

Creating an Open-access, Cross-cultural Home for Greek Film Studies

The creation of this new journal is the initiative of independent scholars and is motivated by the need to address two major problems in relation to the study of Greek film: First, the limited publishing opportunities available to Greek film researchers and second, the limited access of international scholars to information about and discussions of Greek film. Until now there has been a frustrating lack of respectable platforms willing to publish systematically on the various aspects of Greek cinema either in English or Greek. The shortage of English-language literature on the subject, combined with the small number of subtitled Greek films (an indication of their limited accessibility to international audiences) have restricted academic and cinephile knowledge of Greek cinema largely to Greece, and beyond Greece to a few academics and university students mostly of Greek origin. Despite the plethora of relevant Greek-language publications (most of them festival programmes, autobiographies, albums, etc. [see Dimitris Kalantidis]), the reluctance of the publishers to invest in academic writing and the absence of specialized peer-reviewed journals have hindered the development of Greek film scholarship by delaying access to fresh research, preventing dialogue, minimizing motivation, causing stagnation and allowing the recycling of worn theoretical frames and erroneous information.

Recently, however, we have witnessed a shift in two interrelated directions: on the one hand, Greek film has attracted international attention and has been acknowledged as a vibrant force in European cinema; on the other, at a time when Greek titles are radically reduced (see Kalantidis) due to the recession in the domestic book market, a notable number of publications have appeared on Greek cinema in English (books, journals and articles) or are forthcoming (see Olga Kourelou). At the same time important scholarly work is being carried out inside and outside the national borders in the institutionalized context of universities, while an increasing number of independent scholars are contributing to the research field and taking publishing and other initiatives. Recently also Greek film scholarship seems to be questioning some of its own inherent inadequacies, which can be identified, broadly speaking, as follows: cinema, in Greece, has been studied primarily in the context of other disciplines and scholarly work has come out of history, sociology, philology, theatre and

media university departments, producing valuable results, but the analytical tools developed by Film Studies as a distinct academic discipline have remained marginal. Moreover, writing on Greek film has been heavily influenced by rigid ideological prejudices that have often excluded significant areas of study and have obscured important aspects of Greek film culture (for such discussions, see Maria Chalkou, Aphroditi Nikolaidou and Anna Poupou).

In an emerging new landscape of mobility and change, *Filmicon* wishes to create a new opportunity for Greek film scholarship by establishing an open-access hosting space for quality writing on Greek film. *Filmicon* hopes in the process to encourage research, give room to diverse readings and innovative work, instigate dialogue, bring together independent scholars with established academics, and contribute to the developing extroversion of Greek cinema by addressing international readers and providing free accessibility to its content. However, *Filmicon* is by no means another manifestation of the nationalistic exaltation of a phobic society under pressure that turns solipsistically towards itself asking for reassurance and self satisfaction. It does not confine its focus exclusively to Greek cinema, nor does it perceive Greek film culture in terms of exclusiveness and essentialism but as fundamentally hybrid and transnational, an organic part of the global film culture, subject to constant influence, interaction and exchange. And it is precisely these assumptions that run throughout the entire first issue of *Filmicon*.

Dimitris Eleftheriotis's opening essay is of international concern and addresses issues of legitimization regarding both teaching and public funding of cinema in the universities at times of recession, especially when the new technological environment challenges film's extraordinariness by facilitating the creation and consumption of 'banal' works such as YouTube clips. Cross-cultural approaches and transnationality are central to several pieces in this issue. Deb Verhoeven explores in detail the Greek distribution/exhibition network in Australia from the 1950s to the 1970s. Her discussion foregrounds aspects of an area of study entirely neglected by Greek scholars, a surprising fact given that focus on diasporic and exilic cinemas is a dominant trend in Film Studies in general, and both diaspora and political exile are important aspects of the contemporary Greek experience. The two film reviews by Angeliki Mylonaki and Philip Phillis focus on *Wasted Youth* and *Amnesty* respectively, two films of hybrid nature in terms of nationality. The former made by two young filmmakers (Argyris Papadimitropoulos and Yan Vogel, a Greek and a German based in Athens) discusses the subject of crisis from a European perspective by suggesting a link between the Berlin underground trend 'Wasted German Youth' and a Greek one. *Amnesty*, a co-production partly financed by Greek funding bodies and made by

Bujar Alimani – a first generation immigrant of Albanian origin, trained and based in Greece – is entirely Albanian in its content. However, both *Amnesty* and Alimani, whose artistic growth took place in the social and cinematic environment that produced the so-called New Greek Wave, reveal a broader image of Greek cinema which is able to nurture and embrace non-Greek filmmakers and works. Not only hybridity, cross-cultural and transnational approaches but also trans-textual perspectives are suggested by Panayiota Konstantinakou's essay on the *Golfo* Project, a theatrical experiment by HoROS Theatre Company. This innovative performance addresses issues of theatre and national identity by employing a variety of multinational forms of audiovisual and cultural reference, such as Greek bucolic dramatic idyll, folkish *foustanela* films, Japanese manga, the Greek but also Turkish shadow theatre of *Karaghiozis*, television programmes and computer games to create a postmodern articulation of identity that does not rely on the national but on the global and on childhood memory. Finally, star studies, an area of study relatively underdeveloped in Greek scholarship, is the subject of Nick Potamitis who offers an enthralling reading of Vouyouklaki's hybrid star image – an emblematic actress who has functioned as a national symbol – while discussing the construction of the love couple and family romance as ideological vehicles of the right-wing post civil-war establishment.

Many Greek film scholars have studied cinema abroad and learned to discuss film in English or French. This, on the one hand, helps Greek cinema address itself to the international academic community, on the other, however, there is a definite need to learn how to think, speak and write about cinema in Greek. There is a considerable amount of terminology insufficiently translated, a fact that prevents the full implications of a term being understood while producing ambiguities and communication problems. *Filmicon's* intention is to systematically translate and publish texts in Greek to address terminology and other language complications related to the study of film. However, the particular choice of Deb Verhoeven's article was made to highlight once again Greek diasporic film cultures, as well as audience studies and the distribution and exhibition of films, which, with the exception of some systematic and excellent work, still remain under-researched topics.

In conclusion we wish to heartily thank Eurasia Publications and Phaedon Kydoniatis for his initiative and support, as well as the web developer George Prokopakis whose enthusiasm and expertise brought *Filmicon* to life.

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