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12. “Reel” Hellenisms: Perceptions of Greece in Greek Cinema

Katerina Zacharia


Ethnic identity is not an exclusive immutable essence but a symbolic construct devised to describe the nation and its culture in the process of becoming.¹ Nationalist ideology however, in its eagerness to assert the distinctiveness of national culture, constructs the image of a homogeneous nation rooted in a specific time and geographic location, serving the political project of nation-state building. Numerous films make a strong case for considering Greek cinema as a reflection of the struggle of a young nation to work out a coherent national image for local and international consumption. Greek film directors often draw on the nation’s rich cultural heritage, imagined as spanning millennia. They do so in a conversation with a number of discourses on Greek identity, particularly with the narrative of Greekness (Ellinikótita), which sought to identify a distinct national culture purified of foreign influences.² Like their counterparts in architecture,³ language,⁴ and literature, Greek filmmakers engage with various understandings of Hellenism in their quest to define national identity.

In this chapter, I shall focus on a specific discourse of Hellenism which has shaped the work of internationally acclaimed Greek filmmakers, such as Michael Cacoyannis and Theo Angelopoulos. I refer to “Hellenic Hellenism,”

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¹ Handler (1994: 34) quotes Gleason’s intellectual history of the term “identity” which goes back to Erik Erikson, the immigrant psychoanalyst, who saw the term growing out of “the experience of emigration, immigration, and Americanization.”

² On the myth of Hellenicity, see Leontis 1995b: 129, 189ff., 217; on the origins of Hellenicity in ancient Greece, see Hall 2002.

³ The Acropolis was declared a sacred monument (1834) and, hence, was purged of all traces of its Christian/Byzantine and Muslim/Ottoman periods (at the instigation of Leo von Klenze, town-planning adviser to King Otto) so as to be restored to its original Classical form and serve as symbolic capital of the newborn nation. On the importance of the Acropolis in the New Greek state, see Leontis 1995b: 60–66; Hamilakis & Yalouri 1999; Yalouri 2001. In this volume, see Mackridge, pp. 304–8.

⁴ With the independence of the Greek state, Greek intellectuals sought to create a “purified” language—free from Turkish loan words—for the newborn state.
a discourse that drew on European modernism and Greek cultural particularity to articulate Greece's uniqueness. Spearheaded by George Seferis in the 1930s, “Hellenic Hellenism” sought to explore Greekness in a decidedly modernist aesthetic, away from “Philhellenism” and its classical restrictions, imposed by the romantic movement of the nineteenth century. Seferis first coined the term “Hellenic Hellenism”\(^5\) to differentiate it from earlier versions of European Hellenism and Philhellenism that had developed in the nineteenth century in France, Germany, and England, and tended to focus on the Classical period of fifth- and fourth-century Greek culture, to the exclusion of its later (or, in the case of Sikelianos, earlier) developments.\(^6\)

“Hellenic Hellenism,” with its twin orientation on modernist aesthetics and cultural “indigenousness” (autochthony), has been played out in particularly interesting ways in Greek cinema. The former orientation, best exemplified by the work of Theo Angelopoulos, produced a narrative of Greek identity based on “quoting” fragments from various cultural layers of Greece's heritage, in the mode of the elliptical quotation and the modernist aesthetic of Seferis and Elytis.\(^7\) Here, the Classical, the Byzantine, and the popular are on display to produce a non-linear narrative on identity, which, nevertheless, is put in the service of a political project (subversion of the military dictatorship of 1967–1974), but which also participates in the modernist language of cinema; hence his international acclaim. In contrast to the intellectually exacting modernist way of looking at Hellenism we find in Angelopoulos, other films showcase cultural nativity and seek in a thoroughly popularizing fashion to exoticize Greek identity. Building on ethnographic essentializations of otherness, they dwell on the rural, the quaint, and the non-European, highlighting qualities that render Greek identity strange and unfamiliar to the dominant cultural group, often represented by a European or an American visitor. This bifurcation, that is, the split between the modernist and the indigenous representations of Greekness, was a key ingredient of an outwardly directed Greek cinema designed to export Greek culture to international (especially American) markets.

In the first part of this chapter, I will focus on the work of Theo Angelopoulos and Michael Cacoyannis. These two directors are good representatives of the two competing manifestations of Greek identity

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\(^5\) And Cavafy and Sikelianos before him, though without using this particular term.

\(^6\) See Leontis 1995b on Philhellenism (p. 8 n. 13), European Hellenism, Panhellenism (p. 6 n. 9), Neohellenism (pp. 6, 123–4), Romiosíni (p. 80, n.30, ch. 6), George Seferis's Hellenic Hellenism (ch. 5).

in Greek cinema. I also examine theatrical discourse as one of the ways through which Greek filmic narrative validates itself against earlier cultural traditions, and negotiates national identity in the new global order. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the position of contemporary Greek cinema vis-à-vis Europe and the Balkans. I explore the ways in which Greek cinema appropriates the new power relations in the region to challenge past narratives of Greek identity in relation to the dominant West. I will show how, in a post-modern turn, Greek films produced mainly for domestic consumption between 1990 and 2005 complicate earlier representations of Greek identity, often building on a syncretic model.

Let me begin by sketching a brief outline of general tendencies in the history of Greek cinema. Nascent Greek cinema is thought to have begun with a newsreel of the 1906 interim Olympic Games. And yet, there was an earlier film reel by Yannakis and Miltos Manakis, two brothers of Greek-Vlach descent who in 1905 portrayed their centenarian grandmother with their aunts spinning wool (The Weavers) in the village of Avdela, situated in the northern Pindus Range, at the time part of the Ottoman state. This is one of the first three reels of the Manakis brothers that Angelopoulos’s Greek-American filmmaker (played by Harvey Keitel) seeks in Ulysses’ Gaze (1995). The two brothers traveled in the Balkans and captured on film the political and social turmoil of the time, recording the lives of ordinary people in 67 documentaries and 12,500 photographs. And later, the popular nineteenth-century idyll Golfo by Spiros Perisiadis was the first Greek feature film. It

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9 Avdela during the Turkish occupation belonged to the “vilayet of Monastir, the sanjak of Servia, and the kasa of Grevena” (Christodoulou 1997: 18), inhabited by people of Vlach and Aromanian background. Romanian propaganda was trying to persuade Vlachs to declare themselves as Romans, whereas Greek propaganda was trying to get them to declare themselves as Greeks. And during the World War II, some Avdeliots continued to deny their “Greekness” by joining the Italian occupiers. However, the Manakis (or Manakia) brothers were Macedonian Vlachs—Romanian speaking, but largely of Greek persuasion.

10 See the beautifully illustrated volume by Christos Christodoulou, The Manakis Brothers: The Greek Pioneers of the Balkan Cinema. This volume was published in Thessaloniki in 1997 by the Organization for the Cultural Capital of Europe, which was then Thessaloniki, funded by the council of Europe for the 100 years of cinema (1895–1995). The quality of this edition and the Greek subsidy earned are clear attempts of a national stake on the filmic tradition of the Balkans.
was made in 1914 and was directed by Kostas Bachatoris.\textsuperscript{11} It is the same old story of Golfo’s unrequited love for the shepherd Tasso that Angelopoulos’s itinerant acting company in his \textit{Traveling Players} (\textit{O Thíassos}, 1974–1975) attempts repeatedly (but in vain) to perform, constantly interrupted by the historical events of 1939–1952; the implication is that the idyll has no place in the new reality of Greece. Similarly, the \textit{foustanélla} (kilt) genre, an idealistic portrayal of bucolic life with folk song and dress (\textit{foustanélla}), conservative morals, and tragic endings to love affairs, would have no future in New Greek cinema or the new democratic post-1974 state.\textsuperscript{12}

After World War II and the Greek Civil War (1944–1949), Greek films in 1950–1970 were primarily farcical comedies, vaudeville (\textit{epitheorisi}), musicals, and some melodramas experimenting with a fusion of fantasy, Classical tragedy, and, more rarely, (Italian) neorealism. Films were primarily produced by six Greek studios on the Hollywood model,\textsuperscript{13} but there were also some memorable independent productions and early attempts at art, such as Grigoris Grigoriou’s \textit{Bitter Bread} (\textit{Pikró Psomí}, 1951) and Stelios Tatasopoulos’s \textit{Black Earth} (\textit{Mávri Gí}, 1952), both influenced by Italian neorealism, and George Tzavellas’s \textit{Counterfeit Coin} (\textit{Kálpiki Líra}, 1955), Nikos Koundouros’s \textit{The Ogre of Athens} (\textit{O Drakos}, 1956) and the early films of Michael Cacoyannis: \textit{Stella} (1955), \textit{A Girl in Black} (\textit{To Korítsi me ta Mávrà}, 1956), and \textit{A Matter of Dignity} (\textit{To Teleítaío Pséma}, 1957), which met with international acclaim. During the military dictatorship of 1967–1974, television was state-controlled from 1966 to 1989. The Thessaloniki Film Festival was founded in 1980,\textsuperscript{1} and the Greek Film Centre (GFC) was established in 1970 to support independent artistic films. Melina Mercouri, symbol of resistance to the patriarchal code in \textit{Stella} (Cacoyannis, 1955),\textsuperscript{15} and care-free prostitute of \textit{Never on Sunday} (Dassin, 1960), later

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} The dramatic idyll subgenre and subsequent versions of the \textit{Lover of the Shepherdess} (\textit{O Agapitikós tis Voskopoúlas}, 1938, 1956) and \textit{Golfo} (1955, produced by Finos Films; very successful version with Orestes Liakos), film versions of earlier stage plays (belonging to the genre known as \textit{komeidýllia}) dating from the 1890s, are discussed in the articles by Hess and Kymionis in Constantinidis 2000.
\item \textsuperscript{12} For a parody of \textit{Golfo} and the folk/\textit{foustanélla} film genre, see the flashback to the turn of the century in Reppas & Paphathanassiou’s \textit{Silicon Tears} (\textit{To Kláma Vgíke apó ton Parádeiso}, 2001), which is primarily a parody of the tearjerker cinema of the 1960–1970s.
\item \textsuperscript{13} See Constantinidis 2002–2003, documenting the life of films produced in 1950–1975 when the dominant ideology was right-wing, but replayed on TV from 1975–2000 when the ideology was liberal.
\item \textsuperscript{14} In 1981, it came under the Ministry of Culture and since 1992 it has become international.
\end{itemize}
became involved in politics. In her political career, she was acutely aware of the influence of the mass media and took full advantage of her position as the empowered female Greek patriot to participate in and influence the ongoing struggles of Greece’s identity politics. As Minister of Culture, Mercouri was instrumental in the passing of a new law that assigned state funds to Greek cinema in 1982; she concludes her foreword in the first GFC catalogue with a plea for resistance to “uniformity” and “universalization,” and support for “diversity” and for the “freedom” of “individuality.”

Greek cinema has been instrumental in producing narratives on ethnic distinctiveness, often in opposition to foreign imports (cultural imperialism). This is an auteur cinema, where the artistic vision of the director leaves its imprint throughout the body of their work. It is not overtly commercial; it is outside of the studio system and greatly influenced by the French new wave (the Nouvelle Vague of 1958–1964). Among the main proponents of that movement was Theodore Angelopoulos, who studied philosophy, literature, and cinema at the Sorbonne and at the Institut Des Hautes Études Cinématographiques (IDHEC). Much like the Cahiers directors of the French new wave, he was knowledgeable about cinema and became a film critic for a leftist journal, the Democratic Change, upon his return to Athens in 1964. In 1970, he produced his first full-length feature film, Reconstruction (Anaparástasi). This film deals with the true story of a Greek worker who

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16 Later, Mercouri would go after another dream and give a rigorous fight for the return of the Parthenon marbles to Greece, a fight her American husband Jules Dassin continued, until his recent death, in her memory as the chair of the Melina Mercouri Foundation whose main goal is to oversee the completion of the New Acropolis Museum and the eventual return of the marbles from the British Museum. The repatriation of the Parthenon marbles is based firmly on the belief that the Acropolis is part of the sacred national heritage, its symbolic capital, and needs to be reclaimed and safeguarded at all costs. See above, n. 2 p. 321.

17 “The films listed here are intensely individual, full of contrasts, immensely varied—like freedom itself. In answer to the crisis now facing the civilized world, in answer to the reductionist model which is being set up before us, let the cinema take a vigorous stand against schematization, universalization; for the future will be what we make it—either a dream in all its rich diversity, or a nightmare in its lethal uniformity” (GFC catalogue 1987: 6).

18 A number of the directors of the movements were once film critics of Cahiers du Cinéma, such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette, and Eric Rohmer; there were also others, such as Agnès Varda and Louis Malle. All were influenced by the post-war philosophical movement of existentialism: used hand-held cameras, which freed them from the studio environment; discontinuous self-referential editing; long takes; and, often, improvised and inconsequential dialogues, usually narrating stories about human relationships, at times political, as Godard’s films of the 1960s.
after years of labor in Germany returns to Greece, only to be killed by his wife and her lover; there is an obvious parallel here to Agamemnon's fate in Aeschylus' play. *Evdokia* (1971) by Alexis Damianos, *Days of '36* (*Mères tou '36*, 1972) by Angelopoulos, and *The Engagement of Anna* (*To Proxenió tis Annas*, 1972) by Pantelis Voulgaris set the stage firmly for the new initiative. Greek filmmakers had a clear agenda between 1970 and 1976: to subvert the ideology of dictatorship, create a new cinematic language, resist the Americanization of Greece, and provide a more composite and sophisticated picture of modern Greek culture.

The ideological turmoil in Europe translated into the political modernist trend in European art cinema. Angelopoulos followed suit with *Days of '36* (*Mères tou '36*, 1972), *The Traveling Players* (*O Thíassos*, 1974–1975), and *The Hunters* (*Oi Kynigoí*, 1977). He thus completed his historico-political trilogy commenting on Greek history from 1936 to 1952, and especially on the Metaxas dictatorship (1936–1941), and, by an obvious association, on the dictatorship of 1967–1974. His four-hour masterful *Traveling Players* maintains a slow pace, contrary to the Hollywood norm, with a fluidity of time and space that draws attention to the cyclical pattern of Greek history. Having to disguise his commentary, he worked with metaphors and symbols. He came up with an array of remarkable images that superimpose an artistic and intellectual level onto an otherwise simple, straightforward cinema, as a measure to circumvent the junta regime. His daring approach, bypassing the censors, created excitement and admiration in the audience and won him both international and domestic recognition. His poetic visual style of long shots and minimal character expressions, of priority of landscape over character, is distinctive. Here he follows the European trend of “dedramatization” in contemporary art cinema, favoring low-key character portrayal with emphasis on mood and the environment. But he always works within the Greek tradition, “theatricalizing” historical events and building his plots from Greek mythological paradigms. The plot and characters of the *Traveling Players* bear an uncanny resemblance to those of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*. Though only Orestes’ name is mentioned, the mythical narrative is clearly evoked as each of the new characters is introduced. The characters themselves are unaware of their “tragic” parallels, which work almost like their alter-egos, and function as a script they live to play out within their historical setting of the German occupation, and the Greek Civil War, and within their dysfunctional family.

Gradually, history and politics move to the background in the films of his second period when his characters embark on “voyages quests.”²⁹ His “trilogy of silence” begins with *Voyage to Cythera* (*Taxídi sta Kýthira*, 1983),

²⁹ The director’s own words in Angelopoulos 1999: 7.
where an old film director returns after 32 years of political exile in the Soviet Union to Cythera, the island of dreams (and happiness), only to find that all his dreams have been shattered, and that he cannot become reconciled to his country’s present. So in the end, he sets off on a new journey to the unknown with his aged wife Penelope; the *nóstos* (return) is suspended.\(^{20}\)

From the silence of history, Angelopoulos moves to the silence of love in the *Beekeeper* (*O Melissokómos*, 1986), where Marcello Mastroianni plays a middle-aged man who relinquishes his work and family to pursue the family trade of beekeeper. The trilogy concludes with the silence of God in *Landscape in the Mist* (*Topio stin Omíchli*, 1988). Odysseas Elytis had brilliantly exploited the creation myth of the book of Genesis in his *Axion Esti* (*It Is Worthy*, 1959), which won him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1979. The same myth is here exploited by Angelopoulos. A young girl and boy at the end of their symbolic journey through life embrace a tree, which could stand for the image of their lost father, the palpable realization of their dream or the tree of life.

In his third period, Angelopoulos graduates to more esoteric films and explores Greek-Balkan interactions in the *Suspended Step of the Stork* (*To Metéoro Vlémma tou Pelargóu*, 1991), a meditation on liminality, borders and refugees, and statelessness. He does the same thing in *Ulysses’ Gaze* (*To Vlémma tou Odyssea*, 1995), where he brings out again the theme of universal displacement; and in *Eternity and a Day* (*Mía Aioniótita kai Mía Méra*, 1998), a poet’s preparation for the journey to the other side and his encounter with an Albanian orphan a day before eternity.\(^{21}\)

He is currently working on a new trilogy tracing the story of a young female refugee from Odessa on the Black Sea to Greece, and her enduring love for a young accordion player throughout the tumultuous historical events in Greece in the twentieth century, which ends in New York on the eve of the twenty-first century. Plays on the house of Thebes and Oedipus’ family are worked into the entire trilogy. *The Weeping Meadow* (*To livádi pou dakrýzei*, 2004), the first film in the trilogy, covers the period from 1919 to 1949, when Eleni and a young man, whose father, Spyros, Eleni is forced to marry, elope and seek refuge in the temporary dwellings of an itinerant band of musicians. The young man travels with the musicians to Ellis Island in search of a future in the New World. Eleni is imprisoned during the Civil War for harboring an insurgent, only to find out when she is released that her twin sons have killed each other fighting on opposite sides during the Greek Civil War. The analogy with the fratricidal slaughter of Eteocles

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\(^{20}\) See Leontis 1995b: ch. 5, on the suspended homecoming in Seferis’s poetry.

\(^{21}\) On Angelopoulos’s cinematic development see the director’s own comments in Angelopoulos 1999.
and Polynices in Aeschylus’ Seven Against Thebes and Euripides’ Phoenician Women is made evident. Yet again, Angelopoulos has recourse to tragedy to present the story of troubled characters, as if the contemporary history of Greece was but a theatrical play whose heroes are forever compelled to reenact perpetually ancient mythic cycles of violence, unable to break away from their scripted individual histories.

Angelopoulos’s films are routinely taxing on the audience and alienate with their modernist aesthetics. In his contemplative cinema, Hellenism is on display in desolate landscapes and broken statues, in narratives inspired by the Greek classics (Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles), Byzantine iconography and shadow-puppet theatre, folk melodrama, the poetry of Seferis, Elytis, and Solomos, and Greek history. His cinema is “high” art with history and a meditation on individual and national identity. His domestic audience is highly selective, the so-called koultouriárides (culture freaks). The Suspended Step of the Stork (To Metéoro Vlémma tou Pelargoú, 1991) and Eternity and a Day (Mía Aioniótita kai Mía Méra, 1998) sold only 180,000 tickets each in Greece. But internationally, Angelopoulos’s films have won him high praise in artistic circles and a number of highly esteemed film awards.

German director Wim Wenders reportedly considers cinema as the “European art and language par excellence.” But this is not true of Greek cinema, which was lagging behind the other arts until the 1970s and has yet to successfully negotiate the balance between art and entertainment.

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22 Her husband writes to her from the Kerama islands, 15 miles west of Okinawa, on the American base in the Pacific, where he is serving in the army. The second film begins in Uzbekistan and may feature Michelle Pfeiffer and Elias Koteas in the leading roles.

23 See Horton 1997a; and Horton (ed.) 1997b.

24 His Traveling Players (O Thíassos, 1974–1975) has been hailed as one of the top films in the history of cinema and best film in the decade 1970–1980; received the FIPRESCI Award, Cannes (1975); Interfilm Award Berlin “Forum” (1975); Best Film of the Year, British Film Institute (1976); Grand Prix of the Arts, Japan; Best Film of the Year, Japan; and Golden Age Award, Brussels (1976). His Landscape in the Mist (Topio stin omíchli, 1988) was named European Film of the year (1989), and also received the Silver Lion Award for Best Director, Venice (1988); Golden Hugo Award for Best Director; and Silver Plaque for Best Cinematography, Chicago Film Festival. His Ulysses’ Gaze (To Vlémma tou Odysseá, 1995) was honored with Special Jury and FIPRESCI Awards, Cannes (1995), and Critics’ Felix for Best Film of the Year (1995). A number of his other films won numerous awards, such as his Reconstruction (Anaparástasi, 1970), Days of ‘36 (Méres tou ‘36, 1972), Hunters (Oi Kynigoi, 1977), Megalexandros (1980), Voyage to Cythera (Taxidi sta Kýthira, 1983), and, more recently, The Weeping Meadow (To Livádi pou Dakrýzei, 2004) which won the FIPRESCI European film award of the critics 2004.

Cinema in Europe is considered an art and, hence, is often under state patronage, placed somewhere between entertainment and culture under the aegis of the ministries of culture, not of communications and media. It is reported that of the 954 million film tickets sold in the 25 member states of the European Union in 2003, only 26 percent were for European films, primarily sold in their home markets. Although data for Greece were still pending, an increase was estimated from 12.4 million ticket sales in 1998 to 13.5 million in 2000–2001.²⁶ Ticket sales in Greece, as well, strongly favor Hollywood films over domestic art cinema.²⁷ There is, however, an encouraging new trend towards modern Greek pop culture that has met with considerable success at the box office in recent years.²⁸ But barely any of these films make it beyond their national borders.²⁹ On the other hand, Angelopoulos’s modernist cinema still has appeal in international artistic circles, but not at home.

If Angelopoulos builds on the modernist aesthetics of Hellenic Hellenism, Michael Cacoyannis draws on a different model, that of empirical ethnography and the portrayal of rural life in a search of “authentic” Greekness, in addition to his frequent recourse to Greek Classical heritage. Cacoyannis was born in Cyprus, and was theatrically trained in London, after earning a law degree, initially aiming to follow on the footsteps of his father—only to change boots midway and continue on the path of his calling by becoming an actor for a short stint (playing the title role in Caligula by Albert Camus, cast by the author himself), and producing programming for the BBC Overseas service. In 1951, he moved to Athens at the age of 29, and soon after became an internationally acclaimed, Oscar-

²⁶ European Audiovisual Observatory, 10 May 10 2004, press release.
²⁷ In 1996–1997, the time of the popular Balkanisateur (Valkanizatér) by Sotiris Goritsas and No Budget Story by Renos Haralambidis, Greek films accounted for 550,000 of a total of about 9 million tickets sold (6.11 percent). Constantinos Giannaris, One Day in August (Dekapentávgoustos) in 2002 was the second largest film with just 70,000 tickets sold compared to the usual 10,000 ticket sales for Greek films.
²⁸ In 1999, the entertaining pop-comedy Safe Sex by Thanassis Papathanassiou and Michalis Reppas sold 1.5 million tickets, 300,000 in the first week, of an estimated total of 13 million, that is, a staggering 11.5 percent of total ticket sales for that year. Touch of Spice (Polítiki Kouzína) by Tassos Boulmetis in 2003 sold another 1.5 million tickets, and Pantelis Voulgaris’s Brides (Oi Nýfes), released in late October 2004, had by early 2005 sold another 800,000 tickets.
²⁹ “Only 6.3 percent of admissions to European films were earned in European Union markets other than their home markets, a disappointing result in relation to the corresponding figure for 2002 (9.9 percent),” European Audiovisual Observatory, 10 May 2004, press release. The low percentages attest the lack of popular potential of such films, unable to carry themselves across cultures and over the other side of the Atlantic.
nominated film and stage director, screenwriter, editor, producer, and even costume designer (for The Day the Fish Came Out). His first feature film released in 1953–1954, Windfall in Athens (Kyriakátiko Xýpnima), a comedy inspired by the city’s exuberant street life, earned a rapturous reception in Athens and was chosen for the gala premiere at the Edinburgh film festival. Cacoyannis launched his international film career with Stella (1955), which won him a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film. A number of notable films criticizing Greek reality followed: A Girl in Black (To Korítsi me ta Mávra, 1956), A Matter of Dignity (To Teleftaio Pséma, 1958; Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film), Zorba the Greek (Aléxis Zorbás, 1963–1964; 3 Oscars and 6 nominations), The Trojan Women (Oi Troádes, 1970–1971), Attila ‘74 (a harrowing documentary on the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, 1974–1975), Iphigenia (1976–1977, Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Film), Up, Down and Sideways (Páno, Káto kai Playíos, 1992).

Cacoyannis reached a different segment of international audiences than did Angelopoulos and he provoked a different set of adverse reactions from domestic audiences. Angelopoulos remained true to the search for Hellenic Hellenism, as attested by the poetry of Seferis, Elytis, and Solomos. Cacoyannis played to Western expectations, both by promoting the image of an exotic modern Greece, as seen in the perpetuation of primitivist stereotypes in Zorba, and the exploration of the rural in melodramas dealing with family issues, such as A Girl in Black. He, too, appropriated the classics in order to circumvent the censorship of the junta and speak out allegorically against the oppressive regime. He produced numerous stage and film adaptations of ancient Greek plays, duly praised in international film circles: Euripides’ Electra (1961–1962); The Trojan Women, (1970–1971), Iphigenia in Aulis (1976–1977), Bacchae, Medea, Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex, and Aristophanes’ Lysistrata. His Euripidean Trojan trilogy is especially close to his heart. He first wrote the script for Iphigenia, but in the end produced it 15 years after Electra, reversing the mythological sequence, and thus, incidentally, replicating the order in which Euripides composed them. After Electra, Cacoyannis became convinced that the three plays could work as a unity, and reworked the material to bring out the associations between the three and create resonances with Greek political history, the Greek Civil War (Electra), the Colonels’ junta (Trojan Women), and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus (Iphigenia). Mikis Theodorakis, the composer and leftist political activist, produced the score for all three films. When, during the shooting of The Trojan Women, Theodorakis was in exile from the military regime, the recordings took place in England.

In a recent interview, Cacoyannis proclaims that he has a special connection with Euripides, and proudly attests that the play he is primarily
associated with in all continents is the *Trojan Women*. His stage adaptation of the *Trojan Women* ran in New York for two consecutive years, amounting to a total of over 600 performances (1964–1966). The story showcased the brutality exerted by the ruthless Greek conquerors upon unarmed Trojan victims of war against the backdrop of the charred ruins of the city of Troy. Euripides composed his *Trojan Women*, appalled by the massacre of the male population of Melos by the Athenians in 416–415 BC as punishment for their neutrality during the Peloponnesian War. Andromache, the wife of fallen Hector and bereaved mother of their son Astyanax, cries to the Greek envoy, “You have found ways to torture that are not Greek.” A year before the Broadway production of *Lysistrata* (1972), the filming of Cacoyannis’s second part of his Euripidean Trojan trilogy was completed in France. The *Trojan Women* is a most gripping anti-war play, and he ended it with a dedication “to those who fearlessly oppose oppression of man by man.” Allusions to the Colonels’ abuses and the snuffing out of dissident voices were hard to miss. Geneviève Bujold, as the maddened Trojan princess, Cassandra, cries, “To die well is the victor’s crown.” Katharine Hepburn as Hecuba, the Trojan queen who has lost her sons and city, opens the play prostrate on the scarred earth of Troy towards the end of the siege, after a failed attempt to throw herself into its smoldering ruins, says, “Up from the ground, trembling body.” A new heroic stance is adopted in Cacoyannis’s film by the victimized women who survive the war, coping with dignity, and live to tell their story and sufferings. Ionesco “came out happy” after watching this disturbing film. In a recent interview, Cacoyannis remarked that, for American audiences, the story was glaringly reminiscent of the sufferings of the Hiroshima victims, whereas in Paris the same play in Jean-Paul Sartre’s translation, with an ending reworked by Cacoyannis and an associate of his, summoned up memories of the plight of Algerians under French colonial rule. Cacoyannis’s screenplay was published in England in 1971 and received much acclaim in the British media. Incidentally, Aristophanes, Euripides, and Sartre were among the authors banned by the uncouth colonels in Greece.

Cacoyannis cast Tatiana Papamoschou as Iphigenia for her “deer-like” stature. Her furtive, innocent eyes and elegant, fragile body are contrasted to the guilty dark eyes of Agamemnon (Costas Kazakos) and roughened edges of his personality. The mournful mother, Clytemnestra, was played ably by Irene Papas, who had also played Electra in the first play of the trilogy.

31 Cacoyannis 1999: 27.
32 See n. 30.
and Helen in the second. In *Iphigenia*, no expense was spared. Cacoyannis secured the participation of over 2,000 soldiers for the opening scenes in the plains of Aulis. The Minister of Defense of the governing conservative party of Greece at the time, Evangelos Averof, ordered the Greek army Generals to cooperate with Cacoyannis, because they were resistant to helping, since Cacoyannis had blamed the Colonels for the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in *Attila ’74*. Averof told the Generals that “Only war with Turkey will prevent us from giving the army to Cacoyannis.” In the film, the soldiers cried “Sacrifice, sacrifice,” demanding that Agamemnon sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia for a favorable wind and an auspicious expedition to Troy. Clytemnestra’s cry at the news of the army’s verdict becomes a public outcry for the plight of war-torn Cyprus in 1974.

Cacoyannis’s cinematic adaptations of the three Euripidean tragedies were duly praised in international film circles. Western dominant ideology applauded the Greek-Cypriot director, with his recognized Western theatrical training at the Old Vic in London, for putting Greek tragedy on film. He was congratulated both for respecting the ancient dramatic conventions and for putting “the spirit of Euripides’ play into film terms,” even “improving Euripides” (comment by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, then Regius Professor of Greek, at Oxford University). Eugène Ionesco was one of his most fervent admirers, and hailed Cacoyannis’s *Iphigenia* as a masterpiece. “Along with Euripides, Cacoyannis has risen to the summit of art and human knowledge. This is the most beautiful film I have ever seen,” Ionesco exclaimed, where “heaven and earth meet.”

The commercial success of *Never on Sunday* by American director Jules Dassin (*Poté tin Kyriaki*, 1960) and *Zorba the Greek* by Cacoyannis (*Aléxis Zorbás*, 1964) was disapproved of by the more artistic Greek film directors, who saw in such popularizing films an exploitation of demeaning national stereotypes. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Greece was seen by non-Greek intellectuals as the ancestral homeland, cradle of the Western civilization and goal of pilgrimage for members of the intellectual elite of Europe. This cultural Philhellenism came from an idealized Western vision of Greek culture and dwelled on the “Hellenic” aspect of Greek identity, that is, the one emanating from the Classical past. There was, however, another aspect of the Greekness, the “Romaic,” which was associated with the Byzantine and Turkish Christians. It celebrated heroism and bravery, *leventiá* and daring, but also cunning and manipulation, corruption and a patriarchal order.

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33 Quotations from Cacoyannis 1999: 21, 27, 33.

34 The Helleno-Romaic dilemma was first formulated by Fermor 1983 [1966]: 96–147. On cultural *disemia* (binary meaning/thinking) in Greece, see Herzfeld 1985; Herzfeld 1987. See also Leontis 1995a: ch. 6.
Performed only for domestic consumption, the Romaic aspects of Greek society disseminated to Western audiences through early British ethnography, which focused on communities that were geographically isolated, thus studying the exotic, rather than the modern encountered in the urban centers. The studies offered insights into behaviors and attitudes encountered in the wider Greek society. In the anthropological mapping of Greece, the obsession with male honor and female chastity was attested as a particular feature in Greek peasant culture. Because the majority of Greeks lived in rural communities until after World War I, at the time when Campbell was doing his fieldwork in the 1950s, the nomadic Sarakatsani shepherds he was studying were not so far removed from the rest of Greek society. Campbell and du Boulay chose a certain part of Greek society which was highly traditional, though without viewing these societies as “primitive.” But once their findings became widely accepted, readers were flocking to Greece in search of the last generation of Sarakatsani nomads, who were becoming exoticized in the popular imagination of the Western visitors. However, the culturally and economically developing Greece had no place for nomads and the exotic in the new purified vision of Hellenic sophistication. So in Zorba, Greeks were vociferous in their opposition to the “barbaric” slaughter of the widow and the despoiling of dying Madame Hortense’s belongings by the Cretan peasants: “Audiences are shocked by the looting of the dying woman’s hotel in Zorba, but they forget that these people never stole from her while she was alive. To Greeks such behavior is less barbaric than two people sitting in a living room and tearing each other to bits in Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?,” remarked Cacoyannis shortly after the film’s release. On the other hand, Cacoyannis’s “woman-centered films” won him international respect for the “adept direction of women” and “his candid exploration of where women stand in Greek society.”

Following the commercial success of these films in the 1960s, Greece was turned into a vacation spot in the subgenre of vacation films, projecting the visceral, sensual, deep-access-to-authentic-life imagined by Westerners. The travel log structure records the impressions exotic/primitive Greece makes on the Western/civilized outsider: on the European visitors of the turn of the century, an American writer in Never on Sunday, and a half-British writer of Greek descent in Zorba. This tourist myth fuelled the ethnographic idealization of Greece and its attendant image as a land of sensual delights.

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35 Campbell 1964; Boulay 1970.
36 For a recent example, see the 1995 Rotonda issue, where priority is given to the Hellenic over Romaic past (Stewart 2001: 185).
37 Quotation from interview given by Michael Cacoyannis to Walter S. Ross, for NY Times on 24 January 1965.
38 Georgakas 2005.
offering respite from the constraints of the civilized Western world, an exotic land with Zorba-like heroes living lives of unrestrained liberty and free expression and unparalleled bravery of the “Greek soul” succinctly captured in the final scene of the dancing Zorba. When Cacoyannis exoticized Greek masculinity and femininity and performed it for the Western tourist gaze, issues of situational identity developed. The tourist myth about Greece is duly exploited in commercial cinema to increase ticket sales. The Colonels of 1967–1974, uneducated and crude as they were, embraced the tourist myth of Greece under the delusion that it would bring them quick income and please American patrons. When there is a market, there is mass production, and this is the case with a number of American and Western European films that followed later, as for instance Summer Lovers (1982), Shirley Valentine (1989), Mediterraneo (1991), and Captain Corelli’s Mandolin that reproduce the same stereotypes (2001).

Time and again, the message is that the free-spiritedness and lack of inhibitions of the Greeks will rub off on Western visitors. The “primitive” Cretan mountain-dwellers perform their masculinity, much as the Greek urban male performs his perfectly choreographed kamáki (harpoon, Greek for aggressive, usually male, flirting—sexual predation). Yet, Greek song, dance, and food, when performed for the tourist gaze and entertainment, become a shorthand for Greek identity on display. This reductionist approach of film and tourism may be commercially viable but it comes at a heavy price. It conforms to expectations of Greek/Western cultural translation and each performance becomes an affirmation of master narratives and power-relations, with Greece situated low in the global hierarchy of power.

Representing Greek identity in the language of European modernism and Greek indigenous modernism brings me to the issue of cinema as cultural

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39 Summer Lovers (1982), an American production about a love triangle between a young woman (Daryl Hannah) and two men on the Greek islands; Shirley Valentine (1989), a British production about a middle-aged Liverpudlian housewife who goes in search of love and excitement in Greece; Mediterraneo (1991), an Italian production about Italian soldiers stranded on a Greek island in World War II and living a carefree, sensuous life with beautiful readily available Greek women.

40 Captain Corelli’s Mandolin (2001), shot on the island of Cephallonia, directed by John Madden (Shakespeare in Love, 1998, and Mrs. Brown, 1997), tells the story of the love between an Italian soldier (Nicholas Cage) and a local Greek girl (Penelope Cruz) during the Italian occupation of the island during World War II, smoothing over the communist ideals of the Greek peasant girl’s fiancé who was a guerilla fighter and even is here credited with saving the life of his ex’s Italian lover—a happy Hollywood ending in a multicultural, humane, and loving world. See Tzanelli 2001.


translation. There are two approaches to cultural translation. The first occurs when the foreignness of the original is used to startle the audience and, hence, it involves showcasing the difference. The second requires a translation into the idiom of the dominating culture and, hence, cancels any difference. Nineteenth-century intellectuals isolated the Hellenic aspect of Greek identity, but modern visitors are impressed rather by the Romiós aspect, promoted through the bouzoúki music and the zeimbékiko dance of Zorba, and the male clientele of the nightclub of Never on Sunday. Highlighting the distinctiveness of Greek culture as a Romiós culture stripped of all “civilized” behavior, and stressing its “otherness” from the rest of the Western Europe and America, meant conforming to the standards of the powerful Hollywood industry and the idiom of the dominant American culture. The boorish and elemental features of the character of Zorba were already present to some extent in Kazantzakis’s novel Aléxis Zorbás. Yet, the cinematic adaptation of the book greatly exaggerated and simplified them and in the process exoticized Greek culture. Furthermore, by changing the nationality of the “boss” from a Greek lover of Dante to a British character of Greek descent, Cacoyannis not only provided a reason for the use of English as the main language of the film, but also changed the perspective from which Greek society was viewed; it was again through the eyes of an intellectual Western outsider (a Brit), looking down upon the customs of the Cretans, that the audience were called on to evaluate.

Kazantzakis’s novel (1946) was based on a real event, his encounter with Alexis Zorbas, a semi-literate Macedonian whose outlook on life was based more on an empirical wisdom, which had resonated with Kazantzakis’s intellectual and spiritual pursuits. Kazantzakis had been deeply influenced by the Apollonian/Dionysian polarity that Nietzsche famously introduced in his Birth of Tragedy. One of the main premises of Nietzsche’s book was that art is the formal expression of strong emotion; if it is just strong emotion or just formal expression, then it is not art. Art does not give us an intellectual message but emotional release; the emotional aspect is Dionysus and the formal is Apollo. The Dionysiac aspect is pronounced in the Zorba of the novel. Kazantzakis had identified both ingredients in the making of the “Greek soul.” In his Journey to the Morea (O Moriás, 1961), he writes: “Suddenly, in the taverns, at festivals, on holidays, when they drink a little, the so logical and self-promoting small tradesmen and soldiers break into melancholic oriental amanédhes (stylized laments), into an unexpected longing; they reveal a psyche completely different from

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43 Kazantzakis 1946; Kazantzakis 1952.
45 For a comparison to Benedict 1934: 78ff., with Geertz 1988: ch. 5, especially 113, see Zacharia 2003: 114 with n. 45.
their sober everyday one. A great wealth, a deep longing, meráki (doing something with all one’s soul invested in it).” “The Modern Greek,” he says, “is clever and shallow, without metaphysical anxiety, while at the same time, when he begins to sing, a universal bitterness leaps up from his oriental bowels, breaks through the crust of Greek logic and, from his inner core, full of mystery and darkness, the Orient soars.”46 In Kazantzakis’s novels, the multilayered “Greek soul” is admirably bared in all its complexity and distinctiveness, whereas in Cacoyannis’s film, his reductionist approach holds up the Greek rural as exotic, primitive, socially and morally backward; Greek culture is performed for the gaze of the Western intellectual visitor and for an international audience, directly translated to the idiom of the dominant Hollywood industry and inevitably enhancing its stereotyping with colorful images of the dancing Zorba that have been lodged in the memories of international audiences since the 1960s. From the primitivist stereotypes of Cacoyannis’s Zorba and the ethnographically empirical portrayal of the rural of his earlier film A Girl in Black (To Korítsi me ta Mávra, 1956), it is an easy step to associate Greece in the 1990s with renewed imported images of Balkan primitivism. The third story in a series of vignettes in Pantelis Voulgaris’s It’s a Long Road (Óla Einai Drómos, 1998) focuses on a Greek merchant whose wife left him, taking their children with her. The heart-broken husband is shown drowning his pain in a dive, breaking not only plates, but practically everything breakable, including water basins and toilet bowls, and finally ordering a bulldozer to demolish the dive itself, while setting his own raincoat on fire and dancing away his sorrows. This performance of grief in the presence of Balkan prostitutes at the northernmost borders of Greece assimilates the Greek merchant to the immediate Balkan neighbors rather than their European counterparts, bypassing the cosmopolitan images Athenian intellectuals much rather favor in their own performance of culture.47

The above discussion reveals the enduring legacy of nationalist discourse on cinematographic constructions of Greek identity. Though cosmopolitan in its aspiration to engage with European modernism, Hellenic Hellenism never transcended the core political assumption of nationalist discourse: Identity must be rooted in the (national) soil. The national essence is found in the localities of the nation. Whether the background is the local village or the Cretan landscape, Cacoyannis’s cinema is decisively ethnographic, depicting the culture of the peasants as an insular, contained ethnoscape. Though radically different in its aesthetic, Angelopoulos’s display of Hellenism similarly embeds signs of Hellenism in the national landscape, as, for example, the marble hand carried

46 Kazantzakis 1965: 325–6; my translation.
47 On the Athenian intellectuals, see Faubion 1993.
above water with the city of Thessaloniki as a backdrop in *Landscape in the Mist* (1988). Greek identity in these formulations is nation-centric: Its performance is contained within national space.


I will now move onto the second part of my chapter, that is, the position of Greek cinema vis-à-vis Europe and the Balkans. Greece entered the European Union as the tenth member in 1981, and unlike any other Balkan state: due to its rich history and the influence its culture had exerted over Europe. Greece had retained a strong and, in many ways, unproblematic sense of the Greek “ethnos” for much of the twentieth century, despite appalling internal conflicts and superpower interference in mid-century. There are many historical reasons for this: the survival of the Greek language, script and Orthodox Christianity during Ottoman Turkish rule; and the exchange of populations after 1922, which spared Greece some of the “minority” problems which afflicted other Balkan countries. But the situation began to change following the convulsions that affected Eastern Europe after 1989. Some of this turbulence affected the Balkans and spilled over into Greece, which now became a haven for refugees and felt threatened by the emergence of a new state calling itself Macedonia. This led to intense Greek academic attention to the old issue of Macedonian Hellenism, an issue revitalized by archaeological finds at Vergina and by work on ancient Greek personal names.8 These new developments would again bring to the fore the issue of Greek identity but also would involve Greece more with the fate of its Balkan neighbors.

The recent launch of the euro as a common European currency had, once again, contemporary Greece reworking its past to choose images to adorn the reverse of the Greek euro coins to serve as symbols of the new Greek-European identity. Yet, the symbol of the Macedonian sun was notably lacking, as were any Christian symbols.9 This is of particular interest, especially after the dispute between the Church and the state in 2000, when the government announced its decision not to divulge the religion of the individual on identity cards (Israel and Turkey still do), thus implementing a greater separation between the two. Archbishop Christodoulos was then quoted as saying, “First we are orthodox and then we are Europeans.” But in April 2003, at the accession agreement for the ten new member states signed under the Acropolis, the Greek representative maintained: “We have a new country, Europe, without leaving our old country, Greece.”

8 Hornblower & Matthews (eds) 2000.
9 See in this volume, Mackridge, p. 315.
Greece is clearly in the process of developing into a multicultural society. Each Greek is now rehearsing a number of her multiple cultural identities: Greek, European, Balkan, Mediterranean, and so on. We live in syncretic times, where the tension between globalization and various ethnicities remains in a fully fledged symbiosis.

A fresh domestic *heteroglossia* (other-speech-ness)\(^{30}\) is witnessed especially in urban contexts where Balkan and Russian immigrants are congregated. In a concerted re-imagining of South-Eastern Europe, Greece looms as the new influential leader of the pack, a role she now embraces. Gone are the days when she trailed behind Western Europe as an inferior member state embarrassed by its Balkan neighbors. This stance marks a major shift in geography and in discursive frame within which Greece negotiates its identity. Post-Soviet political transformations, along with the spread of global capitalism, brought about a historical reconfiguration in the manner in which Greece situates itself in relation to the Balkans. This change can be best conceptualized in terms of new types of currents across borders in the region within an emerging political economy of power hierarchies. The influx of immigrants from poorer countries to Greece, along with the investment of Greek capital in the region, signal a historical reversal—in the past Greece exported human resources/immigrants and was economically dependent on foreign capital, whereas a new European Greece is discursively constructed by Greeks in a hierarchical relation *vis-à-vis* the Balkans.

In a historical irony, a thread of popular discourse in Greece, the aboriginal European state of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Eurocentrism, now constructs its neighbors in colonialist terms: as inferior, and less civilized, a process amply documented by the sociology and anthropology of the Balkan immigrants in Greece. At the same time, in Greece efforts at bringing transparency into public administration and the para-judicial circle have been launched with considerable success: over 11 judges have been paradigmatically brought to justice, a number of whom are already behind bars (Konstantina Bourboulia, Evangelos Kalousis, Stathis, Ilia) for money laundering, bribery, and sex exploitation, to adapt the justice system to the requests of dishonest lawyers in renowned law firms; one of these is currently on parole (Sakis Kehayioglou), while another (Petros Mantouvalos), though being a high-ranking conservative member of parliament, has been deprived of his political immunity with the consent of his own political party (*Nea Demokratía*) so as to stand trial for his wrongdoings.\(^{31}\) All of this occurred during the appeal trials of the

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\(^{30}\) A Bakhtinian term that denotes the co-existence of different competing languages within any national language; see Bakhtin 1981.

\(^{31}\) Interestingly, the conservative government (*Nea Demokratía*—New Democracy), succeeding a 20-year reign of the socialist party (*Pasok*—Panhellenic
members of the notorious urban guerrilla group “November 17,” whose arrest and dismantling occurred in the summer of 2002 under the socialist government, in time for a much safer Athens 2004 Olympics. In the recent general elections (October 2007), voters granted authority to the elected government to modify the constitution, with the aim of improving the educational system and allowing the establishment of private universities in Greece, thus overcoming the age-old state monopoly of higher education. Greece is steadily mutating in alignment with European and global values, engaging in the global discourse.

In a number of films before the 1990s (especially those of Cacoyannis), Greek identity is regularly construed in terms of dualities and binary oppositions. In the context of global hierarchy and power relations expressed through master narratives in cinema, Greek identity is represented within the frame of a number of tensions: East/West, sophisticated/exotic, Classical heritage/Tourkokratía, Orthodoxy/Enlightenment, Hellenic/Romaic, Apollonian/Dionysiac. The new realism of the 1990s in European cinema focuses on social malaise, exclusion, violence, and poverty. Similarly, the Greek film genre of docudrama often records the life of immigrants and religious or racial minorities on the margins of Greece. I will now discuss briefly a couple of scenes from a representative Greek film about the life of immigrants on the fringes of Athens that enhance separatist notions of national identity, before moving to another set of films that document cross-fertilizations and permeable borders, and a more pluralistic concept of national identity and integration.

Constantine Giannaris’s From the Edge of the City (Apó tin ákri tis pólis, 1998) is a provocative film on the life of a teenage gang of Russo-Pontian refugees in the unfashionable outskirts of Athens, the immigrant suburb of Menidi. These are ethnic Greeks from the former Soviet Union, many of whom speak either Russian or the Pontic (south-east Black Sea) dialect of Greek, which is incomprehensible to other Greeks; they have come to Greece in large numbers to escape from the harsh social and economic conditions that have resulted from the collapse of the communist regimes in Russia and other former Soviet republics. Early on in the film, the director interviews the young refugee protagonist who proudly proclaims the Socialist Movement) in March 2004, launched a new campaign proclaiming its intent to make all procedures “transparent,” “not the secretly-cooked books” of the Balkans (Athens News Agency, 22 December 2005). The Minister of Justice, Anastasios Papaligouras, pledged “a purging (of corruption) without exception, without distinctions, that will go as deep and as high as it needs to” in reference to the para-judicial scandals (Kathimerini, 17 June 2005).

52 Such as in the French cinema of the margins, especially the French “beur” (Arab–North African), black and “banlieu” (those who live in the cities) cinema.
superiority of the Russo-Pontian refugees over the Albanian immigrants, claiming that the latter are “hicks” who have left their own countries and families, whereas the refugees from the former USSR have immigrated with their families and have morals and values. The hierarchy between immigrants in the new country is clearly defined and indisputable between them (other such hierarchies surface also in Hostage). In another scene later in the film, two teenagers discuss their “Greekness” or lack thereof, singling out language as a barrier depriving them of a sense of belonging in the host country. Becoming immersed completely into the realities of the host country precludes any holding onto childhood memories from the native country. “I don’t speak Greek—I, the ‘Greek’,” says Anesti. “Anesti, get over it, we are Greeks,” says the protagonist. “Greeks? They consider us Russo-Pontians here. And they are right; how can you be of that nationality, when you don’t speak the language? Why did our folks want to get us here? Wasn’t it nice in Russia?” says Anesti. “Who remembers it?” “I do, I do,” concludes Anesti; this scene is followed by his childhood memory of young happy kids frolicking in a field in Russia. Anesti, unable to make the successful transition to the new country, letting go of the native country, is soon found dead of a drug overdose. The second interlocutor, the film’s protagonist, gradually sinks deeper and deeper into the underworld of drug dealing, male prostitution, and trafficking of women, and ends up murdered by an older gangster.

This film shocked its Greek audience when it was first released, exposing the ugliness of the Greek city beneath and beyond the façade of its European sheen. Stavros Ioannou followed with the docudrama Road Blocks (Kleistói Drómoi, 2000), at the time advertised as “a film about the borders of despair.” This film presents the sad life of the Kurds who flee Turkey and end up in Athens (Koumoundourou Square), where they come face to face with the harsh reality of a limited “freedom” within the boundaries of the roadblocks that surround them, unable to earn a decent living. And then there is a series of feature films on the life of individual immigrants. To name but a few: Andreas Thomopoulos’s Dharma Blues (1997) on the harsh life of a Russian immigrant who comes to Athens to work as a prostitute; Kyriakos Katzourakis’s docudrama, The Way to the West (O drómos pros ti Dýsi, 2003), depicts the life of a Russian immigrant woman (played by Katia Gerou) in search of a better life in an unfriendly Greece; or, Layia Yiourgou’s feature film Liubi (2005) on the trials of a young Russian immigrant who enters a Greek middle-class family as a companion to an elderly disabled lady. Fotini Siskopoulou’s Rakushka (2004) is a film about the power games...

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53 For other such hierarchies, see Giannaris’s Hostage, and Economidis’s The Matchbox below, p. 350.
in the relationship between a middle-aged Greek pawnbroker and an 18-year-old cellist and immigrant from Dresden, a loose adaptation of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s Krotkaya (The Gentle Maiden), set in modern Athens. And then there is the recent film by Constantine Giannaris, Hostage (Ómiros, 2005), based on a true story about the hijacking of a bus by an Albanian immigrant (the Flamour Pisli case, May 1999).

My discussion in this section will move along “cultural syncretism,” avoiding cultural binary dualities. The older dualistic/separatist vision of Greek ethnicity is succeeded by a pluralistic conception of modern Greekness (Neohellenism). Hellenism is now presented as a hybrid, with its diverse component strands in marked relief despite attempts of the nation-state to promote perceptions of seamless amalgamation. This Neohellenism encompasses all different cultural traditions, negotiating the inherent tensions in a cultural dialogue, though at the same time maintaining their separation rather than suppressing, concealing, or denying them.

A survey of recent films points to a new paradigm of conceptualizing Greek identity. In Greek cinema since the early 1990s, Neohellenism is dialogized and represented in a negotiation of a new self-image for domestic and international projection. So, while this anthropological mapping of the Balkans in the aforementioned films follows the movement of migrant laborers and the trafficking of women and young men to document exploitation, and the demonization of the immigrant other, another important process of border-crossing takes place away from the anthropological gaze. Contemporary Greek cinema turns its attention to the Balkan region so as to redirect our attention to a number of cultural cross-fertilizations and human interactions that do not easily fit into the colonialist dualist framework of self and other.

A number of films explore issues of border-crossing. One example is Sotiris Goritsas’s From the Snow (Ap’ to hióni, 1993), the earliest Greek film to explore an ill-fated exodus of Albanian immigrants into Greece (based on a novel by Sotiris Dimitriou). Another is Giorgos Zafiris’s Ephemeral...
Town (Ephímeri Pólí, 2000), a poetic account of the changing landmarks of a transitional town where refugees spend a few days before they are shipped to their next destination. Dimitris Stavrakas’s The Crossing (To Pérasma, 2004) is about the unfortunate journey of a married couple from Bangladesh to Greece. The journey can also be from Greece to the Balkans and Europe, as in Sotiris Goritsas’s Balkanisateur (Valkanizatér, 1996), where two Greek men learn the hard way that they cannot profit from the discrepancy in foreign exchange rates between Greece, Bulgaria, and Switzerland; or Stelios Haralambopoulos’s Hades (Adis, 1996), where a man embarks on a search of a missing woman in Albania and when he finds her she guides him to an inner journey of self-knowledge. Another example of this genre is an interesting film by Christos Voupouras and Giorgos Korras, Mirupafshim (So Long, 1997), in which a Greek leftist intellectual hooks up with a band of Albanian illegal immigrants and makes the journey to their village in Albania.

Other films explore political exile and homecoming, such as Lefteris Xanthopoulos’s Happy Homecoming, Comrade (Kali Patrída, Sýntrofe, 1986), on the hapless return to the Greek homeland of a number of political refugees of the Greek Civil War from Hungary, a theme similar to the one explored in Theo Angelopoulos’s Voyage to Cythera (Taxidi sta Kýthira, 1983). In doing so, such films inevitably engage with issues of transnational networks of immigration, as Pantelis Voulgaris’s Brides (Oi Nýfes). In that film, the American protagonist is shown to be the catalyst who will put a stop to exploitative networks of transnational immigration, a typical American moral story. Other films focus on the conditions of migrancy, such as Theo Angelopoulos’s Suspended Step of the Stork (To Metéoro Víma tou Pelargoú, 1991), and Weeping Meadow (To Livádi pou Dakrízei, 2004), cultural mixing, hyphenated identities (for example, Greek-American, Albanian-Greek, Russo-Pontians, etc.) and internal alterity, such as Tassos Boulmetis’s A Touch of Spice (Polítiki Kouzína, 2003).

In Goritsas’s Balkanisateur (Valkanizatér, 1996), the Greek-Bulgarian immigrant has come to terms with cultural mixing—after all, his son is married to a Bulgarian woman, who soon gives birth to his first Greek-Bulgarian grandson. His son has fully assimilated to the host country and has never learned the Greek language. The customs of the native country are still remembered in food, music, and dance. The older Greek immigrant in Bulgaria expresses reserved faith in receiving recompense from the local government due to his immigrant status, but ends on a positive note: “I speak the Greek language with my wife, with my son, not so much. I used to be a shepherd and then we became all state-owned. Now they say they will return everything. But how many sheep, how much money?—So what will happen?—We eat together, we drink together, we celebrate together.
We’ll work it out.” This scene is a good example of cultural mixing and syncretic existence in a Balkan country.

In these representations of cultural interactions we are far away from the (imagined) insular world of a Greek village or the uniform blue of the Aegean. As people cross boundaries, insularity and homogeneity can no longer sustain national myths equating a culture and a space. In this respect, Greek cinema is attuned with the global fascination with immigrant and cultural flows, and circulations, syncretism and migrancy, engaging in the post-colonial discourses of multilayered identities and de-territorialization; or with deconstructing dominant national discourses, when, for example, proverbial Greek *philoxenia* (hospitality) is shown up as hollow in films which expose the biased treatment of immigrants (for example, *From the Snow, Mirupafshim, The Way to the West, The Wake*). The European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) recently released a survey indicating that Greece views immigration the most negatively of all 25 member states, with 84.7 percent of Greeks considering migrants a social threat.56 This attitude is better evaluated in the right context: More than 10 percent of the inhabitants of Greece today are immigrants; almost all of them have arrived since 1989. This is a massive intake of immigrants for any country to absorb in such a short period of time.

In this new historical juncture that Greece constructs its identity vis-à-vis its Balkan neighbors, whom it increasingly encounters on an everyday basis (as domestics, baby-sitters, economic partners, or spouses), it is productive to turn to cinematic constructions of Greek identity in relation to the Balkans and to examine a number of issues, tracing the fault-lines in the Greek conscience; How does Greek cinema imagine Greece in relation to the Balkans? Or alternatively, what kind of place is the Balkans, and what kind of cross-cultural interactions define its cultural geography? In Greek cinema, under what conditions are Balkan people brought to interact with one another and to what end? What are the kinds of differentiations and intersections when the Greeks get in contact with the Balkans? How does Greek popular culture intersect with Balkans? Why do people cross borders in the first place and what happens when you cross them? What is negotiated in specific encounters, how, and what kinds of assumptions about culture and identity are deployed in specific contexts?

How are the prejudices and perceptions of the European visitors to Greece in the films of the 1960s different from those of the Greek travelers to the Balkans in the Greek films of the 1990s? Does Greek cinema utilize the new power relations in the region to challenge past narratives of Greek

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56 With Czechs in second place with 75 percent, as reported on Sunday, 19 December 2005, in the issue of the conservative *Kathimerini* newspaper.
identity in relation to the dominant West that portrayed her as the internal other so much as with respect to Classical Greece, as with respect to the rest of Europe (concept of “polluted orientalism” by discourse of Classical heritage; whereas during Tourkokratía, concept of corruption of Byzantine Hellenism by Ottomans)? Is Greece’s re-integration in the Balkans in the 1990s to be taken as an indication of its emancipation and disappointment with the hegemonic West? What can Greek cinema tell us about the Balkans, a region that has been fixed in the Western imagination as disorderly, orientalist, backward, primordial, nationalist, and ethnocentric?

How does Greece negotiate new borders, conceptual and fiscal, in the time of globalization? The immediate geographical borders are Balkan, hence the argument of geographic determination. Following the abstract discourse of Hellenism since the eighteenth century, the Balkans appear as a concrete “other” that divided Greeks from where they belonged—politics supersedes cultural geography. But the borders have now become more porous, with a freer commerce of fiscal and human resources. In the 2000s, the one-directional geography has changed and now northern Greeks easily cross the borders to all neighboring Balkan countries and go for coffee, shopping, or business. Yet, the pan-Balkan identity is still context-specific. Greek capital-holders are seen as willing to invest in the neighboring Balkans, but the Greeks still view the Balkan people as inferior, due to the communist regime and its leveling aftermath in the Balkans and due to the privileged Classical heritage and “Europeanness” of the Greeks, as shown in the interactions of the Greek protagonists with the people they meet in their road trip in the Balkans in Goritsas’s Balkanisateur (Valkanizatér, 1998)—a clear vestige of colonialist Eurocentric discourse and Greek ethnocentrism (Hellenocentrism).

It is also important to ask what kind of cultural work contemporary Greek cinema performs in relation to Western European representations of Greece, but also the Balkans. Western interpretations of the Greek Classical past have been the prism through which modern Greeks have negotiated their identities. But if we move beyond an ethnocentric understanding of identity, we can open up a discursive space which will enable us to ask a different question, namely, what kinds of lessons can the West draw from the Greek engagement with alterity.

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57 In fact, the Greek Prime Minister, Kostas Karamanlis, in a meeting of finance ministers of the South-East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP) member countries in Athens on 23 February 2006, noted that “3,500 Greek firms and 800 branches of Greek banks are active in the Balkan countries” and “urged for expansion of cooperation,” as reported by the Athens News Agency (24 February). Great strides have been made by December 2006, as noted in the Greek News Agenda December issue, which analyzes reforms in the Greek banking system and notes that Greek banks hold 15 percent of the South-Eastern Europe banking markets.
Tassos Boulmetis's *Touch of Spice* (*Politiki Kouzina*, literally translated as *Cuisine of Constantinople/Istanbul*, 2003), is a story about a young Greek boy, Fanis Iakovidis, growing up in Istanbul and learning the secrets of mouth-watering delicacies from his grandfather, a culinary guru and philosopher, owner of a grocery store in Istanbul. When he is about seven years old, and during the exchange of populations following the victory of Atatürk's forces in Smyrna and the forced expatriation of all the Greek population from the coast of Turkey, his family evacuates Istanbul for Athens. There Fanis remains for 35 years, employing his cooking skills to spice up the lives of those near him. In his 40s, now an established professor of astrophysics at the University of Athens, he decides to travel back to his birthplace to visit with his grandfather and perhaps catch a glimpse of his first love, Saimé, a Turkish national from Pergamum. Unbeknown to him, Saimé is now divorced from her husband Mustafa, with whom she had lived in Ankara. Fanis's nostalgic journey assists his realization that in his Western life-style he has neglected adding enough oriental spices in his life.

The film is a critique not only of identity as understood by nationalism, but also in terms of its cultural work to shift understandings of culture beyond identity. With respect to national identity and regionalism, the memorable phrase in the film, “The Turks chased us away as Greeks and the Greeks received us as Turks” is used to refer to people with a sense of ethnic identity but also strong connections of belonging to the place of residence. In other words, their affiliation with a non-national space and the simultaneous articulation of a national/ethnic/Greek identity—a syncretism of sorts—is cancelled, neutralized by the nationalist inscription of identity. In this sense, nationalist discourse—the discourse that has shaped nineteenth- and twentieth-century Balkans—does not, in fact cannot, recognize multiplicities, ambiguities, and dual cultural connections. As a result, people are uprooted and subjected to the political violence that nationalism sustains.

In highlighting the grandfather’s attachment to non-national place, the director in a sense revisits the issue of regionalism. In the pre-nation-state Balkans, regionalism stood as a counterpoint to nationalism, since it inscribed a fundamental *heteroglossia*, threatening the national model (hence its obliteration by the nation state). *Touch of Spice* is a statement that cultural connectivity does not have to be associated with national soil. This has important implications for perceiving a multicultural Balkans where one can be an ethnic Greek in Sofia, Bulgaria, feel connected with one’s city/place/Bulgarian culture, but also sustain a Greek identity, in short, behaving

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58 Tziovas 1994.
59 For current articulation of aesthetic regionalism in Greece, see Ball 2003.
We are moving towards a segmented model where one is attached to specific locales (in different nations) not an exclusive national culture/space. This multi-vocality and multi-locality antagonizes the view of the Balkans as a series of monocultural nation-states.

*Touch of Spice* brings attention to practices (the performance of practices) and, thus, stretches beyond identity. If identity recognizes practices and answers the question what is a cultural practice (for example, “eating a hot dog” is quintessentially American, and the cultural traits in *Zorba* are considered accurate representations of Greekness), *Touch of Spice* focuses on how people behave, how they embody/perform cultural practices. Thus, it is not so much what people eat (Greek, Turkish) but how they cook, with whom, and how they eat. Similarly, the film brings attention to issues of pedagogy, how you teach a child about life (through the metaphor of food). Thus, here we have an emphasis on an ethos (How does one live a life? Life must have salt) rather than a list of identity traits. Here the implications are important, too. If the Western model of Hellenism forces a particular performativity of Greek culture for the Western gaze (the traveler, the diplomat, the tourist), the film unearths the performativity of everyday practices which define the ethos of a people. If we take this as our analytical starting point—how Greeks are in terms of an ever-changing ethos (*anthropiá* /humaneness, modes of pedagogy, approach to food) and how they imagine themselves to be—we bypass, to a large extent, Western interpellations of the Hellenic. We also move beyond stereotypes and the often-told narrative of Greek corruption/cunning/etc. A discursive space opens to define Balkans as particular and intersecting *étne* that imagine life *heteroglosically* vis-à-vis the West.

I will now reach beyond the metaphor of culinary syncretism, a favorite image of neoconservatives and liberal pluralists alike, to the concept of “polycentric multiculturalism” on which Shohat and Stam, drawing on Bakhtinian theory, insist in their book entitled *Unthinking Eurocentrism*. This is a type of dialogical multiculturalism between permeable entities and communities. “Each act of cultural interlocution leaves both interlocutors changed,” and there are multiple “dynamic cultural locations” without privileging any single vantage point, dealing not with ethical universals (as in liberal pluralism) but “see[ing] cultural history in relation to social power.” Hence, in theory we may envisage the possibility of replacing the discourse of margins, and marginalized communities with a multiplicity of centers and

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60 On bi-nationalism in Greek America, see Georgakas 2004–2005.
61 I would like to thank Yiorgos Anagnostou for alerting me to the analytical usefulness of “practice” in my discussion of *Touch of Spice*. For a discussion of this topic in relation to American ethnicity, see Yiorgos Anagnostou, “A Critique of Symbolic Ethnicity: The Ideology of Choice?” in *Ethnicities* (2008c).
a plurality of voices in a dialogue between “generative participants at the very core of a shared, conflictual history.” The transition in reality is more difficult: People still do perceive themselves and other factions as marginal and marginalized; when there is power, there are hierarchies and asymmetries. Another association rings true to mind by the linguistic resonance of the film’s title: The alternative translation “Political cooking/cuisine.” In this more general meaning, both the title and the film itself expose both Greeks and Turks as pawns in the plans cooked up by forces bigger than themselves, and always by political agendas that affect human lives in a top-down fashion. In the same way that food crosses national boundaries, especially between Greece and Turkey, victimization as the result of political agendas also affects Greeks and Turks in indiscriminate measures.

The language of “unity in diversity” and “cultural cross-fertilization” is also found in the official documents of cultural policy for the European Union. The Barzanti report talks about “interculturality,” “meaning not generic multiculturalism resulting from a blend of cultures, but a relationship between realms, each of which has its own identity to protect and promote.” The translation of these ideas into practice from the start of the initiative has been faced with the difficulty of the negotiation between national identities and “European” identity. In fact, there has been a lot of debate on whether such a collective “European” identity really exists and what the common heritage is that could unite all the individual states. As mentioned previously, when Greece entered Europe, in 1981, as the first Balkan member state, it was partially due to its rich history and the influence its culture had exerted over Europe. Now, the situation has changed both for Greece, which is negotiating its own relationship to its Classical heritage, and for Europe, which in the post-Cold-War era sees Greece as part of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. In so far as the European Union can be seen in essence as a call for cultural hybridity and syncretic mingling, in agonistic yet symbiotic interaction, then European identity can

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63 I wish to thank Dr Frank Romer for his comments on the association to “political,” when he acted as a chair and respondent in the 2007 APA panel where I presented a much-abridged version of the second section of this chapter.
65 Hainsworth 1994: 12.
66 With Bulgaria and Romania joining on 1 January 2007, there are currently 27 member states, including Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom; with Turkey and four Balkan states pending: Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
be taken as offering a model for integration, away from its hegemonic past to a forward-looking meta-European existence.⁶⁷

Orchestrated cross-fertilizations materialized with the *Eurimages* film project in 1989 as co-productions between at least three European countries under the auspices of the Council of Europe, followed by the MEDIA project in the early 1990s, now in an expanded third version as MEDIA-Plus, initiated in 2000.⁶⁸ Also in 2000, the Greek Film Centre helped to set up the South-Eastern Europe Cinema Network which includes Greece, Cyprus, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, and the former Yugoslav Republics. These initiatives, along with a number of state and private TV channels and subsidies from state-funds, such as the Greek Film Centre, are the main funding bodies for European co-productions and individual national cinemas. All initiatives are fully aware and seek to avoid the traps of European co-productions with international casts at the expense of artistic coherence, the so-called “Europudding.” But when cinema is understood as a European cultural production, a number of questions arise about the internationalization of individual national cinemas and the cultural and economic forces that mediate it. What role do *Eurimages* and MEDIA financial packages play in the selection and distribution of films in Europe and internationally? And how is national identity affected by transnational European productions? European Union fiscal packages encourage the construction of national identity in relation to Europe, but are the films making an explicit reference in relation to the European or the Balkan? And are there national films that try to conceal their identity behind EU or international financing?

A very incomplete list of 67 films since 1960 listed in the Lumière database of the European Audiovisual Observatory indicates that 25 films were funded only by Greek sources and the rest were co-productions, with 15 co-productions with France (according to a recent legislation, Greece is lumped together with the French alliance with respect to European funding), ten with Bulgaria, and nine with Italy and Cyprus each, etc. Angelopoulos’s *The Beekeeper* (Ο Μελισσοκόμος, 1986), *Ulysses’ Gaze* (Το Βλέμμα του Οδησσέα, 1995), *Eternity and a Day* (Μία Αιωνίοτητα και Μία Μέρα, 1998), and *Weeping Meadow* (Το Λιβάδι που Δακρύζει, 2004) are Greek–French–Italian co-productions, Cacoyannis’s rendition of *Cherry Orchard* (Ο Βισσινόκιπος, 1999) was funded by Greek, Cypriot, and French sources; his *Zorba* was financed by US, British, and Greek sources. Of a number of popular Greek films, *Balkanisateur* (Βαλκανιζάτερ, 1996) was a Greek–Czech–Bulgarian production,
and Tassos Boulmetis’ *Touch of Spice* (*Politiki Kouzina*, 2003) is a Greek–Turkish production, but the majority of films in that list are primarily Greek productions.\(^6^9\)

Whether the funding is Greek, European, or international, a closer look at films of the past 15 years points to a number of new directions and trends in Greek cinema. There are still the successful and entertaining pop films, such as Olga Malea’s *Mating Game* (*I diakritikí goiteía ton arsenikón*, 1998), or Thanassis Papathanassiou and Michalis Reppas’s *Safe Sex* (1999), and sequels like Nikos Perakis’s *Sirens in the Aegean* (*Sirínes sto Aigaío*, 2005; a sequel to the popular *Loafing and Camouflage*, *Loúfa kai Parallágí*, 1984). Or a number of dramatizations of Vizyenos’s novels, as in Lakis Papastathis’s *The Only Journey of His Life* (*To Mónon tis Zois tou Taxeídon*, 2001), and Papadiamantis’s novels, as in Lena Voudouri’s *A Corner of Paradise* (*I Goniá tou Paradeisou*, 1998), Efthimios Hatzis’s *Shores of Twilight* (*Ta Ródina Akroyíaidia*, 1998), Dora Masklavanou’s *Coming as a Friend* (*Ki’an Fýgo … tha Xanártho*, 2005) and Eleni Alexandrakis’s *The Woman Who Missed Home* (*I Nostalgós*, 2005). Or films on topics of universal concern, such as those with children and the coming of age, to name a few: Fredy Vianelis’s *Dream II* (*Óneiro II*, 1992), Nikos Cornelios’s *The World Again* (*O Kósmos Xaná*, 2002), Penny Panayotopoulou’s *Hard Goodbyes: My Father* (*Dýskoloi Apohairetismoi: O Mbambás mou*, 2002), Kostas Natsis’s *Icarus’ Dream* (*To Óneiro tou Ikárou*, 2005), and Lucia Rikaki’s *The Other* (*O Állos*, 2005). The references to the Classical heritage are fewer, though Angelopoulos still favors them. Greek stereotypical masculinity is challenged and more permeable boundaries of the young urban male are introduced in films such as Renos Haralambidis’s *No Budget Story* (1997).\(^7^0\) Whereas Angelopoulos turned to the borders and depicted northern Greece in his films, away from the Western tourist gaze, offering instead an introspective meditation of Greek history, there is a clear trend for depiction of the realities of urban life in a post-modern, multicultural Athens, as in Takis Touliatos’s *Quo Vadis* (2003). The loneliness and existential angst of urban living is captured in Pantelis Voulgaris’s *Quiet*.

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\(^6^9\) As reported in the audiovisual observatory, for instance, Nikos Nikolaidis’s *Singapore Sling* (1990); Constantine Giannaris’s *From the Edge of the City* (*Apó tin Ákritis Pólis*, 1998) and *One Day in August* (*Dekapentávgoustos*, 2001); Stavros Ioannou’s *Roadblocks* (*Kleistoí Drómoi*, 2000); Olga Malea’s *The Cow’s Orgasm* (*O Orgasmos tis Agelíadas*, 1996) and *The Mating Game* (*I Diakritiki Goiteía ton Arsenikón*, 1998); Thanassis Papathanassiou and Michalis Reppas’s *Safe Sex* (1999) and *Silicon Tears* (*To Kláma Vgíke apó ton Parádeiso*, 2001); John Tatoulis’s *Beware of Greeks Bearing Guns* (2000); Dimos Avdeliotis’s *The Four Seasons of the Law* (*I Earini Sýnaxis ton Agrofylákon*, 1999); Giorgos Lanthimos and Lakis Lazopoulos’s *My Best Friend* (*O Kalýteros mou Filos*, 2001); and Antonis Kafetzopoulos’s *Stakaman* (2001).

\(^7^0\) See Horton 2001.
Days in August (Ísihes Méres tou Ávgoúóstou, 1991), Pericles Hoursoglou’s Eyes of Night (Mátxa apó Nýchta, 2003), and Stratos Tzitzis’s Rescue Me (Sóse Me, 2001). The harrowing desperation, manipulation, deceit, and depression in a hermetic working-class microcosm is exposed in Yannis Economidis’s subversive recent films, The Matchbox (To Spírtókouto, 2003) and Heart in Mouth (I Psíchi sto Stóma, 2006). The Matchbox (2003) includes a dialogue between three Greek men, one of whom is urged to marry an Albanian woman, but revolts as he considers such a union an insult for himself and his family. “What? Marry the Albanian? Why don’t you marry her?—Why, surely you don’t think you and I are equal and similar, do you?” (Και εσύ γιατί δεν την παντεύεσαι; Ίσα και όμως είμαστε;). In this scene, the old separatist notions of identity and dual standards are brought into focus, only to be undercut by a rather wicked sense of humor.71

There is still a dialogue with the dominant Hollywood cinema but the stronger affiliation is to European cinema, sharing concerns about urban violence and the changing face of the city, with the influx of waves of immigrants and their precarious living on the outermost edges of urban centers. The lens begins with Greece as the new land of opportunities, what America was for the Greeks at the turn of the century, but lingers on to uncover the patronizing superiority of the local Greeks and, at times, their demonization of the immigrants, as in Constantine Giannaris’s Hostage (Ómiros, 2005). Another important theme is the disillusionment of refugees from former socialist countries that leads to crime (The Edge of the City, Hostage) and suicide (From the Snow and The Way to the West) and often violent deportation or willful return to the mother country (From the Snow). The thug subculture, teenage gangs, and life of the homeless, the addicts and the forgotten lives in the underbelly of the city are themes that have gained a number of very competent disciples, starting with the depiction of a glamorized brutality in Constantine Giannaris’s From the Edge of the City (Apó tin ákri tis pólis, 1998), of the decadent life of the addicts in Nikos Panayotopoulos’s Deívery (2003), and Makis Papadimitratos’s Tsiou (2005). A new set of urban heroes surface: the main characters in Christos Voupouras and Giorgos Korras’s Mirupafshim (So long, 1997) and in Nikos Grammatikos’s The Wake (Agrípnía, 2005). These are characters that run to the rescue of illegal immigrants, calling into question the morality of their compatriots and often jeopardizing their own lives in the process, but reaching better understanding of themselves in the end.

71 See above, p. 340.

72 In Renos Haralambidis’s No Budget Story, the intertextual imitation of Robert De Niro’s taxi driver, “You talking to me?” generated good laughter and earned the young director a lot of points (Horton 2000: 193).
Such observations are also encouraged in Constantine Giannaris’s *Hostage* (Ómiros, 2005), a film freely elaborating on the relationships formed between hostages and captor in the fatal hijacking of a bus in northern Greece in May 1999 by Flamur Pisli, an Albanian immigrant. *Hostage* was voted best film in the European Film Forum and Festival in Vienna in November 2005, for being “an outstanding example of the social and political changes in the southern countries of Europe,” and was nominated for the 2005 European Cinematography award, but it met a rather cold and even hostile reception in Greece. The opening epigraph of the film is a quotation from Sophocles’ *Ajax*, the tragic hero who committed suicide to save his honor, thus providing a succinct framework for the action: “One must live with honor like a man, or die with honor. Yes. There is the rub.” In the course of the journey of the hijacked bus, notions of male honor and female chastity attested as a particular feature in Greek peasant culture in the studies of Western anthropologists flocking to Greece in the 1960s have deteriorated in the Greek reality of the twenty-first century. Elion Senia, the Albanian captor in the film, has been framed for illegal gun trade, tortured and sodomized by corrupt Greek policemen for sleeping with the wife of one of them. “Effing a guy’s wife is bad enough. But effing the wife and being a foreigner and all, it’s like cutting the guy’s d… off in his own house,” says one of the policemen before the terrible scene of Elion’s sodomy with a bottle. Elion, time and again, asks for revenge and vindication for his loss of honor. Scenes of the torture are recalled when Elion detects in the bus another Greek wife who has left her husband to be with her lover, one of the fatal victims in the story. Elion comments that Albanian women are faithful to their husbands: “If a woman even looks at another man, she’s dead. Here they go from one to another. They are all—” “Whores,” interjects the adulteress in the bus.

The notion of Greek hospitality is also challenged a number of times, in the letter from Elion’s mother read at the beginning and in the prejudices of the Greeks against the Albanian immigrants both in the bus and in the crowds gathered around the bus at the times of negotiations with the police. As they cross over to Albania, Elion promises all hostages that, when they reach his home, his mother will make them a fine meal and vouches to release them all after this gesture of Albanian hospitality. His tragic end nullifies this promise. His mother, “a tragic figure” manipulated by Albanian police to negotiate her son’s surrender as a guarantee for his safety, witnesses his brutal execution. The Greek police are corrupt, but the Albanian police are brutal. During the captivity in *Hostage*, a Greek heroin-addict hostage belittles his Albanian captor as uncivilized and uncultivated, citing theatre as one of the contributions of Greece to the Western world, whereas the African immigrants are credited with a sense of rhythm, securing them a
higher place in the Greek social hierarchy than the Albanian immigrants, who are good only for cheap labor. The slanted cultural hierarchy of the heroin addict is attested time and again in Greek films of the last decade.\textsuperscript{73}

I will close this chapter with a short discussion of two films from Greek diasporic cinema. The first one is the deliberately hyperbolic and very successful \textit{My Big Fat Greek Wedding} by Canadian-Greek director Nia Vardalos (2002), which raised a lot of laughter at the idiosyncrasies of her family. Its success, though, is largely due to the fact that it translates more universally to families of immigrants and the daily negotiation of their identities in the host country where the parents attempt to hold on to the traditions of the motherland, insisting on mores and habits that fit awkwardly in the host country. The second film is the subversive \textit{Head On} by the Greek-Australian director Ana Kokkinos (1998; with a Greek-Australian actor, Alex Dimitriades in the lead). Here the parental will to tip the identity balance in favor of the motherland is hindered by the severe resistance of the rebellious teenagers. In both of these films, the hybrid Greek diasporic subjects are “confronted with the ‘theatrical’ challenge of moving ... among the diverse performative modes of sharply contrasting cultural and ideological worlds”.\textsuperscript{74} “Why do you Greeks always b.s. your parents?—You have to lie. If you tell them the truth they use it against you,” says the lead character in \textit{Head On}.

\textit{My Big Fat Greek Wedding}, a film that cost $5 million and made over $241 million, promoted a popular image of the Hellenic in multicultural America, but in the Greek homeland was criticized as caricature and enhancing poor stereotyping. \textit{Head On}, on the other hand, exposes the oppression of stale traditional values enhanced by the generation gap between the parents, who lived a harsh immigrant life and dealt with prejudices of every sort in the host country, and their children, who are oppressed by a life-style that sets them apart from where they want to belong, and end up lost and deprived of values and identity, alike. In a bold scene from inside a car that moves through the neighborhoods of Australian immigrants, Aris, the main protagonist, shouts: “It’s full of Arabs. Face it [...] You are not in Europe any more. This isn’t Asia. This isn’t Africa. Pray, pray to God, to Allah, to Buddha, pray to whatever you want, to Dionysus. Nothing is going to save your kids.” The 19-year-old closet-gay son is in constant struggle with his father and earns his approval only when he performs a \textit{hasápiko}, the par excellence Greek-male dance. In the last scene of the film, while dancing, he comes to terms with himself: “I am going to live my life.

\textsuperscript{73} See above, p. 340.

\textsuperscript{74} Shohat & Stam 1994: 42.
I am not going to make a difference.” This realization is interspersed with images of immigrants arriving to Australia at the turn of the century.

The marble head of Hellenic Hellenism that weighed so heavily upon the modern Greeks of the motherland in the first half of the century in Seferis’s poetry, the broken hand still hovering over Thessaloniki in Angelopoulos’s *Landscape in the Mist* (*Topío stin Omichli*, 1988) perhaps pointing the way for the young protagonists, has become a choking reality for second- and third-generation Greeks in their adopted countries. In a world where the subject can dance a manly *hasápkos* and still be gay, thus choosing to subvert the very manliness for which the former immigrants with their long curly mustaches and their bravado were looked down upon as crude brutes upon arrival, their sons oscillate between the different poles of their hybrid diasporic identity erasing the memories of the motherland. In a scene with a Turkish taxi driver earlier on in *Head On*, we listen to a song about freedom (“Ο δρόμος είχε την δική του ιστορία”, “The road had its own story”), sung for the students who occupied the polytechnic school at Athens and gave their lives rebelling against the military junta of 1967–1974, the very reason for which Aris’s parents left the motherland. The young Greek-Australians had just laughed away the age-old hatred between the Greeks and the Turks when they both agreed that “Oh, you are a Turk. Well, probably your great-grandfather raped my great-grandmother.” When the Greek-Australians do not recognize the song, the Turkish immigrant offers freedom as the value in common that translates across cultures, pointing the way towards a multicultural dialogue in a polycentric new global order.

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75 See, for example, Seferis, *Mythistorema* G, K4, KB 6–15, and the caption in Liakos’s chapter in this volume; Thrush B 54–6.