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Film as *Revanche:* Dissecting the *Dispositif* in New Greek Cinema

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of Nikos Vergitsis's second feature film Revanche *(1983) in light of contemporary apparatus theory. A close reading of a number of sequences aims to highlight the importance of the film's legacy for New Greek Cinema, its uniqueness in conveying the specificity of the cinematic medium, and its role in the emergence of a new subjectivity entangled with the crisis of ideology. My analysis situates the film's release within the socio-political context of Greek film industry of the time, but diverges from social science methodologies in cinema studies: By focusing primarily on the filmic devices and tropes that reveal the agency of the cinematic* dispositif*, I suggest that the film responds to the bulk production of Greek art-house historical films during the polity change (i.e. the transition from Military Junta to democracy from 1974 onwards) with individuating what Jacques Rancière calls "the emancipated spectator" (2011). By delineating a radical form of cinephilia that acknowledges the mechanisms of visual assemblages, I argue,* Revanche *urges the viewers to consider the complex relation between technology and representation, past and present, the personal and the political.*

KEYWORDS

cinephilia
dispositif
film technologies
Metapolitefsi
Revanche
spectatorship

INTRODUCTION

The 24th Thessaloniki Film Festival, held from 3 to 9 October 1983, was considered innovative for many reasons and on different possible fronts. To begin with, it was the first year in the history of the institution – which was initiated in 1960 as the "Greek Film Week" and served as the most important state platform for the promotion of local productions domestically and internationally (Chalkou 2008: 29) – where the awards were not monetary[1]; this decision aimed at keeping the competition process dispassionate and even-tempered, and dissolving the tradition that was shaped in the years following the fall of the Colonels' Junta (1967–1974), where audiences saw the Festival's ceremonies as arenas for expressing public sentiment and questioning the biases of dominant ideologies. Consequently, it was in this edition that the Greek State Awards were officially announced by the government within the context of the festival, as a gesture of acknowledgement, but arguably also as a suggestion of control and institutionalization: These awards were henceforth scheduled for the end of the calendar year and were seemingly disassociated from the festival procedures and outcomes, aspiring to leave space for content-based criticism (Aktsoglou 1989: 45). Eventually, and with an emphasis on the content of the programme, it was a significant year for initiating the discussion on the relation between the personal and the political on the one hand, and the question of the country's historical memory and the society's contemporaneity on the other.

The discussion on the aforementioned binaries was extensively traced in the coverage of the event by the press of the time, and reflected on the distribution of the best film award *ex aequo* in two radically different movies that stood at opposite poles: *Rebetiko* (1983) by Costas Ferris is a period piece set in the interwar years, which follows the personal story of a singer of this genre of urban music that was developed by immigrants reaching the country after the forced exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s; whereas *Revanche* by Nikos Vergitsis is a highly referential Greek film that stands in-between genres and tones (Soldatos 2002: 256–258), focusing on the figure of a 30-year-old man who lives in an abstract urban setting. While both films are the most renowned pieces of the two directors' filmography respectively, the latter, as I argue in this paper, becomes, over the ages, a landmark for Greek film culture. *Revanche* is not only representative of a new era in the reception of Greek cinema where the political was not necessarily identified with the clarification and re-appropriation of the historical past; the film's prime achievement is that it introduces, through cinematic techniques, the complex trinity between the layered diegetic world, the visual technological assemblages that shape the construction and perception of the narrative alike,

[1] For a detailed timeline on the evolution of the Thessaloniki Film Festival and state awards, see Taxopoulou (2009).

and the spectators' trajectory to higher levels of critical subjectivity. By proposing a model of an emancipated spectatorship that is akin to that of a critical cinephile, Vergitsis's directorial choices echo Barthes's suggestion that "instead of looking for ideology in film, we should consider ideology as a cinema of our society" (Bryukhovetska 2010). In the following pages, I attempt to unpack the layers of this interrelationship through a close reading of the film, acknowledging the historical and cultural complexities of the society it references and the production system within which it exists; yet maintaining a distance from social readings of the Greek reality of the time. Instead, my reading concentrates on the film as a cultural object that reflects and performs ideology through a mangle of material and immaterial relations, visible and concealed narratives.

To begin with, the plotline of *Revanche* revolves around three characters in their early thirties, two men, who are best friends, and one woman who develops a romantic relationship with both of them, at first in succession and later in parallel. In particular, Yannis, the protagonist, is an avid cinephile who frequently goes to the movies, watches the same classical Hollywood films on VHS over and over again, and escapes the anguish of his everyday routine by re-enacting or mentally re-appropriating scenes from film noirs, musicals, and even European cinema. Yannis and his old friend Yorgos had reportedly dissident behaviour in the past, but at present they lead a quiet life, hanging out in bars and enjoying the perks of carefree idleness. Eva, the woman with the biblical name and the modern looks (she appears on screen with a short mullet hairstyle and exclusively dressed in trousers), is the third side of this love triangle, expressing equal interest in both men, while openly claiming her right to self-determination. Some additional characters, who directly relate to Yannis, frame the main cast, constituting tangible archetypes that contradict the triangle's elusiveness (i.e. the non-exclusive, dynamic, and constantly transforming relationship between the three key players) and thus deepening the audiences' understanding of the film's conceptual framework: Anna is Yannis's indulgent and silent girlfriend, keeping her door always open for the promiscuous lover; Vassilis is Yannis's close pal and temporary host, a queer musician living in a detective's office (fake or actual is unimportant); Harilaos, Yannis's father is an old Lefty currently involved in labour syndicates and unconditionally attached to the 'Party', who in his son's eyes seems stuck to a rigid morality and conservative ideology; and, lastly, Katerina, Yannis's sister, is a young woman who was falsely accused for most of her adult life, as she was thought to have reported her brother and other "comrades" to the police for a terrorist attack (and was unjustly labelled a "petit-bourgeois"), but, as it is revealed in the end, she was only covering Yorgos's mischievous act.

Interestingly, while contemporary readings of the film underline the significance

of characterization, and especially regarding Eva's character, in the 1980s critics hailed the film as a successful experiment of form and an imaginative attempt to overcome possible obstacles that abound in low budget productions. Recently published articles refer to the narrative's "challenging of social taboos" (Walden 2017), the face of a young woman as "nearly the symbol of the New Greek cinema" (Georgakopoulou 1997), or the exemplification of the tendency of 1980s Greek directors who "produce[d] films about the representation of the new sociocultural roles of contemporary Greek women, signifying a shift from depicting social political subjects of the 1970s and 1980s to identity roles" (Paradeisi 2010: 129).[2] Respectively, four decades ago and following the film's premiere, film critic and writer Christos Vakalopoulos had remarked that the film promoted the value of collectivity "as a process that not only mobilizes the plot, but is also shaped through it". At the same time, *Revanche* became "a documentary on its actors", who in their turn "are particular (specific) and not *representative*" (Vakalopoulos 2005: 357, 359, 362) – individuals with fully formed personalities that do not stand as representatives of different social groups. In Babis Aktsoglou's view, the film was an artistic and commercial success due its "international style" and the director's disregard of "the depths of Greek history" (Aktsoglou 1983b: 70). The present article not only aspires to constitute the meeting ground for these confluent yet fractional readings, but it primarily aims to highlight the distinctiveness of *Revanche* in conveying a turning point in the modernization of Greek society[3] and constituting a breakthrough instance in Greek cinema, through the viewer's familiarization with the mechanisms of the cinematic apparatus and the specificity of the medium. In so doing, I argue that the director supports an expression of cinephilia that is not based on anachronism – a ritual that, in Thomas Elsaesser's words, "always seeks to un-fram[e] the image (...) and results in "a crisis of memory [that derives from our] impossibility of experience in the present, and the need to always be conscious of several temporalities" (2005: 39–40) – but on the confident exploration of the temporal registers of the *dispositif*: through their temporary co-existence in an invented cinematic space, the newly *emancipated spectators* experience the historical dialectics between past and present as an invented, legible socio-temporal system, where a collective "common sense" is developed (Rancière 2011: 102).

LEGACIES OF THE FUTURE, MEMORIES OF THE PRESENT

In 1995, Centre Pompidou presented a comprehensive retrospective of Greek

[2] For an account on gender relations in Greek cinema in post-war decades, see Hadjikyriacou (2013). For an investigation of representational politics of femininity in the 1980s and 1990s and their connection to the Greek mediascape, see Zestanakis (2013).

[3] For a comprehensive overview of the socio-political conditions and cultural context in Greece in the 1980s, see Vamvakas and Panagiotopoulos (2014).

cinema, comprising a programme of 100 films that run the whole gamut of the local film production in the 20th century. To this day, this is the most extensive tribute to the country's national production to be held by an international institution abroad – hence the magnitude of this endeavour renders its curatorial approach canonical. In the catalogue that was published on this occasion, each film of the tribute was contextualized in relation to certain milestones in Greek history. *Revanche* was associated with three important markers of 1983: The devaluation of drachma; the return home of the Communists, who were political refugees after the Civil War (1944-49); and the first time Greece assumed presidency of the European Economic Community (the precursor of the European Union) (Demopoulos 1995: 258). Interestingly, the selection of these three historical instances – roughly outlining frameworks of economy, political ideology, and positioning within the borders of Europe respectively – is indicative of the emphasis given by Greek film historiography to the politicized nature of New Greek Cinema (Valoukos 2011; Stassinopoulou 2012; Karalis 2012). Vrasidas Karalis, specifically, broadens the question of political ideology to the 1980s: He includes *Revanche* in his historical account of the decade that he emphatically defines as an era of "hope and disenchantment" (as is the title of the respective chapter [Karalis 2012: 193]) – in terms of the legal framework and the creative input that was propelled by a new political regime, namely socialist democracy, as represented by the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) that came into power in 1981. Karalis includes other milestones that affected the way movies were made and perceived in the country at the time: most significantly, the change of the area of responsibility of film production from the Ministry of Industry to the Ministry of Culture in 1980, and the abolishment of state censorship in 1986 that was in effect since the years of German occupation. Thus, in this light of political and societal change, Karalis refers to Vergitsis's film as an example of a commercial success that was grounded on the "simple reason" that it was a "good film" (2012: 203). Despite the reductive associations of the film's quality to indefinite, abstract notions such as "effective script [...] unpretentious simplicity, and healthy self-irony" (ibid) that overlook the complex mechanisms that compel audiences to resonate with individual films at particular historical moments, Karalis successfully reads the film in light of a diversification of political agendas in Greek cinema; questioning the core values of Greek society did not necessitate the re-enactment of the historical past on a set, but rather encouraged the use of the lens as a filter of past legacies in the contemporary.

Whereas during the Junta mainstream historical productions did aim at the re-enactment of the historical past and often resulted in presenting History as a theme park by generating mythologies and spectacle,[4] political art-house fiction

[4] During the Colonels' regime there is a proliferation of mainstream historical films, featuring popular actors who represented the star system of the studios in the 1960s (Aliki Vougiouklaki, Jenny Karezi, Yannis Voglis, et al.) Aiming at boosting the national

films from the mid 1970s to the late 1980s attempted to revise official History by resisting specifications of spatiotemporal attributes, alluding to the possibility of hidden narratives, forbidden political views and oral testimonies,[5] and undermining the value of "historicity as […] the rearrangement of the historical events from the present point of view" (Hung 2002: 254).[6] In this vein, *Rebetiko*

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sentiment, films such as *Oi Gennaioi tou Vorra/The Brave Bunch* (1970), *Manto Mavrogenous* (1971), *Ipolochagos Natassa/Battlefield Constantinople* (1970) – to name just a few – were not only period pieces that glorified Greek resistance during the Ottoman period and the Second World War (roughly based on crude readings of the history of the era), but they were also visual extravaganzas, pushing the testing of the medium technologies to the extreme. Focusing primarily on narratives set in the 19th century or the 1940s, studio directors in the early 1970s tested the effects of cinemascope, extreme zooming lenses, and daring jump cuts, among other visual experiments, inadvertently or perhaps wittingly counterbalancing the oppressive restrictions set by the regime in terms of content with lavish, kitsch statements of form.

[5] In the early years of *Metapolitefsi*, that is, in the transition from the military dictatorship to a democratic government, the demarcations of Greek political fiction films were widely associated with the genre of historical dramas. Having Theo Angelopoulos – who shot *Meres tou '36/Days of '36* (1972) and *O thiassos/The Travelling Players* (1975) amidst the Junta – as their precursor, from 1974 onwards, several filmmakers opted for period pieces that addressed explicitly politicized, sensitive subject matters, such as the conditions and outcome of the Greek Civil War. Prominent directors set their stories in Greece of the recent past, narrating stories of division and partisanship, imprisonment and exile, sacrifice and freedom: They often do so by drawing on motifs and plotlines from Greek literature of the 20th century– such as Pantelis Voulgaris's *Happy Day* (1976), a loose adaptation of Andreas Frangias's *Loimos/Pestilence*, Lakis Papastathis's *Ton Kero ton Ellinon/When the Greeks* (1981), where excerpts from the oeuvre of two monumental writers, Alexandros Papadiamantis and Yorgos Vizyinos, are embedded in the script, or Christos Siopahas's *I kathodos ton 9/The Descent of the Nine* (1984), while Anglopoulos frequently aims at collaborations with renowned Greek writers (such as Petros Markaris or Thanassis Valtinos). Films such as *O anthropos me to garyfallo/The Man with the Carnation* (Nikos Tzimas, 1980), or the slightly posterior later *Ta pedia tis xelidonas/Children of the Swallow* (Costas Vrettakos, 1987) can also have a place in this indicative reference list.

[6] Karalis is also critical of the practices of the art-house production of political historical films, arguing that in *Metapolitefsi* this was yet another way of imposing cultural hegemony and monopolization of culture by those who were previously sidelined by conservative rulers and, due to the emergence of a quasi-omnipotent, ruling PASOK, the Greek Socialist Party, had the opportunity to 'correct' a dominant narrative. Karalis suggests that this de-historization was a bi-product of the overt aestheticization of historical events that lacked agency, and the failure of representation: "The de-historization of both the people and the left ideology through secular hagiographies, political legends [...] created not simply a genre and an aesthetic for the cultural production of the period [...] what had previously been hidden [...] was now venerated and idolized. From being present but not represented, it became represented but not present. It was transformed into an ideological construct full of nostalgia" (Karalis, 2012: 208). Despite the harshness of his critique, and despite the fact that his interpretation of the makers' intentions is based on assumptions, rather than on solid sources (and especially while following a narrative that is all too often used as an interpretative tool for Greece's financial and cultural recession – that is the governance of the Socialist Party and the populist ideology that entailed), Karalis has a strong point

was an example *par excellence* of a politically engaged film that performed the fragmentation of narrative and the disruption of time and space as a practice of cultural poetics – the cultural system in which Vangelis Calotychos situates the process of "evacuation of this [modern Greek] reality" in an attempt to reimagine the nation (2003: 8-9).[7] By prioritizing access to History via individual memory, the dissolution of boundaries between 'objective history' and 'subjective memory', as well as the amalgamation of past and present, the film *Rebetiko*, with a profound nostalgic aura, works as a counterpoint to the economic setting of mass production and mass consumption that started dominating Greek society at large.

In a different vein than *Rebetiko*, the other award winner of the 24th Thessaloniki Film Festival resisted this tendency and called into question the political value of historicizing filmic structures. All the more outspokenly, it went so far as to suggest the dismissal of patrimonial legacies and the rapture with past ideologies (which is more tangible in one of the last scenes of the film, where the main character confronts his father); at the same time, it capitalized on the ephemeral nature of the moving images that are projected on screen as momentary shadows running on a fixed surface, asserting that the viewing subject only becomes emancipated (and thus political) when s/he understands the layering and function of visual technologies, and their pivotal role in managing individual and collective memory. This persistence on a fleeting ephemerality in terms of narrative style and dialogue was a cause of dispute among film critics of the era – it is no coincidence that when *Revanche* gained the Greek Film Critics Association award in the same festival, leftist film critic Vassilis Rafailidis withdrew from the association as a sign of his disapproval of the film's political imperative.[8] Yet, as the film lacks any specific spatio-temporal coordinates and drops any associations with historical events that were precedent or contemporaneous to its time of production (a method that

in arguing that historical fiction films were nostalgia films in disguise.

[7] In his recount of cultural history of Modern Greece, Calotychos (2004)applies this term as a loan from New Historicism – which is another point that proves the intellectual need for Greece to reconsider the way the country faces its past, and systematically perceives it.

[8] It is worth noting that director Nikos Vergitsis was a founding member of Marxist film magazine *Proodeftikos Kinimatografos/Progressive Cinema* that was first released in 1978 and was relaunched in 1981 under the title *Proodeftikos kinimatografos: Alloi kairoi/Progressive Cinema: Different Times.* The magazine often featured texts of political analysis, next to radical film analyses and general articles. *Rebetiko*'s director Kostas Ferris was also the founder and chief editor of the magazine *Meteikasma/Afterimage* that only released one single issue in November 1980. This issue was largely devoted to the German writer, director, and painter Herbert Achternbusch, who was much inspired by Greek mythology and the country's archaeological past, as the tribute highlights (Troussas 2017). The above prove that this tension in the two directors' perspective on the cinema's relation to the historical past and present expands to different media and intellectual activities.

contradicts its previous framing in the Pompidou retrospective), it provides an enduring exemplification of political engagement of the subject. The main character of *Revanche* resorts in cinema in order to (at times literally) re-frame his present, and not to un-frame his past. His performed cinephilia is not an expression of nostalgia that is firmly "located on the social level in which collective identities, memories, histories and consciousness or unconsciousness are invoked" (Davis 1979: 27), but an interrogative process where dominant establishments are uprooted. In this respect, the construction of reality is no longer an accumulative "ideological effect" (Baudry 1978). As the spectator becomes conscious of the mechanisms that enable different experiences of temporal and spatial arrangements, the cinematic medium becomes a constant factor of destabilization and negotiation of ideology.

ENTERING THE *DISPOSITIF*

In the paragraphs that follow, I focus on three sequences that precede key turning points in the narrative and shifts in the main character's course of action. These sequences are seemingly disjointed and self-contained, and do not seem to serve the narrative in any other form than mood changing interludes. On the contrary, I argue that they become cues for our understanding of the cinematic *dispositif* as a preemptive space for experiencing a new paradigm of critical subjectivity. In the end, the ultimate gesture of cinephilia is breaking (and entering) the *dispositif*. Despite the fact that this term has been extensively used as a *terminus technicus* among film theorists and practitioners alike (Lochard 1999), regardless of its expansion in the field of other visual arts as a trans-historical phenomenon (Aumont 1989), and its strong presence in German media studies (Zielinski 1994; Paech 2003; Kessler 2007), *dispositif* in this text returns to the roots of its genealogy. Namely, I refer primarily to Jean Louis Baudry's seminal essays, where he defines the ontology of cinema viewing as a product of interaction between the technical assemblages necessary to produce and screen a film (what he names "appareil de base" [Baudry 1978: 31]) and the topological and ideological positioning of the spectator. The reiteration of the term in the work of Michel Foucault, who focuses of the interrelatedness of heterogeneous (material and non-material) elements in the formation of structures of knowledge (Foucault 1980), is also pertinent to an analysis of *Revanche*; nevertheless, Baudry's use of the word is crucial, as it is medium-specific and departs from the tangible elements that are already present in the film from the very first scene.

Fig. 1: *A Beam of Light*

The opening sequence of the film immerses us in the environment of the cinematic *dispositif*: a thick, flickering beam of light enters a dark space through a window on the wall (Fig. 1). We presume that it is coming from the projection booth, and at the same time visualize the light that comes from behind our backs, enabling the projection of the film onto the cinema screen. This first shot introduces us into the diegetic world, by insinuating that what we are about to watch will only take place within, and because of the conditions of this controlled environment, with an emphasis on the structural elements of film: light, shadow, and frame. The vertical camera movement that leads to a fade-to-black further foregrounds this material basis of film as it sharply primes for the opening credits, which appear in a roll, pointing at the mechanism of the reel that unravels. The shot that follows takes us from the source of the light to its reflection on the faces of the characters, thus presenting a primordial dialectics between a stimulus and its effect, where representation schemas are not a prerequisite for its establishment – we can only speculate on what is the film Yannis and Anna are watching by its sound, but we do not get any visual traces. Otherwise stated, the director presents an unconventional shot-reverse shot – classical Hollywood's preferred "invisible" editing style for dialogue pieces – by framing at eye-level the two parts that are in conversation (namely, the projection and its spectator) and determining the sense of place where the conversation takes place (the dark). In the second scene of the sequence, another vertical camera movement[9] follows the couple as it voluntarily enters another confined space, that of an elevator, where the destination is unexpectedly the set of the ending scene of *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942), and the male character who was just introduced plays the part of Humphrey Bogart (Fig. 2).

[9] According to Vergitsis's interview with Babis Aktsoglou, this element of verticality was particularly challenging for the filmmaker's method in terms of practicalities, as they could only be filmed through a complex of mirror reflections (Aktsoglou 1983: 77).

Fig. 2: *On the Set of* Casablanca

In Rancière's words, the emancipation of the spectator begins when "we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting: when we understand (that) the self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing, themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection" (2011: 13). Hence, when Yannis breaks the boundaries of the actor's interpretation of a role, by becoming both the viewer and the player of the scene and separating the representation of an archetype from its primary connotations, he prompts the viewers to consider the spatiotemporal displacement that derives from our interaction with audiovisual technologies as an assertive gesture, an "unpredictable interplay of associations and dissociations" (Rancière 2011: 17) that is oppositional to structures of ideological hierarchies.

From this point onwards, the film's characters unpredictably inhabit hybrid, transitional "in-between" spaces – be they public or private – that are emphatically re-appropriated or re-imagined through a given condition of mediality, in different possible configurations and conceptualizations: Anna's living room becomes a figurative escape point for Yannis, because of the presence of a VHS player[10] that allows him to immerse in a different environment (Fig. 3); in a time of the hero's life when the "art of forgetting is an asset [...] memory itself is like videotape, always ready to be wiped clean" (Bauman 1997: 25).

[10] For an analysis of the introduction of the VHS in the Greek households in the 1980s, see Kassaveti (2014).

Fig. 3: *Anna's Living Room*

The street in front of the apartment block becomes a meeting place for a demographically diverse group of residents, who leave their homes when a big earthquake happens – the natural force that traverses and moves different geological layers in a momentary outburst is an astute metaphor for a society's crisis of temporality. The two best friends have an important encounter where they confess and blame one another in an 'in-between' space of a building's foyer that resembles a chessboard when seen from above through a bird's eye shot (00:35:22); the forest and the sea becomes the gateway for the heroes' fantasies and get togethers (1:13:16, 1:18:50, 0:44:19). After his father's death, Yannis visits his parents' place on a little raft he sails night and day, as he plays the saxophone (an instrument he always wanted to play but was not disciplined enough to study, as we learn earlier in the film). Thus, a makeshift floating medium of transportation turns into a psychoanalytical tool about the painful return to the past – or, in Freudian terms, even the womb (1:25:20).

Fig. 4, 5: *Running Scenes in* Revanche *and* Jules et Jim

But, more importantly, in several scenes of the film, spaces are hybridized through the practice of pastiche, as the director re-frames or directly alludes to a handful of monumental, easily identifiable scenes from classical Hollywood and Nouvelle Vague films[11]: the running scene from Francois Truffaut's *Jules and Jim* (1962) (Fig. 4. 5) – *Revanche*'s most palpable reference, partly because of the love story that grows between a woman and two best friends with common, homophonic names – is now set in the centre of a Greek metropolis; the scene set in the bathtub that reframes the scene from Godard's *Contempt* (1963) translates, for the needs of Vergitsis's plot, the domesticized cracks in the couple's relationship. In the reenactment of the main musical act from *Singing in the Rain* (Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen, 1952), actor Antonis Kafetzopoulos is a modern version of Gene Kelly, who wears jeans and sneakers instead of a formal suit and reminds us the time passing. As for the reference to Éric Rohmer's *Claire's Knee* (1970), the fact that it is only spoken of and not visualized, highlights the French director's distinctive, discursive style of filmmaking, which is distinguished by the extensive dialogic parts. The reference to these art-house films is not coincidental. Similarly to the method of the Nouvelle Vague auteurs, who expressed their admiration for classical Hollywood films, pastiche in *Revanche* delivers a method of archiving common references for the future,

[11] The discernibility of the filmic references could raise methodological questions regarding the difference between pastiche and intertextuality. In this paper, I opt for the constitutional definition by Richard Dyer, who recognizes "pastiche as a kind of imitation that you are meant to know is an imitation" (2007: 13) and endorse Genette's argument on the non-satiric elements of pastiche (1997). Moreover, Jameson's conceptualization of pastiche as a retake of modernity (1991: 21–25) proved highly relevant in the revision of a Nouvelle Vague scene. For an analysis of pastiche as a practice "in part derived from the semiotic model of intertextuality," see Hoesterey (2001).

rather than recollecting memories from the past. By drawing comparisons between the social conditions within which French New Wave films were produced and the pitfalls of Greek cultural reality in the 1980s, Vergitsis seems to suggest that critical filmmaking often stems from a feeling of urgency (thus returning to the use of the earthquake as metaphor). At the same time, and considering the Nouvelle Vague as epitome of independent cinema, Vergitsis explicitly states that cinema should be independent from institutional support in his interview with film critic Aktsoglou (1983: 77).[12]

In the expansive sequence that follows Yannis's realization that he has fallen in love with Eva (00:22:36–30:40), the hero wanders in the streets of the city with his car, following an ambulance that carries an earthquake victim and trying to handle his sexual arousal. He seeks refuge to his friend Vassilis's place, which is re-framed as a mystical cave. Yannis sees the body of a naked man, who is evidently Vassilis's lover, on a couch in the entrance hall – implying that physical, bodily expressions of desire are excluded from the dark room where he will be staying, on the other end of a dark corridor. When Yannis enters the room where he will be accommodated, he starts exploring the props and mise-en-scène, which the viewer gets to know through a panning shot: Yannis plays the piano, wears the detective's trench coat, examines photos that are hanged on the wall, touches the head of a fake lion (the logo of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios), plays with a ventriloquist's dummy (which can also be interpreted as a reference to the anthology horror film *Dead of Night* [1945] or later films that belong to a different genre, such as *Knock on Wood* [1954]). All these elements of transformation and allure prepare the viewer for what Tom Gunning names *exhibitionist* cinema in his discussion of the *dispositif* of early cinema,[13] a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator (Gunning 1990: 57).

[12] In his interview with Babis Aktsoglou, Vergitsis recalls a discussion he had with an anonymized director in the beginning of his career. The director was complaining that there is no way to shoot a film in Greece when there is no available steadicam in the country. Vergitsis's response to her was: "Have you ever written a script that necessitates the use of steadicam?" Shortly after, he argues that directors shouldn't wait for public funds to shoot a film (Aktsoglou [1983: 77]).

[13] Gunning stresses that exhibitionist cinema is contrasted to the voyeuristic aspect of narrative cinema analysed by Christian Metz. Similarly, whereas the French school of semiotics (Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Comolli) use Plato's allegory of the cave as a model that showcases the cinematic apparatus' technical formulas for visual manipulation, Vergitsis sheds light on the depths of a sanctum to establish contact with the audience.

Fig. 6: *Animating Automata*

The momentary appearance of Yannis's hand leaping out from the box where he is fully hidden (Fig. 6), emulating an early automaton, further highlights the paradox of investing cinema and all technical assemblages that have primarily a mimetic function with animist readings, and consequently draws the dialectics between mechanics and metaphysics (according to Baudry, "the ideological function of art […] is to provide the tangible representation of metaphysics" [1974: 42]). The sequence continues with a dream-like scene of a sexual encounter between Yannis and a random girl, where the match cut that includes rapidly alternating black frames creates a flickering effect – an effect that was established in the opening sequence as an intrinsic part of the cinematic *dispositif* – brings together shots where Yannis's father sits on a director's chair and leads a film crew, exerting the manipulating powers of the ancestors. The flickering screen echoes the flickering lights of the ambulance and the hotel's neon sign that dominate the previous scenes, but also leads to the next scene where we see Yannis's face as a canvas where the flickering of another screen is reflected – thus pointing at the opening sequence of the film. From the reflection of light, we move to the mirror reflection, where the hero watches himself in the glass surface. He uses both his thumbs and index fingers in a well-recognisable gesture of drawing an imaginary frame, until a portable camera is found in his hands (Fig, 7).[14] The film follows a point-of-view angle – a kind of shot that will only be repeated towards the end of the film, when Yannis approaches his parents' place (01:21:32): The return to the roots can only be accomplished through the subjective exploration of the active present, and not the speculative reiteration of the past. This sequence pulls the hero (and, in extension, the viewer) in a guided exploration of an expanded cinematic *dispositif* and pushes

[14] This scene in the mirror is also indicative of the director's method and thus is essentially reflective and self-referential. Due to the technical limitations of the model of the camera, Vergitsis had to use a complex system of mirrors to shoot aerial shots, as he explains in his interview with Aktsoglou (1983: 77).

them back to the surface, to a here-and-now which lacks any specific temporal specifications, where the viewing subject is identified with the viewed subject and is ready to take control of their spatiotemporal environments.

Fig. 7: *Reflective Shot*

Fig. 8: *Breaking the Wall*

In the closing sequence of the film (1:34:21 – 1:35:47), Yannis invites Claire, a woman he has only met on the phone, in his private room that he has drastically transformed by opening a hole on the wall, which features the caption: "nothing is immoral in love, as long as all three parts agree". Before hanging up, he takes a look at his ventriloquist's dummy, allowing the viewer to consider that the source of the sound might not correspond to the logical supposition. The room gets dark in the next scene and a female silhouette is seen through the door. For the next two minutes, the screen remains black, as we listen to the characters whispering, only occasionally and partly lit by the flame of a match. When the female voice utters "What are you thinking?", a beam light coming from the right (similarly to the first scene) breaks the wall (Fig. 8). Once again, the following

shot is a close up to the main character's face, only now the light is not flickering, but direct and glaring. As Eva's desired face appears in this open ending that resists the viewer's horizon of interpretation, the characters rapture the darkness of cinema, the "very substance of reverie" (Barthes 1986: 346), and the viewers witness the duplicity of the cinematic experience. In his dissection of the experience of the cinematic *dispositif*, Roland Barthes asserts that "there is another way of going to the movies (besides being armed by the discourse of counter-ideology); by letting oneself be fascinated *twice over*, by the image and by its surroundings" (1986: 349). Inspiring Rancière's critique to the redundancy of Marxist theory of alienation and the futility of a conventional call to arms[15] (Rancière 2011: 41–45), this last shot exemplifies a Rancièrean "pensive image" that provides a zone of indeterminacy between contradictory stages of existence (between active and passive), which is the only possible space for emancipatory thought. In *Revanche*, it is not "dialectics that breaks bricks" (according to the Marxist-Situationist film of the same title [René Vienet, 1973]), but the opening of technical assemblages and seemingly hermetic apparatuses through thought processes that are not based on representation, but return to the affect of primordial systems of visuality and mediality; and do not invest in the resolution of the past, but in the tentativeness of the ephemeral. In this regard, the celebrated "breaking of the fourth wall" does not refer to the invisible border between the viewer and the screen but is also an innate attribute of any filmmaking and meaning-making process.

Revanche can be considered a pioneering film in Greek cinema for many different reasons: the openness of the director in the filmmaking process, which included the active participation of the actors and the rest of the crew in the development of the script, but also of the shooting itself (in his interview with Aktsoglou [1983: 76], the director recounts his crew's amazement every time he stopped the shooting to summon a collective meeting); the almost unanimously positive reception of critics and audiences alike, which was also translated in the box office; the film's receptiveness in imprinting a society in transition; its abundance of sophisticated film references. But first and foremost, *Revanche* is worth re-examining in light of contemporary filmmaking, as it is an exemplary case of exhibitionist cinema that acquaints the viewer with the structure, function, and dynamics of the cinematic *dispositif*, proving that on the reverse side of an (ideological) apparatus, it can emancipate viewers of the past, present, and future.

[15] In his turn, Vergitsis himself was very critical of the Left, even though he considered himself a leftist; in one of his interviews, he went so far as to confess the following: "In my first film, I just wanted to note that all of us who declare we 're leftists, are crap. That's where I stopped, that was my blindspot. Now in *Revanche* I've passed to the point where I can say 'You know, we are crap, but we should somehow move on.'" (Deliolanis et al. 1984: 30).

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