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"Reframing Gender in Modernist Greek Cinema: The Case of Tonia Marketaki"

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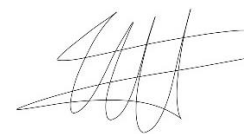
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Abstract

This thesis explores the filmography of Tonia Marketaki, a Greek female filmmaker of the 20th century, within the framework of New Greek Cinema. Despite her international recognition, there is a notable gap in research on her works, reflecting the broader oversight of women filmmakers in the male-dominated Greek film industry. The study employs the lenses of aesthetics and gender representation to analyze Marketaki's filmography. Her films are examined for their role in reshaping cinematic language and challenging established gender norms. Emphasis is laid on her exploration of masculinity and female agency in her early short film *John and the Road* and her feature films *John the Violent*, *The Price of Love* and *Crystal Nights*. The thesis contextualizes Marketaki's films within the evolving social and political landscape of Greece, highlighting shifts in gender dynamics from the late 1960s until the early 1990s. Through case studies of each film, the aesthetics of Marketaki's work are highlighted, considering narrative structures, character complexities and innovative elements of mise-en-scène. The thesis aims to contribute to a more inclusive understanding of Greek film history by acknowledging the pivotal role of women filmmakers like Marketaki.

Keywords: Tonia Marketaki, gender, Greek cinema, modernism

Introduction

Tonia Marketaki (1942-1994) was one of the pioneer Greek female filmmakers of the 20th century. Her filmography comprises one short film and three feature length films. Her movies span the distinct trajectory of New Greek Cinema, its beginning, peak and demise. However, as in global narrative filmmaking, female pioneers working in the male-dominated Greek film industry belong to a forgotten generation that has been “overlooked and disregarded, simply because of their gender,” as Vrasidas Karalis (2013, 45) accurately comments. Nikos Vasilopoulos (2022, 272-273) notes that the history of Greek Cinema begins to be systematically written from the 1960s onwards in a way that silences women and their innovative contribution to it. Karalis (2013, 46) adds that “Greek cinema, as every other national cinema in its institutional organization, could think of a feminine presence only in front of the camera but never behind it”. It is accordingly puzzling and surprising that despite the international recognition that Tonia Marketaki had, there is still limited research around her filmography and impact.

Within the wide scope of women’s cinema, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan argue for the visibility of women filmmakers in national and international contexts:

We know that there is an imperative need to address the concerns of women around the world in the historicized particularity of their relationship to multiple patriarchies as well as to international economic hegemonies. [...] We need to articulate the relationship of gender to scattered hegemonies such as global economic structures, patriarchal nationalisms, 'authentic' forms of tradition, local structures of domination, and legal-juridical oppression on multiple levels. (1994, 17)

In this context, Alison Butler (2002, 91) studies films which situate female identity in dynamic historical situations in order to reveal the imbrication of technologies of gender with those of local, national and international power. She examines the aesthetics of works by women filmmakers in terms of the ways they respond to particular patriarchies and other localized and globalized power relations. She employs examples of German women directors in the 1970s and 1980s during the period of New German Cinema, as well as women directors in the Iranian New Wave in the same decades. Following the same paradigm, this MA thesis will analyze Marketaki’s filmography, focusing on her aesthetics and representation regarding gender consciousness in the crucial decades of the 1970s and 1980s in modernist Greek cinema.

Marketaki was born in 1942 and lived in Athens. Pursuing her dream to become a filmmaker, she studied in Paris in the early 1960s in IDHEC (Kyriakidis 1994, 17-18). During her stay in France, she received the predominant influences of the French New Wave which she employed in her own emerging visual language.

Between 1963 and 1967, she worked as journalist and critic in England, Algeria and Greece (Valoukos 1999, 173). She completed her first short film *John and the Road* (*O Yannis kai o Dromos*) one week before military coup in Greece on April 21, 1967, which lasted until 1974. Marketaki was arrested for her left-wing views and, during the junta, she left the country in self-exile and took fervent part in the resistance that was forming in Europe against the regime (Valoukos 1999, 173). She returned in 1971 to shoot her next three-hour black and white film, *John the Violent* (*Ioannis o Viaios*, 1973), which won awards for direction, screenwriting and first male lead in the Thessaloniki Film Festival in 1973. In 1977, Marketaki drew on literature to create a television series *Lemonodasos* (1978) named after Kosmas Politis's novel. She revisited her passion for modern Greek fiction by adapting Konstantinos Theotokis's novel *Honour and Money* (1914) as her second feature, titled *The Price of Love* (*I Timi tis Agapis*) in 1983. The film won seven national awards and the Golden Olive Award in the Mediterranean Film Festival in 1984. Her swan song was *Crystal Nights* (*Kristallinies Nihtes*), released nine years later, in 1992. Achilleas Kyriakidis (1994, 27) notes that its title was inspired by the "Night of the Crystals," the first systematic massive attack against Jewish people and their properties in German territories in 1938 by the nazis. Marketaki died in 1994 at the age of 52. Her works are among the rare instances of women's cinema in Greece of the time. As Vasilopoulos (2022, 273-274) notes, Marketaki made the female presence behind the camera visible during the 1970s and 1980s. She not only stands among the pioneering female directors but also an auteur that radically and systematically experimented with cinematic language in the early 1970s, recalibrating the narrative rhythms and visual poetics of cinematic storytelling. In this way, she becomes part of a group of filmmakers that include, among others, Theodoros Angelopoulos, Costas Ferris, Pantelis Voulgaris, Dimos Theos and Alexis Damianos.

The innovative stylistic choices of this new paradigm were prepared in the 1960s and established in the 1970s. Karalis (2017, 193) calls it the 'formalist moment' because it displayed high self-consciousness in form and representation, reconfiguring the dominant visual language. The stylistic tradition of the Old Greek Cinema was confronted with a dialogue with radical modernism that was occurring worldwide through such movements as the French New Wave, New Hollywood Cinema, Latin American Cinema, Czech New Wave and New German Cinema, among others (Karalis 2012, 175). As Yannis Bakogiannopoulos (2002, 14) notes, when Old Greek Cinema arrived at its peak in the late 1960s, there appeared "idiosyncratic" and innovative directors and films, such as Kostas Zois' *Silhouettes* (1967), Vangelis Serdaris' *Robbery in Athens* (*Listeia stin Athina*, 1969), Stavros Tsiolis' *Panic* (*Panikos*, 1969), Petros Lykas' *The Girl of Number 17* (*To Koritsi tou 17*, 1969). *John and the Road* is one of the short films that fall into this category. Angelopoulos's *Reconstruction* (*Anaparastasi*, 1970) is underlined as the turning point of what is labeled today as New Greek Cinema (Soldatos 2020, 271). New Greek Cinema was defined by its open form, ambiguities, understatements,

ironies and contradictions within a context of rapid modernization. Narratives generally remained elliptical and open-ended. Angelo Nicolaides (2012, 5) adds that there was a shift towards psychologically complex characters struggling within indeterminate situations. The rich subtext of these films was often accompanied by a “claustrophobic, gloomy and foreboding” mise-en-scène, while new open landscapes outside of the studios were also rediscovered (Karalis 2012, 148-149). The new directors of the 1970s “foregrounded mostly the geometry and construction of each scene, avoiding fast movements of the camera, jump cuts or montage” (Karalis 2017, 193). Marketaki combined her international cinematic influences with the Greek context and applied these innovative elements in her style. Vasilopoulos (2022, 27) particularly stresses that if Angelopoulos shifted the visual language towards dark motifs and internal character conflicts, Marketaki's cinematography and character complexity are even more emphatically expressed.

Examining the representation of gender during the decades that Marketaki was active, one observes that established versions of social and cultural perception, including gender, were being challenged. Achilleas Hadjikyriacou (2013, 175) explains that during the postwar years of the 1950s and 1960s, many aspects of traditional gender relations were renegotiated due to the deep social, cultural and economic transformations that were shaping Greece at the time. These changes were illustrated in film with the representation of leading male characters as “more sensitive, emotional, caring and less interested in ‘sexual scoring’ to prove their manliness” (Hadjikyriacou 2013, 258). Traditional male machismo, which was epitomized by the concept of the unmarried ‘pallikari’ and the successfully married ‘pater familias,’ was being challenged (Hadjikyriacou 2013, 258). Femininity was mainly expressed in films that only seemingly subverted it, such as Ntinou Dimopoulos's *Ms Director (Dis Dieuthintis)*, 1964) starring Tzeni Karezi and *The Lady and the Tramp (I Arhontisa kai o Alitis)*, 1968) starring Aliko Vougiouklaki (Vasilopoulos 2022, 273). Although these films foregrounded women who react against social stereotypes, they perpetuated traditional gender roles (Vasilopoulos 2022, 273). Eleni Stamiris (1986, 84) explains that because of the junta and its adherence to the cult of the family, Greek society never experienced the sexual liberation movement that shook the West in the 1960s and early 1970s. When the regime fell in 1974, the Greek women's movement moved along the wider context of progressive politics. Until then most films generally avoided direct confrontation with current social and political puzzles and kept their visual language at a symbolic level (Karalis 2017, 38-39). Films that belonged to the new movement investigated “stories and themes that had been forbidden until then” (Karalis 2012, 149). Maria Paradeisi (2003, 129) situates Marketaki among the paradigmatic innovators that overtly shifted Greek cinema's attention from sociopolitical subjects to portrayals of “identity issues, gender roles, private stories, relationships and feelings”. Maria Katsounaki cites filmmaker Elissavet Chronopoulou's words (quoted in Paradeisi 2003, 129), who explains that directors were trying to “allow emotion to pass into [their] films” by

applying their personal taste. Sexuality and gender were portrayed as being in crisis and dominant discourses were challenged in films such as Pavlos Tasios' *Yes, Certainly, But . . . (Nai Men Alla . . . , 1972)*, Marketaki's *John the Violent (Ioannis o Viaios, 1973)* and Kostas Ferris' *The Murderess (I Fonissa, 1974)*.

Bakogiannopoulos (2002, 30-31) identifies the 1980s as the second phase in the movement, marked by a more overt challenge to crystallized patriarchal ideas about gender and identity. Gianna Athanasatou (2002, 159-161) argues that the emergence of a solid "female sphere" occurred within the New Greek Cinema movement but became stronger in the 1980s. Within the changing sociopolitical context, women's need for self-identification was innovatively echoed in cinematic works (Athanasatou 2002, 159-161). Radical feminist ideas regarding romantic relationships, marriage and family were boldly represented in Marketaki's *The Price of Love* (1984), Frida Liappa's *Oi dromoi tis agapis einai nyhterinoi* (1981) and *Htan enas hsyxos Thanatos* (1986) and *I ores (The Hours, 1990)* by Antouanetta Angelidi. By 1985, the demise of New Greek Cinema was reached though a prolonged creative limbo. The period of crisis that followed lasted for the next ten years which were characterized as "the most insular" for the history of Greek cinema (Karalis 2012, 218). Marketaki's last film *Crystal Nights (Kristallinies Nihtes, 1992)* is situated in the beginning of the new decade together with other films that explored existential approaches. Such films were Pandelis Voulgaris's *The Quiet Days of August (Isihes Meres tou Augoustou, 1991)*, Liappa's *The Year of the Heatwave (I Hronia tis Megalis Zestis, 1991)* and Yorgos Stampoulopoulos's *Two Suns in the Sky (Dio Ilioi ston Ourano, 1992)*, among others (Soldatos 2020, 439-451).

Karalis admits that "[w]omen filmmakers were always at the forefront of radical approaches but have been discussed only briefly in the overall literature about Greek cinema". For example, only recently has academic research shed light on Maria Plyta's (1915-2006) valuable work as the Greek first female director¹. She was followed by Lila Kourkoulakou (1936-2015) and then Marketaki who was simultaneously active with Liappa (1948-1994). Vasilopoulos (2022, 270-271) admits that many years had to pass for female representation behind the camera to be recognized, as was the case of Plyta, while there might also be other unknown Greek women filmmakers. Academic bibliography on Marketaki's filmography is scarce and information concerning her life and work remains mostly in journalistic pieces of writing, reviews in contemporary magazines, biographical volumes and festival archives. Kyriakidis has collected details on Marketaki's life, career and four films in an informative biographical volume entitled *Tonia Marketaki* (1994).

1 Among the recent academic studies dedicated to Plyta are the following: Ursula-Helen Kassaveti's article "Searching for Greek Women's Cinema in the '60s: Melodrama and Maria Plyta (1915-2006)" (2011), Karalis's "From the archives of Oblivion: the first female Greek director Maria Plyta (1915-2006)" (2013), Betty Kaklamanidou's and Marina Zigneli's "Maria Plyta: The "Unknown" Female Director of Greek Cinema and European Modernism" (2022) and Alkisti-Anastasia Aktsoylou's MA thesis "Variations of Melodrama: The Case of Maria Plyta" (2023).

Recording landmarks of the 20th century in his *History of Greek Cinema* (1999, 2000, 2020), historian Yannis Soldatos mentions Marketaki's contributions in his attempt to draw attention to works that would otherwise remain oblivious. In addition, in her "Women from Both Sides of the Camera" (2002), Athanasatou² examines Liappa's and Marketaki's films. Most distinctly, Karalis pays tribute to Marketaki in his systematic delineation of national Greek cinema in his meticulously inclusive book *A History of Greek Cinema* (2012) and his later study *Realism in Greek Cinema: From the Post-War Period to the Present* (2017).

Therefore, the main purpose of this thesis is to complement the limited literature and shed more light on Marketaki's work, its significance and impact within the wider sphere of Greek modernist cinema. Her short film *John and the Road* can be considered an early experimentation with form in the dawn of the new formalist movement. Her next two films, *John the Violent* and *The Price of Love*, coincide with the peak of New Greek Cinema, while her swan song *Crystal Nights* echoes the demise of this period. Her first two films revolve around male protagonists, while the last two films focus on female protagonists. They are all complicated characters who reflect the contested political and cultural gender dynamics and relations of the time of production. These four movies will be the case studies in each of the following chapters and will be approached through the lenses of aesthetics and gender representation. Female and male subjectivities will be analyzed for their unconventional portrayal. In each case study, themes, narrative structure, characters, innovative and symbolic aspects of the mise-en-scène and the role of the camera will be discussed. It will be, thus, revealed that Marketaki's stylistic and thematic choices innovatively reframe and reconsider the representation of gender both behind and in front of the camera, demonstrating that works by women directors in national cinemas are yet to be foregrounded for their cultural, political and social impact.

The first chapter of this thesis offers a reading of *John and the Road* focusing on the representation of masculinity, and it will be informed by George L. Mosse's work (1996). The second chapter offers an in-depth reading of *John the Violent* and centers on the forces that shape the female victim of gender-based violence. Following Diana Russell and Jill Radford's (1992, 25) argument that the history of femicide is parallel to the history of patriarchy, Marketaki portrays both the victim and perpetrator as trapped in the repressive mechanisms that societal institutions impose and perpetuate.

The aim of the third chapter is to designate the ways gender roles in *The Price of Love* are reframed within the Greek sociopolitical context in early 20th century. Masculinity will be discussed for its unconventional portrayal, whereas the female characters will be analyzed for epitomizing feminist ideals within the

² She follows Ann Kaplan's earlier study on feminism and film, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (1983).

period of the narrative, but also resonating far beyond the time of the film's production.

The fourth chapter, dedicated to *Crystal Nights*, focuses on the complexities of gender and love in relation to categories of ethnicity and age within turbulent historical circumstances. The reconceptualization of History from a female perspective, is also discussed as one of the intentions of Marketaki's swan song.

The conclusions summarize the main findings of our analyses, followed by the works cited section that complete our thesis.

Chapter 1: Masculinity in Crisis in *John and the Road*

John and the Road (1967) is the first short black-and-white film by Tonia Marketaki. Representing the female expression behind the camera, she is among the emerging directors that benefited from the proliferation of short films and documentaries during the 1960s. However, she does not concentrate on “social events, landscapes, local festivals and historical personalities,” which had shaped the visual morphology of short films in Greek cinema (Karalis 2012, 127). Nor does she use the central themes of most films in the 1960s as main thematic axes, namely the new urban landscape in Athens, industrialization and modernization, the traumas of recent history and the looming political crisis (Karalis 2012, 107). Instead, in her first film, Marketaki examines the impact of all these diverse factors on the representation of a masculinity, portraying it in crisis. The modernist aesthetics and the new and complex way with which she presents this type of masculinity demystifies ideals and criticizes dominant perceptions. She employs a fragmented narrative structure and uses intense contrasts in the mise-en-scène and editing in order to represent male subjectivity as vulnerable, introspective and in despair.

John and the Road's protagonist is Yannis, an ordinary Greek man, just as his name suggests—Yannis is a very common male name in Greece. Yannis (Yorgos Votsis) is a young man who walks around the streets of Athens contemplating his past experiences while observing the present, his role in it and his hopeless future. Yannis does not speak except for a single time. Karalis remarks that characters in New Greek Cinema films followed an anti-Hollywood aesthetic:

The conflict between a human being and its social environment was depicted in its ordinary manifestations: as an inability to find personal fulfillment, emotional reciprocation, or interpersonal understanding rather than as grand moral dilemmas, heroic acts or superhuman virtues. (2012, 154)

Yannis is, indeed, a common man depicted in a mundane, urban environment, tormented by a lack of freedom of expression in political, sexual and existential self-determination. Like male characters of other contemporary modernist films, such as *O Krahtis (The Leader, 1964)* and *Prosopo me Prosopo (Face to Face, 1966)*, who do not reproduce “idealized stereotypes of class or gender” but finds themselves “trapped in complex situations in an environment of intense negotiation between tradition and modernity” (Hadjikyriacou 2013, 172), Yannis is in limbo, too. He does not have a clear purpose or motive and is wandering aimlessly in an alienating and impersonal urban center. He appears homeless, as he is never depicted at home but constantly in different urban spaces, in the streets, a square and inside a tavern. He is the recipient of forces of his historical circumstances and a tense sociopolitical environment, while also facing social isolation, romantic disappointment and ultimately his own self-rejection. Unable

to embody the traditional masculine ideals, to act with purpose or react, he is deprived of his agency.

The film's narrative structure is nonlinear, and each fragment reveals specific aspects of the male character's problematic agency. First, Yannis is depicted being disoriented and impotent as a historical subject. In the first shots in the film, he sits alone on stairway in the street and then walks among the crowd of pedestrians, while the Athenian landscape is explored in handheld shots that enhance the realism of the film. As he passes in front of a kiosk, he looks at frontpages of magazines and newspapers. He sees pompous headlines, which inform about political assassinations and turbulent historical circumstances, such as "Lambrakis was not murdered³," "Next target the moon and Mars," "Stable political system, fluid political situation" and "New troops in Vietnam"⁴ (fig. 1, 2, 3, 4). The phrase "Communist is your worst enemy" written on a leaflet also reaches his hand (fig. 5), while others are scattered around the square down the road. These shots expose the forces that deprive Yannis of his agency as a historical subject. He is only the recipient of a multitude of information about events which he cannot control or influence. In a subsequent episodic sequence, multiple scenes of violent events that reflect the newspaper headlines are edited together, accentuating the psychological turmoil of the character. War horses are running furiously, a space rocket is blasting off, a woman is threatened to be killed, footage of criminal acts in the Vietnam War, a woman trying to give birth in pain, while her voice is heard in the next aerial shot of the city of Athens, implying the urgent need for affective expression. The editing style juxtaposes past and present, what is thought and what is left unsaid, what happened and what may have happened. Yannis is seen leaning on a wall out of breath and about to cry, indicating that he is trapped in an atmosphere of evolution but also suffocation and political stagnation. He cannot act as a hero in the historical moment. Instead, he is "a man that swims among things," as Marketaki (quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 33) has noted. He cannot express with words his subconscious thoughts nor the stimuli that he receives and processes (Marketaki quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 33). Contrary to dominant and established postwar representations that showed men always overcoming troubles and never as victims of social forces (Vasilopoulos 2022, 271), Marketaki openly portrays Yannis's masculinity as troubled. Dominant depictions of masculinity as "a symbol of personal and national regeneration" (Mosse 1996, 3-4) are challenged by Yannis's representation as an ordinary man torn between forces of modernity and the traumatic historical past and present. This approach aligns with Mosse's (1996, 3-4) observation that the idea of manliness was paradoxical, simultaneously seen as a protector of the established

³ Grigoris Lambrakis, a left-wing member of the parliament and anti-war activist in the 1960s, was assassinated in May 1963 by right-wing extremists, while delivering an anti-war speech (Chalkou 2022, 121). The reactionary blast that followed influenced art, including cinema, "contributing to its politicization and radicalization" (Chalkou 2022, 121).

⁴ All translation in English from the films and Greek bibliography belongs to the author.

order against the threats of modernity and as a necessary quality for those advocating change.

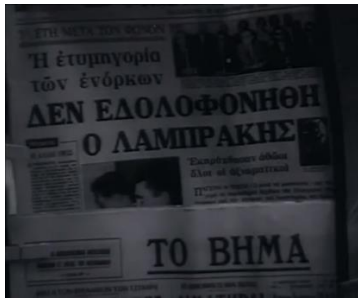


Figure 1: Newspaper headlines about national news

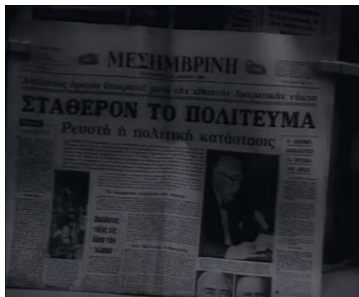


Figure 2: Newspaper headlines about national news



Figure 3: Newspaper headlines about international news



Figure 4: Newspaper headlines about international news



Figure 5: Leaflet with political slogan

Marketaki's exploration of this new type of masculinity goes even further. Traditional social expressions of masculinity are subverted. Early in the film, Yannis attempts to light up a cigarette, a stereotypical symbol of masculine power and dominance. However, it is immediately put off by the rain (fig. 6), depriving him of the need to find a sense of personal dynamism. In contrast, female subjectivity is represented with an agency that Yannis lacks. A young woman is introduced later in a close-up and in a total black background, smiling and looking intensely and directly into the camera. The camera zooms in and out and the viewer gradually witnesses her self-assurance. She is confidently sitting in front of a table, drinking and smoking (fig. 7), activities that John was unable to enjoy. Yannis is depicted in the outer space of a square, a public place conventionally viewed as a male sphere of socialization and dominance. Hadjikyriacou (2013, 12-13) explains that the Greek public square and the kafeneion (coffee house) were traditionally considered male "forts" in rural areas, where men could socialize with other men in everyday life through drinking, card-playing, political debates and hospitality. The depiction of the square in Marketaki's film as a deserted space with abandoned tables connotes that the traditional masculinity is being disturbed in the modern urban environment. The *mise-en-scène* places the character walking alone in the bright white and plain surroundings that contrast with the empty black tables (fig. 8). Yannis is disoriented in the open space, unable to express his masculinity in the absence of other male peers and friends. The impersonality of the crowds in the city streets alternate with the absence of male bonds in the square. Thus, Yannis, as the typical characters of New Greek Cinema, experiences existential conflicts within an alienating urban environment. Towards the end of the film, Yannis resorts to the tavern, another place closely associated with masculinity. Yet, even there, he faces solitude and traditional male machismo. The tavern is portrayed in dark shadows that denote hostility and abandonment, rather than hospitality and delight. The few last customers are leaving, the waiter is tired and indifferent and the only sounds heard are the tricking door and the dishwashing. The owner of the tavern, representing the older generation, reproduces traditional and misogynist ideas about gender. He declares that when the woman he loved told him she was about to get married, he wanted to kill her. The voice of a customer is heard sarcastically asking the old man whether he

actually killed her. Yannis becomes torn between the older generation's violent machismo and his own sensitivity and emotional impasse.

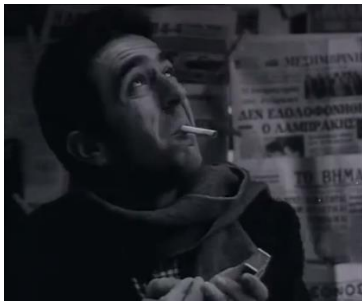


Figure 6: Rain putting of Yannis's cigarette



Figure 7: Woman drinking and smoking



Figure 8: Yannis passing through deserted square

Masculinity and class are additionally portrayed in trouble, especially when the focus shifts to the female character with whom Yannis is in love. She is an attractive woman with dark hair, dressed in an elegant black dress and a fur coat. Her appearance denotes her possibly higher social status. Addressing Yannis, she admits “You don’t believe it... and yet I’m getting married in a month. A good luck. An industrialist. I’d be happy if I were you”. The female character does not reject the traditional concept of marriage as an economic transaction but employs a subversive attitude within its conventions. She expresses her agency through her ability to choose a beneficial marital contract to secure a stable and luxurious future living. Her fiancé as an industry owner belongs to the upper middle class. There is a class difference between him and Yannis, who belongs to a lower class and is, therefore, being rejected by the woman. It can therefore be assumed that the class difference between the future groom and Yannis is not only a matter of

masculinity traits but also a class conflict. Hadjikyriacou acknowledges that the crisis of masculinities in the 1960s was to a significant degree a female task:

Masculinity is renegotiated along with femininity in the filmic world, surrounded by deep changes in longstanding models of gender relations and hierarchies of power. Female economic emancipation, the abandonment of female shame and the failure of men as providers are the main axes around which the filmmakers used to contextualize the male crisis. Thus, the traditional patriarchal structure often appears in a state of collision but is never explicitly abandoned, remaining, in this way, a caricature of the traditional male dominance in the public and private sphere. (2013, 175)

Indeed, as New Greek Cinema emerges, characters like Yannis experience feelings of inadequacy and insufficiency and they are abandoned to face alone the negotiation of masculinity and class.

Another interesting element is Yannis's disillusionment as a young man during a time that is considered a joyful period in one's life. In the first shots of the film, when he leans down at the gutters of the pavement that is full of water, he discovers a small marble toy covered in dirt (fig. 9), a symbol of youth and innocence. He tries to clean it but a car that passes by splashes water on his face (fig. 10). Thus, Yannis's attempt to find solace in his past childhood memories is portrayed as a vain attempt to recapture something that is forever out of reach. What is more, the owner of the tavern addresses the vanity of Yannis's young age by sorrowfully asking him: "Aren't you sorry for your youth? Such youth, what a pity!". He is insulted by the old man's comment and expresses his anger by pouring a glass of wine on the latter's face (fig. 11) and then breaking it on the wall. This symbolic gesture connotes his attempt to release his anger and disappointment and accept reality. An optimistic reconciliation between the generations is also implied when the two men exit the tavern together and Yannis helps the owner step down the stairs.



Figure 9: Yannis holding a marble toy



Figure 10: Car splashing water on his face



Figure 11: Yannis pouring wine on the owner's face

As the narrative progresses, Yannis's sensitivity begins to be ambiguously delineated as an element that he attempts to embrace. For instance, among the magazine frontpages he notices in the beginning of the film, there is a photograph of a muscular half-naked man posing and showing his sculpted arms, accompanied by the slogan "muscle power" (fig. 12) and mark the visual presentation of the dominant male self (Geraghty 1995, 62-65), constituting ingredients of a 'pin-up' representation (Geraghty 1995, 64). Constructing this physicality, sports, combats and violence offer the opportunity to demonstrate the male body as active and dominant (Geraghty 1995, 65). Although this portrayal of dominant masculinity is displayed as an ideal that the protagonist in *John and the Road* cannot attain, his half-naked body depicted at the end of the film demystifies standard discourses on the definition of masculine power. In a flashback, he is depicted from a high angle lying alone on the beach, smiling and enjoying the sun in his white swimsuit (fig. 13), which resembles the frontpage cover man. This instance perhaps denotes his embrace of his body, his introspective contemplation of selfhood and his rejoicing in not being active but relaxingly optimistic about the future. Simultaneously, the portrayal of him as very small could also denote his loneliness and insignificance in the cosmos.

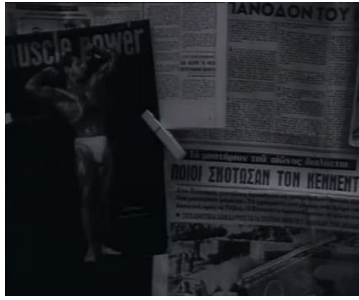


Figure 12: Muscular man on magazine frontpage



Figure 13: Yannis lying on the beach

Yannis's sexuality is also represented as problematic throughout the narrative. He sees sexy semi-clad women in magazine frontpages (fig. 14), but he can only admire them from a distance, unable to actually engage in a romantic relationship. It is also highlighted that Yannis's sexuality is torn between reality and fantasy. A young blond girl shown in a medium shot is seen walking, smiling and looking at the camera, as Yannis follows her. However, through abrupt editing, the girl disappears in the next shot and Yannis is again left alone in the street, blinded by the blurry sunlight. This girl was perhaps only existing in a memory of a past romantic relationship. Marketaki comments that he sees and feels in a blurry manner and cannot identify the boundaries between daydream and reality (quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 33). Accentuating his emotional void and the lack of reciprocation, the *mise-en-scène* later in the night juxtaposes the darkness outside in the street with the couples that Yannis sees from the windows of buildings. A happy couple is dancing to romantic jazz rhythms and another couple is making love. These contrasts encapsulate the romantic ideal which he cannot attain. Nevertheless, after he has observed the couples, he is shown outside moving along the music on his own, raising his hands and dancing *zeibekiko* (fig. 15). Eva Marda (2020) explains that *zeibekiko* dance was exclusively a "male dance" through which men could "show their frustrations, express their concerns" and identify as the "leader" as others watched. Yannis's dancing without an audience is an indication of his self-knowledge and comfort in being alone and his reveling in the freedom of a solitary moment. Similarly, when he reminisces the same blond girl again towards the end of the film, the flashback scene shows them happily together at a summer beach. The weather signifies their youth, happiness and romantic love. Although their relationship was ephemeral and cannot not provide Yannis

with fulfillment at present, he finds solace in his nostalgic memory. The last shot of him lying alone on the beach is another optimistic implication that he has embraced his solitude. Since he cannot succeed in feeling included in groups and relationships, a struggle in post-adolescent age (Marketaki quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 33), he decides to confront this frustration.



Figure 14: Semi-clad woman on magazine frontpage



Figure 15: Yannis dancing zeibekiko

The lines he recites in the darkness towards the end from Menelaos Lountemis's poem "Tonight" ("Apopse," 1954) summarize and encapsulate all the above contradictory elements of the protagonist's identity:

Απόψε που έχασα τον ίσκιο μου/και βουλιάζω στην άπατη
νύχτα./Απόψε που βγήκα στα τρίστρατα του μεσονυχτιού/και
ζητιανεύω λίγον ύπνο./Απόψε που αποδήμησαν κοπάδι οι
χίμαιρες/και γω ξεσέλωσα το άτι της ελπίδας.../Απόψε που σου
σήκωσα το γιασμάκι/και σ' αντίκρυσσα ολόγυμνη-εφτάσκημη
ντροπή-/Μετρήθηκα ξανά μαζί σου-/Κι ήμουν ένα μπόι πιο ψηλός!

Tonight that I lost my shadow/and I'm sinking into the bottomless
night./Tonight that I got out at the crossroads of the midnight/and I'm
begging for some sleep./Tonight that a flock of chimeras migrated/and
I unsaddled the steed of hope.../Tonight that I took off the
yashmak/and I beheld you bare-hideous shame-/I compared myself
to you again-/And I was feet taller!⁵

⁵ The poem belongs to Lountemis's collection *Κραυγή στα πέρατα* (1954).

Just like the narrator in Lountemis's poem, Yannis is confronted with social pressure, solitude, unattainable love and despair, which lead to his self-rejection and shame. However, as the last line indicates, the character ultimately overcomes and triumphs over his vulnerable and shameful state. The optimism arises from the idea that, despite the disheartening circumstances, the young man ultimately feels uplifted and powerful, exhibiting a sense of personal growth, transcending past mistakes and distancing oneself from negative influences.

Indeed, in Marketaki's film masculinity is portrayed as ordinary rather than larger-than-life. Trapped within a multitude of forces, the male subject is asked to adapt to, act and react to national and international events, crimes and wars, personal romantic relationships and need for male companionship. The film culminates with a symbolic gesture as Yannis ascends a staircase in the urban landscape, removing his hat—an act that can be interpreted as a symbolic wave towards reclaiming his agency. What distinguishes this film is its innovative approach in challenging traditional notions of masculinity. In a reframing of the enduring emphasis on manly virtues like willpower and courage, as noted by Mosse (1996, 3-4), the film offers a reevaluation within the context of a more nuanced exploration that adds depth to the narrative and highlights the evolving discourse surrounding masculinity.

Chapter 2: Representations of Femicide and Gender in *John the Violent*

John the Violent (1973) is the first feature length black-and-white film written and directed by Marketaki. It was released just before the fall of the Greek junta and was one of the first films that introduced and established the modernist aesthetics and politics of New Greek Cinema. The central theme of the narrative is the radical issue of femicide⁶. Yannis Ragkos informs that Marketaki carried out extensive research on a true case of femicide in Greece at the time, collecting documents from publications, judicial records from the trial and forensic reports (2018, 95-96). The story revolves around a young woman, Eleni Chalkia (Mika Flora), who is murdered with a knife by an unknown perpetrator in a night street in Athens. In the police investigation that follows, various witnesses testify and express contradictory arguments, rumors and versions about Eleni's life and the crime. In the second half of the film, the focus shifts on young Yannis/Ioannis Zachos (Manolis Logiadis), a mentally unstable man who identifies as Eleni's murderer, undergoes a trial and is ultimately confined to a psychiatric asylum. The movie's revolutionary approach is demonstrated by the release of the film during the most militant period of New Greek Cinema, when progressive feminist representations were stifled. In the context of struggle for freedom and democracy, Marketaki exposes the treatment of female and male subjectivities in relation to gender-based violence. The narrative structure and style shape the representation of the female character, Eleni, and the norms around gender, sexuality and marriage during the modernization and urbanization of post-war Greek society. Moreover, the representation of the main male character, Yannis, is again unconventional and incompatible with dominant discourses on masculinity. Therefore, attention will be drawn to the theme, the structure of the narrative, the portrayal of the characters, the camera and the dark *mise-en-scène*, informed by the works of cinematographers Giorgos Arvanitis and Giorgos Panousopoulos.

Before proceeding to the analysis, one should consider that the movie deals with femicide at a time when the term was not systematically used, nor did it constitute a recognized legal category⁷. Russell and Radford explain that the problem of violence against women remained hidden in history and hence their experiences were hard to be documented (1992, 25). Russell and Radford (1992, 25) also insist that femicide describes a phenomenon as old as patriarchy and that women have always experienced a danger when going out at night since streets are unsafe for them. Although there are discontinuities and changes depending on cultural differences, "all patriarchal societies have used femicide as a form of punishment or social control of women by men," ensuring male dominance and female subordination (Russell and Radford 1992, 26). Within the national context

⁶ Femicide is different from homicide because of the murderer's sexist motives (Kouroutsidou and Kakarouna 2021, 23).

⁷ The term was found in legal dictionaries in mid-19th century, only to reappear in public use much later, in 1976 by Diana Russell and other feminist activists (Canadian Femicide Observatory, 2020).

of Greece, historian Efi Avdela (2002, 29-44) observes that public discourses about premeditated interpersonal crimes were based on the anthropological Mediterranean 'code of honor and shame'. In post-Civil War Greece in the 1950s and 1960s, interpersonal violence was losing its symbolic legality and discourses on sexual crimes were beginning to be linked more to internal migration, impersonal urbanization and mentally unstable killers (Avdela 2002, 29-44, 232). However, studies regarding gender-based violence in contemporary Greece show that discursive phrases, such as "crime of passion" or "criminal love" are still perpetuated (Weil, Corradi and Naudi quoted in Kouroutsidou and Kakarouna 2020, 24).

In *John the Violent*, femicide is represented as complex from the beginning of the film through a fragmented narrative structure and no singular omniscient narrator. Various characters are presented looking straight into the camera while testifying in the police station and sharing their assumptions on potential murderers and explanations (fig. 16, 17, 18). This aesthetic and narrative choice not only resonates with the documentary convention of 'talking heads' but also showcases a forward-thinking approach, serving as a precursor to contemporary true crime docuseries.⁸ This approach increases the visibility and awareness of such cases, foreshadowing similar fictional content in American series of the 2010s, such as *Mindhunter* (Netflix, 2017-2019), *Big Little Lies* (HBO, 2017-2019) or *Unbelievable* (Netflix, 2019). Moreover, flashbacks of the night of the crime are depicted with voiceover narration of eyewitnesses reading their typed official testimonies. The episodic structure perplexes the logical chain of the events, rather than leading to a tight cause-and-effect continuity. In addition, the statements are often conflicting. For instance, as Ioulia Mermigka (2022, 188) highlights, some witnesses insist that they are absolutely sure that the woman screamed for help, whereas others say that she remained silent. The descriptions of the perpetrator also remain vague. An eyewitness describes him as short, overweight with a mustache and thick dark hair. Yet, when he is asked to identify him in a lineup (fig. 19), he cannot confirm with certainty, since anyone could fit the profile. The possibility of discovering one singular truth is postponed and questioned. The perpetrator could be any ordinary man that concentrates any of the characteristics described by the witnesses. That is, anyone can be suspect of gender-based violence, which pervades Greek society, is repeated and perpetuated. The story world, thus, unfolds as a complex, conflicting and unpredictable web of events. The contradictory narrative segments do not only

⁸ Marketaki's approach was pioneering given that it is in the late 1980s that "television reality crime programs" (Cavender and Fishman quoted in Walters 2011, 27) became hugely popular, including network series like *America's Most Wanted* (FOX, 1988-2011; Lifetime, 2011-2012) or *Dateline* (NBC, 1992-). Elizabeth Walters (2012, 27) also mentions that the genre of true crime docuseries remains so popular in the 2020s that some cable channels have dedicated their entire programming lineup to episodic true crime, such as *Homicide Hunter* (Investigation Discovery, 2011-2020), *Fear Thy Neighbor* (Investigation Discovery, 2014-2023) and *People Magazine Investigates* (Investigation Discovery, 2016-).

undermine the reliability of the testimonies or the police investigation, but also present gender-based crime as an obscure and highly complex phenomenon. The research carried out never suffices, while the factors and the motives leading to it continue to lie in obscurity.



Figure 16: Witness testifying



Figure 17: Witness testifying



Figure 18: Witness testifying



Figure 19: Line-up of suspects

What is more, throughout the process of the investigation, the female subjectivity of the victim remains ironically in the background and is left to be constructed by other characters' agency and events. Sofia Xigaki (2018) mentions that until recently the critics have refrained from analyzing the first part of the film, which foregrounds the sexist stereotypes concerning femicide, as if it was not

of concern. Eleni's character is, indeed, delineated only through the perspectives of other characters and is defined in absentia. Vasilopoulos (2022, 274-275) underscores that her portrayal not only avoids a complete picture of her but represents how female subjectivity is constructed in Greek society in the 1970s within a web of patriarchal forces. The characters place Eleni's life and privacy under the microscope, as Kyriakidis comments (1994, 36), and present stereotypical and misogynist descriptions. For example, Eleni's fiancé (Thanassis Valtinos), who is revealed to have relations with sex workers, refers to her and stigmatizes her as a "whore" when he finds out that she had previous intimate sexual relations⁹. This characterization is heard twice by him, once, ironically, when he addresses the female sex workers and then at the police. In contrast, her mother-in-law describes Eleni as "virtuous" and "hard-working" because she was helping her in the household. Yet, a different view is offered by Eleni's work colleague who believes that she was being manipulated into doing a heavy load of chores in the house.

The information on the victim's private sexual life is made public in the press, which is another source that shapes the portrayal of the female subjectivity. Journalists and photographers appear throughout the investigation silently recording the witnesses' testimonies or information from the coroner's laboratory and publicize them. The newspaper narrative that is constructed depicts Eleni as promiscuous, dishonored, with questionable morals and an intention to undermine her fiancé's dignity. The extreme sensationalism in the journalistic coverage, the news and the rumors complicate the representation of the female subjectivity and cultivate fascination and moral panic (Mermigka 2022, 195). For example, the vocabulary chosen in the press aims at intriguing the public's attention:

The thick veil of mystery still covers the murder of 'the beautiful Helen' and the interest shown by the public opinion reaches a peak. Did the victim lead a double life? A relation from her village revealed that she and another villager had been living together and that she also had a relationship with a butcher or fishmonger [...]. Could it be him the man who was blackmailing her? The butcher who slain her?

The puzzle of subjective opinions that are expressed reveal a web of stereotypes about female sexuality and morality in a patriarchal society. The media use sensationalism to increase profit and simultaneously reproduce and perpetuate a misogynist ideology.

The only instances the audience gets a glimpse on Eleni's own voice and perspective is through flashbacks of her life before the crime, which are edited

⁹ In the female moral code in Greek society, the concept of 'dropi' [shame] strictly prevented women from getting involved in any kind of premarital sexual relations (Hadjikyriacou 2013, 14-15). On the other hand, for young men, it was considered a masculine virtue to engage in sexual experiences before marriage and they were encouraged to do so (Hadjikyriacou 2013, 14-15).

together with the testimonies. In these scenes, the camera remains mostly static and records pieces of different aspects of the woman's private life in an observational documentary style. For example, as her mother-in-law explains their relationship to the police, Eleni is depicted in a flashback at her fiancé's home, tired of performing chores and then dining with him and his mother a few hours before the fatal incident. In another instance, during her fiancé's description of Eleni not being a virgin, a flashback depicts the two of them silent in bed and him physically forcing her to have a gynaecological examination in order to confirm her virginity. Female chastity and reputation are again revealed as manifestations of patriarchy. A woman's honor, especially the sexual virtue of an unmarried woman, was inextricably linked with maintaining her chastity (Campbell 1974, 268-269). The silent shots of Eleni preparing for her visit to the doctor and the sterile whiteness of the doctor's uniform, operating room and examination table highlight this burden exercised on women. The intrusion of the camera into her private life exposes the restrictive moral code of honor and marital norms that dictate female premarital virginity.

Furthermore, the rural cultural landscape and traditional practices around marriage and gender relations are also targeted by Marketaki for their inherent sexism. The long shots that add a realistic effect and directly immerse the viewers into the sociohistorical landscape emphasizes the parochialism of these conventions. For instance, Eleni's fiancé recounts to the police officer that he had some property that would enable him to marry her. However, he had to sell it and give it as dowry to his sister, who was pregnant and needed to get married in order to protect her honor. While he is narrating in voiceover, the camera moves in slow pan movements in a long take showing in flashback the rural area of the family's home. The camera functions again as a recorder of reality, entering the interior of their home and revealing fragments of the characters' private lives with simplicity, austere clarity and immediacy. Inside the house, the family is discussing and the man is then shown reacting violently upon hearing the news of the pregnancy. With silent shots, the camera moves inside the empty house that the family is about to sell. As Karalis (2012, 143) comments, in New Greek Cinema, meaning is often created through silences and subtexts that imply the invisible structures that dominated the Greek social landscape. Thus, viewers observe the culturally specific marriage rules and strategies that were based on stereotypes of gender roles. They notice the traditional marital transactions and the institution of dowry in rural areas, as well as the extent to which these practices are being negotiated in modernized urban Greece. Vasilis Karapostolis (1993, 105-108) explains that these sexist cultural practices were beginning to be reconfigured during the modernization and urbanization of post-war Greek society, since women entered the labor market. Indeed, Eleni is depicted working in Athens in order to earn a living on her own and save money for her dowry and marriage. She was even giving money to her future husband due to his financial predicament.

The second half of the movie shifts the focus to the victimizer. Through the portrayal of Yannis, Marketaki targets the construction of masculinity in a patriarchal society that exercises fatal pressure on young individuals. As in *John and the Road*, the typical Greek name Ioannis/Yannis signifies, as Mermigka (2022, 185) mentions, that cultural changes in Greek masculinities begin to be more overtly contested. Yannis is portrayed as a prisoner of his mind while trapped within social structures without defense mechanisms. Karalis (2012, 151) identifies Yannis as “the problematic hero” within a universe of delusional criminal darkness. Contrary to dominant representations of masculinity, he is delineated as a psychologically troubled, yet charming individual, who claims to have murdered a woman.

Yannis’s male subjectivity is represented as unstable, indeterminate and violent. He is introduced in short scenes silently reading about the crime in the newspaper and getting obsessed with it. The reasons for this obsession remain unclear and are implied through *mise-en-scène* techniques and dark cinematography. He is usually filmed in static positions in his dark room, leering at a woman dressing at an apartment across the street and then rushing outside to follow her suspiciously. He gives up and later witnesses her with male company in her house. His action does not have a direct or clear motive. In silent shots he is then depicted again in his room, drawing female breasts on a paper, hanging it on the wall and stabbing it with a knife. In the next scene, he appears dressed up as Dracula and scares his nagging grandmother. The camera then slowly moves and shows his macabre painting of monsters on the wall, his books on science, politics, art and occultism. He refuses to let natural light in his room and prefers the curtains closed. His violent tendencies are symbolized through the above claustrophobic *mise-en-scène* objects and behaviors. The bleak enclosed interior space resembles his troubled mental state, his fears and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority experienced by a young man. The viewer also gets a glimpse of even more private mental activities, like his dreams. In a nightmarish dream, he walks into a white blinding void, falls into a trap of spider webs and frantically struggles to get them off his head. Waking up and writing down his thoughts, he confesses that he experiences a suffocating shame and a force, which “should escape, otherwise it turns into poison”. He feels frustrated, angry and self-isolated from the social environment. The complexity of the male subject pertains to his “inability to find personal fulfillment, emotional reciprocation, or interpersonal understanding,” features commonly embodied by characters in New Greek Cinema films (Karalis 2012, 154). Male subjectivity has become fragile and problematic.

Marketaki also explores Yannis’s mental condition and final resort to gender-based violence as a socially constructed reaction to a deeply entrenched patriarchy that corrupts all systems, social groups and institutions. For instance, Yannis has internalized the violent representations of masculinity and the sensationalist approach reproduced by the press. Therefore, his obsession with reading the news on the crime stems from his conviction that the killer is respected

through the attention he gains. Yannis concludes that since the press focuses on those who kill “they are being admired and feared, that means respected”. Scott Bonn (2014, 11-17) explains that lurid, complex and compelling representations of killers, indeed, align with the innate human tendency to identify or empathize with the frightening and the incomprehensible. Marketaki’s exploration of this fascination with criminals is prophetic given the rising popularity of serial killer narratives later in the 20th century¹⁰. Yannis also admires the type of masculinity promoted in the media which is that of a man with a mysterious identity and the cruelty to commit murder. He is convinced that history is written by murderers, men like David and Orestes, Alexander the Great, Constantine the Great and Napoleon. These men’s recognition is attributed to their strength and ingenuity in murder. He aspires to identify with the killer and hence connects himself with Eleni’s murder. Lena Kitsopoulou (2019, 41) remarks that he finds the power to confess that he is the killer because he actually lacks the power to kill. “Attacking reality with fantasy,” he embraces the role of the criminal so that his life can be under the spotlight for the first time (Kitsopoulou 2019, 41). The character’s fragile subjectivity is also shaped by the police force, which is also presented as manipulative. As their investigation does not progress to any conclusion, they ultimately suspect Yannis because of his peculiar behavior. When he willingly confesses, his confession in conjunction with his sensitive existential condition become the proof that the police needs. His statement might or might not be true. However, for fear of being accused of inefficiency, the police are relieved by the outcome (Kyriakidis 1994, 39). The hypothesis that he might be unreliable is only questioned by one journalist who asks him in an interview what will happen if the actual murderer is detected. Yannis replies “If he has more proof...”.

As the narrative reveals more aspects of Yiannis’s character, more and complex social and cultural phenomena that lead to his aggression and unstable mental state are presented. Yiannis’s grandmother, representing the traditional moral code, blames his own family for his murderous tendencies and fears. She attributes his unstable upbringing to his aunt, who brought him up and oscillated between being a single parent and working as an artist in the theater. In a flashback of his disturbed childhood, the audience learns about his fear of his domineering aunt, as well as his problematic relationship with his peers. Young boys are depicted bullying him because he was introverted and sensitive. This depiction is significant given that the subject of bullying only garnered increased attention and visibility in societal discourse in the late 20th century and has continued to be a significant topic in the 21st century (Faris and Felmlee, 2023). This narrative

¹⁰ Bonn (2014, 11-17) notes that the fascination with serial killers was fueled by their glamorization in Hollywood films, like *Psycho* (1960), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). Walters (2012, 26) observes that true crime particularly became “a provocative staple” of radio and television because of the proximity that these media offer. Fact and fiction are blurred through “exaggerated depictions” of serial killers, such as Jeffrey Dahmer and Hannibal Lecter, transforming them into “larger-than-life celebrity monsters” (Bonn 2014, 11-17).

choice underscores how, from an early age, societal expectations linked to patriarchy influences behaviors by establishing power dynamics of dominance and authority as components of male socialization. Since Yannis's experiences as a young adolescent were infiltrated with fear, he resorts to cathartic violence towards women. Thus, to confirm his masculine power and dominance while growing up, he aspires to kill a young and beautiful woman (Kyriakidis 1994, 36-37). As Mermigka (2022, 183) confirms, the sociocultural regimes of gender, family and sexuality were restrictive and oppressive. As a recipient of all these forces, the mind of the violent criminal reflects the violence that society imposes on him. Karalis (2012, 151-152) agrees that Yannis's mind "epitomized the structures of a society permeated by violence, frustration, and internalized horror". Yannis is a totally lost individual, who is depersonalized, self-alienated and turns to crime to survive his own insignificance (Karalis 2012, 151-152). Thus, Yannis's subsequent trial becomes a metaphor of questioning societal institutions, such as the Greek family, which produce and reproduce patriarchy, violence and criminality (Soldatos 2021, 304-305).

Finally, in the long trial that follows, the male character is ambiguously portrayed as a hero. This epilogue ironically addresses "the inability of Greek society to deal with the sight of masculinity deprived of power" (Karalis 2012, 202). Being mostly static or making slow pan movements, the camera stands as a discreet and pensive bystander that records all the controversial and conflicting perspectives heard throughout the trial. According to traditional approaches to punishment, the brutality of Yannis's action corresponds to a sentence to prison. However, modern medical discourses are expressed by psychiatrists, who share their conclusions on schizophrenia, as well as the irrationality and incomprehensible motives of the perpetrator. They justify the overall indeterminacy of madness based on heredity, instincts and psychopathological sexuality (Mermigka 2022, 196). Yannis's confession can be interpreted as a selfless act motivated by his paranoia or a pretentious acting performance, as the prosecutor asserts. Yannis fluctuates between power and powerlessness. His intelligence allows him to detail everything he has read in the news, impressing the group of male journalists and psychiatrists. Ekkehard Pluta (quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 41-42) stresses that the audience of young people even cultivate admiration for Yannis, who becomes an idol or hero through his cathartic action of self-liberation. Kyriakidis (1994, 39) agrees that Yannis thrills his contemporary young people who believe he is genuinely expressing the deeper needs of their time. The extent to which the verdict is just and favorable for the young man is also open to question through the open-ended tone of the last scene. The camera silently moves and captures the outer space of a mental asylum. Yannis is then depicted in static postures inside his room contemplatively looking outside the window, at pictures of Eleni and himself on the wall and, finally, at the camera in an extreme close-up shot (fig. 20, 21, 22). The contemplative tone adds to the ambiguity of male character's problematic representation as a hero. Kitsopoulou

(2019, 42-43) interprets the juxtaposition of the two photographs not as a representation of the victim and the victimizer, but rather as an illustration of two individuals both victimized by the crime.



Figure 20: Photographs of Eleni and Yiannis on the asylum's room's wall



Figure 21: Yiannis staring at the photographs



Figure 22: Close-up of Yiannis face, the film's concluding shot

In fact, Spyros Pagiatakis accurately concludes that Marketaki targets the teetering traditional norms and challenges them (quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 41). Yiannis lives in the margins of a society that seemingly cares for his mental health but ironically is at the same time responsible for his psychological pressure. Eleni, too, is not the agent in the formation of her own female subjectivity. Patriarchy and misogyny appear to underlie and control all institutions and social groups. Eleni's death is not portrayed as a crime of passion nor a crime for reasons of honor, as femicide was traditionally represented (Mermigka 2022, 190-191). Criminal incidents of gender-based violence are, thus, consequences of multifaceted factors that are complex, often indeterminate and perpetuated even in the 2020s. Yorgos Pilihos (quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 41) has commented that the movie exposes the moral decay of Greek society that is prolonged with everyone's tolerance. Pilihos (quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 41) also underscores that Marketaki does not merely present a criminal case of a woman's murder but

exposes the repressive mechanisms that society exercises. Karalis confirms that it was “the crime as the end result of many imponderable factors beyond the understanding or control of the specific character” that the new directors of the 1970s wanted to represent (Karalis 2012, 154). By employing and defining the emerging aesthetics of New Greek Cinema, Marketaki critically examines the roots of an everlasting phenomenon. As Russell and Radford (1992, 25) support, historically femicide is challenged by women, meaning that the history of femicide is paralleled by a history of fights by women of different cultures and nations. Marketaki’s example falls within this form of revolutionary resistance and paves the way for the visibility of silenced aspects of the female experience.

Chapter 3: Gender Roles Reframed in *The Price of Love*

Marketaki's second feature, *The Price of Love* (1983), has been considered as "one of the most accomplished achievements of Greek cinema, viewing history from the perspective of women, and acting as a therapeutic to the dominant stereotypes of feminine passivity and fatalism" (Karalis 2012, 204-205). The film, an adaptation of Konstantine Theotokis's Greek novel *Η Τιμή και το Χρήμα* (1912)¹¹, revitalizes the tradition of translating literary stories to cinematic images (Karalis 2017, 21). Vasilopoulos (2022, 275) emphasizes the director's use of Theotokis's political writing style to address contemporary questions on gender identities. According to Marketaki (quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 48-49), the characters symbolize gender roles in Greek society and the film constitutes a specific reading of its source. Amid the radical questioning of cultural and historical memory in New Greek Cinema, *The Price of Love* plays a pivotal role in redirecting political attention towards social values and constructs, such as patriarchy and dominant gender traditions. Athanasatou (2002, 167-168) astutely notes that Marketaki's innovations focus on sexual freedom, women's financial and professional independence, the significance of motherhood, and the contestation of repressive institutions like the dowry. In fact, in 1983, the year of the film's release, the formal abolition of dowry was put into legal force (Stamiris 1986, 85).

The film explores the romantic relationship between two individuals from different sociopolitical backgrounds in the early 20th century suburb of Madouki in Corfu. Although Rini (Anni Loulou), the poor young woman, has genuine feelings, Andreas Xis (Stratis Tsopanelis), the fallen aristocrat, fluctuates between love and economic interest, seeking to benefit from her dowry. The bargaining between him and Siora Epistimi (Toula Stathopoulou), his potential mother-in-law, begins and heavily affects Rini's and her family's reputation. The sociopolitical landscape in Corfu was marked by political corruption and economic inequality, concurrently with the island's role as an industrialized and cosmopolitan center. Against this backdrop, Marketaki delves into the female experience under the oppressive presence of hostile and alienating gender norms. She approaches both female and male characters as complex and ordinary people and reconstructs their everyday experience as class conflict. Karalis (2012, 205) points out that the representation of the characters' experiences is neither idealized nor beautified but presented with savage honesty. The film's aesthetics are a combination of formal realism and poetic style (Kyriakidis 1994, 26). This analysis will specifically focus on the *mise-en-scène* of spaces, whether public or private, as they subvert traditional gender roles.

¹¹ Konstantinos Theotokis was one of the most important representatives of the Heptanese School and a fervent supporter of the women's movement (Soldatos 2021, 133). His works are renowned for their socialist realism, ethnographic and philosophical approaches (Soldatos 2021, 135).

As a mother and wife, Siora Epistimi exhibits agency and authority within the private space of her household. Michael Herzfeld (1991, 79) acknowledges that in the ethnographic literature on Greece women are usually represented as “either submissively silent or dangerously garrulous”. He adds that women often “appear as incomplete humans because of their stereotyped inability to speak rationally” (Herzfeld 1991, 79). However, despite living in male-dominated society, Epistimi—whose name connotes her capacity to act and think in a practical and rational manner—does not occupy a passive role but is an active subject, subverting gender stereotypes even from the beginning of the film. In the first scene, she is shown in the house counting her savings in the drawer and making sure that they are safely protected. The money is depicted in a close-up that highlights its significance for Epistimi. Belonging to the working class, she has earned her money by working in a factory. She is the only breadwinner in the family and entirely responsible for the management of the household’s finances. Epistimi makes all decisions in the house. This is manifest, for example, when Andreas and two peasants knock on her door begging her to hide a sack of smuggled sugar. Despite being reluctant and contrary to her husband’s, Trinkoulos’s (Spyros Pantelios) criticism, she agrees to help them and mobilizes the members of the family to cooperate. She complains that Trinkoulos is irresponsible in his role as family provider and he should therefore not intervene with her decisions. Herzfeld (1991, 80) maintains that “[a] Greek woman can quite seriously maintain to outsiders that her sex is inferior to the male while internally mocking the men of her kin group and community for insisting on exactly the same claim”. Indeed, Epistimi reprimands her husband and rejects his criticism and authority regarding decisions on their household. She is independent, proud and self-sufficient.

Not only is Epistimi the main provider in the family but she additionally displays integrity and clever judgment in both in private and public agreements. Exiting along with other female workers from the factory, she performs an economic transaction with a man and sells her daughter’s knitted baskets (fig. 23). She is alert in confirming the price of the product so as not be cheated. This legal transaction, which is carried out in daylight in an open public space, is juxtaposed with the subsequent secret economic deal later at night inside the house (fig. 24). Epistimi is again depicted as dominant and smart towards Andreas who visits her to retrieve the smuggled product. They are shown seated at the table under the dim lighting of the lightbulb and in alternating close-ups, choices that highlight the meeting’s secretive nature of their meeting. Epistimi decides to cleverly bargain and make a profit out of the smuggling, negotiating the price and accepting only when Andreas offers her a favorable deal. The power dynamics and negotiation around the table become a motif throughout the film. In this instance, Andreas’s economic profit is dependent on Epistimi’s decision. Moreover, although her involvement in an illegal affair breaks her moral code, it is significant that the family’s honor is not endangered nor offended, because the deal occurs at night concealed from third parties and in the private space of her house. Thus, she

protects the household's reputation, appearing shrewd and dominant without hesitating to take risks. Constantinos Balaskas reflects upon Siora Epistimi's agency:

[She] expresses the new type of Greek woman who takes on all the burdens of the family, fighting tooth and nail in every possible way. Being simultaneously male and female, she tries to overcome her destiny by taking advantage of every opportunity to increase her income (dealing with smugglers, retail trading, interest payment, concealing income) and avoiding or minimizing any expenses, including the case of the dowry. (1993, 136)

Regarding her daughter's dowry and marriage¹², Epistimi also negotiates with Andreas on the same table. Although he insistently demands she double her offer, she is unyielding and offers only the small share that the young girl deserves. It is essential for the mother to ensure that all her children are treated fairly and that their fortune is equally distributed. Epistimi also represents a more sentimental approach to marriage by maintaining that she is giving her own precious daughter, whose worth cannot be measured in monetary value. However, as Andreas views marriage as merely an economic transaction, he denies to compromise and leaves.



Figure 23: Siora Epistimi's economic transaction in the streets



Figure 24: Epistimi and Andreas negotiating at home

What is more, in the public space of the market, Epistimi and her female friends also unsettle gender stereotypes. They meet in the open-air market near

¹² "The dowry was a necessary condition for every girl's social rehabilitation through marriage. This institution was poor parents' constant concern and every poor girl's only dream. Families saved money to ensure that their female members will be able to marry" (Saliba 2020, 104).

the sea, where women used to socialize, discuss and spend their Sunday morning (fig. 25). Mermigka (2022, 234-235) remarks that this women's gathering contributes a delightful aspect to their socialization, and allows them to express their honest opinions on marriage and class. Epistimi displays class consciousness by acknowledging that Rini will marry above her class if she is destined to choose Andreas. She claims: "How could we aim so high? We are poor people and he comes from a family," meaning from a noble background. The women gossip about other families, as well. For example, when they notice an aristocratic mother and daughter traveling to the city in a carriage, they comment on the daughter's perceived lack of beauty, noting that her wealth is likely to be the factor that attracts a prospective husband. The women also show their disapproval on the use of car as a means of flaunting wealth by the higher classes and openly discuss politics. Herzfeld (1991, 79) underlines the subversive practice of gossip among groups of women. Indeed, the women in the film are conscious of the class divide and its relation to gender. The act of socially articulating opinions about such issues is subversive, because, according to Herzfeld (1991, 79), this articulation "lies outside formal social structures defined and controlled by men".



Figure 25: Women in the open-air market

Siora Epitimi's agency and dynamism as a woman in a patriarchal society is also connoted through contrasts in the mise-en-scène of public spaces in Madouki. For example, when she hears that Rini and Andreas are heading to his home, she is depicted frantically running in the streets to prevent her daughter of becoming his wife in a disgraceful way. On her way, she faces a crowd of men protesting and holding placards and she is forced to move against the mass screaming: "Let me through! Someone is being lost!" (fig. 26). Marketaki places Epistimi dashing among demonstrators, rather than in front of "two vehicles that met and obstructed her way for a while, causing her to await," as in Theotokis's (1921, 65) novel. Considering this addition in the film, one views Epistimi's act of running against the male crowd as a metaphor of her revolutionary dynamism as a woman in a male-dominated society. As the narrator explains, Epistimi runs "in order to save the value of her house, the little money she had earned penny by penny, working all her life with her honest hands". She is experiencing her own personal struggle and fights alone to save her family's honor, reputation and decency. The culmination of her revolution, however, is evident in the end of the

film when she acts subversively in the male sphere of the fish market, where men traditionally worked. She approaches Andreas and his uncle, who are working there, and demands to formally discuss with them, having decided to finally give Andreas the dowry of 600 talara (money). The uncle responds that “this is no place for conversations” and that Andreas will ultimately marry another woman with a richer dowry. Unable to bear her family’s devastation and unfortunate fate, she acts recklessly and stabs Andreas in the arm with a knife (fig. 27), a tool conventionally symbolizing male competence and aggression. Herzfeld (1991, 85-88) admits that it was “very unusual for women to raid” and views the rare cases of women participating in attacks as a challenge to male norms, a contempt for male incompetence and an intricate interplay of power dynamics within the local community. Likewise, with her aggressive yet liberating practice and within a male sphere, Epistimi reacts to normative gender expectations and tragically concludes her revolution.



Figure 26: Epistimi passing through protesters



Figure 27: Epistimi attacking Andreas in the fish market

In contrast, as a husband and father, Trinkoulos, appears passive and responsible for risking his family’s reputation and moral standards with his habits. Unlike his wife, he is a quiet and idle man, who lacks agency, compromises and obeys his wife’s orders. Inside the private space of the house, he is depicted usually alone in his bedroom, separate from the rest of the family, who are busy with chores in the living room. When he joins them for dinner, he sits on the table silent, while the children help him take off his coat and hat. He does not work nor undertake any housework. Instead, he spends his time in the tavern, drinking and unable to handle this weakness. Yet, even in the public space of the tavern, a place where masculinity was traditionally celebrated, Trinkoulos is being ridiculed in

front of his peers. The tavern *mise-en-scène* portrays him standing up unsteadily among the rest of the customers, who are seated, socialize and discuss politics in a serious and solemn manner. The male characters taking advantage of his lighthearted mood encourage Trinkoulos to sing along a traditional romantic song. He follows the tune in slurred and slow speech. Delveroudi (2009, 354) notes that Marketaki portrays the father as gentle, humane and vulnerable (Delveroudi 2009, 354), while Karalis (2012, 205) adds that the representation of masculinity in the film is deprived of power since male characters react “only through drinking and frolicking, like spoiled children”. In fact, Theodora Glykofridi-Athanasopoulou (2001, 128) mentions that Trinkoulos's effeminate qualities are suggested by his behavior, which traditionally aligns with female passivity and an inability to object. Additionally, his name itself implies a frivolous and weak characterization—tris [three times]-koulos [impotent]. His ultimate collapse occurs on his way home, where, drunk as his is, he stumbles and faints in the alley outside the doorstep of his house, until Epistimi and her daughter carry him inside. This scene is secretly observed by Andreas who reflects: “Think of having Trinkoulos as a father-in-law. What a disgrace to society!” Nevertheless, while Trinkoulos's honor seems to be publicly tarnished, this does not seem to influence the entire family. Epistimi has managed with her dynamic attitude and dignity to maintain the image of her home on a social level that is impossible to be stigmatized.

Along with the unconventional portrayal of masculinity in Trinkoulos's character, Andreas is another male character represented in a complex and contradictory way concerning his class. He is introduced entering the luxurious home of an aristocrat woman, Siora Vagia (Lili Mastora). He is depicted as a young nobleman within a lavish *mise-en-scène* and among a group of women visitors, who have elegant and sophisticated costumes and stylized hairstyles and are entertained by an opera singer and a pianist. The setting signifies nobility, wealth, and social privilege, positioning Andreas as part of the upper class. However, in the next scene, in a private conversation between Siora Vagia, Andreas and his uncle, the young man appears vulnerable and dependent on her help and political power. Revealing his unstable political and financial situation, he requests the transfer of the confederate in Madouki and the woman agrees to help and immediately applies her authority¹³. It is revealed that, in contrast to the female character, Andreas lacks agency as a male aristocrat. Andreas's status downfall is overtly evident in his discussion and negotiation with his uncle at the tavern. On the one hand, Andreas admits his desire to marry Rini and his willingness to disregard social norms about honor and economic discrepancies. On the other, as an aristocrat, he is compelled to conform to conventions, as exemplified by his uncle's dictate to seek for substantial funds to settle the debts of their forebears. Throughout the film, Andreas is not in control of his life and relies, instead, on his uncle who represents the older generation and patriarchal traditions. Takis

¹³ This scene is one of Marketaki's additions to Theotokis's book.

Karvelis's (1984, 127) remarks that the young man is "a victim of circumstances, the whole constitution of a society that priorities monetary value above all; money is what drives everything, regulates love and shapes people". Rini, too, acknowledges the severe economic and social pressures Andreas faces when she exclaims as he deserts her: "You, the ancestors, shaped him this way. Andreas is not a bad person. It is you who made him unable to endure the downfall and prone to necessity. That's why poverty defeated him and made him dishonored!" Andreas could have followed his heart and even work to be financially independent, but he remained trapped in "the allure of power and domination" (Karalis 2012, 205).

Andreas's portrayal contrasts with Rini's, who most distinctly embodies female agency in the film. Chrysi Inglesi (1997, 114-227) studies women's experiences of subordination across a range of fields, namely sexual desire, professional sphere and education. Regarding the first field, Inglesi (1997, 114-130) pinpoints that female sexuality remained unexplored and even prohibited during a girl's upbringing. Jean G. Peristiany (1966, 182) elaborates that the honor of an unmarried woman could be tarnished not only through physical touch but even through an awakening of the senses or the involuntary arousal of desire. Sylviane Agacinski (2000, 77) additionally notices that in all forms of romantic love and sexual experience, "the [female] subject is never autonomous". Challenging such conventions, not only does Rini allow Andreas to enter her home without her mother's presence, but later she also willingly makes the conscious choice to follow him to his home. According to the traditional code of honor, premarital relations, including private meetings between a man and an unmarried woman alone, would dishonor individual women and their families permanently (Hadjikyriacou 2013, 14-15). By ignoring the, Rini actively prioritizes the expression of her sexuality and self-determination over the traditional way of marital arrangement, sacrificing both her family's and her own honor for the sake of love. Athanasatou (2002, 166) highlights that when Rini defies her mother's power and follows Andreas, "she is performing an act of faith in love and follows her heart and desire". Moreover, the erotic scenes that depict the couple making love signify their emotional connection against their different class backgrounds. The camera captures their naked bodies in dim lighting in a full shot at the entrance of their private room (fig. 28) and then approaches them in close-ups of their body parts and faces, creating an intimate atmosphere of warmth and tenderness. Their naked bodies connote that they are released of both class and gender conventions as they are represented as equal. Apart from the focus on their erotic bond, female agency in sexuality is pronounced for its revolutionary significance. Rini's exploration of her sexuality is liberating, subverting expectations of passive female subjectivity. Her experience corresponds with Agacinski's (2000, 77) definition of sexual freedom, which does not entail dominance and exercise of power, but is viewed as an active process of giving and accepting other people's desires.



Figure 28: The couple's intimate moment in their bedroom

As Andreas unfolds his utilitarian character, Rini expresses her opposition to male power. This reaction is also portrayed through contrasts in the *mise-en-scène*. Rini is shown being confined inside the room, in dark colors and low lighting, while she witnesses from the window masqueraders celebrating outside. The masqueraders are depicted in natural light dancing and singing a traditional song: "Long live the Carnival king, tonight he will die". The festive and vibrant depiction of the custom is one of Maretaki's additions to Theotokis's novel, where it is just mentioned that "it was a Sunday afternoon of Carnival season" (Theotokis 1921, 71). This triumphant atmosphere outside contrasts with Rini's entrapment and foreshadows her upcoming revolutionary attitude. Mermigka (2022, 234) remarks that the celebration and the caustic lyrics of the song underscore Rini's moral downfall and social exclusion. Simultaneously, these elements signify a reversal in roles and expectations to unfold (Mermigka 2022, 234). Indeed, the suffocation causes Rini to protest and complain to Andreas that her name and honor should be restored: "When will we be married? I cannot stand being caged in here. I am afraid to see any person outside". Andreas reveals his latent self-seeking motives, calls her a "jinx" and a "whore" and abandons her pregnant¹⁴ in a house that is to be confiscated soon. Then, Rini more overtly expresses her opposition by bravely responding:

You act so because you are weak; because I have no brothers to kill you¹⁵, my father is helpless and my home is only on my mother's back. You have tricked me and no man will consider me after what you have done to me. I blame myself for believing you are an honored man! Work! Why are you asking for more money?

If a woman fails to protect her honor, she is characterized as "shameless and a bitch, a woman without restraint" and "she becomes 'used,' if only on the lips of men, and therefore 'lost'" (Campbell 1974, 270). Yet Rini chooses to stay in Andreas's house rather than return to her mother's and is determined to give birth

¹⁴ A woman who was both unmarried and pregnant was greatly dishonored within the local community (Pylarinos 2007, 189).

¹⁵ The husband, brothers and sons were responsible for the restoration of a woman's honor (Campbell 1984, 271).

to her child. The previous depiction of the house as a space of sexual liberation and love is now demystified, as Athanasatou (2002, 167) observes. The feminist perspective is evident as Rini decides to undertake both her own responsibilities and Andreas's (Delveroudi 2009, 355), exhibiting collective agency for both. Additionally, when Siora Epistimi visits Rini, after Andreas has left, the two women sit at the table, negotiate and make a decision unified together. They demonstrate their agency and power since they do not have nor need a male figure to protect their honor. Delveroudi (2009, 354-355) mentions that Siora Epistimi remains rough and direct, rather than gentle in negotiating the protection of her daughter's honor and employs her own experience and instinct.

Rini defends her revolutionary attitude by finding employment in the same factory where her mother works. She is depicted in a long shot in front of the factory contemplating decisively before entering and then patiently working among other female employees in the assembly line. She is also seen receiving her own wage¹⁶. The close-up on the money in front of her hands accentuates her economic independence as a single woman and future mother. The fact that mother and daughter are depicted as coworkers shows that Rini has clearly embraced her mother's dynamic character. Close-ups of Rini's face as she observes her mother working denote the admiration and pride. As Theodosis Pylarinos (2007, 190) notes, Siora Epistimi functions as a pioneer of emancipation which manifests itself in the next generation. Gender representation in the professional sphere also intersects with class. In her plain and unadorned garments, Rini walks in the streets behind aristocrat women dressed elegantly. Her working-class background contrast with the aristocrats and a comment is made on the demands of working-class women for equal treatment. Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson (1988, 28) explain that "[e]ver since large numbers of women were drawn into factory work in the industrial revolution in 19th century England there has been a strong belief that wage work can liberate women from gender subordination". Similarly, citing Engels's observations, Heidi Hartmann (1981, 4) mentions that "women's participation in the labor force was key to their emancipation". Therefore, Rini's initiative is a manifestation of a female "innovator of change and subversion of prevailing unwritten law" (Pylarinos 2007, 187). Rini embodies an exception among the women in her class and a paradigmatic figure not only for the time the story is set, but also for the film's production time and even for the early 21st century, as Delveroudi (2009, 355) pinpoints.

Rini witnesses her mother's attack against Andreas in the fish market, another addition to Theotokis's novel by the director. The fact that the young girl is present as a passive bystander is crucial for her forthcoming decisive action. She witnesses the ultimate rejection of her love by Andreas, as well as the peak of her mother's struggle to defend her family's honor. Therefore, refusing to become an object of economic transaction without a will of her own, she soon powerfully

16 These descriptions constitute Marketaki's additions to Theotokis's novel.

announces her decision to move to Athens, work and raise her child as a single mother. Pylarinos (2007, 187) stresses that the fact that she consciously chooses to give birth to her child and raise it without being married constitutes a highly revolutionary act. Her choice acquires even more political significance given that, even in the end of the 20th century, women still face prejudice should they choose to be unmarried or single mothers (Inglesi 1997, 229-232). Rini sits on the table with her father, brother and sisters on her side and confesses to Andreas that she does not love him anymore nor does she want him as husband. She repeats the phrase uttered earlier in the film by the two women, but now employs first-person singular pronouns instead of plural: "I am hard-working, whom do I need?". She refers to her herself excluding Andreas and prioritizes her own "needs, desires and dreams," as Karalis underscores (2012, 205). This final negotiation around the table is not about an economic transaction but about the value of the young girl's emotions and self-respect. The film's title is echoed in this last scene, since monetary value becomes insignificant against human emotion and dignity. As Babis Kolonias, (quoted in Delveroudi 2009, 357) remarks, the conflict between the individual and society is parallel to a conflict between erotic instinct and sociohistorical circumstances.

Overall, in *The Price of Love*, Marketaki challenges conventions and offers a profound exploration of gender dynamics within Greek society's intricacies during a transformative historical period. The film's visual language, thematic depth and commitment to portraying the multifaceted nature of its characters contribute to its significance within the broader context of New Greek cinema. Bakogiannopoulos (quoted in *Cinephilia.Gr*) praises the film's stylistic combination of realism with a philological approach. Mermigka (2022, 230) mentions that the film avoids excessively introspective and formalistic explorations, commonly found in New Greek Cinema, while Marketaki notes (quoted in Kyriakidis 1994, 49) that she created "an ordinary film". Karalis (2012, 204-205) also highlights the film's significance for its focus on and exposure of ordinary people's oppression as well as for placing women as central figures and agents in the historical landscape. Women are, indeed, depicted transcending archetypal roles and embracing complexity. Siora Epistimi embodies the complexities of societal expectations, navigating between traditional roles and personal aspirations. More overtly, Rini's journey, marked by her transformation into a revolutionary figure, symbolizes the feminist discourse of the era. The notion of honor and the institution of dowry become obsolete traditions that victimize characters. Mermigka (2022, 231) emphasizes that the dowry is not only presented as a pre-modern anthropological remnant but as a tool for justifying tradition and modernizing Greek patriarchal capitalism. Nevertheless, most striking is the fact that issues surrounding the subjugation of women remain relevant and persistent in the 2020s. Patriarchal remnants, sexism and gender violence trace their origins to the roots of tradition, which Marketaki innovatively and resonantly contests, leaving a lasting impact far beyond her time.

Chapter 4: Forbidden Love, Gender and History in *Crystal Nights*

Crystal Nights (1992), Marketaki's last feature film before her untimely death, is an intricate and ambitious film coinciding with the years of New Greek Cinema's demise by the early 1990s (Karalis 2012, 229-230). According to Panayiota Mini (2016, 135), the narrative is extended in time and encapsulates a "historical panorama," from the period of the Metaxas dictatorship in the late 1930s to the German occupation during WWII, until the early 1950s, the post-war era. The historical backdrop of the film was innovative for Greek cinema, which generally avoided the subject of the Holocaust. Dinos Dimopoulos's *Amok* (1963) and Kostas Manousakis's *Prodosia (Betrayal)*, (1964) were among the exceptions that explored the subject and served as influences on Marketaki's last work (Mini 2016, 144). Her international relevant inspirations included the ambiguous style of Alain Resnais's anti-war *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959), as well as Liliana Cavani's *Il portiere di notte (The Night Porter)*, (1974) that centers on an affair between a Nazi officer and a concentration camp inmate (Mini 2016, 144). Karalis (2012, 229-230) notes:

Marketaki's final film was a visually mesmerizing experience, full of sensitivity and fragility, and touching on the most inhuman incidents of recent history, with empathy, affection, and a sense of guilt for the victims, their lost lives, and happiness. It was a film about lost innocence, and the continual traumas of history, which can never be healed or atoned for.

Through dreamlike sequences, episodic complexity and an intricate story reality is blended with the unreal. Gender identities are explored within abstract ideas of the nature on love and its impact through time, life and death. The first half of the film follows the tragic affair between Isabella (Michele Valley), the German wife of a Greek officer in Metaxas's government, and Alvertos (François Delaive), a young Greek Jew. Having received an anointing, she exhibits the power to know the future, to read the mind and control it on a transcendental level. During the war, Isabella's spirit appears in Alvertos's niece, Anna (Tania Tripi), whose relationship with him spans the second part of the film and meets another tragic end. The formal elements, such as the expressive use of color, the camerawork and the symbolic mise-en-scène, contribute to a distinctive narrative rhythm. Marketaki innovatively intertwines these aesthetic choices with gender relations that intersect with multiple elements of identity and shape the historical moment.

The two main characters, Isabella and Alvertos, are positioned in contrast concerning their ethnicity, culture and class. First, the portrayal of masculinity intersects with ethnocultural background and class, a representation that granted Marketaki originality within the realm of Greek cinema. Alvertos is introduced in sepia color as a young Jewish boy, working as an ice-seller in Athens. The choice of color, reminiscent of old photographs, connotes the past and the everyday life of

the character (Delveroudi 2009, 361). He is depicted barefoot and dressed in frayed clothes, denoting his poor economic condition (fig. 29, 30). He also admits that the socioeconomic expectations about Jewish people would steer him towards becoming “a fabric merchant”¹⁷. By having a Greek Jew as the protagonist of the film in the late 1980s¹⁸, Marketaki acknowledges the significance of foregrounding a subject matter that was “virtually non-existing in Greek cultural production” (Marketaki 1988). She also portrays Alvertos as a complex character who concentrates heterogeneous characteristics. For example, despite his Jewish background, Mini (2016, 142) points out that his blue eyes and blond hair are reminiscent of an “Aryan-looking” man. The fusion of diverse elements is an argument against the reducibility of identities based on racist ideologies, which dictated that the “German Aryan race” was superior against “inferior races,” especially the Jewish population (Berding quoted in Rodríguez-García 2021, 934). Isabella also understands the challenge of being torn between “two homelands” and hearing “two voices” and recognizes that “Jews have many homes” around the world. She, thus, acknowledges the importance of embracing one's diverse cultural backgrounds.



Figure 29: Alvertos in work clothes



Figure 30: Close-up of Alvertos's bare feet

¹⁷ Although Metaxas's regime (1936-1941) officially banned anti-Jewish demonstrations, he was sympathetic to Mussolini and Hitler and imposed some discriminatory restrictions to Jewish population, such as limiting their press freedom (Bowman 1986, 47-48).

¹⁸ Despite having one of the highest extermination rates of Greek Jews in Europe, Greek historiography only began showing interest in the subject in the 1980s, with wider attention emerging in the 1990s (Varon-Vassard quoted in Mini 2016, 145). Marketaki collaborated for the screenplay with a controversial female Greek Jewish writer and journalist, Malvina Karali (Delveroudi 2009, 357).

The female character's portrayal is the opposite to Alvertos's character. Isabella comes from Germany and is the wife of an officer working within the ruling political regime. The racist ideology dictated by National Socialism in Germany stands as a divisive force and place her in the role of political and national rival to Alvertos. Dan Rodríguez-García (2021, 924) informs that, historically, mixed partnerships have traditionally been considered "unconventional and even forbidden" and people of mixed descent have been socially and institutionally problematized. Isabella's connection to metaphysics, spirituality and national politics becomes apparent at the beginning of the film, depicting her mystical abilities she was introduced to in Germany by proto-Nazi occultists. The scene of the induction ceremony is shown in cold blue undertones that connote the character's rigid and solemn commitment to the occult beliefs. The *mise-en-scène* also highlights the economic disparity that separate the two protagonists and thus they are initially positioned as "rivals" (Mini 2016, 144).

However, their instantaneous attraction represents the subversive and unifying power of love across racial, ethnocultural, religious or class boundaries. Isabella's and Alvertos's love is forbidden and, hence, subversive. In their first encounter, vibrant colors substitute the previous monochrome palette to impart their powerful feelings. They are also shown in slow motion as they approach and stare at each other (fig. 31), while the close-ups of their faces reveal their mutual subjective experience of desire. The close-up of their hands as there are both touching the ice that the woman buys from Alvertos (fig. 32) is symbolic of their breaking the rigid boundaries that stand between them. The fact that their voices are heard, replying to each other's thoughts, makes Isabella realize that he is evidently the ideal mate she has been seeking throughout her esoteric mystical journey. Their subsequent meeting in the garden of the house and the rose in the center are also symbolic of the unifying power of their bond. The natural environment constitutes a space where no cultural boundaries apply. The woman's admission that "Earth speaks into [them]" confirms that their differences are not insuperable. As Janis L. Pallister (1986, 61) notes about the metaphoric meaning of the natural landscape in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the "haunting beauty of the landscape" serves as a backdrop for the intense emergence of love between the characters. Isabella also establishes their common ground through a universal approach to religion, contemplating whether both Germans and Jews might be "the chosen people with a special mission".



Figure 31: Isabella's and Alvertos's first encounter



Figure 32: Close-up of their hands holding a brick of ice

The two characters' fluctuation between union and separation is also signified through the representation of marriage, which becomes a motif throughout the film. Alvertos's and Isabella's intense connection unfolds within the context of a Jewish wedding ceremony, where they are dressed in black and white respectively as if they are celebrating their own marital bond. Later, Isabella's decision to end her life becomes intertwined with Alvertos's subsequent marriage to another woman. She is distinguished in black clothing among the crowd and then disappears, designating their breakup. Moreover, Alvertos's erotic bond with Isabella's reincarnated soul into Anna, his niece, is again similarly culminated amidst a wedding feast. The incestuous undertones imply that not only does their love reach across cultures, but it also defies the laws of family and biology that render it forbidden and impossible. The film's ending with Alvertos's marrying again another woman and Anna murdering everyone at the wedding feast east ultimately underscores the tragic fate of Isabella's and Alvertos's love.

The crossing of boundaries is particularly significant for the female character's agency. Isabella overcomes forces on an individual level when she consciously chooses to engage in adultery. Like in Resnais's film, the universals of love, eroticism and unhappiness emerge (Pallister 1986, 59) and draw the woman to her lover. Feeling emotionally unfulfilled in her marriage, Isabella employs her agency and consciously chooses to betray her marriage for the sake of true love. In addition, as Pallister (1986, 60) would agree about Isabella, a motif that marks the character's trajectory is the ways war and people's migrations "affect, disorient and even dictate [her] own biography". Isabella argues that she is "not afraid of [Alvertos's] bare feet," a synecdoche that implies her desire to connect on a more genuine level and transgress broader forces of world history, societal norms or

class distinctions. She also admits she “can understand [him] in any language [he] may speak,” demonstrating that she places love beyond ideological prohibitions. Mini (2016, 144) also underlines the film’s “persistent breaking of the boundaries between predator and victim, and pain and pleasure”. For example, Isabella's agency is tested when Alvertos betrays her by marrying another woman. Yet through her act of committing suicide, it is implied that she is determined to “break the dimension of time” and powerfully pursue her fight to be with Alvertos again “in infinite lives if needed”. She transgresses realistic boundaries of time and, despite being dead, she still has the force to influence Alvertos’s life.

The sexual connection between the protagonists also emphasizes the significance of sexual liberation, particularly for the woman. B. Ruby Rich (1998, 350) explains that until the early 1980s the issue of sexuality was overlooked and absent, while the erotic and its power were attacked and valorized as “antifeminist”. Reidar Due (2013, 123) also notes that since the mid-1970s international filmmakers have pursued fresh approaches, withdrawing from traditional sexual politics and “the classical language of moral interpretation” and frequently blending “meticulous social realism with aesthetic and imaginative freedom”. Therefore, the long scene of Isabella and Alvertos’s intercourse is transgressive for aesthetically representing the complexity of their sexuality. The room where the couple physically consummates their love is dark and sparsely furnished (fig. 33), symbolizing the intimacy of the moment and allowing the characters to expose their true selves without inhibition. The use of a black sheet on the floor also connotes the unexplored realm of their sexual emotions. The slow motion accentuates the subjective passage of time, while the characters’ movements resemble a hallucinatory choreography (fig. 34). The use of slow motion also offers a glimpse into the minds of the characters, as their shared mental poetic dialogue is emphasized throughout. At a climactic moment, the woman’s expression of orgasm resonates beyond the room and is heard even by her daughters in the night. This instance becomes a celebration of female sexuality.



Figure 33: Isabella and Alvertos in an empty dark room



Figure 34: *Their bodies in intercourse*

Simultaneously, gender is portrayed as a unifying and shared human experience, echoing Stuart Sovatsky's (1993, 80), who views it "as a mystery being shared". He claims:

Of the many provocative sexological redefinitions that emerge from an understanding of eros as mystery, perhaps none is more challenging than the notion that gender does not exist except as a shared, elastic interdependency. [Gender shall be discussed] as the fundamental condition of erotic embodiment in which men and women find themselves. (1993, 80)

During their intercourse, the characters exchange poetic lines that demonstrate their view of their gender as one: "You and I are one, who is god who is hell, we are powerful together". They approach gender as Sovatsky (1993, 81-82) conceives it, "as a magnet-like, inherent, holding-together felt as an uncanny connectedness, an allure, a hope and, most certainly, a need". The woman also admits that "love is powerful as death and jealousy strong as hell," acknowledging the intertwining of love and death during intercourse. This statement echoes Marketaki's influences from Tantrism, as Vasilis Rafailidis (1995, 175) mentions in his film review. According to this aspect of Hinduism, death during orgasm is considered as the epitome of virtue (Rafailidis 1995, 175). Marketaki (1992a) encapsulates these spiritual elements remarking that "eros is shown as a magical and transcendental force, like the forces of the instinct and the subconscious, as desire for possession and authority".

Marketaki also presents a departure from traditional age dynamics in romantic narratives, where older women are perceived as 'the other' and masculinity and youth seen as the norm (Woodward quoted in Haring and Maierhofer 2023, 158). Tiina Vares (2009, 510) confirms the invisibility of older women as sexual partners for younger men in film. In *Crystal Nights*, Alvertos is eighteen years old having just entered adulthood, while Isabella is forty, the same age as his mother. Reflecting social conventions, he confesses to her: "I don't like it that you are so older than me I cannot look at the future". She responds that "there is no future, future is just death and [they] are alone in a city that will disappear". Isabella transcends age-related stereotypes and suggests a broader understanding of romantic relationships by focusing on the importance of emotional connection

than on age difference. This portrayal is part of small group of similar audiovisual texts that present a reverse May-December romance, including, for instance, American films like *The Graduate* (1967), *Harold And Maude* (1971) and *White Palace* (1990). As Elisabeth Vanderheiden's (2021, 386-387) remarks, even 2020s studies maintain inflexible attitudes toward relationships between older women and younger men. In addition, Isabella demystifies stereotypes about the expression of older women's sexuality. In the early 1970s, Susan Sontag (1972, 31-32) had already observed the double standard of ageing, noting that "for most women, aging means a humiliating process of gradual sexual disqualification". Women over forty are generally depicted as sexually unattractive or without sexual needs themselves or are sexually active (Montemurro quoted in Vanderheiden 2021, 372). In contrast, Alvertos exalts Isabella's beauty and lust by calling her "ravishing" and "like a flower among thorns," deconstructing this stereotype. Isabella appears confident in her beauty and enjoys her sexual side.

In a broader historical context, Marketaki suggests alternative ways that drive and shape History. She places women at the forefront, alongside forces such as "passion," "sexual relations" and the "erotic," while challenging traditional male-centered approaches (Marketaki 1992b, 27). In an introductory scene in *Isabella* and her husband's house, men are shown sitting around a table engaging in serious discussions about politics (fig. 35). This depiction is a metaphor on how history has always been expressed from male perspectives. Abruptly, Isabella who is sitting alone away from the table (fig. 36) disrupts the conversation asking: "What do you believe about love?" This moment introduces an alternative emotive lens through which to view historical events. The men immediately react by defining love as "the best kiss of angels to stars" or as the "imagination in the service of repressed instincts" and uttering quotes like "Eros, unconquered in combat". These statements demonstrate their effort to embrace a different perspective. Marketaki herself has noted that:

History proceeds out of [...] motives of passion. The love for authority is a passion, the love for money is a passion, the conflict of forces derives from passion, from sexual relations, not simply from economic relations, as historians wanted to present us. (1992b, 27)

Marketaki also comments that the protagonist, who dies from erotic passion and comes to life again to restructure an infeasible relationship, is a character that could only be portrayed as a woman.



Figure 35: Men conversing around the table



Figure 36: Isabella seated separately from the men

The different manifestations of love also coincide with significant events in the historical context. As the two lives of Isabella and Anna unfold, the historical reality undergoes a dramatic transformation. Mini (2016, 143) observes that Marketaki synchronizes the outbreak of WWII with Isabella's peak of sexual instincts, manifested through her suicide. Fictional depictions are interwoven with newsreel footage, accentuating the rapidly changing reality, as well as the character's role within it. However, it is noteworthy that in both Isabella and Anna's lives, love is intricately linked with violence, which echoes Marketaki's view that "the war of eros acquires the universality of an historical war or, better, of WAR" (1988, 4, original emphasis). Isabella commits suicide and Anna leads her Jewish family to death by betraying them to the Germans so that she can protect and keep Alvertos to herself. Later, when Anna's vengeful feelings peak, she symbolically throws stones at the glass windows of a basement—Alvertos's refuge, which alludes to the infamous historical event of the "Night of the Crystals," the pogroms of 1938 against the properties of Jewish population. The film concludes with Anna unleashing the most violent and destructive manifestation of her love. She is depicted as trapped alone in the room of the mansion where Isabella and her husband lived, tormented between her past and present imprisonment. As Pallister (1986, 62) observes about the woman in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the enclosures of the mise-en-scène are simultaneously "sites of erotic fantasy, of anguish, of feverish longing, nightmare and self-torture". The claustrophobic mise-en-scène depicts Anna in cold blue and black shadows in her empty bedroom (fig. 37) and, then, looking at herself naked at the bathroom's mirror, with blurred eyes in her reflection (fig. 38). This unhinged and turbulent portrayal foreshadows her murderous action. At the end, having set fire to Alvertos's wedding celebration, she appears standing on the roof of the building, looking from a distance at the flames

(fig. 39), enacting “a symbolic Holocaust” (Mini 2016, 144). Marketaki encapsulates these observations about the intertwining of love and History:

In *Crystal Nights*, eros has cosmic dimensions, equal or similar to the forces that move history. Eros is shown [...] as fascism; and fascism, that is the proclivity for domination and the battle for authority, [is shown] as an extension and realization of these same instinctual forces. Beauty and Hell are the same, and everything leads to a deadlock in which the Holocaust, the mutual destruction, is the only—and impermanent—solution. Life’s circle, by necessity and fatality, restarts—since death and birth are not but alternating stations in the single perpetual cyclical course. (1992a)

The cyclical nature of the narrative is additionally evident in the end with the close-up of a burning candle and the voice of different girl, Marianna. She reveals that she was born in 1983, previously named Anna and, before that, Isabella, and lived beyond time, where “there are no genders, races and age”. The cycle is not closed but develops as a spiral, as Soldatos (2020, 450) notes. Marianna also claims that “even a love that leads to you to death will also die,” showing that, regardless of love’s impact, separation and demise are inevitable. Pallister (1986, 63) ultimately explains similar motifs as indications that “history repeats itself”. He views the representation of both the personal past and the broader History as entrapment, especially for the woman, and as an important ramification of the perpetual conflict between love and death (Pallister 1986, 61).



Figure 37: Anna in her empty bedroom



Figure 38: Anna in front of her bathroom's mirror



Figure 39: Anna above the burning building

Crystal Nights, with its intricate narrative structure and its Borgesian elements, as Karalis (2012, 229-230) describes the motifs of alternate realities and paradoxes, delves into the complexities of time, life, and love. Marketaki explores gender dynamics within the context of forbidden love and traumatic historical events, initiating an enigmatic reflection on the limits and possibilities of their interplay. The power of love is a recurring theme that foregrounds women and connects them across time. The film's portrayal of love is both alluring and mysterious, echoing Sovatsky's (1993, 73) perspective on eros as a phenomenally essential force shaped by various cultural, religious, and psychological systems. Masculinity intersects with ethnicity and culture, while female agency interacts with age, sexuality and historical circumstances of extreme nationalism and racism. Marketaki draws inspiration from both Greek and international influences, contributing to the film's originality and thematic richness. Although her swan song did not receive high acclaim at the time of its production, it garnered 'State Quality Awards' for Best Picture, Best Photography and Best Script. This accomplishment was significant given that the film's release coincided with Angelopoulos's *The Suspended Step of the Stork* (*To Meteoro Vima tou Pelargou*, 1991) and Voulgaris's *Quiet Days in August* (*Isihes Meres tou Augoustou*, 1991). Marketaki's innovative aesthetic and thematic approach transcended the audience's expectations (Delveroudi 2009, 360) and contributed to the film's lasting impact on the landscape of Greek cinema.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to study the ways Marketaki reframed issues of aesthetics and representation in New Greek Cinema and to shed light on the works of a Greek female director within a male-centered film industry. In the analyses of her four films, themes, narrative structure, characters, symbolic aspects of the *mise-en-scène* and the role of the camera were discussed. The visual style and the representational practices of Marketaki's filmography were highlighted as distinct for their often prophetic power and original gender consciousness. The exploration of subjects, such as true crime genre's fascination on serial killers, bullying and single motherhood, continue to be relevant and impactful, more than three decades later. Marketaki brought to the fore previously underexplored aspects of male and female experience. Rendering female representation behind the camera visible, as well, her works demonstrate the urge of Greek women directors of the late 20th century to express their distinctiveness (Athanasatou 2002, 159-160).

Marketaki's oeuvre is also powerful because she is a woman. Avdela's argues for a female approach to the historical canon, stating:

As we move from seeing women as victims to viewing women as pillars of authority and from the optic of female culture to that of gender relations, the image of the past is defined by different political views on the present oppression of women and the possibility of reversing this situation in the future. (1991, 423-424)

Only by reframing the female presence behind the camera as a pillar of authority, can the film canon be revisited through a feminist political lens. Marketaki's female identity challenged the male-centered paradigm of the Greek cinema and influenced future female voices, such as Antoinetta Angelidi (Karalis 2017, 49), Lagia Giourgiou, Katerina Vassilakou, and Lukia Rikaki. It is, therefore, imperative to engage in a scholarly examination and appreciation of the contributions made by female filmmakers to construct a more inclusive and objective film corpus of Greek cinema. By directing attention towards this neglected facet of Greek cinema, a more equitable comprehension of the multifaceted narratives comprising our cinematic history will be cultivated.

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