Twice born: Dionysos Films and the establishment of a Greek film circuit in Australia[1]

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ABSTRACT

From the late 1940s until the late 1970s Melbourne was home to a dynamic Greek cinema circuit made up of some 30 different inner-city and suburban venues operated by a handful of vertically integrated exhibition/distribution businesses. Dionysos Films was amongst the first Greek film exhibition/distribution companies to form in Australia and from 1949 until 1956 it operated with little significant competition, establishing the parameters for a diasporic Greek film circuit that stretched across regional and metropolitan Australia and into New Zealand. This article measures the shadow cast by Dionysos Films (and its charismatic proprietor Stathis Raftopoulos) over the history of Antipodean Greek film experiences and the implications that this neglected aspect of Australian and Greek film history has for our understanding of the national cinemas in both countries.

KEYWORDS

migrant audience
foreign-language film
art cinema
cinema-going
diaspora
Greek cinema

[1] This is an updated version of Deb Verhoeven's article 'Twice born: Dionysos Films and the establishment of a Greek film circuit in Australia', originally published by Intellect in 2007 in the *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 1: 3, pp. 275-298.

INTRODUCTION

> 'How differently Dionysus spoke to me!'
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872)

Dionysos, the Greek god of wine, occupies a peculiar place in the Olympian pantheon. The patron deity of agriculture and theatre, Dionysos belonged to two realms, mortal and divine, and according to various birth stories, he was born twice after a difficult and contested gestation. For post-war Greek migrants in Australia experiencing the manifold and complicated naissance of life in the diaspora, the name Dionysos held a further significance. Dionysos Films was one of the first commercial companies to undertake regular Greek film screenings in Australia and was the precursor to a highly accomplished transnational business enterprise specializing in the screening of films to Greek diasporic audiences.

The breadth and success of this film circuit gives rise to a series of questions about the originary claims typically made for national cinemas, claims that rely on defining acts of creative production (rather than consumption) and a preference for straightforward attributions of patrimony (Greek cinema belongs to, or arises from, Greece; Australian cinema to Australia and so on). In Australia such originary tropes are especially evident in discourses of a 1970s film 'renaissance' in which the national cinema is reconceived entirely as a domestic production industry. And yet in one of the creation myths of the Australian film renaissance, the catalyst for reconfiguring 'Australian' cinema as a history of film production centres on an experience of cinema-going, in fact a very personal experience of going to the movies. Indeed in the mind of its self-proclaimed progenitor, Phillip Adams, the very genesis of the Australian film production revival in the 1970s can be directly traced to his teenage experiences watching foreign-language films at Melbourne's Savoy cinema. For Adams, it was these European film experiences, notably his viewing of *One Summer of Happiness* (Mattson, 1951), that both inspired him to become a film-maker and suggested a destination for his later research into the revival of the local film industry.

FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CINEMA AND THE AUSTRALIAN FILM RENAISSANCE

Reliving his early cinephilia, Adams describes himself and his fellow audience members at the Savoy with typical self-deprecating humour: 'On the one hand, our pulses quickened to Bill Haley and the Comets. On the other, we acned intellectuals saw ourselves as *European*' (Adams 1982: 4; original emphasis). But despite their

happy internal accommodation of both European intellectualism and American popular culture, Adams also describes how this same audience understood their attendance at the Savoy as if it involved crossing a significant threshold:

> It took a lot of courage to go to the Savoy for the first time. Finally whether it was all that cappuccino heating the blood or simply the sap of puberty rising, we made it across the foyer. And in 90 enthralling minutes our lives were changed forever. We realized that foreign countries weren't merely travel posters, that human relations could be filmed with a simplicity that would have horrified Hollywood, and that there was something beyond sex – beyond shelter-shed gropings and backstall fumblings – that involved a deep and transforming emotion […] We went into the Savoy as smutty little boys and came out as lovers. (Adams 1982: 4)

In this brief anecdote Adams overlays mutually expanding geo-spatial, cultural, intellectual and moral horizons all of which coalesce around a particular experience of cinema-going. Adams's description of his attendance at the Savoy gives full force to the complete range of meanings that have come to be associated with the idea of being 'worldly'; in which being *European* is allied with a kind of sexual and emotional maturity not otherwise found in (Hollywood) cinema or in mainstream 1950s Australian culture. Here Adams follows the lead of many art-film critics and aficionados who seek to distinguish the art cinema's 'eroticism' from the disreputable sexuality of exploitation genres; even though art-film exhibitors themselves were perhaps not so circumspect, frequently resorting to sexual innuendo in promoting these films to prospective audiences (Hawkins 2000: 22).

More specifically, Adams proposes a direct link between the distribution and exhibition of foreign-language art cinema in Australia and the later arrival of the Australian production industry itself:

> So when Barry Jones and I finally went round the world to see how we might revive the Australian industry, it was no accident that we made a beeline to Stockholm. It was the Swedish industry, not America's, that was to be our model. (Adams 1982: 4; see also Verhoeven 1995)

If the revitalized production industry took Adams's elaborations of his new-found 'worldliness', in all its metaphoric glory, to mean that there might exist a reciprocal global interest in Australian film then they were sorely disappointed. On safer ground, cultural nationalists embraced the Australian cinema's 'European turn', as described by Adams, by articulating its cultural relevance as an example of the local resistance to the overpowering charms of Hollywood (for example, Dermody and

Jacka [1987]; see Verhoeven [2006] for a further elaboration on this point).

This demarcation between the Australian national cinema of the 1970s and its Hollywood nemesis is expressed in a series of interlinked binary oppositions that centre on the geo-conceptualization of film production sites for their organizing structure:

Hollywood	vs	National art cinemas of Europe or Asia
Moral and emotional clichés	vs	Frank sexual, emotional content
Formulaic plots	vs	Innovative narrative structures
Prescribed visual codes	vs	Inventive, sometimes experimental aesthetics

In this arrangement Australian film production is typically aligned with foreign-language art cinema as an alternative to Hollywood genre film. From the mid-1970s this arrangement also held sway over the way the exhibition of Australian films was organized in Australia. For many years after the film revival one of the typical ways to see an Australian film was at an art-house cinema where the local idiom could be heard amidst a wide array of foreign-language films.

The organizing structure outlined above is most meaningful if it is widely assumed that the dominant cinema (Hollywood) is both universal and without accent. If the type of US accent popularized in Hollywood movies, sometimes described as 'mainstream US English' or MUSE (Lippi-Green 1997), is considered the norm, then accented films (i.e. those using non-MUSE dialogue including those in the local version of English) might as well be 'foreign-language' movies; or so the logic goes. The infamous story of how the Australian film *Mad Max* (Miller, 1979) was dubbed into MUSE for its American release is often cited as a case in point, though there were others such as Peter Weir's *The Cars That Ate Paris* (1974) which was re-cut, dubbed and re-titled *The Cars That Ate People* for its US release. By the 1970s, reviews of Australian films in the US trade journal *Variety* frequently commented on the incomprehensibility of the accents, and key industry figures saw the international perception of Australian films as 'foreign' as an obstacle to the industry's success (see Walsh [2000] for an elaboration of these debates; also Sergrave [2004: 171–72]). But industry figures might equally have wished Australian films were *more* 'foreign', thus enabling their distribution in America along the same lines as European films (also derived from middle-sized national cinemas). Instead, in the United States, Australian films like *The Cars That Ate Paris* were considered not quite foreign and aesthetically high-brow enough to 'deserve'

art-house subtitles and yet not American and generic enough to avoid dubbing. What remains of interest is the way Australian films of the revival period were attributed the status of foreign-language films in both international and domestic markets.

In fact the combined programming of local and foreign-language films in art-house cinemas highlights an aspect of Australian film consumption that is generally overlooked in cultural analysis. Rather than simply stressing a neat division between majority audience submission to Hollywood dominance and minority audience commitment to Hollywood's vulnerable Others (both 'foreign' and local) it might also be valuable to characterize the screening of foreign-language cinema *alongside* locally accented films as enabling the 'foreign' to play a more multifaceted role in shaping the substance of Australian culture, more so than previously assumed by media theorists and historians. For example, the detailed commercial and cultural processes by which an audience for *both* foreign-language art cinema and Australian film was interpellated and normalized in the 1970s suggests that there was, and perhaps is, a more dynamic relationship between developments in the organization and experience of cinema-going, and wider polity shifts such as the mainstream promulgation of multiculturalism. And as with most oppositional logics, there is a lot missing from the carefully divided picture, Hollywood versus Others: the failure to see Hollywood films in the auteurist mode for example (as art); the failure to understand how for many Australians the American cinema has historically spoken a 'familiar but foreign' form of English (a charge not usually laid against British films); the failure to recognize the international (and Hollywood) dimensions of so much 'art-cinema' production; the failure to see how imagining Hollywood's 'otherness' contributed to its success with distant, aspiring audiences; more specifically a failure to see how, from the 1950s onwards, the consumption of Hollywood cinema in Australia was literally being de-familiarized with new audience demographics and market segmentations emerging in the wake of technological and social change.

For the purpose of my research there is another glaring deficit in this particular creation story and this is the absent account of the foreign-language *popular* cinema which was being widely screened in Australia at the very same time Phillip Adams sat savouring the delights of his subtitled Swedish temptresses. Alongside the art cinemas, and occasionally in cooperation with them, there existed a network of venues screening non-art cinema fare to large audiences of migrants. Whilst the venues were language-specific in orientation, the range of films screened at them was not. The programming of an international selection of popular films at Greek venues for instance meant that audiences attending these cinemas could see

(sometimes subtitled) films from Hollywood as well as other popular non-English-language films such as those produced in India, Turkey, Egypt, Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and Hong Kong. The first commercial release of a Dutch film in Australia, the domestic hit comedy *Wonderlijke Leven van Willem Parel* (Gerard Rutten, 1955) occurred in a Greek cinema. When things got tight and audience numbers contracted in the late 1970s, these same cinemas began screening R-rated films as well as their staple fare of comedy and melodrama. Greek audiences in 1950s and 1960s Melbourne experienced their domestic cinema like art-house Australians did some decades later with Greek films typically programmed in combination with 'foreign-' (i.e. not Greek-) language films. So whilst Adams, along with a (mostly) Anglo Saxon audience at the Savoy watched, let us say, Elli Lambeti's tribulations in Michael Cacoyannis's movie *To Telefteo Psema*/ *A Matter of Dignity* (1958), just a few city blocks away a booming Greek cinema circuit could be found – screening popular melodramas and comedies starring domestic divas such as Aliki Vouyouklaki and Rena Vlahopoulou to migrant audiences in Melbourne, more widely to audiences in other capital cities around Australia, to audiences in regional centres and as far afield as New Zealand and South Africa; a circuit that had already screened *A Matter of Dignity* some months prior to the Savoy.

It was not uncommon for films screening as popular melodramas in one venue to become the stuff of serious art down the road at another (and vice versa). As Victor Perkins notes, the distinction between art cinema and popular cinema in largely one of context:

> Thus a film fully accessible to its French audience will no longer belong to the popular cinema when it arrives in England equipped with subtitles […] Factors of these kinds contribute to processes whereby movies popular in their countries of production enter the structures of art cinema abroad. (Perkins 1992: 196)

Perkins's observation about subtitles, however, is also culturally specific. Hollywood movies, for example, were screened with subtitles in diasporic Greek cinemas in Melbourne (as they were and are around the world) but they are not thought of as art films on this basis. What defines the distinction between Melbourne's Greek cinemas and a cinema like the Savoy is the experience of a language in common both between audience members and on the screen. As Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau (1992: 10) note in their introduction to *Popular European Cinema*, 'language is part of the complicity between film and audience'.

ACCOUNTING FOR GREEK FILM EXHIBITION AND RECEPTION IN AUSTRALIA

'Overall, I consider myself an Australian, but I'd like to think that, when it comes to my film language, I am Greek.'

Bill Mousoulis (1999a)

For the most part, Greek film exhibition is not part of the story of the Australian cinema: Phillip Adams was not the only one seemingly blind to this multi-language popular cinema circuit. Many contemporary members of the trade were also ignorant of its scope. For example, prominent art-film distributor Sidney Blake claimed in 1963: 'there are four foreign film theatres in Sydney, three in Melbourne, and regular outlets in the other cities […] My films keep them busy most of the time' (Higham 1963: 18). Yet, if his numbers are wildly inaccurate (there were at least nine venues operating in the Greek circuit alone in Melbourne in 1963) Blake does posit a more interesting binary arrangement in his account of the foreign-language film market in Australia:

> Of course I have to bear in mind that there are two publics. The one is made up of about 80 p.c. migrants and 20 p.c. Australians – this is the non-intellectual, the non-arty public. This public wants a strong story, stars they've heard of at home if they're migrants, and an opening that isn't boring, that grips them right away […] And then of course there is sex. One must remember that. And then there's the other public – of students. There is now a big enough audience of students to fill a theatre for an arty film for quite some time. (Higham 1963: 18)

One must remember sex. In describing only two audiences for foreign-language films, Blake differs from Adams in that he puts sex in with the 'non-intellectual, non-arty' audience (made up mostly of migrants) and not with students who watch art films (which apparently do not feature sex).

However, the evidence suggests that up until the liberalization of censorship legislation in the early 1970s, films screened at Greek migrant venues were for the most part family-oriented comedies, religious epics and melodramas. As far as this circuit goes, censorship records and anecdotal accounts indicate that the key problem for the censor was not usually sexual content but the frequency of violent scenes featuring knives (Vlattas 2006; Anagnostou 2006b). In 1972, when R-rated films were first screened at the Greek cinemas, they were advertised separately from the regular Greek cinema programme notices in the *Neos Kosmos* newspaper,

one of Melbourne's two Greek newspapers. These R-rated films were initially shown at one cinema only, the Liberty (which did not show family films), though shortly afterwards they also began screening at the Victoria and the Kinema (together forming an 'inner circuit' within the Greek venues). In remembering sex, the family-oriented entertainment of the Greek circuit seems to have been mislaid.

A possible explanation for why the screening of popular European cinema has been omitted from general accounts of Australian film history might lie in the imprecise language of their description: as examples of 'foreign'-language film exhibition. In her lonely volume *Hollywood Down Under*, the key work in Australian film history specifically devoted to the history of film exhibition, Diane Collins gives generally scant treatment to the screening of what she calls foreign-language films in the post-war period within which she alludes even more fleetingly to 'ethnic films' i.e. non-art-house foreign-language cinema (Collins 1987: 242–46). Greek cinemas were not attended by Greek migrants in search of 'foreign'-language films, though many of the films screened in these venues were also heard in non-Greek languages. Nevertheless trade journals and later commentary continue to describe these cinemas as 'foreign-language' venues and even accounting for the commercial logic behind this ethnocentrism (Hollywood as the normative measure of the 'foreign') it still does not make sense since it was not uncommon for Hollywood films to be shown at them. Strictly speaking they are multi-language, mostly popular genre (i.e. non-art) cinema venues.

Another, perhaps more obvious, explanation is that, with the notable exception of Philip Adams's account, the existence of these cinemas is not directly linked to the project of Australian national film production. Migrant audiences, like audiences more generally, do not figure prominently in mainstream Australian film history, as doggedly interested as it is in all aspects of film production (Bowles et al. 2007: 96–97). So instead, when Greek-Australians are discussed in relation to the cinema, it is invariably to acknowledge their participation in the local industry as film-makers (Mousoulis 1999a, 1999b) or in terms of their representation in locally made films (e.g. Damousi and Freiberg 2003).

Bill Mousoulis's speculative account of Greek-Australian film production does make some interesting gestures towards incorporating the experience of film viewing into his analysis. He begins by trying to understand the relatively high proportion of Greek-Australian film-makers actively producing work across a range of genres, including notable directors such as Nadia Tass, Alex Proyas, John Tatoulis, George Miller, Nick Giannopoulos, Aleksi Vellis, Alkinos Tsilimidos, Ana Kokkinos and Stavros Kazantzidis (to name only a selection). Of these directors he asks two

interrelated questions: 'Is your film language Greek? Is our film language Greek?' Mousoulis is working here with an expanded definition of 'film language', referring to the formal structure of film style as well as the philosophies, the ideas, the feelings contained in the films. Thus in creating a typology of the films made by Greek-Australian film-makers according to their 'language', Mousoulis identifies in the work of some of these directors a 'Hellenic sensibility'. He then continues by posing (but not really answering) a further question regarding the audience – 'Is it only Greeks who can understand these "Greek" films?' – in which he tantalizingly proposes the 'Hellenic sensibility' as both a category of production but also reception:

> Perhaps we Greeks are able to see things others cannot. And maybe then it is our responsibility to not let that seeing die. Maybe we can advise others on how to look, how to feel, when it comes to watching certain films. (Mousoulis 1999a)

For Mousoulis the Hellenic sensibility he identifies (but does not really elaborate) represents an alternative to the primary modes of watching permitted by American cinema. In this way of thinking, 'seeing' is really a category of production rather than film viewing. Mousoulis's real interest is in how Greek-Australian *film-makers* 'see' or at best, enable their audiences to see, a key assumption also taken up in the short debate that occurred in the article's wake. In 'Are Their Eyes Greek?', Vicky Tsaconas (2000) takes issue with Mousoulis on the scope of his understanding of Hellenic sensibility but reiterates the key underlying idea that 'seeing' is most important as an aspect of the film-maker's rather than the audience's experience (to the extent that film-makers are not also audience members).

In so quickly abandoning the idea that 'film language' might be as much about dialogue as it is a matter for visual analysis, neither Mousoulis nor Tsaconas consider seriously the role of hearing or listening (or speaking) as important defining features for understanding migrant cinema practices (and most especially as a feature of cinema-going). This omission is all the more telling for the discussion of Greek-Australian, or more broadly 'Hellenic', audience practices given the prominence of recent accounts of historical audience behaviour in Greece. Dimitris Eleftheriotis, for example, has written about the importance of speech and other forms of communication in the practice of open-air cinema-going in Greece in the 1960s in terms of the wider idea of 'interruption' (Eleftheriotis 2001: 184–92). For Eleftheriotis interruption occurs across all aspects of the cinema experience; the grind programming, the location of open-air cinemas amidst other buildings and activities, the critical role of the refreshment bar, the possibility of intrusive weather

conditions and so on. Interruptions from the audience include all the expected reactions to a film – laughing or crying, shouting, whistling, clapping – but might also consist of other forms of participation, such as the recitation of well-known lines of dialogue and the asking or answering of questions on behalf of the on-screen characters. Discussions and arguments amongst audience members were not uncommon, with regular interjections arising from the floor concerning the quality of the film and more specifically the actions, motivations or morality of the characters. Eleftheriotis is especially concerned to point out the vast gap between this description of audience behaviour and the presumption on the part of a substantial amount of film theory, that the spectator is friendless, silent and wholly susceptible to the allure of the image.

Eirini Sifaki finds in Eleftheriotis's description of Greek cinema-going a type of Hellenic sensibility that is very different from the one proposed by Mousoulis. For Sifaki: 'there is something inherently Greek about open-air cinemas, a tradition of oral culture blended with cinema-going, creating a particular viewing experience' (Sifaki 2003: 249). The further inference to be drawn from Eleftheriotis's and Sifaki's respective observations of Greek cinema-going is that whilst conventional film theory and history has given preference to issues arising from textual analysis, even when a hypothetical model of film viewing is instated, it relies on a specious, *culturally specific* set of ideas about cinema attendance: assumptions that rest on the idea that it is the films themselves that are of principal interest to audience members rather than the social experience of attending the cinema, for instance; assumptions about the primacy of the image-text in producing meaning for viewers rather than meaning arising from within a tradition of 'orality' in the form of dialogue and exchange; assumptions about the necessity for the viewing of films to be characterized by 'intactness' (both in terms of textual completion but also the 'coherence' of the film's reception) rather than understanding it to be typically fragmented and interrupted. These assumptions would also seem to apply to the vast majority of film theory produced in Australia and which might go someway to explaining the absence of Greek migrant audience experiences in the historical record of the Australian cinema.

The important economic role of Greek film distributors and exhibitors in the post-war period is also glaringly absent from structural accounts of the Australian film industry. Instead the early, pre-war history of Greek exhibition activity is recorded in community histories and biographies such as Peter Prineas's *Katsehamos and the Great Idea* (2006) or Jean Michaelides's work (1987) on cinema pioneer Sir Nicholas Laurantus. A notable exception is Kevin Cork's concerted and as yet unpublished research on the Greek film exhibitors active in regional and rural New South Wales

from the early years of the twentieth century until the late 1960s (Cork 1998; the work has been posted on the Internet). Cork's statistics are immediately impressive. He identifies 116 rural cinemas in New South Wales during this period that were operated at some point by Greeks across 57 different towns. Of the 66 Greek exhibitors the overwhelming majority (some 61 operators) were owners of a café or catering business when they entered the movie trade and they were responsible for the construction of 34 new cinemas. For the most part, Cork's thesis is concerned with the impact of these Greek family cinema businesses on local rural communities and vice-versa and Cork is quick to point out how this pre-war generation of Greek film exhibitors differed from those based in metropolitan areas in the post-war period:

> People may remember the mass immigration of the 1950s-60s and recall the ethnic cinemas around Sydney and Wollongong that were run by Greeks and screened mostly foreign dialogue films. The exhibitors at these were small in number and contributed little to the history of this state when compared to the much larger, earlier group of Greek immigrants who screened English-dialogue pictures to millions of British-Australians in the days before television. (Cork 1998: n.p.)

Cork is particularly dismissive of what he sees as the 'enclave' entertainment businesses established in the wake of the popular uptake of television:

> By the late 1950s, when cinemas that screened English-dialogue films were closing as television increased in popularity, the few Greek ethnic film exhibitors were able to buy cinemas in or close to enclave areas and screen foreign-dialogue films to those who craved cheap entertainment in their native language. […] A negative aspect to the 'enclave' exhibitors was that, knowing the low socio-economic status of their patrons, they were disinclined to service the cinemas which were allowed to deteriorate to a point where, in at least two situations, government agencies forced them to close. […] The Greek exhibitors who came to New South Wales before the mass immigrations of the post-war years were a different type of immigrant. They were not able to seek the security of enclaves and exploit their compatriots' lack of English and homesickness because they, themselves, were in country towns where usually no more than one or two Greek families lived. As exhibitors, they screened English-dialogue films because their audiences comprised British-Australians. Yet, they did so not out of regret, but out of the desire to become economically independent and to break the peasant cycle from which they and their forebears had come. They could all claim an Hellenic heritage, but the areas from which they came were different in their local customs and traditions. What did bind them together was their peasant background and, if

> they wanted to break out of that cycle, they had to take some major steps during the course of their lives. It was in the taking of these steps, making decisions to move out of refreshment rooms and into motion picture exhibition, that broke the peasant tie and made integration in the host country more easily achieved. (Cork 1998: n.p.)

For Cork, the post-war Greek exhibitors are of limited historical interest for a number of reasons: they 'exploited' the homesickness of their compatriots with 'cheap' Greek rather than quality Hollywood and British films; they deliberately failed to maintain an acceptable standard of accommodation for these entertainments because they did not respect their audience who were primarily Greek working class rather than rural 'British-Australians'; they did not encourage cultural integration but created instead myopic 'enclaves'; and they were not sufficiently aspirational in their business motivations but were prompted by 'regret'. These are highly presumptuous charges and deserve some detailed response.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND DIMENSIONS OF THE GREEK DIASPORIC CINEMA CIRCUIT IN MELBOURNE

'Oh yes we saw dripping dramas, oh did we see dripping dramas, everything was a drama.'
Olga Black (2006)

The most rapid period of Greek migration to Melbourne began in the wake of the bilateral agreement on immigration between Australia and Greece that was signed in 1952. Between 1952 and 1974, some 220,000 Greeks came to Australia. Population statistics give some indication of the scale and pace of this movement to Melbourne in particular. In 1947 there were a mere 2,500 Greeks in Melbourne. By 1971 the city boasted more than 98,000. Melbourne remains the ethno-linguistic centre of Hellenism in Australia with a concentration of approximately 215,000 Greeks and Greek Cypriots compared to approximately 160,000 in New South Wales (Tamis 2005: 63). These figures probably underestimate the number of Greeks in Australia, since temporary Greek migrants would have been missed in the periods between censuses and census documents fail accurately to distinguish ethnic identity from nationality thereby missing ethnic Greeks born in places such as Turkey, Egypt or even the Australia-born children of Greek parents. On this basis Melbourne is sometimes described as the third largest Greek city (after Athens and Thessaloniki) though variations in the definition of the term 'city' suggest considerable caution is required in making this claim.

Between 1949 and the early 1980s a thriving cinema circuit made up of some 30 different inner-city and suburban venues operated to service this large Greek diasporic audience in metropolitan Melbourne. The first publicly promoted screening of Greek films in Melbourne occurred in 1949. Dionysos Films presented *I Foni tis Kardias/The Voice of the Heart* (Ioannopoulou, 1943) a film that had been previously screened in Sydney by the Hellenic Talkies Company (operated by the Camillos Brothers) for which the company acted as agent. Dionysos, however, would very quickly overtake the Camillos Brothers as Australia's principal importer of Greek cinema. In the ten years that followed this pioneering screening around ten different exhibition/distribution businesses were established with varying degrees of success; the largest of the competing interests throughout this period was Dionysos Films.

Company founder, Stathis Raftopoulos (aka Stan Raftopoulos, Efstathios Raftopoulos, Stan Raft and 'Rafto the Magnificent') was a charismatic community figure; at any given time a poet, teacher, magician, printer, restauranteur, actor, prize-winning wrestler, film-maker, successful businessman and philanthropist (Figure 1). In regards to the latter, a percentage of profits earned from the Melbourne screenings of *The Voice of the Heart* (and later films) were used by Raftopoulos to assist the purchase of resources for schools in the newly established post-war Greek communities ('T.E.' 1970: n.p.). Raftopoulos was an active member of AHEPA, a key Greek philanthropic organization in the Australian diaspora, the Ithacan Philanthropic Society, the Greek Community Association, the Hellenic RSL sub-branch and the Greek-Australian Writer's Association. He was also a founding member of the Greek-Australian Cultural League of Melbourne (GACLM) and its vice president for some years. His civic contribution was recognized in 1982 when he received an MBE for his services to the Greek community. As a poet Raftopoulos was in great demand, particularly for his orations at funerals but also for his satirical epigrams both of which were based on a capacity to distil personal characteristics with pithy precision. But he was also happy to wheel out a poem or two during unexpected breaks in the movie programme. Author, and friend, Kyriakos Amanatidis notes that Raftopoulos's interest in cinema stemmed from a popularist leaning which was also evident in his approach to poetry (Amanatidis 2006). Raftopoulos never read from notes and seldom failed to move an audience. In Amanatidis's observation Raftopoulos, who arrived in Australia as a 14-year-old pre-war migrant, held a unique community position as an intermediary between the pre- and post-war Greek migrant cultures. Born on Ithaca in 1921, Raftopoulos moved to Australia in December 1934 following his father Spiro who had gone to Australia in 1922 and his grandfather who had emigrated in 1895, a typical chain migration pattern. Unlike his pre-war contemporaries he was not well integrated

into the Australian community, despite serving as an entertainer for the Australian military, and he maintained a very strong attachment to Ithaca (as both a destination and an idea) which he made manifest later in his life when he built a striking obelisk on the island, dedicating it to 'the memory of past generations who for a thousand years cultivated the soil of Ithaca, to remain here till the end of time'.

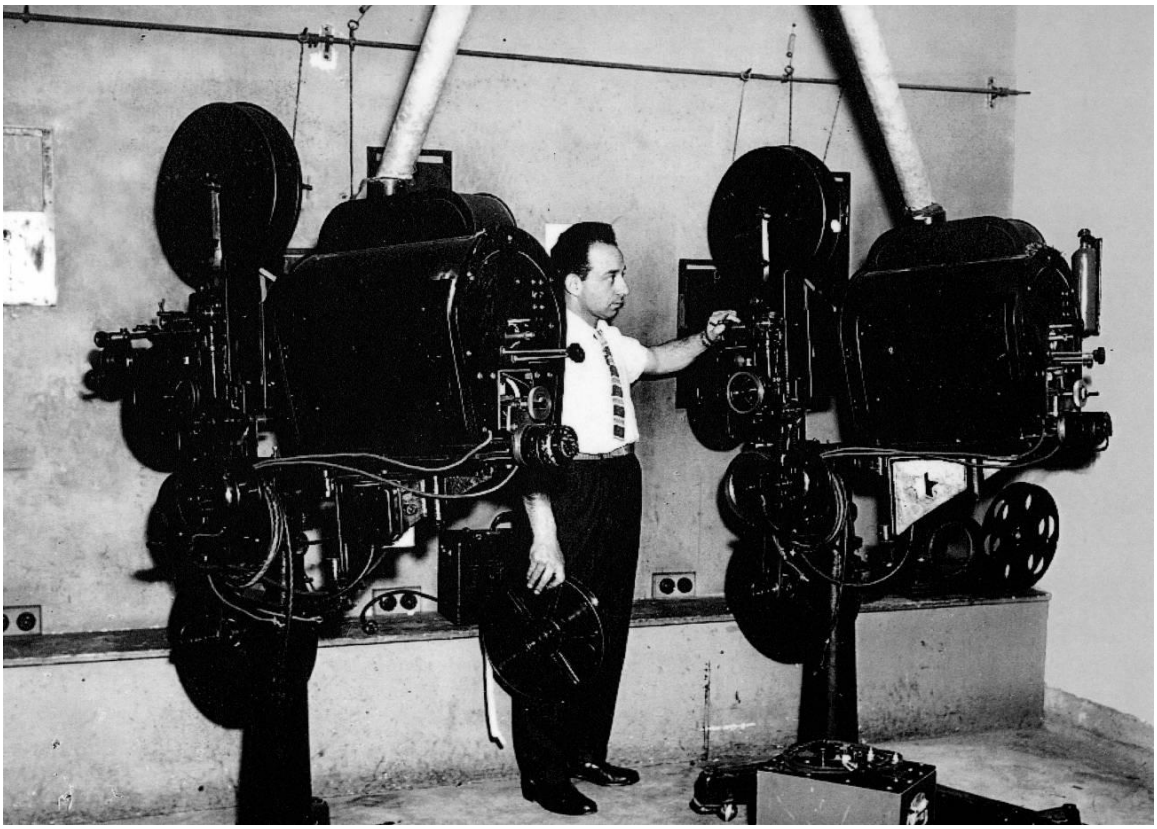

Fig 1: *Stathis Raftopoulos in the projection room at the Nicholas Theatre Hall, 1950, Courtesy Stathis Raftopoulos Collection, RMIT Australian-Greek Resource and Learning Centre.*

Between 1950 and 1954 Raftopoulos's company, Dionysos Films, was the sole distributor of Greek films in Australia but his success in establishing regular programmes during this period soon attracted imitators. At the very end of 1955 a new player, Andreas Papadopoulos (Olympia Films), screened the first of several films, *Orkistika Ekdhikissi/I Swore to Take Revenge* (Novak, 1952). In 1956, a spate of Greek film imports arrived and not all destined for the Greek cinemas. *Xypolito Tagma/The Barefoot Battalion* (Tallas, 1953) was shown in 1956 for the first time, brought by Ray Films, an Australian art-house organization, playing at the Lyceum Theatre in Bourke Street for a month and then later in Sydney. Angelo Mallos (Grecian Films) brought *Kyriakatiko Xypnima/The Sunday Awakening* (Cacoyannis, 1954). Kyriakos Nikitarakos (Parthenon Films) brought *Anihti Thalassa/The Open*

Sea (Meletopoulos, 1954) to the Carlton Theatre. Other names involved in the industry at this time, Dimitris Candiliotis, Panayiotis Raftolpoulos and others like Andreas Christodoulou (*Maria Pendayiotissa* [1957]), were only temporary operators bringing out one to two films at the most. But in 1957 a new competitor with serious credentials entered the fray. Peter Yiannoudes (New World Entertainment) exhibited with great success the very popular remake of the very popular *Golfo* (Laskos, 1955). Yiannoudes was an experienced operator having worked in the film industry in Cyprus from the age of 12 before coming to Australia where he worked for Hoyts as an assistant projectionist. Through his Cyprus networks and his personal relationship with Philopemen Finos, he was able to establish an exclusive arrangement with Finos Films giving him access to a regular stream of high-quality films. Like Raftopoulos, Yiannoudes was an energetic showman and between 1958 and 1961 he travelled to more than 150 towns and villages around Australia carrying a portable 16mm projector in order to screen films to even the smallest Greek communities using prints copied from the 35mm ones he had brought into the country for metropolitan exhibition.

Yiannoudes's experience in screening *Golfo* reveals something of the tenor of entrepreneurism required as new players tried to enter the market. Finos Films's productions had proved too expensive for rival distributors but Yiannoudes took a gamble that the higher quality of their films would attract larger audiences and that there was sufficient curiosity about the latest remake of this popular title. Unable to secure a venue to show his film because the main place for four-walled exhibition, Nicholas Hall (adjacent to Melbourne's 'Greek precinct' in Lonsdale Street), was alternatively booked week-in week-out by Raftopoulos and Papadopoulos respectively, Yiannoudes approached the Melbourne Town Hall, which seated more than 2,500 people. He imported 5,500 leaflets from Cyprus, handing them out at the local Greek Orthodox church. The screening was a great success selling out two weeks in advance with queues of people turned away on the night. All this came to the attention of Hoyts who operated the Capitol Cinema directly opposite the Town Hall. The following Monday Hoyts tried to shut Yiannoudes down. In order to guarantee his booking at the Melbourne Town Hall, Yiannoudes undertook training as a firefighter and the screenings continued. Four sell-out screenings later and Yiannoudes was more than adequately compensated for the higher prices demanded by Finos Films. Raftopoulos and Papadopoulos, on the other hand, were limited by the vastly smaller seating of the Nicholas Hall which, even with a sell-out success, could only accommodate around 300-400 people per screening.

After 1958, Greek films in Melbourne were primarily screened in existing cinema buildings, purchased or leased for the express purpose of showing films to Greek

audiences. Prior to this, venues were difficult to locate, especially in the city centre. This was not because there were no empty cinemas. Many cinemas had closed in the wake of declining attendances brought about in part by the introduction of television and other changes to both the organization of film exhibition and the economic circumstances of its consumers. Many of these cinemas, however, had caveats attached to their sale which prohibited their ongoing use as cinemas or, in one case, the Victoria in Richmond (operated by Stathis Raftopoulos's father, Spiro), which insisted on its use as a venue for English-language cinema only (i.e. it would only be sold as a going concern). Loula Anagnostou, who worked with her brother Stathis and father, Spiro in their respective exhibition enterprises describes the relative merits of four-walling (paying for the limited rights to use) multipurpose venues:

> Melbourne Town Hall took a lot more people. Nicholas Hall was a smaller hall, but it was cosy. We used to use that a lot, Nicholas Hall, it was lovely. But getting the screens up, in the Melbourne Town Hall, it was a great venture because the Town Hall wasn't made for films. It's very high. The auditorium there was only for music. So we had great difficulty in putting up screens and bringing them down again, because they were only allowed up for the nights that we had booked. It was pretty awkward at the time, if I remember rightly. Trying to get things going. (Anagnostou 2006b)

The practice of renting community or municipal halls meant that the Greek distributors/exhibitors were restricted to screening 5-6 films per month, and had no exclusive claims on a venue, so without a regular supply they could forfeit their venue booking to a competitor.

Dionysos Films was the benchmark for all competitors entering the market in this period. The company achieved great success with the 1955 release of *I Orea tou Peran/The Beauty from Peran* (Laskos, 1955) and a couple of years later repeated their good fortune with the colour remake of the first Greek talkie *O Agapetikos tis Voskopoulas/The Lover of the Shepherdess* (Paraskevas, 1956) not to be confused with the black-and-white film of the same title distributed in Australia at more or less the same time by Grecian Pictures. Raftopoulos was able to extend his audience capacity by screening interstate on a systematic basis, particularly in Adelaide and Sydney (but also travelling to Brisbane and Newcastle regularly). In addition, he dabbled with mixed success, in small-scale production activity. In December 1954 in Melbourne he screened, with a live voice-over commentary, *A Tour through Greece*, a 16mm documentary he produced about his trip to Greece the previous year. The screening proved to be highly controversial. English-language media reports

claimed that patrons had demanded their money back because of the poor quality of the film and that more than 16 police were called to calm the angry crowds. As the newspapers quoted one patron: 'The film was all taken out of focus. It is so blurry you cannot distinguish anything and the commentary is so bad that we cannot understand it – even though it is in Greek' (Anonymous 1954). Raftopoulos maintained that the controversy was the work of commercial competitors aiming to sabotage his screenings (Raftopoulos 1993; Anonymous 1954). Olga Black, an Australian-born Ithacan, attended one of the screenings in Melbourne, and clearly recalls the film's poor production values:

> It was badly taken, because he couldn't stabilise anything, especially on the boat the thing was going up and down with the boat, the camera, and as he was walking inside on the island, the camera was going with him. But when he was a stationary and taking something, yes, it was OK. (Black 2006)

The shaking may have been exacerbated by the fact that at one point in the film Raftopoulos inadvertently captured the 1953 Ithacan earthquake. But despite the less than ideal production values (and their palpable effect on the audience) Black does not recall the controversy and remembers the film fondly, her actual nausea a close affective approximation for the acquired home-sickness experienced by second-generation migrants:

> I remember getting quite green and seasick and just hanging on to my stomach and not wanting to make a fuss or hoping that nothing would happen to me that I would cause a big disturbance. Because I really didn't want to miss the film, because it was on Ithaca and it was Stathis with his home film, not video, which didn't exist, home film and he was on a boat himself trying to take the shore of Ithaca. And I can remember that clearly and it was going up and down and up and down and so was I and so was my stomach. That was the first film of Greece that I remember and it was in colour and beautiful sky, beautiful water and lovely greenery, because the island of Ithaca was quite green. (Black 2006)

In 1959 Yiannoudes also made a documentary about Macedonia that screened for ten weeks at the Fitzroy Town Hall ('Anything that was Macedonian was pretty popular in Melbourne') and many years later Raftopoulos and Yiannoudes would together attempt to produce a film called *The Long Shot*, this time a feature starring the 1970s screen-siren Abigail, but the film was never completed (Yiannoudes 2006).

The late 1950s was a period of especially intense business activity in the Greek

circuit. In 1957 Chris Louis, a Greek-Australian real estate agent who had arrived in Sydney from Cyprus in the late 1940s, took up a lease on the Lawson Theatre in Redfern. Louis, like Raftopoulos in Melbourne, was a significant figure in Sydney's Greek community. He was the first Greek exhibitor in Australia to show Greek films on a daily basis and before too long he had leased or acquired twelve cinemas around the city as well as interests interstate (Table 1). Possibly inspired by Louis's example, the three most successful Melbourne-based distributors, Dionysos, New World and Olympia, decided to join forces and formed Cosmopolitan Motion Pictures (CMP) in 1958, whereupon they began an ambitious programme of cinema purchases, often with financial partners who provided them lease-back arrangements. Perhaps the most controversial of these purchases was the 1961 acquisition of the National Theatre, also known, for obvious reasons, as *to nifopazaro* (the bride market), and which was located only metres from Stathis's father's cinema the Victoria.

The amalgamation of the three most active companies into one united Greek exhibition/distribution outfit is of considerable interest. Shortly afterwards, in 1959, an article in *Nation* predicted dire days ahead for the exhibition of foreign films in Australia which it attributed to the divisiveness of the sector: 'the distributing and exhibiting interests involved in foreign films compete and squabble amongst themselves and now, faced with a real crisis, may disappear one by one' (Wade 1959: 20). Whilst this may well have been true for the often precarious art-cinema circuits in Melbourne and Sydney in this period, it certainly did not represent developments in the Greek diasporic cinema.

What distinguished Raftopoulos, Papadopoulos and Yiannoudes from their other competitors was that they each went into the industry without another source of employment or income and they each brought different industry networks and skills to the table: Raftopoulos (with his philanthropic and community contributions); Papadopoulos (his business experience and connections in Greece); Yiannoudes (his film industry experience and Cypriot distribution connections). In forming CMP as a consortium of interests they aimed to make their business as professional as possible. The basis of the arrangement held that any films already contracted for distribution were exhausted as the property of the individual members but after an agreed period of time all titles became company assets and all forward decisions were made by all three. In addition, Yiannoudes and Louis (both Cypriots) were able to negotiate an agreeable division of territories to avoid conflict between Australia's two remaining large companies. CMP operated venues in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and West Australia. Louis exhibited throughout New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory and New Zealand. It is also possible, but not

documented, that the agreement entitled Louis to exhibit in South Africa. Film titles contracted to both companies were therefore distributed throughout all major Australian capitals, key regional centres and internationally. Much later in the 1970s, after Andreas Papadopoulos left CMP, a new company was formed, LYRA Films, comprising the Sydney-based Louis (L), the Melbourne-based Yiannoudes (Y) and Raftopoulos (RA).

Although there were many parallels in the business practices and audience experiences of the Melbourne and Sydney Greek cinema circuits there were many distinctions as well. For example, unlike CMP, Louis purchased several specific cinemas with a view to operating them for non-Greek audiences such as the Italian and Yugoslav communities respectively, a practice that did not occur in Melbourne because of the already well-developed Italian cinema circuit there. The sorts of films screened at these Italian venues, comedies and musicals, were highly popular with Greek audiences in Greece but because of the commercial distinction between the Greek and Italian circuits in Melbourne, Greek-Australian audiences were highly unlikely to have seen the popular comedies of Franco and Ciccio or the musicals of Al Bano or Romina Power for example (Eleftheriotis 2001: 193–94).

CMP was especially effective at limiting the number of potential competitors by aggressively blockading the Greek market through cinema purchases and options and using their capital to buy up large numbers of prints. Throughout the 1960s only two ongoing operations succeeded in breaking through. From 1959 Spiro Raftopoulos (Stathis's father) operated the Victoria as a venue specializing in subtitled English-language films for the Greek community in double bills with Greek features (see Bowles et al. 2007: 100-01 for a detailed discussion of the programming strategies at the Victoria). CMP eventually leased the theatre from him in 1967. At the end of the decade another competitor emerged. In 1966 Takis (Jim/Dimitris) Anagnostou (Stathis's brother-in-law), Nakis (Nikos) Raftopoulos (Stathis's brother), Jim and Nick Lazogas created United Cinematographic Enterprises which operated the Sunshine Theatre for a couple of years before it was taken over by CMP who ceased operating it but adopted their usual practice of maintaining an option on the building. CMP's competitiveness also extended to attempts from outside the Greek community to screen Greek films on a commercial basis. At one point an ambitious Italian importer brought in a Greek film provoking CMP to retaliate swiftly by importing fifty Italian films and threatening to screen them in cinemas close to the Italian circuit. Their near monopoly in the Melbourne Greek circuit also enabled them to control the price of the titles brought to Australia. Peter Yiannoudes remembers how Greek distributors became aware of the success of the Melbourne circuit and would try to lift their prices but CMP would simply

refuse to buy their films, both parties realizing that if they were not bought by CMP they would not be screened (Yiannoudes 2006a). This strategy actually took quite a bit of nerve on the part of CMP given the cyclical nature of Greek exhibition and it sometimes meant holding out quite a long time.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE GREEK FILM INDUSTRY

'If it wasn't for America and Australia, the Greek film industry in the duration of a number of years, maybe 5-10 years, would have been completely dead.'

Anna Vlattas (2006)

Year	Venue	Location	Company
1949-1968	Nicholas Hall/Theatre	City, Melbourne	Dionysos; Olympia; Cosmopolitan Motion Pictures (CMP) (fourwalled)
1950	Empire	Leederville, Perth	Dionysos (fourwalled)
1954-1959	Assembly Hall	City, Melbourne	Dionysos (fourwalled)
1954	Carrington	Newcastle	Dionysos (fourwalled)
1954	Lyric	West End, Brisbane	Dionysos (fourwalled)
1954	Maccabean	Darlinghurst, Sydney	Dionysos (fourwalled)
1954	Windsor	Lockleys, Adelaide	Dionysos (fourwalled)
1954-1959	Attik	Fitzroy, Melbourne	Dionysos (fourwalled)
1955	Rialto	West End, Brisbane	Dionysos (fourwalled)
1950s	Paddington Town Hall	Paddington, Sydney	Dionysos; CMP (fourwalled)
1956	Curzon	Goodwood, Adelaide	Dionysos (fourwalled)
1956	Melba Theatre	Dulwich, Adelaide	(fourwalled)
1956-1966	Carlton Theatre	Carlton, Melbourne	Olympia; CMP (leased)
1957	Lawson Theatre	Redfern, Sydney	Louis (leased)

1957-1967	Melbourne Town Hall	City, Melbourne	New World Film Entertainment (NWFE); CMP (fourwalled)
1957-1981	Thebarton Town Hall	Thebarton, Adelaide	Dionysos (57); UCE (66); CMP (67-81)
1958	Castley Hall	Sunshine, Melbourne	(fourwalled)
1958	Regal Theatre	Subiaco, Perth	CMP
1958	Olympia Theatre	Perth	CMP
1959	Vesuvio	Newmarket, Melbourne	(fourwalled)
1959-1969	Cathedral Hall	Fitzroy, Melbourne	From 1962 CMP (fourwalled)
1950s	Doncaster Theatre	Kensington, Sydney	Dionysos (fourwalled); leased by Louis in 1959
1961-1966	Cosmopolitan	Brunswick, Melbourne	CMP
1961-1968	Dendy	Brighton, Melbourne	Spiro-Raft Theatres (SRT), CMP (fourwalled)
1958-1974	Victoria Theatre	Richmond, Melbourne	SRT (owned); CMP (leased)
1961-1984	National	Richmond, Melbourne	CMP (owned)
1962	Pantheon	Adelaide, Adelaide	CMP
1963-1968	Globe	Richmond, Melbourne	SRT; CMP (leased)
1963-1981	Sun	Yarraville, Melbourne	CMP (owned)
1963-1966	Orient	North Fitzroy, Melbourne	(fourwalled)
1963	The Grosvenor [primarily for Italian audiences]	Summer Hill, Sydney	Louis (owned)
1964-1976	Oreon [primarily for Italian audiences	Petersham, Sydney	Louis (owned)
1964-1970	Marrickville Kings	Marrickville, Sydney	Louis (owned)
1962-1974	Pantheon	Wakefield Street, Adelaide	CMP (leased)
1965	The Hub [principally for Yugoslav audiences]	Newtown, Sydney	Louis (owned)

1965	The Elite	Haberfield, Sydney	Louis (owned)
1965	Whiteway	Port Kembla, NSW	Louis (owned)
1966-1976	Empire	Brunswick, Melbourne	CMP (owned)
1966-1982	Kinema	Albert Park, Melbourne	CMP (owned)
1966	Padua/Metropolitan [for Italian audiences, eventually leased to Italian circuit]	Brunswick, Melbourne	Louis (owned)
1966	Century	City, Melbourne	(fourwalled)
1966-1985	Westgarth	Northcote, Melbourne	CMP (owned)
1966	Cinema Italia	Clifton Hill, Melbourne	
About 1966	Marina Theatre	Rosebery, Sydney	Louis (owned)
1966-1980	Paramount	Oakleigh, Melbourne	CMP
1966-1968	Sunshine	Sunshine, Melbourne	Lazogas (owned); United Cinematographic Enterprises (UCE); CMP (leased)
1967-1980	Norwood Civic Theatre	Norwood, Adelaide	CMP
1967	Lyceum	City, Melbourne	(fourwalled)
1967-1982	Astor	St Kilda, Melbourne	UCE (owned) From 1968 CMP (leased)
1967	Enmore / Finos (Hoyts)	Newtown, Sydney	Louis (owned)
1968	Dendy	Brighton, Melbourne	UCE? (leased)
1960s	Parap Theatre	Darwin	CMP; Louis (from 1962)
1967-1979	Pix theatre	Geelong	CMP
1970	Chelsea/Ellas	Earlwood, Sydney	Louis (owned)
1972	Apollo/Hoyts	Ashfield, Sydney	Louis (owned)
1972	The Regent	Bankstown, Sydney	Louis (owned)
1970s	Elizabethan Theatre	Newtown	Louis (owned)

1972-1987	Liberty/Galaxy	Brunswick, Melbourne	CMP (owned)
1975-1977	Ascot Vale	Ascot Vale	CMP (leased)
1958-1982	State Theatre	North Hobart	CMP
1966	Hindmarsh Town Hall	Hindmarsh, Adelaide	CMP
1981-1983	Woodville Town Hall	Woodville, Adelaide	CMP
Working List of Cinema uisitions and Leases (does not include subsidiary distribution arrangements with art-house venues); Metropolitan Greek film circuit (Australia)			

Table 1: *List of metropolitan Greek cinema venues*

The period of expansion of the Greek cinemas in Melbourne closely coincides with the rise of the Greek film industry itself. Between 1950 (shortly after the end of the Greek civil war) and 1975 (the year in which important legislative changes to Greek television broadcasting were made) both the number of cinemas and the number of films produced in Greece reached unprecedented highs (Constantinidis 2002: 9-10). Throughout this period film production in Greece was dominated by six major studios: Finos, Anzervos, Novak, Spentzos, Karayannis-Karatzopoulos and Damaskinos-Mihailidis. But many other smaller production companies were also able to find distribution in Australia (e.g. Olympia, Hermes, Midas, Romilos, Faros, Cronos to name a few). At this time cinema-going constituted the most popular form of entertainment for Greek families (Soldatos 1999: 87-110).

By the mid-1960s the annual turnover of films produced in Greece was well over 100, making it one of the leading centres for film production in Europe. There are several factors that contributed to the sustained level of production of the Greek cinema. Films from this period were typically produced with low budgets (the average cost of a film in the mid-1960s was around US$30,000) and high audience yield (see Sifaki 2004). In 1967, for example, there were 500 open-air cinemas in Athens (with a population of 1.5 million), which, in the four months of the summer season, sold more than 31 million tickets, the vast majority of which were for Greek films. According to Dimitris Eleftheriotis, both the low cost and popularity of Greek cinema in this period can be attributed to the limited range of genres on offer (comedies and melodramas making up 90 per cent of all the films produced in the 1960s) and the absence of a highly stratified Hollywood-style star system (Eleftheriotis 1995: 238). According to Eleftheriotis, 'Unable to compete with foreign films in terms of production values, the Greek industry relied on the

familiarity of the characters and the "Greekness" of the diegetic world of the films' (Eleftheriotis 1995: 238). As Eleftheriotis sees it, Greek films are, 'domestic in all senses of the word, they are made for domestic consumption, set in a domestic setting (never outside Greece) and are usually about domesticity' (Eleftheriotis 1995: 238). It is a neat summary but in his haste to be succinct, Eleftheriotis, like most other commentators on the Greek film industry of this period, elides the non-domestic market of the Greek diaspora.

One way of thinking about the relationship between Greek film production and its diffusion throughout the Greek diaspora is to describe the latter as an 'ancillary' market. Nowadays the term refers to markets created by new technology platforms (video, DVD, etc.). But before the advent of television, US films played exclusively in cinemas and its only ancillary markets were cinemas in international territories. In this historical sense an ancillary market was a subordinate but supportive market. That said, Australia's diasporic Greek cinema circuits are not exactly an ancillary market because, for the most part, there was little effective vertical integration between the Australian distribution/exhibition companies and Greece production outfits (unlike the relationship between the Hollywood studios and their operations in Australia, for instance). Further analysis is required to determine the extent to which domestic supply in Greece was dependent on sales in the Greek diaspora. It is highly unlikely, however, that there was any systematic response from Greek producers to 'market intelligence' in Australia such as box-office data, particularly given the time-lag between a film premiering in Greece and its arrival in Australia some time later, often well after the close of the all-important Greek summer season and because most films screened in Australia were purchased outright (rather than returning box-office percentage to Greece). Even Finos Films, which did initially require a percentage of box-office on top of a flat fee, were persuaded to reconsider this system of contracting. In the late 1950s, Apollo Maglis, the distribution manager of Finos Films inspected several Melbourne venues after which their fees were reduced by 20 per cent and the requirement for a share of box-office was rescinded. In 1959, Maglis travelled with CMP's Peter Yiannoudes to India to buy films (including *Devdas* [Roy, 1955] and *Mother India* [Khan, 1957]) and after sending them to Cairo for subtitling into English and Greek, screened them in both Australia and Greece. There is also anecdotal evidence that Greek-Australian distributors/exhibitors financed some Greek production activity through pre-sales of particular titles.

Rather than being a true 'ancillary' market, then, diasporic exhibition and distribution might be more usefully described as operating like a 'supplementary' market in the Derridean sense, in which the 'supplement' is something added to an

entity that is nominally complete but that admits its lack of completion by requiring an addendum or increment, and that is therefore replaced by the new compilation of entities. In this case, Greek diasporic cinema markets are both a surplus to the domestic Greek cinema, which is not reliant on their returns, and yet they replace the idea of the Greek national cinema as a geographically bound entity. Australia's diasporic film circuits have the effect of unsettling the idea that the Greek cinema was a purely domestic one. As well as enhancing the Greek cinema (through extending its reach) the Australian Greek film circuit's very presence underlines the absences in a unitary conception of national cinema in Greece. The supplementary market then functions as an addition and a replacement (Derrida 1996: 144-45).

CONCLUSION

'Aah, they were days of glory.'
Stathis Raftopoulos (2000)

Raftopoulos's choice of name for his company proved to be a prescient one. As a latecomer to Greek mythology, Dionysos carries with him a sense of foreignness as an internal quality, an outsider no matter where he is, and unlike most deities, he dies. For later commentators, the Dionysian is particularly characterized by this dissolution of boundaries (between foreign/familiar, mortal/divine and so on). In describing the role of post-war Greek film exhibitors, it would be easy to lapse back into unhelpful dualisms. The simple binary oppositions that are typically invoked to divide domestic from foreign do not work particularly well when describing the interlocking networks of diasporic cinema exhibition and distribution nor when attempting to capture the extraordinary complexity of diasporic audience experiences afforded by physical, social and emotional spaces including those of the cinema in involved and intricate ways. This complexity of movements and interchanges across multiple borders – national, local and specific – varies no less than their magnitude or impact and captures something of what is entailed in understanding Melbourne's diasporic cinema experiences as an example of a located form of globalization in process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge in particular the research assistance of Michelle Mantsio in the production of this article. Thanks is also due to the many Greek cinema proprietors and patrons who have generously granted their time to us;

special thanks to Peter Yiannoudes, Anna and Paris Vlattas, Chris Vlattas, Costas Margaritis, Loula Anagnostou, Olga Black, Kyriakos Amantidis and Kasiani Raftopoulos. Staff at the National Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research, La Trobe University and the Australian-Greek Resource and Learning Centre, RMIT University have also been generous.

Ross Thorne, Dylan Walker and Daniel Catrice have lent their expertise at different stages of this research and Gerry Kennedy from the Cinema and Theatre Historical Society (CATHS) has been a constant support. This project was made possible by an Australian Research Council grant and was further supported by the Global Cities Institute and the School of Applied Communication at RMIT University.

Images are reproduced courtesy of the Stathis Raftopoulos Collection, RMIT Australian-Greek Resource and Learning Centre.

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