

History, Subjectivity, and the Public Sphere in Greece: The Essay-films of Tonia Marketaki and Eva Stefani

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The paper contextualizes and reflects on the essay-films *John and the Street* (1967) and *Acropolis* (2001) by prominent Greek filmmakers Tonia Marketaki (1942–1994) and Eva Stefani (b. 1964), respectively. Created at different moments in modern Greek history, the two films nonetheless address the tension between history and personal experience in the public sphere, especially as this tension marks the urban context of Athens. The analysis explores how the two films challenge hegemonic national narratives while tracing “subterranean” alternative subjectivities. It emphasizes the aesthetic practices developed by the filmmakers and examines whether these practices contribute to what Jacques Rancière has described as a possible reconfiguration of “the distribution of the sensible,” and whether they help to envision urban reality as a spatio-temporal field of ever emergent potentialities.

Keywords: history, memory, city, essay-film, representation, aesthetics, public sphere.

In this paper I reflect on two films, *John and the Street* (1967) by Tonia Marketaki and *Acropolis* (2001) by Eva Stefani, arguing that both address the tension between history and personal experience in the public sphere of modern Greece, particularly in the urban context of Athens. I briefly outline how the films call into question hegemonic national narratives by employing quite similar aesthetic practices despite their different social and artistic contexts and thematic foci. At the same time, I look into the particular subjectivities traced by these films – those that do not conform to the norm authorized by the public sphere and that are forced to exist “under the radar” of visible, acceptable publicness, thus being, in this sense, subterranean. By focusing on these aspects, I explore whether these films contribute to a possible reconfiguration of “the distribution of the sensible” – to borrow Jacques Rancière’s terminology. Rancière defines “the distribution of the sensible” as “the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it”; in essence, Rancière’s concept pertains to how something is presented to sensory experience and addresses the politically crucial question of “who can have a share in what is common to the community.”¹ For Rancière, aesthetic practices, as forms of visibility, participate in this distribution and can potentially “induce novel forms of political subjectivity.”² It is such forms of political subjectivity, often suppressed by the dominant ideology of a nation-state, that I attempt to discover in the films examined here – subjectivities that seek to rearrange the “shared sensible order.”³ Furthermore, by highlighting how these two films transcend the traditional “either fiction or documentary” divide, I hope to contribute to a clearer definition of the essay-film in the history of Greek cinema.

The first essay-films from Greece can be traced back to the mid-1960s. These films can be seen as “special cases” in what was then emerging and is known as New Greek Cinema (NEK/NGC).⁴ The term New Greek Cinema

1 See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 9–19.

2 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, 9, 13.

3 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, 40.

4 Regarding the origins of the New Greek Cinema, its socio-political background, and its multiple dimensions as a broader cultural phenomenon, see Maria Chalkou, *Towards the Creation of ‘Quality’ Greek National Cinema in the 1960s* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, PhD Thesis, 2008), accessed August 12, 2023, <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/1882/>.

encompasses a range of practices oriented towards the formation of an independent and arthouse cinema that developed in opposition to the commercial (and often politically conservative) Old Greek Cinema (ΠΕΚ/OGC), while resisting producers' total control over filmmaking. Strongly influenced by "la politique des auteurs" and modernist film theories, New Greek Cinema practices were characterized by bold formal experimentation and associated with the Left and its cultural imaginary and breakthroughs. Unsurprisingly, it is in these practices that we encounter the deployment of essayistic modalities by certain filmmakers. By "essayistic modalities," I refer to specific tropes which, originating from the long literary heritage of the essay before their "cinematic revisions" (as Timothy Corrigan has noted), include the author's explicit engagement with socio-political issues of their times, the transformation of the subjectively perceived self through its dispersal into public experience, reflexivity of a work regarding the means of construction, and "the inevitable fragmentation and incompleteness" connected to this process.⁵

Marketaki's *John and the Street* incorporates (in its 20 minutes) several of the aforementioned features. It is unsurprising, given that Marketaki studied at IDHEC in Paris when the *Nouvelle Vague* movement was flourishing and the critical discourse around essayistic filmmaking was shaped.⁶ Made in the late 1960s, *John and the Street* alludes to the political trauma dominating public life in Greece during that decade. Articulated as an inquiry, the film presents a fictional character (a young man, embodied by leftist journalist Giorgos Votsis) and a personal event in his life (his separation from his girlfriend) to communicate the *sense* of a public space saturated with unease and anxiety. The film follows the psychogeographical (to borrow a Situationist term from that decade) wanderings of the lead character in the streets of Athens, starting from his despair over his girlfriend's decision to end their relationship and marry a wealthy industrialist.⁷ This personal misfortune becomes a trigger for reflection but never develops into what we might call a storyline.

5 See Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film. From Montaigne, After Marker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6–20.

6 IDHEC is the acronym for Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques (Institute for Advanced Cinematographic Studies).

7 Regarding the term "psychogeography," see Guy Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," trans. Ken Knabb, in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 8–12.

Following Marc Ferro's umbrella statement that "film, image or not of reality, document or fiction, true story or pure invention, is history," I would argue that what compels *John and the Street's* reading as a film about history is precisely its stance *against* official history.⁸ This stance is articulated in two ways.

First, the film defies dominant evolutionist or historicist approaches, both of which often aim (though implicitly or unconsciously) either to guarantee the intertemporal solidity of a nation or to retrospectively rationalize what was inherently contingent.⁹ Specifically, the film challenges the

8 See Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, trans. Naomi Greene (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1988), 29.

9 By the term "historicism," I refer to a certain positivistic approach to history, most notably articulated by German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886). Since this paper explores how particular cinematic practices defy dominant historical narratives, it is necessary to mention Ranke's historicism, as it remained a quite hegemonic paradigm in Europe up to the second third of the twentieth century, providing a general conceptual framework for understanding social reality and being intrinsically linked to the development of the European nation-states. As Georg Iggers highlights, "within this tradition, the state was seen as the central institution which provided a thread for historical narrative." Ranke's historicism emphasizes that the historian should be committed to the strict presentation (freed from subjective views) of the facts and should aim to consider and reconstruct the past objectively, on its own terms, relying strictly on source materials. But, as Amy Kapczynski accurately notes (drawing on Walter Benjamin's critique of Ranke), historicism "abandons most of the past (such as the past that has not been codified in official documents) as irrelevant" and "thus generates histories that claim neutrality but in fact justify the status quo." The "purity" of the gaze that historicism calls for, actually tends to conceal that relying upon institutional sources in order to reconstruct the past inevitably entangles the historicist in the perspective of the "victor." Thus, adopting Benjamin's view here, I consider the historicist's imperative to recognize the past in "the way it really was" (through the mere accumulation of data and "without involving in this retrospective glance anything that has taken place in the meantime") to be impossible and delusive, due to the inevitable mediation of the ideology of the ruling class. In what follows, I argue that Marketaki's film, through both its form and content, subverts historicism's alleged transparency. See Amy Kapczynski, "Historicism, Progress, and the Redemptive Constitution," *Cardozo Law Review*, 26 (2004–2005): 1041–1117. See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," trans. Harry Zohn, in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 253–264. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland & Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 470. See Georg G. Iggers, "Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56, no. 1 (1995): 129–152. See John Toews, "Historicism from Ranke to Nietzsche," in *The Cambridge History of Modern European Thought*, edited by Warren Breckman and Peter E. Gordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 301–329.

stereotypical notion that modern Greek history has been “a continuous effort leading, in a linear manner, to more and more democracy.”¹⁰ Marketaki associates specific aspects of the public sphere of her times (which have been deliberately disassociated from one another by dominant ideology), drawing attention to a presumably dialectical interdependence between an individually experienced enclosed present and a recent past, marked by the frustration of the collective struggles of the lower social classes. Thus, rather than building a smooth storyline, transversely to the lead character’s wanderings, Marketaki juxtaposes newsreels of the Vietnam war with footage of massive demonstrations in Athens during the major (political and parliamentary) crisis of 1965, and archival material of the Cold War space race with Athenian cityscapes emitting an Antonionian sense of alienation. Marketaki creates an urban landscape interspersed with sequence excerpts from American Westerns and scenes of police violence. She incorporates the harrowing “news” scene of the self-immolation of a Vietnamese Buddhist monk alongside Greek newspaper headlines about the left activist and politician Grigoris Lambrakis’s assassination trial and melancholic views of night parties.¹¹ This juxtaposition is technically constructed in a manner reminiscent of the “montage of attractions,” introduced by Sergei Eisenstein: an anti-naturalist sequence of seemingly unconnected shots, to generate specific shocks to the spectator. These shocks “provide the only opportunity for perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown.”¹² In addition, the film’s sound design features a blend of a news spokesman’s voice with the voice of a first-person narrator confessing a romantic disappointment through his recitation of a poem by the iconic novelist and political refugee

- 10 The phrase in quotation marks belongs to Stavros Stavrides, Professor at the School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens. It is drawn from an interview I conducted with him in 2022 about certain political events of outstanding significance for the historical trajectory of Greece and their spatial imprint on the Athenian cityscape. The interview is part of my essay-film called *Athens, My Love* (2022), which was presented in the 46th Drama International Short Film Festival and in the 64th Thessaloniki International Film Festival.
- 11 Grigoris Lambrakis was a Member of the Parliament, elected with the Integrated Democratic Left [ΕΔΑ/ΕΔΑ], who was assassinated by far-right parastatals in 1963. Regarding the July 1965 events, see Jean Meynaud, *Rapport sur l’abolition de la démocratie en Grèce. Tome II* (Montreal: Les Éditions Nouvelle Frontière, 1972).
- 12 See Sergei Eisenstein, *Selected Works, Volume I, Writings, 1922–34*, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 33–58.

Menelaos Lountemis (1912–1977), whose own association with the Left since his school days led to a life of wandering and persecution.

In making these associations, Marketaki, far from implying any kind of determinism, conceptualizes social reality (both in its local and global complexities) as a field of ever-emergent and antagonistic potentialities, where some are actualized at the expense of others that are suppressed.¹³ Or, as Žižek might put it, instead of relativizing the past from her present perspective, Marketaki relativizes the *present itself*, exposing its probabilistic character.¹⁴ In doing so, she seems to foreshadow what had not yet been explicitly actualized but was a distinct possibility – the undoing of the fragile Greek democracy by the right-wing military dictatorship that would start in April 1967 and last until 1974. Eerily, Marketaki regarded this potential undoing *as if* it were already apparent in the mid-1960s, reflecting on the dismantling of political life through the pre-emptive attacks of the post-war conservative capitalist State against the “internal enemy” (the Left and the struggles of the working class). This, for example, is manifest when – out of nowhere and for no obvious reason – the film features dozens of leaflets bearing anti-Left slogans scattered in the central streets of Athens. It is also evident in several shots where the city, rather than serving as a neutral backdrop, is transformed into a nightmarish open prison which gradually devours even the memories and fantasies of the young man who strives to exist amidst his alienation. What enhances this anticipatory dimension/temporality of the film is what actually followed: the military junta was installed just a week after the film was shot. On April 21, 1967, the colonels’ *coup* established the seven-year-long junta, marking the darkest period of Greece’s recent history, and brought tanks into Athens. The undoing of democracy which Marketaki addressed in her film (and which became explicit

13 On considering the past as an active field of possibilities which are yet to be fulfilled, see Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” trans. Harry Zohn, in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 253–264. This last Benjamin’s work is a characteristic example of relentless critique of historicism. See also Stavros Stavrides, “Η σχέση χώρου και χρόνου στη συλλογική μνήμη” [The Relationship of Space and Time in Collective Memory], in *Μνήμη και Εμπειρία του Χώρου* [Memory and Spatial Experience], ed. Stavros Stavrides (Athens: Alexandria Publications, 2006), 17–19, 33–36.

14 At this point, I draw on Žižek’s interpretation of Walter Benjamin’s anti-historicist stance. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute – Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For* (London/New York: Verso, 2000), 90.

after the *coup*) was further reflected in the fact that four months after the *coup* Marketaki was arrested and imprisoned by the regime, and consequently the film was not publicly shown at the time.

Marketaki's fragmentary and politically charged narrative highlights the second way in which her film engages with history: it strives to make visible what lies hidden in the indiscernible cracks of a public sphere which claims to reflect the supposed coherence of the nation and to make visible what usually informs the *collective memory* of politically excluded parts of the population.¹⁵ In this case, Marketaki seeks to attribute visibility to the personal and social experiences of "an increasingly self-aware youth," an opposition to the status quo youth, which film theorist Maria Chalkou describes as "a distinct social entity and a leading force behind many of the socio-political and cultural developments of the time" – yet a youth also haunted by the defeat of the Left in the Greek Civil War (1946–1949).¹⁶ This youth (represented by the well-known leftist Giorgos Votsis as a synecdoche in the film) encapsulates the alternative, subterranean subjectivities I referred to earlier. In highlighting the inscription of such a (quasi-collective) subjectivity into the urban reality and the demand for this subjectivity not to be excised from this reality, Marketaki's film invokes the "right to the city" as outlined by Henri Lefebvre in his famous essay, which, coincidentally, was also written in 1967.¹⁷ Lefebvre's concept indicates a broader demand taking shape in the mid-1960s in the European Left, evident already in the actions of the Situationists, towards the reclamation of urban reality as an active field of possibilities yet to be fulfilled. "The right to the city" was described as a spatio-temporal condition through which subjects marginalized in capitalist life could render their dreams and desires visible and audible, against the instrumentalization of the city by the interests of the ruling class and against "a discriminatory and segregative organisation"

15 Regarding the term "collective memory," see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

16 See Maria Chalkou, *Towards the Creation of 'Quality' Greek National Cinema in the 1960s* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, PhD Thesis, 2008), accessed August 12, 2023, <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/1882/>, 20, 105, 304–306.

17 See Henri Lefebvre, "Right to the City," trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, in *Writings on Cities*, eds. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 63–181. See also Henri Lefebvre, "Space and Politics," trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, in *Writings on Cities*, 194–195.

of public space.¹⁸ Thus, in addressing the challenging of such instrumentalization on the level of cinematic representation, I refer to the possibility of subverting hegemonic pictorial representations of urban space, which are constructed to exclude oppositional political agents by representing the city as homogeneous, abstract scenery. Marketaki contributes to this subversion by pointing to certain social antagonisms that mark the urban fabric and by sketching the profile of social subjects which seek to experience the city as a field of encounters, resisting an “alienated urban life.”¹⁹

Pointing to the contradictory character of the public space, however, does not necessarily entail direct access to the social experience of dominated subjects. As Alexander Kluge has argued (from a class perspective), even though the public sphere allegedly represents society as a whole, it actually excludes or distorts substantial parts of the experience of the exploited.²⁰ It is in fact a bourgeois public sphere – namely, a historically shaped operative formation which has been, in its various iterations from the 18th century to date, fundamentally concerned with the interests of the dominant class. Prevented from being articulated in the bourgeois public sphere in the first place, the (personal and social) experience of the aforementioned leftist youth of the 1960s consequently ends up being even more inadequately representable in cinematic terms. “In cases where experience, or, rather, its translation is blocked, we need to resort to the format of the essay film,” Kluge wrote in 1985.²¹ Marketaki understood this much earlier. Thus, the fragmented and incomplete structure (typical elements of the essay-film as I note above) that she opts for, in order to convey a sense of the shattered and suspended experience, seems to be consistently homologous to that experience. This homology is, as a matter of fact, self-reflexively stressed from the very beginning of the film. To underline the individually experienced enclosed present that I mentioned earlier, Marketaki superimposes (in writing) a verse by poet Yannis Negreponitis – “Loneliness is a matter of self-sufficiency” – over the opening sequence (in which the desolate man

18 Henri Lefebvre, “Space and Politics,” in *Writings on Cities*, 194–195.

19 Henri Lefebvre, “Right to the City,” in *Writings on Cities*, 126, 158.

20 See Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Daniel and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 1–19, 54–60.

21 See Alexander Kluge, Tamara Evans and Stuart Liebman, “The Assault of the Present on the Rest of Time,” *New German Critique*, 49 (1990): 11–22.

aimlessly roams the dark streets of Athens) – “in a manner reminiscent of Godard”, as Chalkou also points out.²²

Over three decades later, in 2001, Eva Stefani develops related essayistic modalities in her 25-minute film *Acropolis*, in an effort to problematize specific discourses associated with official national history. In Stefani’s case, the challenge appears even more deliberate (in comparison to Marketaki), since her film is structured around the most widely known and long-standing signifier of “Greekness”: the ancient monument in the heart of Athens, which signifies the (assumed) unbreakable link between the modern city and ancient civilization.

Stefani intervenes in extended archival material, re-assembling it from various sources: family films, footage of medical surgeries, film scenes shot at the Acropolis after the Liberation from the Nazis in 1944, pornographic films, aerial views of the city centre, images of cemeteries, shots of nudist communities, street crowds, café scenes, and state-organized festivities. In the film’s voice-over, a female narrator tells her story in first person but *through a double identity*: as the Acropolis (a feminine noun in both modern and ancient Greek) and as a woman defined by trauma. The heterogeneity of the components is further amplified by the inclusion of a cheerful interwar song, female guides informing tourists about the Parthenon (the ancient temple atop the Acropolis), dogs barking, excerpts from the (male-narrated) speakage of the popular performance show *Sound and Light*, and the screams of a woman (possibly) subjected to torture.

As film theorist Afroditi Nikolaidou argues, these brutal audiovisual discontinuities in *Acropolis* are arranged to destabilize the assumed continuity of the Greek civilization, while the insistence on the notion of perishability – evident both in the representations of the ancient monument and the film’s own medium – defies the enduring spatial arrangements in the public sphere which are related to the concept of continuity and the crystallization of national identity.²³ However, Nikolaidou remarks

22 See Maria Chalkou, *Towards the Creation of ‘Quality’ Greek National Cinema in the 1960s* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, PhD Thesis, 2008), accessed August 12, 2023, <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/1882/>, 304. I should also mention that Yannis Negrepontis was a leftist who was exiled during the dictatorship.

23 See Afroditi Nikolaidou, “Ντοκιμαντέρ και αυτοαναφορικότητα. Φιλμική διαχείριση της μνήμης στις ταινίες *Αγέλαστος Πέτρα* και *Ακρόπολις*” [Documentary and Self-Reflexivity. Filmic handling of memory in *Agelastos Petra* and *Acropolis*], in *Μνήμη και εμπειρία*

that this destabilization does not lead to a post-modernist elimination of any anchoring point. Instead, identity is re-introduced through the central presence of the female body (“a centre that gives meaning to memory as such,” Nikolaidou notes), which becomes a depository for stories that have not merely been suppressed but squashed.²⁴ Anchored to the female body, identity now becomes connected with the implied question: who deserves publicness? The female body becomes a metonymy of subjectivities which, according to the ethno-patriarchal imaginary, do not deserve publicness.

Structured around various instantiations of femininity, Stefani presents subjectivities that include: femininity associated with motherhood (shots of a mother holding her baby), which is generally relegated to the domestic sphere; femininity intertwined with armed struggles (images of the leftist women partisans who, after fighting against the Axis Occupation, participated in the public celebration for the Liberation of Athens in 1944), disrupting the predominance of parading male troops in public imagery, and femininity linked with the demand of reclaiming life as an activity freed from subjugation (connoted through shots of girls playing). These subjectivities, physically articulated and performed by women, share a common characteristic: they are excised from the representations that compose the dominant public sphere either because they are discounted and devalued as circumstantial and irrelevant or because they are deemed disruptive to historical narratives authorized by the nation-state.

Moreover, Stefani’s provocative editing queries the imposed normality of a public sphere defined by images of male national leaders who claim a connection with the (supposed) glory of antiquity, while this same normality simultaneously constructs private spheres where women are portrayed as sexual objects.²⁵ Stefani juxtaposes shots of Eleftherios Venizelos (1864–1936) and George Papandreou (1888–1968) – both notable politicians

του χώρου [Memory and Spatial Experience], ed. Stavros Stavrides (Athens: Alexandria Publications, 2006), 89–105.

- 24 Afroditi Nikolaidou, “Ντοκιμαντέρ και αυτοαναφορικότητα. Φιλμική διαχείριση της μνήμης στις ταινίες Αγέλαστος Πέτρα και Ακρόπολις,” in *Μνήμη και εμπειρία του χώρου*, 89–105.
- 25 I describe the editing as “provocative” because Stefani intentionally juxtaposes visual representations of situations from notably different social realms, each carrying markedly different kinds of publicity (or non-publicity). Stefani’s juxtaposition is provocative in that it implicitly raises the question “what is concealed by what is shown?”: the radical disparity of the film’s images, their disjointedness, is what challenges the prescribed isolated function of these very same images – their iconic status for the nation.

whose role as prime ministers defined the trajectory of modern Greece – at the ancient Acropolis temple, with soft-porn shots of women posing naked, catering to the imperatives of the scopophilic male gaze. Thus, the film disidentifies itself from a national body, which assumes the mantle of tradition, sanctifying antiquity while reifying femininity.

Stefani's focus on gender as an alternative axis for identity construction, combined with her critical view of "nationally correct" discourses, sets her film apart from and renders it incomprehensible in relation to hegemonic tendencies in the Greek cinematic landscape at the dawn of the 21st century, often referred to as Contemporary Greek Cinema (ΣΕΚ/CGC).²⁶ This is a (controversial) term used for periodization purposes by some theorists and denotes a range of practices (developed after the mid-1990s) connected with commercial, big-budget fiction films, with "the far greater participation of private production companies and the new television channels," mild thematic content, and conventional narrative structure.²⁷ Yet, Stefani's quest has not been lonely and singular if viewed within a broader cultural milieu beyond cinema. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, performative art practices in the public space of Athens also employed the female body "to disrupt the urban environment" and challenge "the boundaries of the socially acceptable" in dialogue with political struggles for democracy (for example, Georgia Sagri's performance outside the historic building of the National Technical University of Athens on November 17, 1999),

26 I borrow the term of "nationally correct" discourse from Dimitris Christopoulos, who, in his text on censorship in post-war Greece, outlines issues that the Greek nation-state deems should not be "touched upon" in the public sphere, otherwise censorship mechanisms would be mobilized. See Dimitris Christopoulos, "Λογοκριτικά Συμφραζόμενα" [Contexts of Censorship], in *Λεξικό λογοκρισίας στην Ελλάδα: Καχεκτική δημοκρατία, δικτατορία, μεταπολίτευση* [Companion to Censorship in Greece: Weak Democracy, Dictatorship, Metapolitefsi], eds. Dimitris Christopoulos and Penelope Petsini (Athens: Kastaniotis Publishing House, 2018), 279–291.

27 Regarding the term Contemporary Greek Cinema (CGC), see Dimitris Papanikolaou and Afroditi Nikolaidou, "Re-examining 20th Century Greek Cinema," in *Motherland, I See You: The Twentieth Century Greek Cinema*, eds. Dimitris Papanikolaou and Afroditi Nikolaidou (Athens: Hellenic Film Academy and Nefeli Publications, 2022), 19. I use the term in the way that Nikos Kolovos has attempted to signify it. See Nikos Kolovos, "Προτάσεις για το Παρόν και το Μέλλον" [Suggestions for the Present and for the Future], in *Ανιχνεύοντας τον Σύγχρονο Ελληνικό Κινηματογράφο* [Tracing Contemporary Greek Cinema], ed. Diamantis Leventakos (Athens: Audiovisual Culture, Greek Directors Guild, Centre for Audiovisual Studies, 2002), 149–156.

or to hack “male-dominated work environments” in the city centre (Mary Zygouri’s intervention in a porn cinema hall downtown Athens in 2004).²⁸ This was also the period when the first gender studies programs were introduced in Greek universities, providing strong conceptual frameworks for the exploration of the public sphere as a battleground between femininity and the nation-state. These processes certainly did not arise in a vacuum but were a historical outcome of a long-standing, albeit often disrupted, feminist movement in Greece.²⁹ To corroborate my argument about the contiguity of Stefani’s essay-film with these artistic and academic pursuits, it is worth noting that, later on, when this milieu gained more distinct recognition in Greece, the 14th edition of Documenta, one leg of which took place in Athens in 2017, featured both *Acropolis* and Mary Zygouri’s and Georgia Sagri’s performances while prominent Greek feminist scholars contextualized these works.³⁰

In the light of the above, I would conclude by emphasizing the shared characteristic of Marketaki’s and Stefani’s essay-films: the contribution of both works to the reconfiguration of “the distribution of the sensible,” against the tired repetitions of hegemonic visual culture.³¹ Through their re-arrangement of (cinematic) forms that determine what is experientially

28 Regarding cases of Greek performance artists during the late 1990s and the early 2000s, like Georgia Sagri and Mary Zygouri, or activist collectives reclaiming the urban space of Athens, such as Urban Void, see Alexandra Antoniadou, *Realisations of Performance in Contemporary Greek Art* (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis, 2017), accessed September 2, 2023, <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/31283>, 111–177.

29 See Kostas Yannakopoulos and Venetia Kantsa, “ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ: Η ακαδημαϊκή εμπειρία του φύλου. Μια αναστοχαστική προσέγγιση με αφορμή ένα Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών στο Πανεπιστήμιο Αιγαίου” [INTRODUCTION: The Academic Experience of Gender. A reflective approach drawing on the example of a Postgraduate Program at the University of the Aegean], *feministika*, no. 4 (Autumn 2021), accessed August 31, 2023, <https://feministika.net/i-akadimaiki-empeiria-tou-fylou>.

30 See Katerina Tselou, “Eva Stefani. *Acropolis*,” *documenta14*, accessed August 31, 2023, <https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13490/eva-stefani>. See also Athena Athanasiou, “The Round-up Project: Kokkinia 1979–Kokkinia 2017,” *documenta14*, accessed August 31, 2023, <https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/11541/mary-zygouri>. See also Elena Parpa, “Georgia Sagri. *Dynamis*,” *documenta14*, accessed August 31, 2023, <https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/992/georgia-sagri>.

31 See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 39–45.

available to the community, the essayistic modalities employed by these two films succeed in making visible certain social subjectivities and aspects of their experience that have been systematically suppressed by ancestor-worship and/or post-war conservatism. The essayistic elements of the films (principally rooted in constant reflexivity about the very means by which visual representations are constructed and critical engagement with the nature of the public sphere) challenge the assumption that the community is a unified whole. Instead, they propose that its supposed unity can be contested through the recombinant use of the nation-state's preferred symbols (monuments) and by revealing subjectivities unconcerned with national legacy (the unsettling, personal trauma of love defeated by class divisions). What finally arises as politically crucial in this rethinking of representational priorities is that both films suggest a perspective on the public sphere that not only refutes space as being resoundingly fixed through (or exclusively invested with) the imaginary of the ruling class and the nation's political elites, but also acknowledges that, at any moment, new spatialities are shaped within, and by, social antagonisms; spatialities that hold the potential to recover what history has dismissed in (and about) the past.³²

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32 See Stavros Stavrides, "La révolte de la jeunesse athénienne de décembre 2008: la justice spatiale dans une "ville des carrefours" émergente" [The December 2008 Youth Uprising in Athens: Spatial Justice in an Emergent 'City of Thresholds'], trans. Frédéric Dufaux, *justice spatiale* [spatial justice], no. 2 (October 2010), <https://www.jssj.org/article/la-revolte-de-la-jeunesse-athenienne-de-decembre-2008-la-justice-spatiale-dans-une-ville-des-carrefours-emergente/?lang=en>

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Santrauka

Istorija, subjektyvumas ir viešojo sfera Graikijoje: Tonios Marketaki ir Evos Stefani eseistiniai filmai

Dimitris Kechris

Reikšminiai žodžiai: istorija, atmintis, miestas, eseistinis filmas, reprezentacija, estetika, viešojo sfera.

Straipsnyje aptariu du filmus – Tonios Marketaki *Jonas ir gatvė* (1967) ir Evos Stefani *Akropolis* (2001), kuriuose atsispindi įtampa tarp istorijos ir asmeninės patirties šiuolaikinės Graikijos viešojoje erdvėje, ypač šios įtampos išraiška Atėnų miesto kontekste. Trumpai apibrėžiu, kaip šie filmai kvestionuoja hegemoninius nacionalinius naratyvus, naudojant gana panašias estetiškes praktikas, nepaisant skirtingų socialinių ir meninių kontekstų bei temų. Kartu analizuoju šiuose filmuose atsiskleidžiančias specifines subjektyvumo formas, kurios neatitinka normų ir egzistuoja visuotinai priimtinos viešumo sampratos šešėlyje. Mano nuomone, sutelkdami dėmesį į hegemoninius nacionalinius naratyvus ir nenormatyvius subjektyvumus, taip pat perkurdami kinematografines formas, kuriomis perduodama bendruomenei priimtina patirtis, abu filmai savo eseistiniais elementais suteikia balsą tam tikroms gyventojų dalims (ir jų patirčiai), kurios ilgą laiką buvo sistemingai slopinamos praeities garbinimo ir pokario konservatyvumo. Be to, abu filmai skatina, Jacques'o Rancière'o žodžiais tariant, galimą „sveiko proto pasiskirstymo“ rekonfiguraciją. Galiausiai, permąstant reprezentacinius prioritetus, politiškai yra itin svarbu tai, kad abu filmai perteikia viešosios sferos perspektyvą, kai ne tik atmetamas viešosios erdvės įtvirtinimas per valdančiosios klasės ir tautos politinio elito įvaizdžius (arba išskirtinis persmelkimas šiais įvaizdžiais), bet ir pripažįstama, kad bet kuriuo momentu socialinių prieštaravimų viduje ir per juos formuojasi naujos erdvės, kurios gali susigrąžinti tai, ką istorija „ištrynė“ kaip galimybes (galimas istorijos kryptis). Atkreipiant dėmesį į tai, kaip šie du filmai peržengia tradicinę „fikcijos arba dokumentikos“ takoskyrą, straipsnyje gvildenama, kaip galima atpažinti tam tikrus eseistinius eksperimentus, daugiausia pagrįstus nuolatiniais apmąstymais apie pačias priemones, padedančias kurti vizualines reprezentacijas, ir kritiniu požiūriu į

viešosios sferos prigimtį. Tokie eksperimentai, mano manymu, yra aiški graikų kino istorijos tendencija, kurią nulėmė ir modernistinės kino teorijos, ir platesni estetiški bei politiniai ieškojimai.