: Crime, Control and Resistance', in *Youth & Society*, 27:73 (September 1995), Viewed 29 January 2014, <http://yas.sagepub.com/content/27/1/73>.

¹⁵ See for example Kornetis, Kostis. 'No More Heroes? Rejection and Reverberation of the Past in the 2008 Events in Greece', in *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 28: 2 (October 2010), 174.

¹⁶ Panos Leventis, 'Walls of Crisis: Street Art and Urban Fabric in Central Athens, 2000–2012', in *Architectural Histories*, 1(1): 19 (2013), Viewed 29 January 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/ah.ar.2>.

¹⁷ This information was gathered after I posted (Fig6.3.7) on Nikolaidis's facebook fan page on the 29th of January 2014, and I got a response concerning the context and the exact location of the graffiti, as well as the information that the graffiti was created by a



Fig 6.3.6 The first shot of the graffiti



Fig6.3.7 The longer shot reveals the whole graffiti

The inclusion of this graffiti in Nikolaidis's film can be said to anticipate a tragic 2008 incident that shaped Greece's recent history, connecting thus the latter episode to Nikolaidis's antiauthoritarian arguments in 2002 about increasingly authoritarian power. Thus his fear for the bleak pessimist future that he projected in his 'dark' film can be said

friend of the two youths. The woman who responded, Nefeli Katsimicha, claims to be the niece of one of the two young people killed, and to live next to the parking in Koletti Street in Exarchia where the graffiti is situated. The information was confirmed by Christos Chouliaras, the assistant director of the film, who added that he was the one to mention the existence of the graffiti to Nikolaidis and the filmmaker decided instantly that this scene should be shot there. After online research, I traced the incident in various websites and blogs that list police brutality casualties from the 1970s until today, as for instance the following blog: <http://newsandart.blogspot.co.uk/2010/03/159-h-exei-84.html>. Articles concerning the persecution of Astrinos Lyronis, the police officer who killed the two young men, can also be found on online press of the time, as for instance in the article in *Naftemporiki* on the 18th of July 2001 (Viewed 29 January 2014, <http://www.naftemporiki.gr/story/9400>).

to be confirmed: on December 2008, a police officer shot and killed, fifteen-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos in Exarchia. This incident fuelled a series of riots and antiauthoritarian actions, with Exarchia as its main core, protesting against police brutality. The riots led the police to invade Exarchia, after many years of non-trespassing the ‘anarchist’s den’, and to cover the area in police squads. During this period of police condemnation, the activists found expression against the authorities through graffiti, therefore a link between the 2001 event and graffiti presented in *LTA* and the 2008 event is detected. Thus it is highlighted that history repeats itself, and that past informs present and future, as well as point to the vision of a grim Greek future perpetuated by the authoritative regime, something that Nikolaidis had been doing in different ways from his first to his last film. These incidents and the historical significance of the Exarchia area thus show the importance of Nikolaidis’s decision to feature the area in the film, and show how his political ideas are applied in the real world.

The filmmaker realistically presents the police for the first time, leaving aside the black-coated state representatives that had to be decoded: the audience is now presented with police uniforms and vehicles as well as Nikolaidis’s satire against the police (Fig6.3.8). When Man walks towards Elsa’s house, he is cornered in a street by police vehicles coming from both directions, thus blocking his way and forcing him to surrender. He initially follows their commands, but the two squads’ contradictory orders confuse him, and utters ‘make a decision’, thus showing his contempt. He then openly swears at them and accuses them of selling drugs at schools, which provokes the police into brutally attacking him. Additionally, when later on Man finds out about the set-up, he utters the key phrase for the film and for Nikolaidis’s filmography: ‘Everyone works for the cops; how can this country evolve.’



Fig6.3.8 Actual depiction of the police

6.3.3 Contemporary Social Phenomena

The above police encounter is filmed in an almost observational mode that is similar to how Man's walking within the city is filmed. The audience realizes that the protagonist is being followed by the police when an undercover police officer following Man passes in front of the almost static camera. This observational mode of recording space rather than using subjective point-of-view shots to track Man's movements does not evoke the same theme of surveillance that is predominant in the rest of Nikolaidis's films. The police officers' pursuit of Man is filmed at night-time, emphasising 'expressionist' and shadowed lighting that links the film to classic film noir conventions.

The police in this film adopt a role that is unique to Nikolaidis's body of films. When Man goes to the pawn shop to sell the ring he stole from Odette, the camera is already in the underground space where the shop is situated and records Man descending into the space from above, this time arriving into the space ahead of him rather than following him into it. When he gets to the basement, Man chances upon a group of immigrants who are forced to leave the place by an armed police squad with bulletproof vests (Fig6.3.9). Man intermingles with the group and as he squeezes through them, the camera cuts to a shot showing the police forcing the immigrants out that omits the protagonist altogether. In this shot, police brutality is highlighted but on subjects who have not yet been present in Nikolaidis's films. In 2002, police attacks and threats towards immigrant populations in Greece became increasingly publicised, and Nikolaidis chooses to showcase these incidents as a comment on the overall situation in the new Millennium. This fact also shows that in this contemporary society, the police are not only against antiauthoritarians, as presented by Nikolaidis's earlier films, but also against immigrant populations, thus constructing two different types of marginalized groups. At the same time, with this scene Nikolaidis attempts to show that there are no real social divisions or different kinds of social margins, but that the police themselves enforce and perpetuate these divisions.



Fig6.3.9 The police forcing the immigrants out of the basement

The actual representation of the urban setting can be further linked to the classic noir milieu and 'the antipathy towards the city.'¹⁸ Deborah Thomas suggests that the 'characteristic anxiety provoked by the contemporary urban setting of film noir' is rooted in the immigrants that populated American cities in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ascribing a sense of 'Otherness' in the urban spaces and rendering the cities strange and uncivilized.¹⁹ The urban classic film noir milieu can therefore be further connected to the urban contemporary milieu that Nikolaidis projects in the film, where immigrants play a central role in constructing the modern metropolis. At the same time, while Nikolaidis shows the lack of civilization, he does not 'Other' the city through the use of immigrants and the various social problems they represent, but instead ascribes the role of 'Othering' to the police and their intolerance towards the immigrants. Subsequently, he suggests the authorities are responsible for the lack of civilization and the estranged urban milieu, linking back to his antiauthoritarian ideology, making the film more overtly political. Although what Nikolaidis attempts to do is partly achieved, the role of the 'Othering' does not seem to be restricted to the police, as it will be elaborated further on.

Nikolaidis attempts to show similarities in how the immigrants and the Greek subjects are represented: immigrant strippers dance to traditional Pontic Greek music, in order to assimilate with their environment, and a Kurdish girl in the detective's office dances to Kurdish music, which shares common elements with traditional Greek music. Madalie's role in the film further highlights this argument for integration. For the first time in Nikolaidis's work, the viewers are presented with a black protagonist through Madalie. Madalie forms part of the gang and shows that the two different aforementioned marginal groups are in fact the same group, and that they are all part of modern Greek society. Madalie becomes as much a part of the gang as the rest of the Greek members, or at least this is what Nikolaidis seems to have intended to portray.

The observational mode that Nikolaidis's camera uses to film outdoor locations records homeless people sleeping on benches, scavengers and looters. These outdoors scenes which are filmed in observational mode, in combination with the referentiality of the *mise-en-scène* make for less staged scenes; thus these elements highlight the elaborate staging of the rest of Nikolaidis's films that correspond to fictional environments. These images are an exaggerated version of real images detected in the Athens city centre, which foreshadow the grim future of decaying societies and foretell the situation that is found in the Greek capital nowadays. Furthermore, in the outdoor shots piles of garbage fill the

¹⁸ Thomas, 'Hollywood Deviant Male', 60-61.

¹⁹ Ibid.

frames, constructing Nikolaidis's characteristic baroque frames (Fig6.3.10). Likewise, the piles of garbage that suggest the inability of the state to work properly and, consequently, to its ability to cause chaos and claustrophobia, do not necessarily refer to an imaginary scenario of a collapsed state, but they can also refer to actual and frequent refuse collector strikes that lead to the piling up of the garbage, thus to real life situations in the metropolis. Hence, the urban milieu in *LTA*, which resembles the post-apocalyptic city of *MP*, can be framed as an actual reflection of Athens city centre in the 21st century.



Fig6.3.10 The observational camera records the garbage

The use of media representation in this film is another element that is unique to Nikolaidis's body of films. When the gang arrives at the warehouse where the drug transaction is about to take place, they hide and wait for the television crew to arrive. When they arrive, the viewers are presented with the image of the news reporter testing her lines, looking to the cameraman's camera directly, which is placed next to Nikolaidis's camera. Her focus on her appearance and her concern with the exclusivity of the news story portray her as opportunistic. Man and Kid approach the film crew, assuming the role of police officers with the pretext of informing them that the transaction will take place earlier than expected, in order to trap them. Man accuses them of 'splashing blood on TV' and the cameraman responds that they are just doing their jobs. The representation of the news crew emphasises that they only care about the exclusivity of the news, and offers a critique on the ruthless role of the media in contemporary quotidian life.

Therefore, through the aforementioned social phenomena of this tangible world a certain version of Greece is depicted. This Greece resembles both actual contemporary society and the fictional world featured in the rest of Nikolaidis's films, confirming that the diegetic world Nikolaidis presents in his films is not that fictional after all. His ideas and beliefs are embedded in real-life examples and contexts found in contemporary societies.

6.3.4 Female representation

The representation of women in *LTA* is the most problematic of all Nikolaidis's films and lifts altogether any doubts as to whether Nikolaidis is a misogynist or not. In this film the 'unimportant' women of the two previously analysed films now assume leading roles. Only Elsa remotely resembles the classic film noir femme fatale, but her representation is still quite ambiguous. Whether or not female representation in *LTA* is viewed as a critique of women's place in contemporary society, as with Rita's representation in *TWASS*, it remains highly misogynistic.

A basic characteristic that differentiates the representation of women in *LTA* from the rest of Nikolaidis's films is that a man now has the main leading role. Subsequently, the women are frequently identified with Man's views about them. His role is much based on his lines. A line that he utters in Elsa's presence but addressing Kid is:

Man: All women are replicas. Most of them anyway... And all replicas want to fall in love with and marry us. You know why, right? Because they think that's how they'll evolve into real humans and convince us they're not machines. I once was with one of them. But it wasn't successful. When her warranty expired she blew a fuse.

Elsa: We've heard all that already.

Man: So take my advice: watch out for replicas who act like real women, and systematically avoid real women, who act like replicas.

This utterly misogynistic statement seems to question Nikolaidis's representation of women in the previously analysed films, confirming that the filmmaker is highly contradictory. It is evident that the woman Man is talking about is Elsa, and his comments suggest that he was traumatised by their relationship. However, no additional details are revealed about their relationship. This general and non-contextualised attack towards women, which describes them as non-human and subordinate to men, appears extremely sexist.

Man's lines in the published script of the film do not stop there. Before advising Kid, he says: 'When I found this real woman, and stupid me wanted to marry her, she didn't want to... Very wisely indeed... Because she didn't have the need to prove to anyone that she isn't a replica. She was a real woman you see, a wonder of the nature let's say.'²⁰ This omitted part of the script adds a motive to his accusation, but still does not excuse neither Man's nor Nikolaidis's sexism. On the contrary, Nikolaidis perpetuates the stereotypical categorisations that he applies to women, and although in the script he

²⁰ Nikos Nikolaidis, *Loser Takes All*, (Athens: Egokeros, 2003), 58-59.

presents Elsa as an unconventional woman who does not care to settle down, he disavows her unconventional lifestyle by categorising her as part of a group, by accusing her of being a replica and, further, by not including Man's whole dialogue in the script.²¹

It appears as if Nikolaidis attempts to attribute this misogynistic and racist behaviour to the lack of social bonds since these views are seen through Man's distorting prism. The world presented in *LTA* is a dark, cruel, contemporary world that faces several social phenomena, in which the gap between state and society members is augmented and perpetuated. Furthermore, since there is no resistance towards the desperate living conditions, individuals are isolated and marginalised, and are found in a state of anomie that the 'wretches' are found in the 1970s. The gang members are presented to the audience as individuals, as people in search for companionship, who have become desolate, despondent and harsh, similarly to the protagonist in *MP*. However, this fact does not justify misogynistic statements. When considering female representation in *MP*, it is attested that there are alternative ways to comment on the antisocial contemporary societies, thus contradicting the latter film's empowering female film leader.

The three leading female characters in the film are very different from each other. Elsa is a few years older than the other two women and she is characteristic of the femme fatale figure, similarly to the women in Nikolaidis's previous two sections of work. Her costumes, which consist of dark clothes, furs and sunglasses, her excessive make-up add to this impression (Fig6.3.11). Elsa is an independent woman who does not depend on men. She owns a bar and she is not sexually objectified, further challenging the patriarchal dyad of public male sphere ≠ domestic/private female sphere. Although she seems to be harsh in manner, she acts as a maternal figure for Kid. She calls him 'kid,' and wants to protect him from the protagonist's vices and joins the gang to care for Kid's well-being. Considering that she is older than Kid and that she is closer to the protagonist's generation, her maternal care towards Kid can be translated into an expression of the older generation's concern for the younger one. It can be also read as an attempt to protect the younger generation against the adversities of the contemporary societies, as well as an effort to moderate their guilt for allowing this world, that the new generations have to live in, to decay.

²¹ Many parts of this film were omitted in the editing process. After contacting Chouliaras to ask if this was the case for this scene, he informed me that the missing lines were not included in the script they used when shooting (Christos Chouliaras, private message on facebook to the author, September 2013).



Fig6.3.11 Elsa resembling a femme fatale

Odette's costumes are reminiscent of the fetishized women of the previously analysed films (Fig6.3.12). She is represented as a constantly drunk woman, who is socially awkward and abject: she slips, she falls, she vomits consequently, she continuously provokes laughter and she adds gag elements to the film. Although she is tricked by Man, she is presented as a determined woman who goes after him, asking for her ring and her car back, and this is how she gets involved in the Eldorado mission. As with the rest of the film's protagonists, the audience only know limited information about her, mainly that her mother has just passed away and that the two of them lived together. Although this information may seem unimportant, it signifies a matriarchal rather than patriarchal house – the dead mother is not unintentionally played by Valley.²²



Fig6.3.12 Odette presented as fetishized

²² The protagonist of *MP* and of *SS*.

Although Nikolaidis has cast non-Greek actresses before,²³ his approach to Madalie's character diverges from his representational patterns for other female characters. Madalie's inclusion in the film is interrelated to film noir. As Kaplan states, black characters were missing from classic film noir due to American racism.²⁴ This absence is substituted by the 'Black' virtue assigned to 'women, bad guys and detectives' for 'occupying indeterminate and monstrous spaces that Whiteness traditionally reserves for Blackness in our culture.'²⁵ Moreover, white characters in classic film noir are 'blackened' by the high contrast lighting that characterizes film noir cinematic language, signifying the 'rotten souls of white folks.'²⁶ Therefore, I claim that Nikolaidis, in an attempt to equalize the gang members in this contemporary pastiche noir, casts a black actress²⁷ to play alongside the white characters, who are already socio-politically marginalized, and who are 'blackened' by their marginal milieu and the film's mise-en-scène. However, Nikolaidis further 'Others' both the women in general and Madalie in particular, thus contradicting what seems to be his original aim.

From the beginning of the film, Madalie is presented as an upgraded version of Nikolaidis's 'unimportant' women: she is a stripper, she wears appealing clothes, she is raped by two drug dealers, and Man frequently uses her for sex. Furthermore, she is continuously sexualized. For example, Man asks to have sex with her before they leave for their mission and she accepts by lifting up her leather skirt. The camera cuts from a medium shot of Madalie to an extreme close-up of her posterior that is presented in a freeze frame that then dissolves to the next scene of the gang in the car (Fig6.3.13). Her fragmented fetishized image features merely for visual pleasure. Thus Nikolaidis uses Madalie's body as an object since the image of her protruding derrière becomes a canvas for a dissolve to take place. As Janell Hobson claims the 'appropriation of a "big behind" – a sign of grotesquerie, later connoting a sign of luxurious beauty in the bustle – illustrates the complexities of white responses to racial and sexual difference, which elicit both repulsion and desire.'²⁸ Therefore, it can be argued that Nikolaidis uses Madalie's 'big behind' as a sexual tool, since she is immensely sexualised, but at the same time it makes

²³ Tschechowa, Herold, Valley.

²⁴ E. Ann Kaplan, "The Dark Continent of Film Noir": Race, Displacement and Metaphor in Tourneur's *Cat People* (1942) and Welles' *The Lady From Shanghai* (1948)', in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, (London: BFI, 2000), 183

²⁵ Manthia Diawara qtd. in Kaplan, Ibid., 184.

²⁶ Eric Lott qtd. in Kaplan, Ibid., 185

²⁷ Which is rare for Greek films, although African immigrants started appearing earlier in Greece than the rest of the immigrants.

²⁸ Janell Hobson, 'The "Batty" Politic: Toward an Aesthetic of the Black Female Body', in *Hypatia*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2003, 96.

her body part appear as grotesque as it gradually dissolves and takes the form of the next shot, appearing as non-human.



Fig6.3.13 Madalie's posterior in a freeze frame

Madalie's further use as a background can be seen when Man and Kid talk with the owner of Eldorado as she and her friend are shown rehearsing their routine on stage. Although the two men are not watching them, their out-of-focus background image is used to decorate the background (Fig6.3.14). Although all female protagonists in Nikolaidis's films are sexualized (apart from the character in *MP* and Marina in *SB*), none of them undergoes such an extreme sexualisation. Madalie's problematic representation is further found in the fact that her foreign accent and her poor command of the Greek language are laughter-inducing, both for the protagonists and the audience. These elements seem to be intentionally stressed, since the speech of the non-Greek actresses that Nikolaidis cast were never used as an intended comical component of his films.²⁹ Additionally, Man calls Madalie 'Blackie' ('Mavrouko' in Greek), which is a highly derogatory term; thus Madalie is constantly doubly discriminated through her gender and race.

²⁹ Tschechowa was dubbed in Greek in *EBA*; Valley was first intended to be dubbed in *MP* but was decided to keep her voice and she spoke in English and French in *SS*; Herold used English in *SS* and *Sugar Three*.



Fig6.3.14 Madalie at the background

Madalie's background that is provided towards the end of the film confuses her representation and appears to be an attempt by the filmmaker to mitigate her misogynistic representation. Madalie works as a stripper in order to save money for a specific goal and this works to justify her appealing costumes. Madalie has studied Librarianship at London Empire College and saves money to open a bookstore. By framing her actions as necessary for her desired goal, Nikolaidis presents Madalie as an educated woman with aspiration, and this differentiates her from his other film characters. Although on the one hand this signifies an attempt by Nikolaidis to project the immigrants' commonalities to the rest of the citizens and counteract their 'Othering', on the other hand it appears as an (unsuccessful) attempt to lessen Madalie's discrimination in the film. Thus, it is clearly demonstrated that the prosaic women who were used merely as props in the two other films of the trilogy now coincide with the representation of a leading character that would have been expected to have the characteristics of the 'ideal woman'.

6.3.5 Concluding Remarks

LTA shows a shift in the filmmaker's concerns. The film demonstrates that his fears about the increasing authoritative power projected in his films which are set in fictional worlds can be applied to a real-life context. Since cinema is 'dead', there are no films to pastiche, and Nikolaidis simply pastiches film noir which fits pessimism and darkness. Athens assumes a grim face both because it is presented through Nikolaidis's fatalistic viewpoint, and because it is projected as a modern metropolis with various socio-political issues, in a country with a malfunctional state. The gang that the protagonists try to form does not work after all, because its members are not equal. By classifying almost all women under the 'unimportant' women category, Nikolaidis 'Others' the women in the leading roles and renders his work utterly misogynistic.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This project began with the aim of exploring Nikolaidis's cinematic work and interrogating patterns of female representation in his films. By examining the filmmaker's style and tracing the stylistic elements that make him an auteur, I aimed at pinpointing recurrent motifs to help towards mapping out Nikolaidis's authorial signature. Nikolaidis's work is extremely personal and introverted, thus I argued that biographical elements of the filmmaker help the understanding of his oeuvre. For this reason, I claimed that in order for his work to be fully comprehended, it needs to be examined as a whole, and I adopted a kind of psychobiographical approach to his work. My aim was to examine Nikolaidis's work as pastiche and analyse how he makes use of pastiche. I also set off with the aim of claiming that female representation is the only consistently inconsistent element in his films since he appears extremely consistent in his other ideas, influences and obsessions, while acknowledging from the beginning that female representation in Nikolaidis's filmic work is misogynistic. I provided a sustained analysis of female representation in each of his films in order to examine this inconsistency.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide a framework for Nikolaidis's work and detail aspects of his career, his life and his viewpoints in order to construct a profile of the filmmaker, since this profile is inherently linked to his cinema. In Chapter 2, I provided a brief history of Greek cinema which mapped out the historical and critical terrain and located Nikolaidis in Greek Film Studies. In line with the psychobiographical approach to the filmmaker's work, I examined various biographical elements about the filmmaker that show his relationship with Greek socio-political issues and with cinema. I argued that Nikolaidis's filmic work does not fall under the three categories of Greek cinema (PEK, NEK, SEK) since I find these three categories restrictive. Based on Nikolaidis's influences and topics, his different aesthetics from the films of his contemporaries, his diversion from the conventions of a national Greek cinema, as well as the fact that he created a consistent body of work, I argued that Nikolaidis's filmic oeuvre constitutes its own cinematic category. For this reason, I consider Nikolaidis a maverick filmmaker.

In Chapter 2, I also examined Nikolaidis's ideas about the 'independent' (in his opinion) Greek cinema, stressing the importance he placed on gaining independence from funding bodies in order to make films. This fact strengthens my argument of the filmmaker having a controversial public profile, since he got funding from the GFC for virtually all his films, even though he did not entirely depend on it, as he received only small amounts of money retrospectively. The connection between NEK and advertising is also stressed as

Nikolaidis claims that the filmmakers of the time practised their craft and learned how to make films through advertising. The influence of American and popular culture on Nikolaidis's work begins to be mapped out in this chapter. Chapter 2 concludes by examining Nikolaidis's relationship with the TFF and to the Second Balcony in order to demonstrate the filmmaker's marginalised position in the Greek cinema discourse, to demonstrate his uncompromising but also contradictory personality, as well as to highlight Nikolaidis's collaborations and further construct his authorial profile.

In Chapter 3, I provided a brief literature review on authorship and I explained why I chose a psychobiographical approach to Nikolaidis's work over other approaches. In this chapter I also provided an overview of his novels and advertisements in order to stress the interconnected nature of his oeuvre and to highlight the consistency of his style and ideas across it. The importance of his work being autobiographical, in the sense that it presents his own personal fears and obsessions, is underlined in this chapter, since it is these autobiographical elements that have shaped his work and have created its interconnected nature. I claimed that the importance of acknowledging these elements, which mainly have to do with rock 'n' roll culture and film noir, is pivotal, since they shape Nikolaidis's authorial style, and shed light on the interpretation of female representation in his films. The filmmaker has been accused of not addressing Greek-specific topics, and his American influence has been criticised for producing work that does not correspond to 'Greek reality'. However, I have shown that what Nikolaidis presents is part of his personal Greece.

In Chapter 3, after clarifying the filmmaker's influences and the extent to which they are encountered in his oeuvre, I argued that Nikolaidis's work is pastiche. I developed a literature review to argue why Nikolaidis's work diverges from Jameson's idea of pastiche and matches with Dyer's. Following a literature review on the existing bibliography on Nikolaidis, I briefly examined a literature review regarding female representation in Greek cinema. This literature review highlighted the existing gaps, and revealed how these texts cannot contribute towards my research, since female representation in Nikolaidis's films is different to the majority of Greek cinema. Through an overview of Nikolaidis's female representation, and after stressing the influence of film noir on his work, I proceeded to expose the two categories that Nikolaidis assigns to the women in his films: *the powerful women* versus *the unimportant women*.

The problematic quest for the 'ideal woman' ('Laura', 'Vera', 'Molly') was also underlined, and her connection to the idea of the femme fatale of classic noir was further stressed. Building the profile of these women in Nikolaidis's work, I argued that Nikolaidis

portrays an idiosyncratic appropriation of the femme fatale who stems from a cultural history which is linked to Nikolaidis's personal experiences and his personal Greece. The misogynistic elements can be said to be part of this cultural history, since they are connected to Nikolaidis's generation and of Greece's socio-political situation, without this being an excuse for misogyny and sexism. The binary between empowered and unimportant women that Nikolaidis perpetuates pinpoints inconsistent female representation and problematises his films, while stressing his misogyny. This argument was set up in order to be explored in further detail in the proceeding textual analysis chapters.

The following three chapters take the form of the three thematic sections of Nikolaidis's work. In these chapters, I conducted a close textual analysis of each film in order to map out Nikolaidis's style, the basic ideas that run through the film, and his pattern of female representation. The sections are characterised by common thematic elements; yet since they were not initially meant to be sections, they stand independently. However, by analysing the films in sections, I clarified connections between films and highlighted the commonalities or differences in female representation in each film.

In this concluding chapter, I will summarise the context of the film analysis chapters, approaching films in combination in order to bring together common elements and recurrent motifs traced through the film analysis, to sum up and stress the use of pastiche and Nikolaidis's connection to postmodernism, as well as to summarise the analysis of female representation in Nikolaidis's films.

7.1 Recurrent Motifs

There is a plethora of commonalities and characteristics that are encountered in every one of Nikolaidis's films. These commonalities reveal a level of consistency across his work and contribute to the construction of his authorial style. The ideas that run throughout the whole body of Nikolaidis's work are mainly pessimism, finality, decadence, threat and the 'coming nightmare'. Ever since *LR*, Nikolaidis's work has portrayed a decaying, threatening environment, which encourages no hope for the future. This premonition about a bleak future is linked to how Nikolaidis perceived his generation, which had experienced great socio-political turmoil at various instances. Pessimism and decadence inform all of his films and are further linked to his antiauthoritarian ideas and nonconformity since he believed that the political parties should be avoided (as evidenced in *TWASS*). The fascist state further perpetuates this threat and nightmare. This is particularly evident in the trilogy that takes its name after this threat (*The Shape of the*

Coming Nightmare), and where this threat becomes the thread that connects the three films. This threat does not only refer to humanity and society, but also addresses the future of cinema (as argued in all his films) and of the rock 'n' roll phenomenon (*Here No More*).

In *EBA*, fascist ideology is juxtaposed with the underworld. Euridice is found in the underworld, which is connoted by the claustrophobic and chaotic environment. The sounds of the film signify the on-going dictatorship which is connected to Hell. In *MP*, the underworld leaves the claustrophobic environment of Euridice's house and becomes the outside world, where the claustrophobic feeling remains and foretells the catastrophic future ahead of the protagonist. The post-apocalyptic, dystopian environment is a warning to this threat and exposes what will come to pass unless the citizens revolt against the fascist state. The threat also concerns the future of cinema. The threat moves back indoors in *TZY*, into another Hell-like environment, which is Nikolaidis's last attempt to awaken the citizens who passively accept the state's commands. In this film, the unseen state has undertaken the role of the pimp, has rendered society a brothel, and the citizens its prostitutes. Elements of decadence, which are connected to the role of the fascist state, also permeate all three films.

In *SS* and in *SYIHMD*, the threat and pessimism are towards the bleak future of societies, the 'death' of cinema. In both films, the environment is threatening, as the protagonists are found in Hell. In *HNM*, fascism and threat are openly presented and articulated. In *TWASS*, the 'wretches' have been destroyed by politics and society and their 'death' is associated with the 'death' of cinema and of the rock 'n' roll way of living. The protagonists openly condemn politics and blame the system for their situation. In this film, Nikolaidis claims that the dissolution of rock 'n' roll culture meant the dissolution of resistance.

In *SB*, the threat of the fascist state takes form and transforms the bunch's house into a battlefield. Antifascist ideas prevail in the film. Revolution becomes necessary and since the bunch belongs to a generation which can still revolt, they proceed to engage in a fight with the authorities and they choose not to conform to the fascist state's commands. *LTA* is an overtly political film, and fascism is openly presented. The authoritative state in *LTA* brings elements of decadence into the mise-en-scène. Nikolaidis's choice to set the film in Exarchia shows that the filmmaker's concerns are applied in the real world and that they are not simply figments of his imagination. The acknowledgement of the 'death' of cinema and of rock 'n' roll confirms that the 'nightmare' is already here.

Many of the rest of the recurrent elements in the films are interlinked with the political nature of Nikolaidis's films. For instance, elements of militarism are encountered

in the sound of *EBA*, and in *MP*'s mise-en-scène (gas masks, wires). *SB* uses common elements to *MP*, and the contrapuntal tension that music creates with the film stresses antifascism and comments on the authoritarian regimes. In *TZY*, the militaristic elements become sadomasochistic props since fascism is linked to perversion. Surveillance is also paramount in his films and it recognised as an outcome of the imposing authoritarian powers. In *EBA*, the sense of surveillance emerges from the subjective point-of-view shots that 'haunt' Euridice and that turn out to be hers, since fascism turns her paranoid. In *SB*, the 'blond guy' watches the gang and subjective point-of-view shots create a sense of surveillance. In *MP* the authorities, who are responsible for the post-apocalyptic situation, are surveying the remaining citizens through the morning patrol. In *SYIHMD*, subjective point-of-view return of the gaze by the women, as an attempt to attack patriarchy. Due to surveillance in *TZY*, the women have been 'caught up in a power situation, of which they are themselves the bearers,'¹ linking this film to *SB* and the film's respective situation.

Another element that is used with political implications throughout Nikolaidis's work is the sea and its association with freedom. In *EBA*, Euridice recalls the sound of the sea and the seagulls in her efforts to feel free, and she also keeps seashells in her jewellery box as if they are valuable. In *SB*, seagulls are heard when Andreas is released from prison and is emancipated from the fascist state. In *MP*, the protagonists will only be free if they reach the sea. In *SS*, Mother realises that she is about to die as she is losing her 'scales', and she is soon drowned in water, emancipating Daughter from her authoritative power. In *SYIHMD*, the women throw the dead husband in the sea in order to free themselves from patriarchy. In *LTA*, Man spends a night in the stolen car by the sea where he finds shelter, and also dreams of Kid flying a kite by the sea, being freed from the miserable life. And in *TZY* the women dream of a collective escape to the sea, where they are freed from authoritarian powers.

Suicide in Nikolaidis's work is also a recurrent motif and is linked to freedom. Suicide is explicitly dealt with in the *HNM* trilogy, where the majority of the protagonists commit suicide in order to be freed from the authoritative regime, since, according to Nikolaidis, committing suicide is not a compromise. Euridice also fantasises suicide which 'frees' her, since seagulls and waves are heard while recreating the suicide that possibly brought her to Hell. Suicide also frees Elsa in *SYIHMD*, who re-joins Vera in the pool. In *TZY*, the unnamed woman is suicidal and aims to 'leave' the atrocious brothel for a better place; however, she fails to do so and is trapped in Hell.

¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

The connections between Hell and dictatorship are persistent throughout Nikolaidis's works. This is evident in *TSOTCN* trilogy where all the women live in Hell. *TWLAC* diptych is set in Hell as well, and while state fascism is not visible, patriarchy's fascism is attacked and subverted. Hell is also associated with the orphic myth, which is widely used in Nikolaidis's work. *EBA* pastiches the myth by subverting it and showing Euridice's version of it. A version of the orphic myth is also encountered in *MP*, where the guard attempts to get the protagonist out of Hell. A similar story is encountered in *SS* as well, whereby the detective descends to Hell in order to find and save Laura.

The ways in which Hell is suggested also become characteristic of Nikolaidis's style. The filmmaker uses baroque frames, which are full of props and which create a sense of claustrophobia and chaos while also giving an almost three-dimensional quality to the image. In *EBA*, Euridice's furniture and clothes, the garbage and the plastic (which has been connected to death) prevail in the frames, causing claustrophobia. *MP*, although filmed mainly outside, adopts the same technique with the same intentions. This approach is also found in *TZY*. *SS* is a celebration of the baroque frames and Nikolaidis uses his characteristic techniques here as a way of further pastiching *Sunset Boulevard*. While the *HNM* trilogy is not as connected to Hell as the rest of Nikolaidis's films (although it is implied that in the real world the fascist state can bring Hell to the societies as well) these techniques are apparent in this film. Particularly in *SB*, the full frames are extremely characteristic of Nikolaidis's work. In *LTA*, the frames are filled with destroyed, almost post-apocalyptic images of the Greek metropolis.

The props that fill the frames are objects of popular culture and include jukeboxes (*TWASS*), flipper tables (*SB*), record players (*EBA*, *HNM*, *TWLAC*), and film posters (*SB*, *MP*, *LTA*). Moreover, dolls and mannequins are widely used. In *EBA*, they are used to infantilize Euridice and to foretell Orpheus's castration. In *TWASS*, the woman that Alkis kills is used as a prop, corresponding to 'Glendora' song's mannequin, while the unnamed woman is used as a living doll. In *SB*, dolls and mannequins have active roles in the gang's fight against the authorities. Finally, in *TZY*, due to the horror elements of the film, dolls come alive in order to scare the women as a response to their inability to have children. The faulty doll is used as a representation of the child-monsters these women would have if they could. Therefore, although dolls and mannequins are recycled across Nikolaidis's work, they have different roles according to Nikolaidis's different intentions.

Another recurrent motif in Nikolaidis's work is the rain, which is linked with film noir and which features in every single film. Elements of black comedy and irony are also encountered in every film while the lack of memory is encountered in some of Nikolaidis's

films (*EBA*, *MP*, *SYIHMD*). At the same time, the importance of memories and the nostalgia for the past as well as anxiety for the future are key recurrent motifs in Nikolaidis's filmic work (*HNM*). Excess and shock factor are also common elements found in all of Nikolaidis's films, and they aim to shock the audience and awaken it. These elements are partly moderated by the comic elements encountered in all of his films.

The notion of companionship is also evident throughout Nikolaidis's work. Its importance is highlighted in the *HNM*, either through the demonstration of its ultimate significance or through the manifestation of what happens if it is missing. *TWLAC* also highlights the importance of companionship. The quest for companionship brought the detective in *SS* to the women's house and Vera to in *SYIHMD* to Elsa's house. *MP* stresses the interdependence of the two protagonists which leads them towards a common goal, and also the women in *TZY* learn to be in each other's company in order to escape the harsh realities of their lives.

This sense of companionship in these films introduces a form of 'family' which the protagonists have chosen. Apart from Euridice, who is alone, all the other protagonists form 'families'. For this reason, the majority of the films take place in a 'home' which the protagonists often have to defend (*HNM*, *TWLAC*, *TZY*). The importance of this personal space for Nikolaidis is seen in *MP*, where the lack of a 'home' space means that the protagonist is left alone with no home or personal memories to return to, thus rendering her 'narrative memories' her 'home'.

These versions of families contradict the traditional Greek families projected in many Greek films. In *TWASS* and *SB*, the gang members are presented in 'family moments', such as at the dinner table. Similarly, in *LTA* the protagonists attempt to become a family but ultimately fail. In *TZY*, the women become family in the end and they appear in family dinner. *TWLAC* contradicts the traditional idea of the family. *SS* presents a perverted relationship between Mother and Daughter and references a problematic relationship with the dead father. Mother becomes the head of the family and the family dinner table is a place of atrociousness, and fetish. *SYIHMD* also presents a disturbed family, since Elsa's father is dead, she has killed her husband and she also kills her lover.

The treatment of the notions of 'family' and 'home' in a way that differs from how conventional families are presented in Greek film creates associations with respective representations of the family in recent Greek films of the 'Weird Greek Wave'. In particular, the disturbed family in *SS* shares many common elements with this wave. In *SS*, Mother treats Daughter as a child, even though she is an adult. She does not let Daughter smoke, but yet allows her to have sex with her, sexually exploit the detective and kill

servants. For this reason, Daughter kills Mother and then takes her place. As a point of comparison, in *Dogtooth* (the film that arguably gave impetus to this ‘Weird Greek Wave’) the adult children of the family are treated as children and are not allowed to go beyond the house into the outside world, and yet the son is allowed to have sex with his sister. Moreover, at the end of *Miss Violence* (Alexandros Avranas, 2013), the mother/grandmother of the incestuous, perverse family kills the father/grandfather of the family, killing the patriarch perpetrator of the incestuous and perverse relations of the family. However, when she kills him, she takes his place, perpetuating the obscenity of the situation. Yet, family representations in the new wave criticise the traditional Greek family and to the suffocating patriarchal Greek society in a more targeted way than Nikolaidis’s films.

There are further connections between Nikolaidis’s cinema and the ‘Weird Greek Wave’. For instance, this new wave is based on filmmakers’ ‘labour-exchange’ collaborations, similarly to Nikolaidis’s cinema. Elements of performativity are also important in the formation of the wave, as they are in Nikolaidis’s cinema. Pastiche is also predominantly used in the ‘Weird Greek Wave’.² The films of this wave are allegorical, as many of Nikolaidis’s films are, such as *TSOTCN* and *TWLAC*. Furthermore, some films of the new wave have provocative narratives and mise-en-scène that are aimed at shocking the audience as well (for example *Dogtooth*, *Attenberg*, *Miss Violence*). Though, there are great differences between Nikolaidis’s work and this new wave in terms of style, since these films engage mostly with the realist tradition, and are greatly influenced by modernism.

The reason why I juxtapose Nikolaidis’s cinema with this wave is because Nikolaidis’s cinema has some ‘weird’ characteristics that were in evidence long before the development of the new wave. This fact can show the influence of Nikolaidis on these new filmmakers as well as the diachronic nature of Nikolaidis’s films. Moreover, the films of the new wave can be read as allegories for the Greek society, but they can also be read as comments on contemporary societies in general, which is justified by these films’ international appeal.³ This is precisely what I have been arguing with regards to Nikolaidis: his films can be read as specifically Greek, but they can also have international appeal due to their placelessness and timelessness.

² For example Tsangari and Lanthimos use it.

³ As claimed in Chapter 2.

7.2 Pastiche and Postmodernism

Although Dyer tries to ‘rescue’ pastiche from postmodernism, I claimed that Dyer’s description of pastiche fits Nikolaidis’s work, even though the filmmaker’s work is postmodern. I claimed that Nikolaidis’s films are characterised as a pasticcio of pastiches, since he pastiches various film genres and styles, and specific films, highlighting the repository value of the genres that Dyer argues about. Pastiche takes different forms in his work according to the filmmaker’s intentions, and the combinatory essence of pastiche allows Nikolaidis to combine traits that otherwise seem incompatible. Film noir is the strongest influence on his work and is the genre from which he borrows many elements in terms of narrative and formal properties. Even if it is not explicitly pastiched, the influence of film noir is always evidenced in his films. In addition to film noir though, Nikolaidis pastiches nostalgia films, post-apocalyptic films, Greek tragedy, comedies, musicals, documentaries, westerns and horror films. I also claimed that Nikolaidis’s pastiche is political, since his films are political themselves, and he chooses to pastiche specific genres or styles and films for political reasons (as for instance film noir, the horror genre, *Cape Fear*, *The Wild Bunch*) in order to convey his political messages.

By analysing Nikolaidis’s use of pastiche in individual films, I have noted a change in its use towards the end of Nikolaidis’s career, and consequently towards the approaching ‘nightmare’. Thus here, I will map out Nikolaidis’s use of pastiche chronologically. *EBA* pastiches the Orphic myth, and film noir influence can be traced in lighting and costumes, however, pastiche in *EBA* is not in much evidence. Also, *EBA* is experimental in form and context and is rooted in modernism; however, the Orphic myth is pastiched in such a way that it becomes political, since Nikolaidis links the Underworld with fascism, and in this specific case, with the Greek Military Junta.

In *TWASS*, due to the pessimism for the future and the concern for the ‘death’ of cinema, Nikolaidis becomes nostalgic for the 1950s. He is also concerned for the bleak future where fascist authorities will rule, as he predicts a future where there will be no revolutions and nonconformity, and where cinema and rock ‘n’ roll culture will be long gone. Film noir and rock ‘n’ roll are also pastiched within the idea of ‘Vera’. *TWASS* pastiches nostalgia films, film noir, documentary, and the musical, specific films (*Ruby Gentry*, *Johnny Guitar*), as well as Greek and foreign literature. The pastiched literature is political and adds to the antiauthoritarian ideology inscribed on the film. Also, the revolutionary rock ‘n’ roll way of life that is pastiched in the film, both through music and through the pastiched nostalgia films, contribute to Nikolaidis’s political pastiche.

In *SB* Nikolaidis pastiches rock 'n' roll culture through popular culture elements that he incorporates into the mise-en-scène (flipper tables, record players, posters) and uses rock 'n' roll music, but also pastiche music, in order to create nostalgia for the 1950s and for the future and to comment on the hybridity and the dissolution of the 1950s music. Film noir is also pastiched in *SB* in terms of the film's lighting and inclusion of the femme fatale figure. *SB* also pastiches *TWB*, a radical antifascist film, in order to comment on fascism, and add to the political nature of his pastiche. Nikolaidis also pastiches *Belle de Jour* in order to denote necrophilia for the 'dead' cinema and music.

MP pastiches post-apocalyptic films and film noir. Extracts from literary works that have been adapted for the big screen are pastiched in the protagonist's voice-over, which form her 'narrative memories'. The post-apocalyptic nature of the film does not allow imitation of scenes of the pastiched films since cinema is not a 'lived' memory. The threat for the forthcoming end of cinema is also demonstrated in the film (the empty cinema room, the 'calls' to film noir heroes, the television frames). Nikolaidis's pasticcio of pastiches exemplifies how the filmmaker's nostalgia for old cinema is used as a critique for the present. Nikolaidis chooses to pastiche the post-apocalyptic subgenre in order to stress the political role of the pastiche, since the catastrophe in the film was invoked by the authoritative regime. Also, the literature that he chooses to pastiche has political undertones that contribute to the filmmaker's political pastiche.

SS celebrates Nikolaidis's style. *SS* pastiches *Laura* and *Sunset Boulevard* and notes Nikolaidis's nostalgia for the aesthetics and the style of film noir, his admiration for the specific genre and his expression of disappointment for the fact that such films are not made anymore. Likewise, in *SYIHMD* Nikolaidis combines common elements from *Les Diaboliques* and *Hush...Hush*, *Sweet Charlotte* and imitates the photography of the film noir (black and white props and costumes, warm lighting, vivid red colours, celluloid glow). The films' dialogue with 'dead' film noir is directly linked with the sense of necrophilia in the films, thus Nikolaidis is in search of the lost cinema. *SS* has highly stylised images of sadomasochism, fetishism and perversion, and *SYIHMD*'s fetishized scenes are an expression of Nikolaidis's fetish for the medium of film and American cinema. Moreover, the original films that are pastiched in both Nikolaidis's films bring to the new films a political tone. In *SS* Nikolaidis chooses *Sunset Boulevard* which features Norma Desmond, a decaying femme fatale, in order to pastiche her into the representation of Mother and comment on the decaying contemporary societies; *Laura* is appropriated and pastiched in order to attack patriarchy, regardless if this is achieved or not. In the same vein, Nikolaidis pastiches the two original films in *SYINMD* in order both to attack patriarchy

and to comment on the zombie-like position that the Greek state brings the viewers of Greek films in.

With the transition to the 2000s Nikolaidis becomes even more despairing of the future. In *LTA*, rock 'n' roll culture and cinema are acknowledged as gone. These 'deaths' result in the 'inability' of this film to pastiche specific films, since it seems as if cinema does not even form a recollection: there are no films to pastiche. Nikolaidis thus solely pastiches film noir, making a pastiche noir. Combining this fact with the explicit display of a film noir milieu that was absent from his previous films, Nikolaidis clearly connects his film and his oeuvre with film noir elements of fear, bleakness and pessimism. Moreover, Nikolaidis, casts a black actress to play alongside the white characters, who are 'blackened' by their marginal milieu and the film's mise-en-scène, thus pastiching film noir politically.

With his last film, *TZY*, Nikolaidis shows that the 'coming nightmare' has come and has destroyed everything. What accompanies this nightmare is so bleak that film noir is not enough to transfer it to the audience. There is nothing sensational anymore; nothing erotic that could be pastiched through film noir. Subsequently, in this highly political film, Nikolaidis refuses to pastiche film noir and he instead pastiches the horror genre. The pastiched scene from *CF* is not dialogue with film, but a dialogue with authoritative power and imposition, adding to my argument of Nikolaidis's pastiche being political.

Through my individual case studies, it is evident that by appropriating the elements from the original films or the genres/styles that he pastiches, he adds his authorial signature. Pastiche *becomes* Nikolaidis's authorial signature itself, since it is vital to his style and enables Nikolaidis to be recognised by. Nikolaidis also contradicts Jameson's claim that pastiche has no historicity. In reference to the rest of the films where he pastiches film noir, Nikolaidis shows a self-awareness to what he is doing which stresses the importance of historicity.

Nikolaidis's pasticcio work shows that the filmmaker addresses cineliterate audiences that would understand his dialogue with genres and the original films since 'it works as pastiche if you know what it is imitating.'⁴ Nikolaidis aims for the viewers to recognise what he pastiches in order for them to understand and decipher his political messages, and his messages for the 'dead' cinema. The difference between pastiche as characterised by Jameson and by the scholars that criticised Jameson is striking. By examining approaches to pastiche, starting with Hutcheon in 1989 and ending with Dyer in 2007,⁵ it is evident that the notion of pastiche changes and broadens over time. What is even more striking is that Nikolaidis's pastiche abides to the most recent examination of

⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁵ See Chapter 3.3

pastiche, maintaining though postmodern characteristics, thus showing the depth and multiple levels of pastiche and the need to constantly reexamine the concept. It also shows that Nikolaidis's pastiche work is so complicated that the most recent methodology is needed in order to approach his work. This fact also contributes to the diachronicity of Nikolaidis's work.

One of the most important elements that connect Nikolaidis's work to postmodernism (and links into his use of pastiche) is his tendency to combine popular culture with high art. Nikolaidis has been repeatedly accused of projecting a part of Greece that is not real but 'Americanised'⁶ through *TWASS* and *SB*. The main reason for Nikolaidis being accused of 'Americanisation' is that 'American popular culture seems to embody all that is wrong with mass culture. [...] So much mass culture comes from America that if it is perceived as a threat then Americanisation becomes a threat as well.'⁷ Therefore, Nikolaidis's cinema was viewed as a threat to Greek morals and to Greekness. As I have argued, Nikolaidis uses American popular culture and generates an idiosyncratic high art cinema; he does not merely combine 'high' art and 'popular' art but instead produces the former from the latter. The filmmaker is irreverent of high art and shamelessly combines it with elements of American pop culture. What Nikolaidis wants from America is its 1950s culture; a culture that in the U.S. was original and popular, a pop culture that was missing from Greece at the time.

This kind of accusations against Nikolaidis mostly came from critics that adhered to left wing ideology, and they perceived anything Americanised as a political threat, since the U.S. had played a major role in the imposition of the dictatorship in 1967. This is the part that the critics failed to understand: Nikolaidis portrayed a personalised version of his past, a selective version of a specific part of his generation, as pastiche does. Thus Nikolaidis presents a cultural nostalgia for *his personal cultural memories*. With regards to pastiche, it is not important whether Nikolaidis projected an exaggerated image of the 1950s generation or not, since pastiche, according to Dyer, 'imitates its idea of that which it imitates.'⁸ Furthermore, since 'a memory may be inaccurate or selective,'⁹ pastiche can also be too. His depiction of this culture thus might be selective and partly fictional, but American culture was undoubtedly present in Greece through rock 'n' roll and the

⁶ This is still going on today: Fodas Trousas attacks 'Rock 'n' Roll Invasion' episode of *The Hacks*, also attacking Nikolaidis for his American influence. Fodas Trousas, 'I Isvoli tou Rock 'n' Roll stin Ellada ton 50s'/'Rock 'n' Roll Invasion', in *Diskorichion*, Viewed 5 September 2014, <http://diskoryxeion.blogspot.gr/2014/09/50s.html>.

⁷ Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 22.

⁸ Dyer, *Pastiche*, 124

⁹ Ibid.

American films screened in the country. In this way, Nikolaidis has been accused of producing personal, pastiche films.

Consequently, although Nikolaidis uses postmodern characteristics in his work, his basic practice that stands out and renders his work memorable is pastiche. The complexity and looseness of the definition of postmodernism further complicates Nikolaidis's connection to postmodernism. This fact mainly has to do with many scholars' consideration of Jameson's definition of postmodernism and of pastiche as a rule of thumb, on which they build and develop theories without questioning it.

Pastiche has not been understood or greatly appreciated by the Greek film critics and this has to do largely with the general hesitance towards postmodernism, especially early in Nikolaidis's career. The difficulty in accepting postmodernism in Greek art is because of the notion that Greekness should always be present.¹⁰ According to Gregory Jusdanis,¹¹ since postmodernism is a reaction to modernism, and

since modernism had not legitimized itself, since Greek culture had not bifurcated into high and low, since the phenomena of massification and urbanization has taken hold only in the last twenty-five years [the 1960s], since the institutionalization of art is still in the early stages [...] it would be meaningless for a movement to emerge in order to negate what did not exist or is not complete.¹²

Thus, 'a postmodernism without the conditions necessitating it [...] would be another foreign import without an audience to consume it.'¹³ The threat of obliterating the 'Greekness' in Greek art becomes a significant drawback to the use of the postmodern practice in Greek art. The belated institutionalisation of art in Greece further discouraged the emergence and acceptance of postmodernism as happened in the case of the U.S. and of the rest of Europe.

This belated application of postmodernism to Greek art, as far as cinema is concerned, also has to do with the tension between high and low art. Until the 1970s the population of Greek cities (the cinema audience of the time) consisted mainly of villagers who moved to the cities but maintained their rural mentality.¹⁴ The first urban generation appeared in the 1970s, which then became the target audience for the filmmakers of the time.¹⁵ As Karalis argues, in the transition to the urban mind-set, the *petit bourgeois* (the newly rich people of the lower middle class) was the main audience for Greek cinema and

¹⁰ See for instance Jusdanis, 'Is Postmodernism Possible outside the West?', 83.

¹¹ Who writes about postmodernism in Greek literature.

¹² Ibid., 89.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Karalis, *History*, xi.

¹⁵ Ibid.

therefore their ‘intellectual pretensions’ formed the representation in film productions.¹⁶ Thus, this thematic appropriation created a tension and a gap between ‘creative cinema’ and ‘popular cinema’. This tension continues to be strong in Greek films.¹⁷

Nikolaidis was influenced by postmodernism that had already found expression in the U.S., and consequently he made films according to American patterns of filmmaking rather than Greek. Thus his early postmodern films are in a sense ahead of their time for Greek cinema. Postmodernism in Greek cinema started to be appreciated, examined and used after the 1990s. In 2002, Skopeteas even (erroneously) claims that postmodernism appeared in Greece in the 1990s.¹⁸ He briefly examines *SS* as an example of oppositional filmmaking and writes that the film imitates classical films, but he fails to identify it as pastiche. His reluctance with regards to the notion of pastiche, only accepting Jameson’s analysis of it,¹⁹ even leads him to write that Nikolaidis mixes eras, styles and traditions, but ‘no matter how original the mingling is, the auteur vanishes. Many styles is no style.’²⁰

Therefore, I argue that pastiche has not been familiar to or appreciated by Greek critics or scholars until recently. The ‘Weird Greek Wave’, which heavily uses pastiche, has started to shed light on its use in Greek cinema. At the same time, even nowadays pastiche continues to have negative implications. The negativity attributed to pastiche by film critics still has to do with the political background of the reviewers. For instance, Tzia Yovanni’s reviews of *Dogtooth* and *Attenberg* in the newspaper *Rizospastis*, the official newspaper of a Greek communist party of Greece, writes that pastiche takes the films away from realism. She argues that this results in a non-logical narrative in the former film,²¹ while noting that the latter film abuses various genres and forms of arts.²² Therefore, the reasons for pastiche’s negative reception have until nowadays to do with politics and with the longing for the Greek films to clearly maintain their ‘Greekness’.

7.3 Female Representation

Nikolaidis categorises women into ‘powerful’ and ‘unimportant’ women, with the first being empowered and having agency and the latter being treated ornamentally. The filmmaker places the powerful women category on a pedestal, while he undermines the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Skopeteas, ‘Postmodern Technique’, 51.

¹⁹ Ibid., 53.

²⁰ Ibid., 62.

²¹ Tzia Yovanni, ‘O Kynodontas ke I Metamoderna Esthiti tis Parakmis’/‘Dogtooth and the Postmodern Aesthetics of Decadence’, *Rizospastis*. Viewed 20 September 2014. <http://www1.rizospastis.gr/wwwengine/story.do?id=6154599>.

²² Tzia Yovanni, ‘Attenberg’, *Rizospastis*, Viewed 20 September 2014. <http://www1.rizospastis.gr/wwwengine/columnPage.do?publDate=9/12/2010&columnId=6326>.

category of unimportant women. The first category of women appears in all films, while the latter appears only in the *HNM* trilogy, where the ‘unimportant’ women blend in with the ‘powerful’ women. All Nikolaidis’s women are conventionally beautiful, and apart from the *MP* protagonist and Marina in *SB*, they are all fetishized and eroticized. Misogynistic elements can be found in all his films, and even the mere deed of categorising women is sexist.

Although I acknowledged from the beginning of this thesis that female representation in Nikolaidis’s work is misogynistic, I only argued about it in Chapter 6 where I analysed the *HNM* trilogy. I decided to examine female representation in *TSOTCNM* and in *TWLAC* as ‘neither here nor there’, and confirm the filmmaker’s misogynistic approach to women in the *HNM* trilogy. I did that because the women in *TSOTCNM* and in *TWLAC* appear to be characterised by agency, empowerment, and the ability to attack patriarchy. Also, in the first trilogy Nikolaidis seems to be more concerned with the outcome of fascism, and misogyny appears as its by-product, while in the diptych the women appear to be able to subvert patriarchy. Moreover, this trilogy and diptych have vital differences from the *HNM* trilogy, since ‘unimportant’ women appear only in the latter trilogy. By examining female representation in Nikolaidis’s films in this manner, I aimed to stress the inconsistency of female representation features in the two first sets of work and in the last trilogy, confirming and emphasising in this way the argument of misogyny. Furthermore, this inconsistency contradicts Nikolaidis’s thematic and formal consistency, highlighting the filmmaker’s controversial personality.

Women thus in Nikolaidis’s work are appropriations of the classic noir femme fatale and share traits with her, while eliminating any weak elements she might have had, and simultaneously liberating her sexuality. At the same time Nikolaidis pastiches horror elements in his films and turns women into abject women and ‘the monstrous feminine’. The only Nikolaidis’s film where female representation is not misogynistic is *MP*. In *MP*, the protagonist leads the film alone for 45 minutes, she has agency, and she is ‘fatal’ and ‘phallic’. In contrast to the rest of Nikolaidis’s protagonists she is rarely seen naked. Her connection to the pastiche films connects her further to film noir, but at the same time to unconventional and anti-patriarchal representations. She is ‘hardboiled’ and emotionless in the beginning, but gradually gets more fragile as her health deteriorates and she starts depending on the guard. However, in their relationship they are presented as equal, and since they both have no memories, their relationship appears innocent and pure, as if they are falling in love for the first time.

Though there are many common elements between female representation in *MP* and in the rest of Nikolaidis's work, there is also a great difference with regards to the fetishization of the women in the rest of the films. In *EBA*, Euridice is presented as a highly complex woman: she is presented as a fetishized, paranoid and schizophrenic woman, and a victim of fascism. She is infantilised and she is presented as abject. However, Euridice castrates Orpheus, acquiring a 'vagina dentata', refusing the role of victim and thus resisting the system from within. At the same time, she is given a voice, since the myth is presented from her perspective, and an active gaze, since the subjective points-of-view shots that are presented throughout the film are hers.

This pattern of representation is also applied to the women in *TZY*. These women appear as victims of the fascist state. They are abject and have personal obsessions. In contrast to Euridice, who denies her victimhood, these women, due to the establishment of the 'nightmare' and the state's ultimate authoritative power, are real victims, and exploitative misogyny is presented in the film as an outcome of fascism. Their 'docile bodies' are appropriated by the state in order for them to not appear as threatening. While the state attempts to 'transform' and 'improve'²³ their bodies though, they have become more abject, entailing more 'horrific' elements than when they had functional wombs. Through the sadomasochistic intercourse they have with the male clients, they gain a sense of empowerment and manage to capture a client. Nevertheless, this power is mitigated by the state since they work for it and they have been asked to engage with sadomasochism. The women's fetishization is lessened due to the elements of horror in the film and sadomasochism has no connection to visual pleasure, but instead becomes a medium in order for the filmmaker to express his antifascist beliefs. There is no sensuality, no pleasure, and the film perverts the norms of visual pleasure. Elements of lesbianism are encountered in this film (which differ from *TWLAC* and *SB*) as the women choose to be with each other because they dismiss men who are connected to the state.

Though the women in *TWLAC* stem directly from the pastiche classic noir, in this diptych, the women lose any prosaic characteristics that the women from the original films might have, namely their passivity and their fragility. Thus, they appear as empowered and they attack the paternal law, while at the same time liberating the oppressed femme fatale's sexuality, thus they can be characterised as 'fatal femme'²⁴. Since the narratives take place in Hell and the female protagonists constantly flirt with death and seek sadomasochism, their relationships linger between Eros and Thanatos. The women in *SS* are in constant quest for sexual pleasure and orgasms, and seek instant gratification. Through the women's

²³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.

²⁴ Pidduck, '1990s Hollywood Fatal Femme', 65.

incestuous relationship, Nikolaidis shows the perversion and decadence of contemporary societies. The extreme representation of their sexuality can be theorised as a projection of the 'perverse, decaying side of film noir sexuality.'²⁵ The women are abject, they take advantage of their captive in order to derive sexual pleasure, and they are 'phallic'. This representation could be said to contribute to the subversion of patriarchy. This pattern of female representation is also found in *SYIHMD*. In this film, the two women are highly fetishized, abject and phallic, they subvert patriarchy, and they have an active gaze in contrast to the distorted male vision. Their explicit lesbian relationship, which pastiches the relationship of the two women in *Les Diaboliques*, further indicates the love between the two women and the rejection of the man, just like in *TZY*.

The representation of the monstrous feminine in both films is very problematic. The connections between the horror genre and the 'castrating' nature of these women sheds light on the complicated representation: 'the horror film offers an abundant display of fetishistic effects whose function is to attest to the perversity of the patriarchal order.'²⁶ Thus questions rise such as why these women conventionally beautiful, why they need to be sexualised and to be represented as abject in order to subvert patriarchy, and why they should be represented as evil and 'Other' in order to achieve that. Consequently, the combination of the fictional places, in which the narratives are set, with their sensual film noir atmosphere makes it possible to claim that these two films, but also *TSOTCN* trilogy constitute Nikolaidis's fantasies, as well as his fear of women as castrators. This fact renders women in the *TSOTCN* trilogy and the *THLAC* diptych objectified figures of fantasy.

In the *HNM* trilogy the 'unimportant' women appear and this shift in female representation confirms Nikolaidis's misogynistic approach. The majority of the female protagonists in the three films appear to share certain characteristics with the appropriated femme fatale, and therefore with the women in the rest of Nikolaidis's work. However, the 'unimportant' women appear in an extremely problematic way: they are used ornamentally and for sexual pleasure, they are nameless, unimportant, unintelligent and usually blonde, and they resemble the women with the ornamental role in Nikolaidis's novels. Therefore, these women represent Nikolaidis's ultimate misogynistic expression.

Rita in *TWASS* appears as a victim of the system and of the oppressive, patriarchal society and she is used by the gang, both sexually and as a way for the men of the gang to meet women. She initially appears as a 'spider woman', yet, the Greek socio-political situation and the patriarchal family have destroyed her. Rita's role in the gang in the 1950s

²⁵ Place, 'Women in Film Noir', 54.

²⁶ Creed, *Monstrous Feminine*, 5.

when she slept with all of the men in the gang coincides with the women that Nikolaidis describes in his novels. Thus, she appears as a woman who felt sexually liberated in the 50s, but she was taken advantage for her liberation. 'Vera' represents 'an age that is gone forever' and becomes a symbol of 1950s culture, of the music, the cinema and the femme fatale that fascinated Nikolaidis and she is further linked to the elements of necrophilia present in Nikolaidis's work. The unnamed woman in the film is presented in a very problematic way: she lives in Vera's shadow, becomes a living doll in Alkis's hands and ends up being killed by him. Alkis's, and therefore Nikolaidis's, quest for the ideal woman highlights the filmmaker's misogynistic approach to her. The 'unimportant' women debut in Nikolaidis's films as guests to the 'erotic party' that the 'wretches' organise in order to revive the rock 'n' roll phenomenon. The rapes in the film could be a reference to the 'rape with murder' motto, which is connected to the 'wretches'' metaphorical rape and murder by the Greek state, system and society. Nevertheless, Rita is also raped by the gang. Her lack of reaction to the rape makes it appear as if something normal. Although there might be metaphorical connotations in this instance, the promotion of rape culture and non-consensual sex is extremely misogynistic.

In *SB*, Sofia is fetishized, she satisfies a male client's desires in order to make money to fund an antiauthoritarian organisation, and she is 'phallic' and 'fatal'. Sofia is presented as being attracted to women, but since she has sex with men, her representation is further complicated. Marina is enigmatic, and she is never fetishized, since her body is constantly covered by her long and wide costumes, she is 'phallic' and she condemns family life. In this film, Rosa is presented as an 'unimportant' woman: she is blonde, unintelligent and is treated ornamentally, since she is constantly portrayed naked and is used for sex. Rosa attempts to get a role in the gang, but she loses her allegiance to the gang after she finds out that the other members are lying to her.

LTA features the most problematic female representation in all of Nikolaidis's films, and reasserts his misogynistic female representation. Man constantly utters misogynistic expressions, and he treats all women in a sexist manner. Only Elsa distantly recalls film noir's femme fatale. Madalie is the epitome of Nikolaidis's misogyny: she is highly sexualised, she is used as scenery, she is doubly discriminated, her fragmented body parts are used as props for a scene transition as well as for sexual and visual pleasure, and her accent is laughter-inducing for the protagonists and the audience. She thus appears as fetishized, objectified, comical and as 'Other'. Hence, the 'unimportant' women now form part of the gang, or at least they think so, since the gang is never successfully formed. Female representation is further problematised when Madalie is presented as being a

woman with aspirations and educational background. This representation appears as an attempt to show a sense of equality between the immigrants and the locals and to limit the role of the 'Othering' to the police. Nonetheless, Nikolaidis does not accomplish this since he 'Others' Madalie, and in fact, the rest of the female protagonists of this film as well.

Therefore, while it seems that Nikolaidis has attempted to convey antiauthoritarian and anti-patriarchal beliefs through the women of the *TSOTCN* trilogy and the *TWLAC* diptych, the *HNM* trilogy confirms that this is not the case. Although the filmmaker manages to express his antiauthoritarian concerns in the first trilogy, any doubts for the female representation in the *TSOTCN* trilogy and the *TWLAC* diptych are lifted. Along with the fact that the worlds that Nikolaidis creates in these specific films are entirely fictional and appear as alternative universes (Hell), the fact that the women in these films constitute Nikolaidis's projections of his fears and obsessions for women as castrators is confirmed. Therefore, the empowerment that these women have in Nikolaidis's work is not related to feminist empowerment, but to the filmmaker's fears and/or desires. Moreover, when looking back to male representation in Nikolaidis's work, men appear as bland, weak and in crisis, they appear either as synonymous with the state or metaphorically or literally castrated. A form of critique for men and the state that Nikolaidis uses in his films is male feminization (*SS*, *SYIHMD*, *TZY*), as if being female is punishable, a fact that is inherently linked to misogyny. Thus, it all comes down to authorship and to my argument for Nikolaidis's introverted and extremely personal work that feature his obsessions, fears, fantasies and desires.

Kaplan writes that nowadays, male filmmakers have proven that they can make films without essentialising gender roles. She states that

now it is clear that being 'female' or 'male' does not signify any necessary social vis-à-vis dominant cultural attitudes. [...] Western culture has constructed active and passive 'positions' for 'male' and 'female'. But people can take up cultural/psychic places that differ from the ones officially assigned to their sex, and it is this fact that makes them possible to envision progressive social change where gender is concerned.²⁷

Although this is indeed achieved nowadays, it is obvious that Nikolaidis (and arguably many Greek filmmakers of his generation, as well as of younger generations) did not achieve what Kaplan claims, and he made films that perpetuated stereotypical gender roles and portrayed women in a misogynist manner, as if feminism never existed. What Nikolaidis accomplishes is to appropriate and promote the stereotypes of the 'evil' and monstrous women that he fears/desires, and if Nikolaidis's women achieve anything, to

²⁷ E. Ann Kaplan, 'Women, Film, Resistance: Changing Paradigms', *Women Filmmakers: Refocusing*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 25.

borrow Amber Jacobs comment on female representation in *Black Swan* (Darren Aronofsky, 2010), it is ‘the perfection of an object produced by the necrophiliac desire at the heart of the male imaginary.’²⁸ Or as Stevie Simkin puts it for real women that are treated by society as femme fatales, Nikolaidis’s appropriated femme fatales are ‘embodiments of patriarchy’s enduring myth of the femme fatale, and of the abiding fear and fascination with female beauty concealing indelible evil.’²⁹

7.4 Closing Remarks

To conclude, what I hope I have achieved to do with my thesis is to contribute to Greek Film Studies with the research of a highly neglected filmmaker, who has an intriguing body of work that differs from the work of any other Greek filmmaker. In this manner, I hope I have contributed to existing research in Greek Film Studies by introducing a case that significantly diverges from national cinema but which can still be read as Greek. I hope I have contributed to a model of examining auteurs of introverted and personal cinemas, of eccentric filmmakers. Moreover, I hope my thesis contributes to research of the impact of film noir in international cinemas, as well as to Greek cinema specifically. My research further contributes to the poor terrain of female representation in Greek cinema, although arguably Nikolaidis’s female representation differs from female representation as it appears in the rest of the Greek cinema.

I also hope that my thesis contributes to the research on pastiche, since I have shown how the study of pastiche is being constantly updated. I argue that Nikolaidis makes paradigmatic use of pastiche, which can contribute to the examination of similar films. My thesis also contributes towards the studies of postmodernism and pastiche in Greek cinema, since from NEK onwards and mostly in recent years pastiche is increasingly encountered, but not examined. Finally, what I also hope I have managed to accomplish is to transmit Nikolaidis’s passion for film noir and his belief that he felt that in cinema, filmmakers can do whatever they desire.

²⁸ Mark Fischer and Amber Jacobs, ‘Debating Black Swan: Gender and Horror’, *Film Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 1, (2011), 59.

²⁹ Simkin, *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale*, 199.

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Primary Film Texts

Euridice BA 2037 (*Evridiki BA 2037*, Nikos Nikolaidis, 1975, GR)

The Wretches Are Still Singing (*Ta Kourelia Tragoudane Akoma*, Nikos Nikolaidis, 1979, GR)

Sweet Bunch (*Glykia Symmoria*, Nikos Nikolaidis, 1983, GR)

Morning Patrol (*Proini Peripolos*, Nikos Nikolaidis, 1987, GR)

Singapore Sling (Nikos Nikolaidis, 1990, GR)

See You in Hell, My Darling (*Tha Se Do stin Kolasi, Agapi Mou*, Nikos Nikolaidis, 1999, GR)

Loser Takes All (*O Chamenos Ta Pernei Ola*, Nikos Nikolaidis, 2002, GR)

The Zero Years (Nikos Nikolaidis, 2005, GR)

Secondary Film Texts

American Graffiti (George Lucas, 1973, U.S.A.)

Belle de Jour (Luis Buñuel, 1967, FR)

Blackboard Jungle (Richard Brooks 1955, U.S.A.)

Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982, U.S.A.)

Body Heat (Lawrence Kasdan, 1981, U.S.A.)

Cape Fear (J. Lee Thompson, 1962, U.S.A.)

Directing Hell (Christos Chouliaras, 2011, GR)

Les Diaboliques (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1955, FR)

Gilda (Charles Vidor, 1946, U.S.A.)

Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte (Robert Aldrich, 1964, U.S.A.)

Johnny Guitar (Nicolas Ray, 1954, U.S.A.)

Lacrimae Rerum (Nikos Nikolaidis, 1962, GR)

Laura (Otto Preminger, 1944, U.S.A.)

The Man with the Golden Arm (Otto Preminger, 1955, U.S.A.)

Ruby Gentry (King Vidor, 1952, U.S.A.)

Sunset Boulevard (Billy Wilder, 1950, U.S.A.)

Unconditionally (*Anef Oron*, Nikos Nikolaidis, 1968, GR)

The Wild Bunch (Sam Peckinpah, 1969, U.S.A.)

